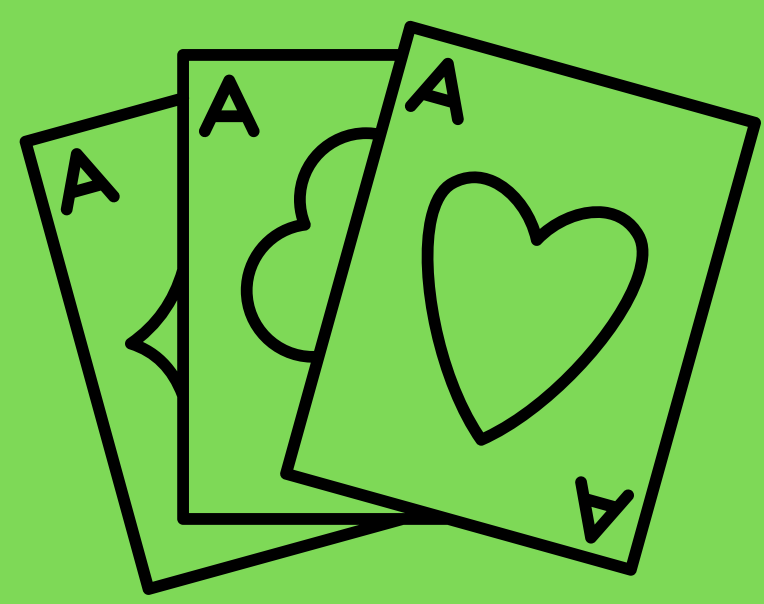


ENSURING SAFE AND HEALTHY GAMBLING HABITS



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INTRODUCTION



The rise of online gambling has created new opportunities for players, but it also came with a new set of risks. With little regulation in place, players are vulnerable to the appearance of dark patterns that can lead them into addictive and potentially dangerous behaviour even if protective measures for player security are becoming more common and expected from the developers of these sites.

This highlights the urgent need for effective monitoring: investigating the dark patterns and positive measures on the sites and responsible gambling measures to protect vulnerable gamblers (Hing et al., 2017).

OUR GOAL



The aim of our research was to investigate the sites of online gambling operators in the Hungarian market and to identify harmful or responsible gambling practices and features.

For this purpose, we conducted a risk audit, in which we assessed the risks found on different sites from a player protection perspective (The Behavioural Insights Team, 2022).



METHODOLOGY



We evaluated the safety of 10 popular online gambling operator sites in Hungary by using a ranking system consisting of 122 elements, which was developed in cooperation with SZTFH.

