

Are the practices of “free-to-play” and “pay-to-win” games new risk behaviours?



Jean-Michel Costes

French Monitoring center on gambling (Observatoire des jeux - ODJ)

Lisbon Addictions 2019

**Lisbon
25th October 2019**

Introduction - about FreeToPlay and PayToWin games

Method - the French eGames Survey

Results

- **Gamers**
- **FreeToPlay and PayToWin practices**
- **Gaming related problems**

Conclusions

- ✓ in 2018, the turnover of video games was 4.9 billion euros (*SELL, 2019*)
- ✓ 74% of French (aged 10 and over) play at least occasionally, half (50%) of players play these games regularly (at least once or twice a week) (*SELL, 2019*)
- ✓ 59% practice on their mobile phone (*SELL, 2019*)
- ✓ one in ten (12%) had the opportunity to make real purchases within certain games for additional content (*Dubrulle, 2018*)

The economic model "Free-to-Play" games

4

✓ FreeToPlay games

✓ PayToWin games

✓ The "freemium" model

- ✦ games for the greatest number, paid for by a few.
- ✦ fun enough to retain players, inconvenient enough to attract more in-game purchases



*(Hahl, 2014) (Hamari et al., 2017) (Horti, 2017) (Johnson, 2014)
(LeJacq, 2012)(Lovell, 2011) (McKinney, 2017)*

"Free-to-Play" and "Pay-to-Win" practices

5

- ✓ 2% of Free-to-Play players spend money on these games, 48% of revenue is generated by 0.2% of the player population (*Purchase, 2014; SWRVE, 2016*)
- ✓ Sale of functional and non-functional items (*Marder et al., 2019*)
- ✓ Motivations (*Hamari et al., 2017*)
 - ✦ Bypass obstacles to the game (ex: advertising).
 - ✦ Economic motivations (special offers, investing in a hobby).
 - ✦ Get unlocking of new content.
 - ✦ Social motivations (belonging to a community).
 - ✦ Competition (+ or -)

FreeToPay
and
PayToWin
Gaming
in France

Introduction
Methodology
Findings
Conclusion

- ✓ The DSM5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders) (*Petry et al., 2014*)
- ✓ WHO - 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11)
"Gaming disorder is characterized by a pattern of persistent or recurrent gaming behaviour ('digital gaming' or 'video-gaming'), which may be online (i.e., over the internet) or offline, manifested by: impaired control over gaming (e.g., onset, frequency, intensity, duration, termination, context); increasing priority given to gaming to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other life interests and daily activities; and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences. "
- ✓ highly controversial and non-consensus decisions (*Griffiths et al., 2016*) (*Aarseth et al., 2017*)
- ✓ Overall prevalence of gambling addiction could range from 0.7% to 15.6%! (*Feng, Ramo, Chan & Bourgeois, 2017*) (*Chen & Leung, 2016*) (*Dreier et al., 2017*)

First national survey carried out as part of the international **eGames project** which aims to explore the overlap area between gambling and gaming. The same survey has been and will be conducted between 2018 and 2020 in several other countries: Canada, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Poland.

- ✓ Based on “Web Users Panel - « Le Carré des Médias » Médiamétrie - nearly 1 million internet users
- ✓ Time survey: 7 weeks, from 5 January to 24 February 2017
- ✓ **Sample: 22,750 French Internet users aged 18 and over**
- ✓ **Quotas** to ensure its representativeness (on the criteria: sex, age) based on data from the Monitoring survey of Internet use by the French population (Médiamétrie, 4th quarter 2016)
- ✓ Final sample was weighted according the initial quotas

Scope of these presentation:

- on **FreeToPlay gamers’ sample**: N = 13,315
- on **PayToWin gamers’ sample**: N = 1,516

Questionnaire, measures, analysis

8

- ✓ Participants reported on a set of demographic characteristics and were asked to report on the frequency, spending and duration and for those who gamble their pattern of gambling
- ✓ The Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) was used for gambling and adapted for P2W gaming
- ✓ A bivariate analysis was used to compare the profiles and practices of gamers. Multivariate logistic regressions were performed to estimate associations between socio-demographic characteristics, gaming patterns and gaming related problems.

