Identifying Problem Gamblers Within Gaming Venues

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Overview of Presentation

- Overview of purpose of study
- Brief review of existing knowledge
- Summary of research methodology
- Summary of key findings
- Implications for policy, practice, and future research

Project Summary

- Detailed literature review of existing research relating to visible indicators
- Review of existing interventions for patrons in venues
- Existing policies and staff training to assist gamblers in venues
- Identify externalised indicators and whether they were sensitive enough to allow problem gamblers to be identified

Current Australian / NZ Knowledge

- Overseas work: Schrans & Schellinck in Nova Scotia, Hafeli and Schneider in Switzerland

- Australian Gaming Council Review

- Industry-specific Guidelines (Christchurch Casino, SkyCity Auckland)

Existing Knowledge I

- Schrans & Schellinck: Studied over 700 VLT players in Canada. A number of indicators (many of them visible) were significantly more likely to be reported by PGs, but were seen to occur quite infrequently

- Hafeli & Schneider: Developed an extensive checklist for use in Swiss Casinos (who already have their own checklist)

Project Methodology

- Survey of 120 venue staff in SA, ACT and NSW
- Survey of 15 counsellors in SA
- Survey of almost 700 regular EGM players in SA
- 140 hours of observation work in SA and the ACT

Aims of Staff Survey

- To validate selected items and to identify other potential indicators
- To identify the potential barriers to identification
- Profile work hours and the feasibility of identifying problem gamblers within venues
- To assess the adequacy of existing training provisions
- Not a prevalence study, but a large-scale 'expert or key informant review'

Findings from Venue Staff Survey

- Most venue staff had received responsible gambling training and this had included material on identifying problem gamblers

- Most were very confident in being able to identify problem gamblers within their venues

- Most worked for long enough shifts so as to obtain sufficient information concerning individual players

- Venue size and staff turnover were not seen to be particularly problematic factors

Staff Survey Findings

- The principal challenge to identification was approaching problem gamblers. Training was not considered sufficient to undertake this role

- Almost all of the indicators were endorsed

- Staff particular emphasised the importance of displays of anger, bragging about wins, and other histrionics

- CHANGES in behaviour and appearance were considered more important than static indicators

Counsellor Survey

- Small-scale interview study (n = 15), but saturation achieved very quickly. Expert counsellors had already been interviewed in the AGC review in 2002.

- The indicators were also strongly endorsed by counsellors

- Addition venue-staff training was considered important

Gambler Survey

- Almost 700 regular (fortnightly+) EGM and Casino gamblers were sampled. The main sample (280) was drawn from the community and 400 from a secondary analysis of data from venue gamblers.

- The aim was not to obtain prevalence data, but to conduct comparisons across gamblers with varying levels of risk as determined by the CPGI

- There was a strong focus on 'hard end' gamblers- to maximise the numbers in each CPGI group (not achievable via telephone surveys)

Gambler Survey

- Were administered the CPGI
- External / Visible indicators (0, 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% of time response scale used by Schrans and Schellinck)
- Also asked to identify other possible indicators

Gambler Sample

	Venue Sample (n= 400)	Community Sample (n = 280)	Total Sample (n = 680)
No risk	234 (58.5)	47 (16.8)	281 (41.3)
Low Risk	71 (17.8)	46 (16.4)	117 (17.2)
Mod Risk	64 (16.0)	80 (28.6)	144 (21.1)
Problem	31 (7.8)	106 (37.9)	137 (20.1)

Types of Indicator Considered

- Frequency, duration and intensity
- Impaired control or choice
- Social Behaviours
- Raising funds / Chasing behaviour
- Emotional responses
- Other behaviours
- Irrational behaviours and attributions

Frequency Duration and Intensity

- Gambled for 3 hours or more without a break of 15 minutes or more

- Spends more than $300 in one session of gambling

- Gambles every day of the week

- Gambles so intensely that the person hardly reacts to what is going on around them

Impaired Control

- Stops gambling only when the venue is closing
- Gambles through usual lunch break or dinner
- Starts gambling when the venue is opening

Social Behaviours

- Rude and impolite to staff

- Stays on to gamble after friends leave venue

- Very angry if another person takes favourite machine or spot in venue

- Has friends or relatives arrive to ask if the person is still there

Raising Funds / Chasing Behaviour

- Got cash out 2 or more times using ATM or EFTPOS

- Puts large win amounts back into machine and keeps playing

- Leaves the venue to obtain money and then returns

- Uses coin machine at least 4 times

Emotional Responses

- Kicks or strikes machines with fists

- Cries after losing a lot of money

- Vocally displays anger

- Looks nervous / edgy / sweaty and agitated while gambling

Irrational Behaviours

- Blames venue or machines for losing
- Complains to staff about losing
- Swears at machines or staff because they are losing

Analytical Approaches

- Prevalence of indicator x CPGI Risk group, I.e., what proportion of each group reported engaging in the behaviour

- Risk-Ratio: P (indicator in PG) vs. P (indicator in other gamblers)

- Logistic Regression: How well do indicators predict PG status?

