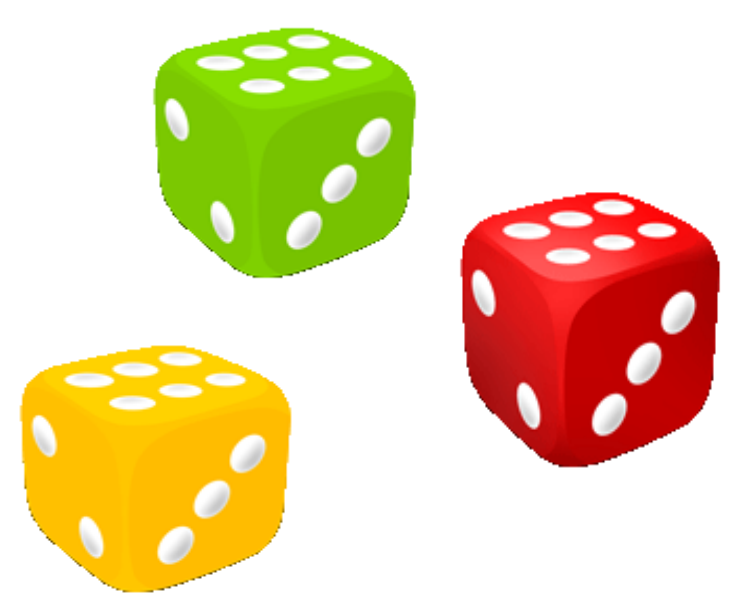# Development, implmentation and evaluation of youth gambling prevention program in Croatia

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INTRODUCTION

In year 2011. first comprehensive Croatian national research on youth gambling was conducted. The aim of the research was to explore the strength that experiences with gambling activities, specific motivation for gambling, ways people think about gambling, and broad personality dimensions have in explaining psychosocial consequences of adolescent gambling. A representative sample of 1.952 high-school students from four major Croatian cities (regional centers) participated in the study. The results were used as a base for development of youth gambling prevention program named "Who really wins?". Prevention program "Who really wins?" is based on national research results but also on relevant and recent literature reviews on effective gambling prevention programs for children and youth. In school year 2012/2013. developed program was implemented in two 1st and two 2nd grades of two different types of high schools in Zagreb.. Described process represents the model of development of evidence-based prevention programs that are still insufficiently developed in Croatian prevention practice.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Research- and theory-based program that addresses risk and protective factors:
- knowledge of statistical concepts, chances and probabilities
- understanding the concepts of gambling industries
- perception of gambling as a problem behavior and knowledge about risks related to gambling activities (addictive potential of gambling)
- social skills – problem solving, decision making, coping with emotions and peer pressure
- critical thinking strategies with the purpose of understanding the comprehensive social influences

Program aims and learning outcomes:
- improved knowledge about gambling and potential risks related to gambling
- improved statistical knowledge about chances and probabilities related to gambling
- decreased cognitive distortions related to gambling
- improved social skills of problem solving, decision making and refusal skills
- higher general self-efficacy

IMPLEMENTATION

Universal prevention program developed for 1st and 2nd grades of high schools (14-16 years old participants)

Students' component
- 6 classroom-based lessons (90')
    1. Introduction "Two sides of a medal"
    2. Chances and probabilities "So, there is a chance?"
    3. Consequences of gambling "The dice was cast – what now?"
    4. Problem solving and decision making "I have a problem – what are my choices?"
    5. Peer pressure "To be a part of the group but keep your integrity in the same time"
    6. Conclusion "And at the end – who really wins?"

- Lessons structure: Introduction activity, main activity related to the theme, conclusive discussion and self-evaluation

Parents' and teachers' component
- 1 interactive lecture (60')
    - Problem and pathological gambling
    - Epidemiology of gambling problems
    - Risk and protective factors related to gambling
    - The role of parents and teachers in youth gambling prevention and development of personally responsible behavior

- Lecture structure: 45' lecture + 15' discussion

EVALUATION DESIGN

Three evaluation questions
1. Whether the implementation was successful?
2. Were the participants satisfied with the program activities?
3. Whether the program has achieved its goals?