FreeToPay
and
PayToWin
Gaming
in France

Introduction

Methodology

Findings

Conclusion

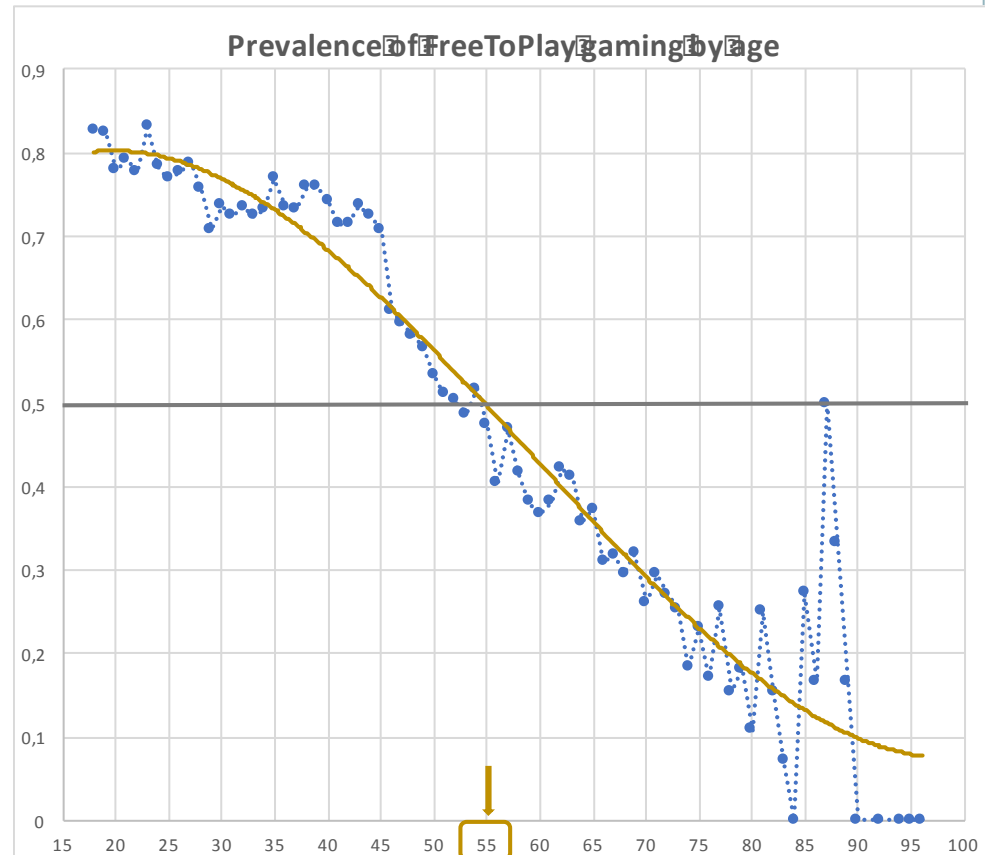
FreeToPlay and PayToWin gaming

**FreeToPay
and
PayToWin
Gaming
in France**

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Findings**
- Conclusion

	n
Overall sample	22 750
Play FreeToPlay games	13 315
PayToWin practice	1 414

	%
Overall sample	100,0
Play FreeToPlay games	58,5
PayToWin practice	6,2



PayToWin patterns

10

**FreeToPay
and
PayToWin
Gaming
in France**

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Findings
- Conclusion

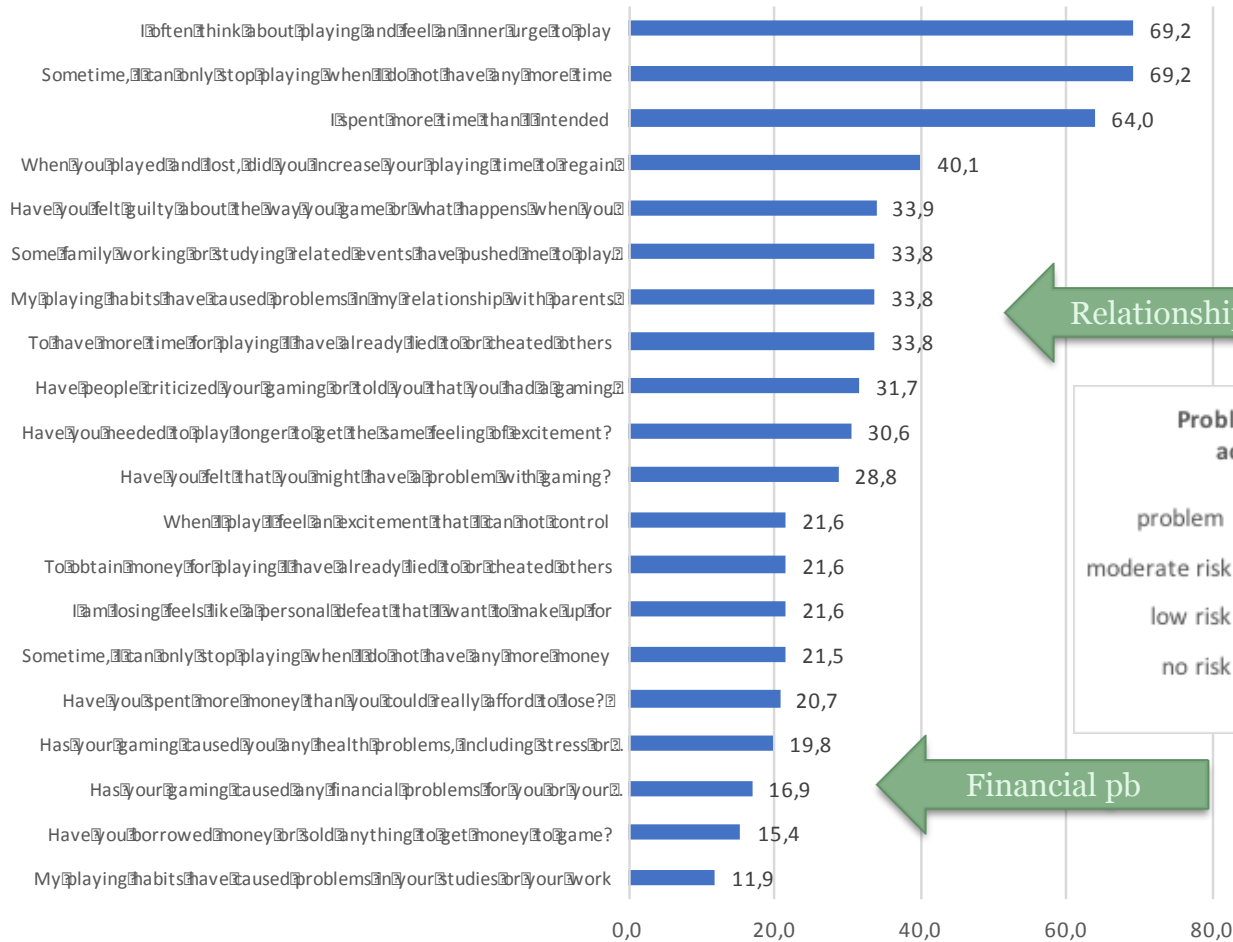
Play (%)			
once a week or less	15,5		
several time a week	42,9		
every day	41,6		
Spend money (%)		Reasons of payment (%)	
A few times per year	52,9	keep the game going	35,5
A few times per month or per	38,0	increase chances to win	28,8
Everyday or almost	9,1	win time in the game	16,0
Spending by session (%)		Gaming time by session (%)	
]0 - 2 €]	48,2	0 - 15 minutes	13,7
]2 - 10 €]	38,9	15 - 30 minutes	34,2
]10 € more]	12,9	31 minutes - 1 hour	29,9