- Bayesian Analysis: How well do indicator predict PG status based on known base-rates of the behaviour

Overview of Gambler Survey Results

- Clear evidence that certain visible indicators are more common in PGs than others (NB we repeated analyses for venue-recruited and community recruited gamblers and found no substantial differences in the pattern of results)

- The prevalence of these indicators increased as a function of the level of risk

Examples
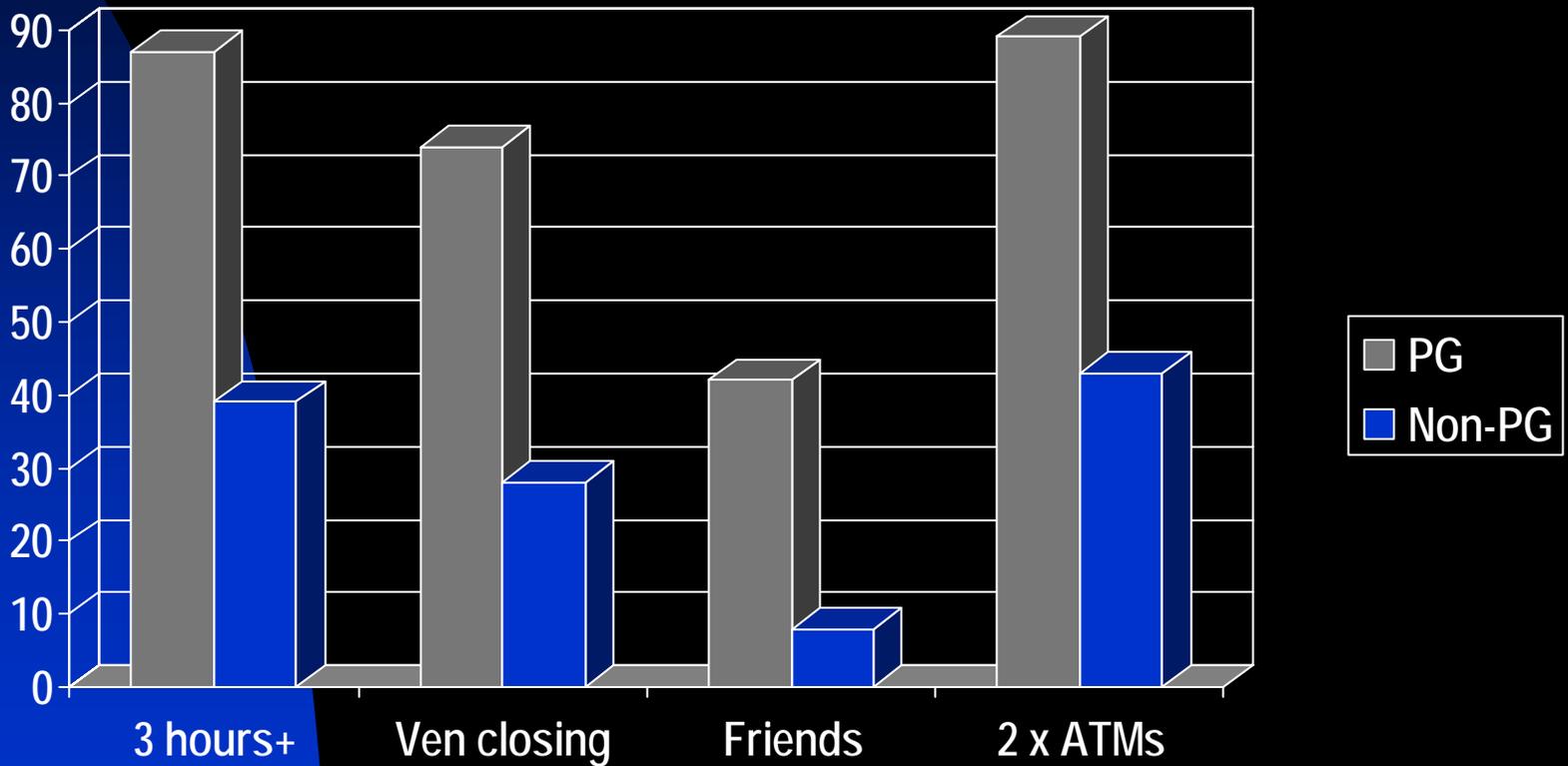
Indicator Types

- Two types

- Higher prevalence indicators: lower odds-ratio (many gamblers engage in the behaviour, but it is more common in problem gamblers), e.g., multiple visits to ATMs

