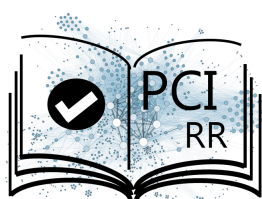

Fw: PCI Registered Reports #757: Decision concerning your submission

Szászi Barnabás Imre <szaszi.barnabas@ppk.elte.hu>

2024. augusztus 7. 11:43

Címzett: Pál Kolumbán <kolumbanpal99@gmail.com>, "kolozsvarimarton@gmail.com" <kolozsvarimarton@gmail.com>

Ezt továbbküldtem nektek már?

From: PCI RR Contact <contact@rr.peercommunityin.org>**Sent:** Thursday, June 13, 2024 18:14**To:** Szászi Barnabás Imre <szaszi.barnabas@ppk.elte.hu>**Cc:** ebencharlotte01@gmail.com <ebencharlotte01@gmail.com>; zjuchenzhang@gmail.com <zjuchenzhang@gmail.com>**Subject:** PCI Registered Reports #757: Decision concerning your submission*PCI Registered Reports***Decision concerning your submission**

Dear Barnabas Szaszi,

Thank you for submitting your Stage 1 Registered Report entitled **The impact of cash-outs on online gambling behavior: A randomized controlled trial** to PCI Registered Reports. Your manuscript has now been reviewed, and the reviewers' comments and the recommender's decision may be found below.

On the basis of these comments, we cannot accept your manuscript in its present form but would like to invite you to revise your article, taking into account the issues raised by the reviewers. Please note that in-principle acceptance (IPA) and progression to Stage 2 is not guaranteed and any revision may be sent back to the reviewers for further evaluation. You should, therefore, include a point-by-point response to the reviewers' comments, outlining each change made in your manuscript or providing a suitable rebuttal.

When your revised article is ready, please:

- 1) Upload the new version of your manuscript onto your preferred open archive;
- 2) Follow this link https://rr.peercommunityin.org/user/my_articles or log onto the PCI Registered Reports website and go to 'For Contributors -> Your submitted reports' in the top menu;
- 3) Make your changes to the title, summary, link to the article (or its DOI) and keywords if necessary by clicking on the 'Edit Article' button. If you haven't already, you may also upload a picture or an illustration for which you own the rights – this picture will be used to illustrate your article, if recommended;
- 4) Write, copy/paste, or upload (as a PDF file) your reply to the recommender's and reviewers' comments by clicking on the 'Write, edit or upload your reply to recommender' button. You must also upload (as a PDF file) a revised version of your article, with all modifications indicated in Track Changes;
- 5) When you are ready to submit your new version, click on the 'Save & submit your reply' button.

As a reminder: if, in the Stage 1 submission checklist, you chose the option to publish the Stage 1 reviews at the point of IPA, then, if IPA is awarded, the editorial correspondence (reviews, recommender's decisions, authors' replies) and a recommendation text will be published immediately at the PCI Registered Reports website under a CC-BY license. Alternatively, if you chose to delay the publication of the Stage 1 recommendation and reviews until final Stage 2 acceptance then IPA will be awarded privately. In either case, depending on your checklist selections, the current list of [PCI RR-](#)

interested journals may then be alerted to the IPA, and we will inform you as to which among the set of PCI RR-friendly journals is an eligible outlet that automatically offers IPA.

In the event that your revised submission is rejected, the reviews and decision will be sent to you, but they will not be published or publicly released by PCI Registered Reports. They will be safely stored in our database, to which only the Managing Board has access. You will be notified by e-mail at each stage in the procedure.

There is no particular deadline for submitting your revised manuscript, but we encourage authors to revise manuscripts promptly to ensure that, in cases where Stage 1 re-review is necessary, the same reviewers will be available.

We look forward to receiving your revised manuscript. Should you decide not revise your manuscript for PCI RR then we would be grateful if you could let us know so that we can cancel your submission on the system.

