

# research snapshot

summarize | mobilize



## The role of self-efficacy and personal fulfillment in social and educational domains in video slot machine gambling among adolescents

### What this research is about

Gambling among adolescents is widespread across Italy. This is partly due to the poor enforcement of age restriction, widely available online gambling platforms, and public acceptance of gambling. Video slot machines (VSMs) are considered addictive because of features such as fast speed of play and small stakes. In Italy, VSMs are available both offline and online.

Self-efficacy reflects a person's confidence in their ability to achieve desired outcomes. Previous studies have looked at self-efficacy in terms of people's confidence in controlling their gambling behaviours. There is little discussion on the role of general self-efficacy in gambling behaviours. General self-efficacy refers to global confidence in one's ability cope and solve problems. It is a key predictor of positive adjustment among adolescents.

The current study aimed to investigate how self-rated problem-solving ability in everyday life was related to regular gambling with VSMs among adolescents. It also examined the role of current and expected personal fulfillment in social and school/work domains.

### What the researchers did

The researchers carried out two surveys in 2018 and 2022 in 11 high schools in Pavia, northern Italy. The data were collected as part of the "Selfie project", which aimed to understand the lifestyles, social interactions, and mental well-being of Italian students through periodic surveys. The final sample of this study included 7,959 students between 15 and 17

### What you need to know

Video slot machines (VSMs) have high potential to trigger harmful gambling behaviours. Yet, the psychological factors linked with VSM use among adolescents remain poorly investigated. The researchers surveyed a total of 7,959 Italian adolescents aged 15 to 17 in 2018 and 2022. Regular VSM use of at least once a month was reported by 108 participants (1.4%). Regular VSM use was more frequently reported by those who rated their problem-solving ability as high or low. It was also more frequently reported by those with high or low levels of current and expected social fulfillment, as well as those with low self-ratings in current and expected educational/work fulfillment.

years old. There was no overlap in participants between the two surveys.

The questionnaire used in both surveys included demographics questions as well as questions on risky behaviours, including gambling. The section on gambling asked about the frequency of engaging in different gambling games, including VSMs. When asked about frequency of VSM use, participants could choose options from 1 (never) to 5 (every day or almost every day). Regular VSM use was defined as at least once per month.

Participants also rated their ability to deal with everyday problems. They rated their current fulfillment in school and social life, as well as what they expected their fulfillment in school/work and social life would be like in the future.

## What the researchers found

About 44 % of the participants were males. About half attended a lyceum. A third attended a technical school, and the rest attended a vocational high school. Most participants performed well in school. But 38.1% had either failed a class or an entire year. Most participants reported households with two working parents and at least one sibling.

Most participants (94.3%) reported never using VSMs. About 4.4% reported using VSMs less than monthly, and 1.4% reported using VSMs at least once a month. Of the participants who reported monthly VSM use, over half (54.6%) reported using VSMs 1 to 4 times per month. The rest reported using VSMs 5 to 7 times per month (23.1%), or using them every day or almost every day (22.2%).

The researchers found that participants who self-rated their everyday problem-solving ability as “high” or “very low” were more likely to report regular VSM use, compared to those who gave a “fair” rating.

Participants who rated their current personal fulfillment in social life as “high”, “low”, or “very low” were more likely to report regular VSM use, compared to those who rated their current fulfillment in this domain as “fair”. In terms of future social fulfillment, participants who expected it to be “high”, “low”, or “very low” were more likely to report regular VSM use than those who gave a “fair” rating.

Participants who rated their current personal fulfillment in education as “low” or “very low” were more likely to report regular VSM use, compared to those who rated their current personal fulfillment as “fair”. In terms of future educational/work fulfillment, participants with “low” or “very low” expectations were more likely to report regular VSM use, compared to those with “fair” expectations.

## How you can use this research

This research can be used to better understand the impact of self-efficacy on VSM use. The findings also suggest that adolescents who gamble present diverse psychological profiles. Social interactions can have either positive or negative influences on gambling

behaviour among adolescents. A comprehensive approach that includes educational support may help curb gambling among adolescents.

## About the researchers

**Giansanto Mosconi, Paola Bertuccio, and Anna Odone** are affiliated with the Department of Public Health, Experimental and Forensic Medicine at the University of Pavia in Pavia, Italy. Anna Odone is also affiliated with Medical Direction at Fondazione IRCCS Policlinico San Matteo in Pavia, Italy. **Joseph DelFerro** and **Andrea Jin** are affiliated with the Perelman School of Medicine, Department of Public Health, at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, USA, and with the Accademia Nazionale di Medicina in Genova, Italy. For more information about this study, please contact Anna Odone at [anna.odone@unipv.it](mailto:anna.odone@unipv.it).

## Citation

Mosconi, G., DelFerro, J., Jin, A., Bertuccio, P., Odone, A., & the Selfie Project Investigators (2024). Video slot machine use in adolescence: The role of self-efficacy beliefs, current and expected personal fulfillment at the social and educational level. *Addictive Behaviors Reports*, 20, 100560.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.abrep.2024.100560>

## Study funding

No funding was received for this study.

## About Greo

Greo has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. Greo is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization with almost two decades of international experience in generating, synthesizing, and mobilizing research into action across the health and wellbeing sectors. Greo helps organizations improve their strategies, policies, and practices by harnessing the power of evidence and stakeholder insight.

Learn more about Greo by visiting [greo.ca](http://greo.ca) or emailing [info@greo.ca](mailto:info@greo.ca).