- Lower prevalence indicators: High odds-ratio- rarely observed, but only tends to occur in problem gamblers (e.g., 3rd party enquiries)

Overview of Findings

- Multiple indicators are needed to identify PGs with a high level of precision (usually 3-4)

- The P (PG) > .90 if 3-4 indicators can be observed (e.g., multiple ATMs visits, hitting machines, emotional responses, continuous play without breaks)

- The best indicators related to emotional responses and social behaviours

- Venue staff emphasised the importance of changes in behaviour, not just <u>static</u> indicators

Probability of Being a Problem Gambler (Model for Males)
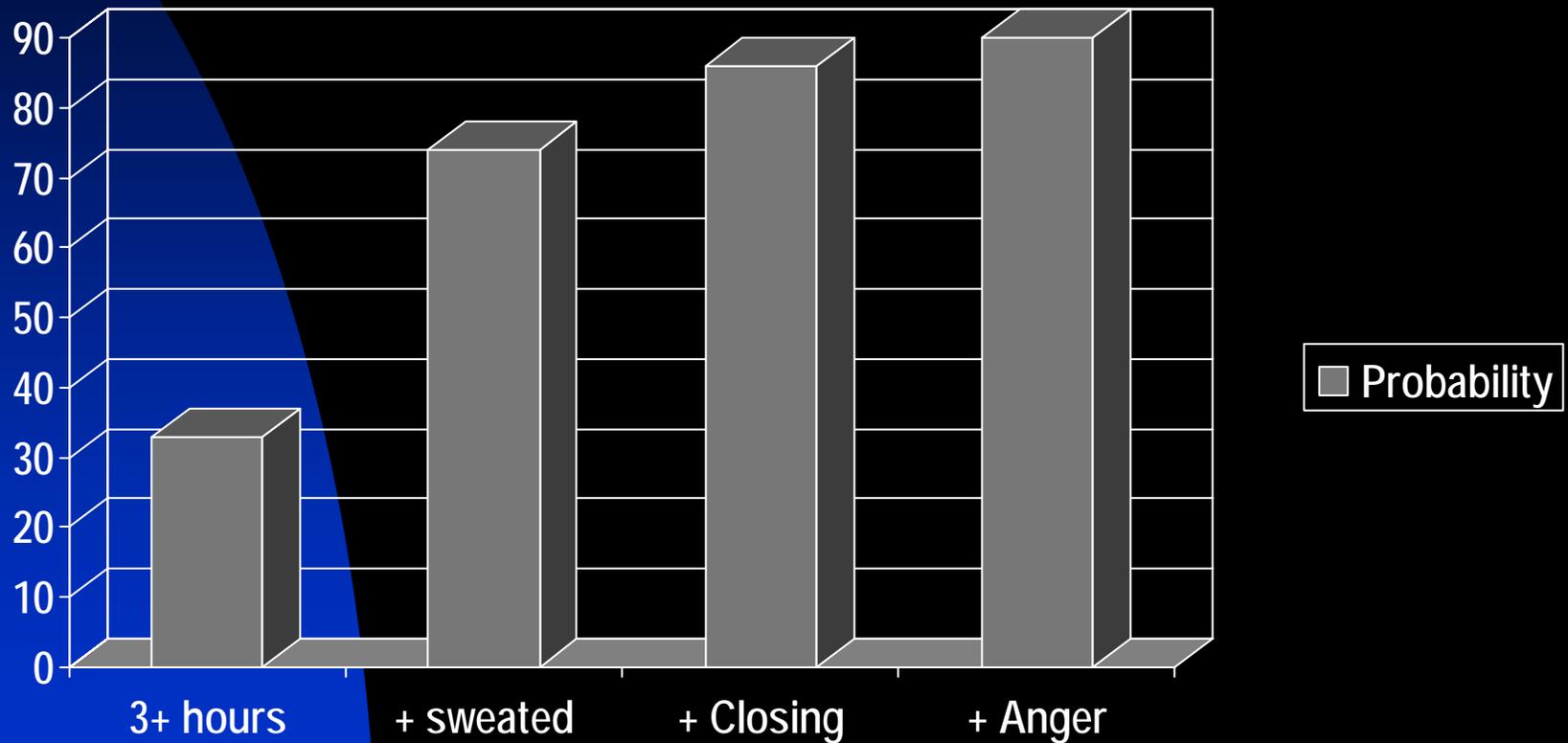
Probability of Being a Problem Gambler (Model for Females)
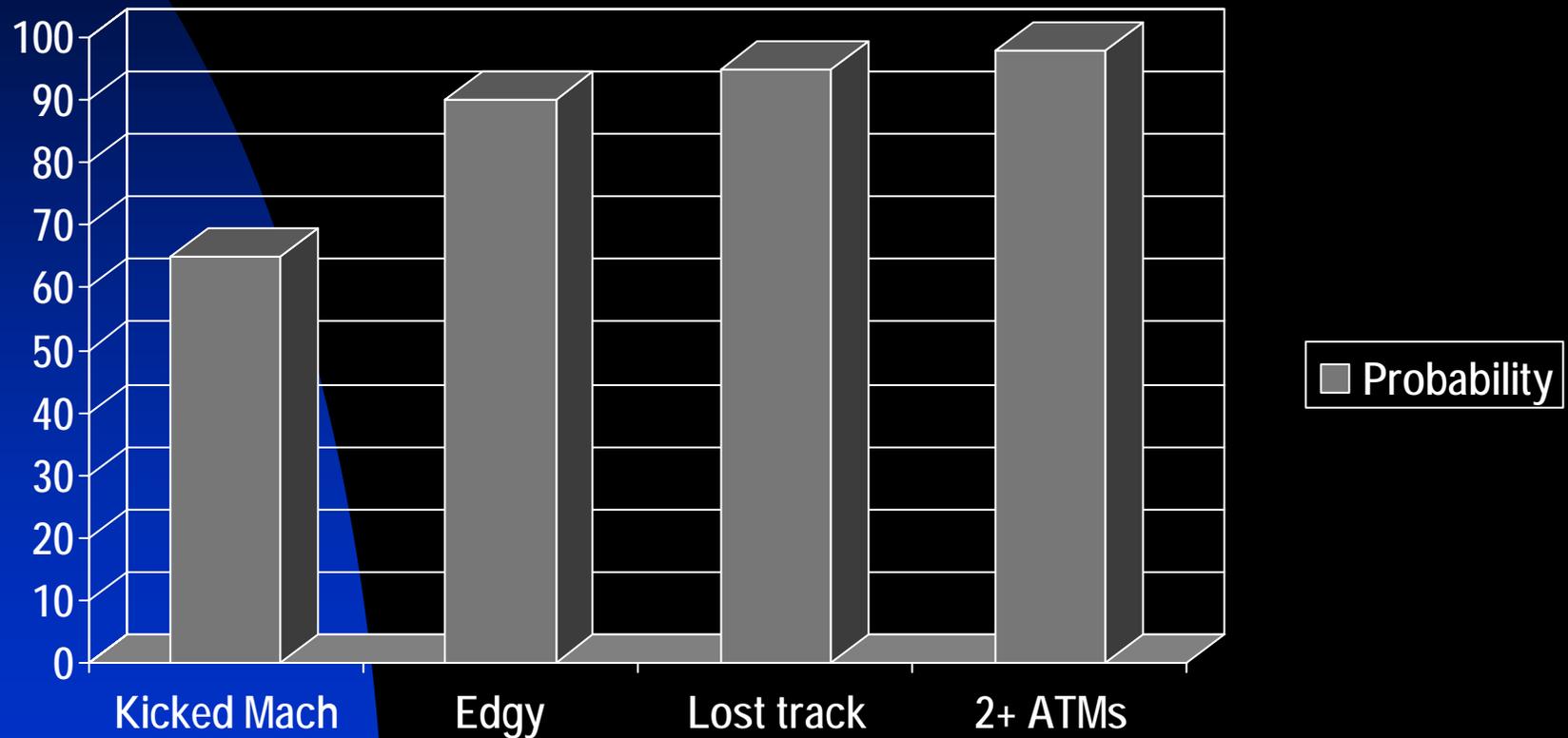
Observational Work