Yours sincerely,

The Managing Board of PCI Registered Reports

Revision round #1

Decision for round #1 : *Revision needed*

Revision invited

Dear Dr. Szaszi,

Thank you for submitting your Stage 1 Registered Report "The impact of cash-outs on online gambling behavior: A randomized controlled trial" to PCI RR. We have now received comments from two expert reviewers, and have also read the manuscript ourselves. Investigating how the availability of a 'cash out' option affects online betting behavior is certainly an important undertaking. However, the reviewers raised some concerns about your review of the current state of the art in the field (review criteria 1A) as well as the validity of your procedure regarding your research question (review criteria 1C and D). For more details, please see the comments of the reviewers and our comments. We look forward to seeing a revised version of the manuscript.

Both reviewers note that your engagement with the recent literature on cash-out is not sufficient. They both suggested some relevant developments in the field that can be incorporated to strengthen your literature review.

Furthermore, both reviewers have concerns about the use of deception by telling participants there would be a cash-out option when there is not. We agree with the reviewers that this could potentially jeopardize the validity of your study.

We share the concerns of Reviewer 1 about the flexibility in recruitment plan/stopping criteria. Please provide more detailed information on what objective criteria will be used to decide to stop data collection.

Please provide more information on the power analysis that you mention. Related, while the data from all participants will be used to test hypothesis H1, only data from those who place a bet can be used to test hypothesis H2 and H3. This raises a potential concern, because if only a small proportion of participants place a bet, the statistical power for testing H2 and H3 will be low. Do you have any insights into what proportion of participants may place a bet (e.g., based on relevant previous work)? If yes, it would be good to account for this in sample size planning. Alternatively, could it be an idea to set a target sample size for H2 and H3, for instance, to have X participants who place a bet in each of the two experimental conditions? The sample size for H1 will then necessarily exceed this number.

Please present your hypotheses as testable and falsifiable hypotheses which adequate operationalisation of the relevant variables (e.g., the operationalization of risk for H3).

Two frameworks are mentioned for making statistical inferences, one based on p values, and one based on the AIC for model comparisons. Our question is whether the inferences based on these two frameworks will always align. If not, more clarification is needed on how statistical inferences will be made based on these two indices. For instance, what statistical inference will be drawn, if the model containing the experimental condition has a lower AIC value, yet the p value for experimental condition is not statistically significant?

Please specify the reliability and validity measures you will report with your self-report data.

Minor point: Do you have any ethical considerations about the close-to-real-life experience of participants? How do you deal with the possibility that vulnerable populations engage with your experimental design?

Sincerely,

Charlotte Eben and Zhang Chen

by **Charlotte Eben and Zhang Chen**, 13 Jun 2024 11:17

Manuscript: <https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/jq7pb>

version: 1

Review by anonymous reviewer 1, 21 May 2024 05:48

Thank you for the opportunity to review this Stage 1 Registered Report by Szaszi and colleagues. This manuscript reports a background and planned methodology for a study investigating how the availability of a 'cash out' option affects online betting behavior. With respect to the four Stage 1 criteria, my appraisal is that:

1A) The scientific question is broadly valid (though see my comments below for some comments on how the study is situated with respect to the extant literature)

1B) The a priori hypotheses of the study are logical, reasonable, and intuitively plausible on the basis of the extant literature.

1C) & 1D) The methodology and analysis plan is generally sound and feasible, as well as being generally detailed enough to replicate the proposed study procedures and analysis pipeline (though see my comments below on the sampling plan, power analysis, and analysis plan)

In summary, I feel it would be reasonable for this study to receive in-principle acceptance once several details of the literature review and methodology are clarified.

Comment 1: Engagement with recent literature (2023/2024) on cash-out

The literature review provides a reasonable overview of the literature, but there are two important recent studies of cash-out that I feel would be important to cover (in the interests of full disclosure, I am an author on one of these studies). The first is a study by Sinclair et al. (Addictive Behaviors, 2024), which reports a number of analyses of users who frequently use the cash-out option and finds no evidence for demographic differences between participants who did use the cash-out feature and those who did not. Reviewing these findings would be of interest in the light of the proposed demographic moderation analyses. Second, a preprint by Bennett et al. (PsyArXiv, 2023) used a cognitive task to assess whether cash-out availability affected gambling behavior, and found that participants bet more when cash-out was available (in line with the manuscript's Hypothesis 1). Since this result has direct bearing on one of the hypothesised results of the registered report, I feel that it would also be important to discuss the preprint here.

