Early Gambling Behaviour in Online Games Parental Perspectives vs. What Children Report

# Details

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DIGITAL PARENTING The Challenges for Families in the Digital Age

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## Topics

## Sample

645 children of the fifth and sixth year in 16 primary schools (average age was 10.5 years) equally divided by gender and geographically spread over Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

# Abstract

In this study, we focus on early gambling practices in online games via surveys admin\_x0002\_istered among primary school children and their parents. The convergence of gambling
and digital games comes along with new challenges for parental awareness and mediation.
The lack of an obligatory strict classification system and labelling of simulated gambling
games and their gambling characteristics makes it hard for parents to identify potential
risks. In addition, the online context of simulated gambling games lowers the threshold for
children to be exposed to gambling activities at a very early age. Our research questions are
twofold: (1) What are parents’ perspectives on children’s engagement in gambling games?
(2) What do children report about their game play incorporating gambling elements? Our
study therefore measures parental mediation of games of chance and explores its relation
with early online gambling behaviour in children.

# Outcome

"There is a high discrepancy between what parents allow their children to do and what children themselves report about their online gambling game behaviour. 95.6% of the parents say their children are not allowed to play games of chance while 23.6% of the children report playing free digital gambling games such as free casino games. These simulated gambling games make use of virtual currencies instead of real money or make it possible to win virtual objects of value such as so-called “skins” to garnish guns in a shooter game. This indicates that gambling starts already early in childhood. Acknowledging this might form the gateway to more serious and monetary forms of gambling at a later age. From a parental mediation perspective, talking and discussing games of chance
seems to be related to children’s real life (offline) engagement in gambling such as playing casino games with friends and betting behaviour. Unfortunately, this is not the case for the more hidden online gambling activities. Parents do not expect their young children to be exposed to gambling features through popular online games which can create a false feeling of safe, harmless entertainment while it is likely to pave the way for the engagement with monetary forms of gambling and the creation of positive attitudes towards gambling among children.