- Proved to be problematic. Industry groups were cautious about interactions with patrons, obvious surveillance, so only participant observation was possible (similar to methods commonly used in anthropology, CSIRO observations of fast-food restaurants).

- Used behavioural method in SA (smaller venues) to ascertain how difficult it was to observe multiple indicators. Justification: If it were ever going to work, then small venues would be the best chance!

- ACT work was done using ethnographic methods

Observational Findings

- Observational work showed that staff only spend 15% of time in the gaming areas in SA

- It took 4-5 hours of continuous observation by our observers to accumulate 3-4 indicators, suggesting that observation systems would need to include an event register, logging of information (OK for Casinos, but may be difficult for small venues?)

- The form of indicators varied (e.g., how people hit machines, expressed anger)

Implications

- Indicators can theoretically be used to identify problem gamblers

- Staff DO know how to spot PGs, but may lack the time to obtain sufficient evidence for new, unfamiliar patrons

- Additional staff training is needed and which builds in the ethnographic information concerning the varying form of behaviours

- Computer models and systems could be developed using Bayesian statistics to obtain probability estimates based on different numbers and combinations of cues

Conclusions and Future Directions

- Further validation of indicators using self-report measures and observation

- Greater links between findings and staff-training

- Need industry-researcher collaborations to determine whether indicator based diagnoses correspond with actual diagnostic tools