Process evaluation
- process evaluation instrument – implementers' self-assessment and monitoring
- students' and parents' satisfaction with the program activities and benefits assessment – self-assessment

Effectiveness evaluation
- control trial – intervention and control group, 2 time-point of assessment
- battery of 7 instruments

EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION

For the effectiveness evaluation, control trial was conducted and the results showed significant effects in intervention group on knowledge about gambling, cognitive distortions and relevant social skills that were integral part of the prevention program.
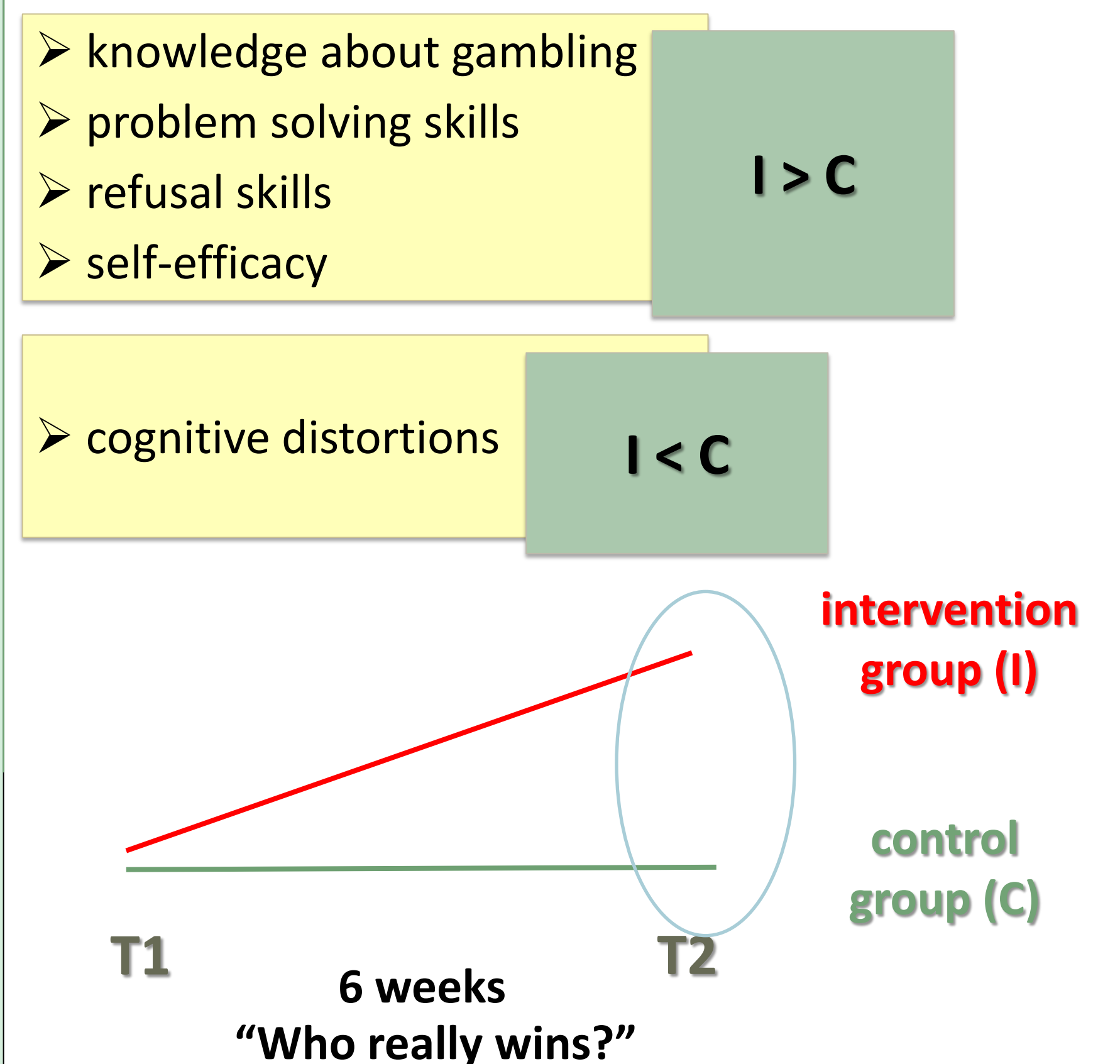
Sample of participants
Two 1st and two 2nd grade high-school classes participated.
N (I) = 89 (66)
N (C) = 101 (105)

Evaluation results

- knowledge about gambling
- problem solving skills
- refusal skills
- self-efficacy

I > C

- cognitive distortions

I < C

intervention group (I)

control group (C)

T1   T2
6 weeks
"Who really wins?"

PROCESS EVALUATION

Process evaluation showed high fidelity in program implementation and high level of students' satisfaction with program. Most of them assessed their satisfaction with the program between 3.7 and 4.4 on 1-5 scale.

Parents satisfaction with the lectures is highly assessed as well.

CONCLUSION

- The evaluation results were starting point for program improvement and modification and preparation of the program implementation package for dissemination
- National dissemination of the "Who really wins?" youth gambling prevention program is planned for next two school years (2013 – 2015)
    - 28 schools in 4 urban areas and surroundings will be involved