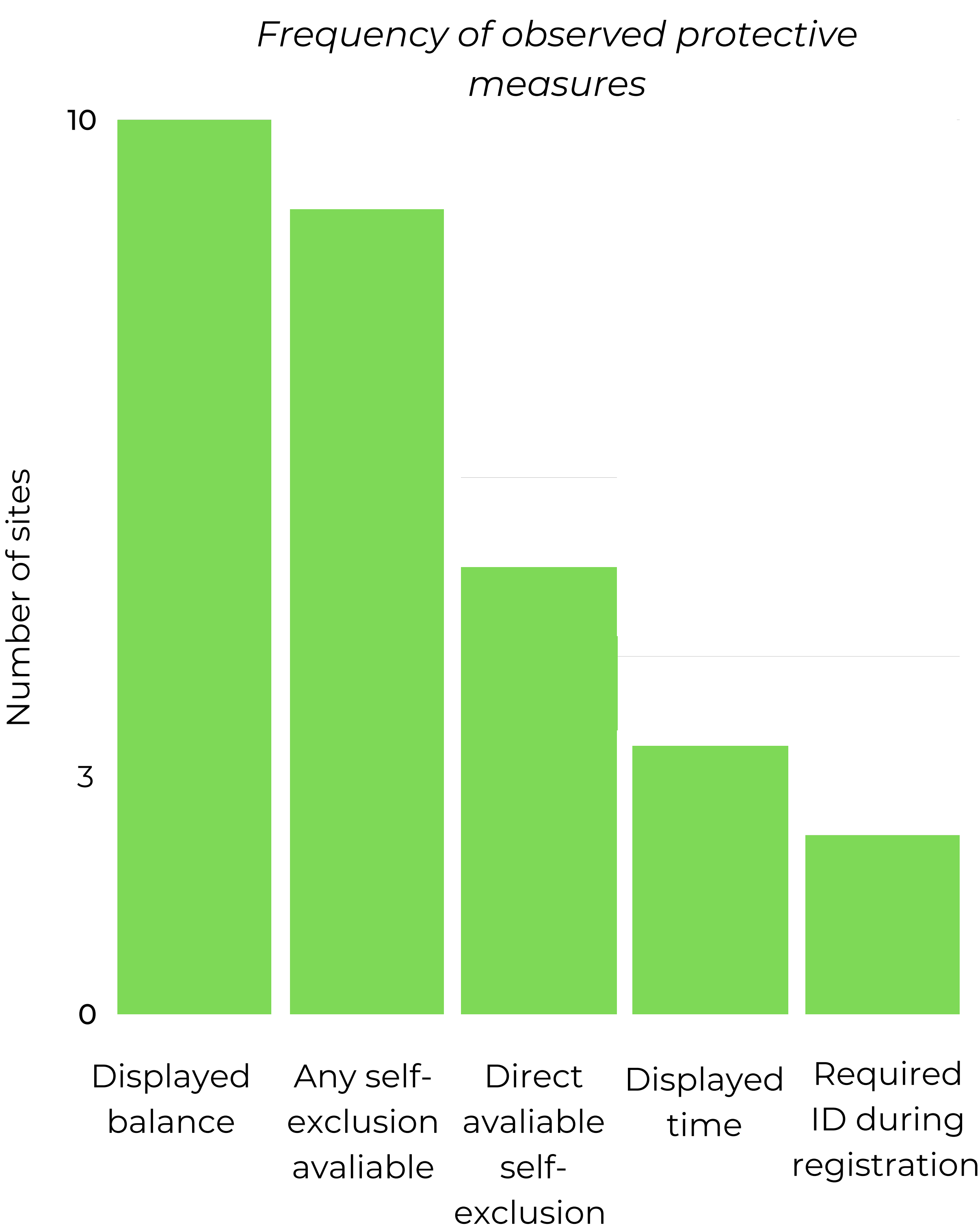
The elements of the ranking system followed the real usage pattern of the players: it included the browsing of the website before registration, the registration process, the game process itself and the specifics of the prize claim. Two analysts independently evaluated the sites and resolved disagreements based on screenshots. They recorded their responses while being observed and finalized their reports after discussing any differences.

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RESULTS



We found that there was variation in the selection of tools used across sites, and we observed differences in the accessibility of these player protection tools. In fact, some sites intentionally hide certain positive player protection tools from users. For instance, while self-limiting options were available on 9 out of 10 sites, only half of these sites provided players to access these tools directly.



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RESULTS



Additionally, among the player protection tools aimed at increasing the sense of reality for users, the balance spent on the site was displayed on all the sites analysed, but only three sites displayed the amount of time players spent on the site or in the game.

Furthermore, the research revealed that three sites employed deceptive offers in the form of pop-up messages, encouraging players to continue their gaming sessions.

CONCLUSION



These findings indicate that although some player protection tools exist on online gambling sites, users may encounter challenges when accessing them. It would be important to ensure these tools to safeguard the player's well-being (Engebø et al., 2022).

Therefore, the online gambling industry must strive to promote easy access to player protection tools and provide transparent information to users about the time and money they spend on the site to enable informed decisions on responsible gambling practices.



FURTHER DIRECTIONS



As a further step of this project, we would like to investigate the effects of pop-up windows that could be beneficial to players, based on default-setting nudging. We are interested in whether a pre-set limit is accepted by players and, if so, whether this could reduce the occurrence of problematic game use, the level of self-exclusion and the amount of money lost by players in the long run.

RELATED LITERATURE



Engebø, J., Torsheim, T., & Pallesen, S. (2022). Gamblers' use of measures to prevent gambling problems and reduce harm. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2022.857280>
Hing, N., Sproston, K., Brook, K., & Brading, R. (2016). The structural features of sports and race betting inducements: Issues for harm minimisation and Consumer Protection. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 33(2), 685–704. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-016-9642-6>
The Behavioural Insights Team. (2022). Behavioural risk audit of gambling operator platforms. <https://www.greo.ca/Modules/EvidenceCentre/Details/behavioural-risk-audit-of-gambling-operator-platforms>