THE EFFICACY OF THE “WHO REALLY WINS?” YOUTH GAMBLING PREVENTION PROGRAM – PRELIMINARY RESULTS FROM THE FIRST NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

“Who really wins” is the first comprehensive youth gambling prevention program developed and implemented in Croatia, based on a national research study on a representative sample of high-school students, conducted at the University of Zagreb. The Program was developed, piloted and modified between 2012 – 2014. Its pilot implementation was performed in 2 high schools in the City of Zagreb, by the authors of the Program and evaluation results indicated a decrease in risk factors, namely better knowledge about gambling and less gambling related cognitive distortions among training group, compared to a control group of students (Huić et al., 2017).

In 2016, after adaptation and modification of the Program, project team begun with a national educational 3-day trainings for the school professionals who could then implement the Program in their high-schools. So far, five educational trainings were held and approximately 70 high-schools across Croatia have the opportunity to implement the Program.

Evaluations of the process and effects are a mandatory parts of the Program implementation, so professionals are obliged to perform standardized pre-test and post-test (before and after the Program) and send the questionnaires back to the authors for the purpose of evaluation. This study will present preliminary results from the first wave of the national evaluation with N=470 high-schools who participated in this 9-week Program. This is also the first implementation conducted by trained professionals, not the authors of the Program.

Results indicate that the Program is still effective in enhancing students’ knowledge in gambling facts and reducing gambling related cognitive distortions, while effects on different socio-emotional skills differ by gender. Interestingly, compared to the previous study (Huić et al., 2017), this study showed greater effects on girls.

Results will be interpreted in the context of advantages and challenges of implementation, as well as potential adaptations that would be valuable to increase effectiveness of this psycho-educative prevention program for both genders.

Key words: youth gambling, prevention, evaluation, gender differences, psycho-educative program
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