Comment 2: Clarification of methodology

On reading through the document it was not clear until some way into the method that the cash-out availability manipulation in this study was purely hypothetical (i.e., that no cash-out was ever actually offered to participants, but that they were deceived into believing that it would be). It would be useful to readers to emphasise this point of the design earlier in the manuscript so that they are not confused (as I was) as to whether the design of the experiment actually involved a cash-out option or not. Similarly, it seems a bit of an overstatement to call this study a "randomized controlled trial to delineate the effect of the cash-out option on online gambling behaviour" when no participant is ever actually exposed to the cash-out option (only to a manipulation that deceives them into believing that they will be given this option).

Comment 3: Flexibility in recruitment plan/stopping criteria

The manuscript states the following for its target sample size: "The minimum target sample size is 500 participants after exclusions. However, if possible, data collection will continue up to 1000 participants." It is stated that this will depend on the availability of funds, and the availability of participants. However, since participants will be paid a flat rate (5000 HUF each), the total cost as a function of sample size is completely predictable, and it is not clear why there is so much uncertainty in the budget that the sample size may vary as a factor of 2. Similarly, it is not clear what stopping criteria will be used to determine whether participants are no longer available (and therefore that data collection should cease). Each of these points has the potential to be a source of considerable experimenter degrees of freedom, and should be preregistered in more verifiable detail.

Comment 4: Imputation of survey data

It is unclear to me why it is necessary to impute survey data at all. Why not simply require responses to each of the survey questions so as to ensure that full data is available for all participants?

Comment 5: Operationalisation of bet risk

Further information is required on how "the odds associated with the chosen bets of the individuals" will be operationalised for the purposes of the analysis testing hypothesis 3. How will odds be quantified (as probabilities, as decimal odds, etc.), and will any transformations be applied to these odds prior to analysis? Transformations may be necessary here because as a payout multiplier, odds necessarily display non-linearities across their possible range.

Review by anonymous reviewer 2, 06 Jun 2024 10:46

This manuscript describes a planned hypothetical laboratory experiment to investigate whether the availability of cash-out has an effect on sports betting choices. This is an important topic of investigation in gambling research, especially considering the increased availability of new technology-driven sports betting platforms in North American jurisdictions. My comments are as follows.

1. My main comment is the authors have not appropriately considered sufficient international evidence on this topic, with the focus being primarily on their self-authored papers. In particular I would like to point out the work of Daniel Bennett and colleagues, which presents a similar laboratory experiment – one which has some notable strengths compared to the present work:

Bennett, D., Albertella, L., Forbes, L., Hayes, T., Verdejo-Garcia, A., Walasek, L., & Ludvig, E. (2023). People place larger bets when risky choices provide a post-bet option to 'cash out'.

2. I am concerned about the external validity of the proposed study, which is important given that sports betting is a form of gambling which is especially responsive to actual events, with e.g. how well one's own team is doing having large effects on mood and behaviour towards others (e.g., research linking sport event outcomes to domestic violence). In particular, I do not like the use of deception and the fact that there is never a cash-out option presented to participants. Providing an actual cash-out option, as the work highlighted in (1) did, would give a much greater likelihood of observing significant differences between the conditions. Cashing-out is all about the feelings that one is having during the sporting event, and the impulsivity and potential regret as pull factors. I think it is hard to anticipate these feelings before the fact, and hence the study is missing the most interesting aspect of the behaviour of interest.

3. The research questions are defined too informally for a registered report, with for example riskiness being undefined in H3 (although I would guess they mean the mean decimal odds). I am used to for this journal seeing hypotheses stated in terms of actual programming code as based on simulated or pilot data. None of the exploratory analyses include the collected self-report measures, which makes me question why they are included.

4. The use of "RCT" is generally reserved for field studies; the present work should be described as it is: a hypothetical experiment.

5. The competing interests statement misses out publicly-known conflicts of interest among the authorship team, e.g. just based on what is available from Google:

GVC appoints Dr Mark Griffiths to RG role

24th November 2020 | By Daniel O'Boyle

Responsible gambling expert Mark Griffiths, distinguished professor of behavioural addiction and psychology at Nottingham Trent University, will join GVC Holdings to assist the operator's

responsible gambling strategy.

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In case you have any questions or queries, please email us at: contact@rr.peercommunityin.org.

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