		more than 1 hour	22,3
frequency spend money / year spending (€) / year duration (hours) / year			
Mean	32,1	127,3	501,3
SE	1,7	8,7	39,1
Median	6	39	133,5
Gini	0,67	0,77	0,8

Have gambled during the last 12 months		
	Yes	43,7
How closely would you say that spending money on these games		
Certainly	11,1	35,4
Quite sure	24,3	
A little	18,3	
Not at all	41,2	
Don't know	5,1	

PayToWin Gaming problems

11

Problem PayToWin gaming during the past 12 months, %

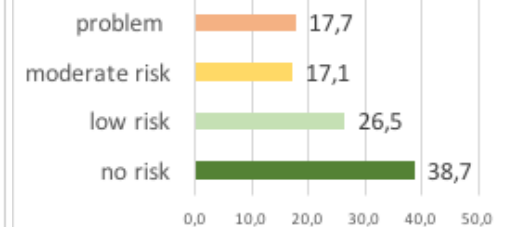


Time control pb

Relationship pb

Financial pb

Problem PayToWin gaming, according to PGSI, %



FreeToPay
and
PayToWin
Gaming
in France

Introduction
Methodology
Findings
Conclusion

Associated factors: Free-to-Play, Pay-to-Win and Problem Gambling

12

**FreeToPay
and
PayToWin
Gaming
in France**

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Findings**
- Conclusion

Associated factors with Free-to-Play Practice, Pay-to-Win Practice and Problem Gambling

Summary of results of logistic regressions models

	Studied variable		
	FreeToPlay gaming	PayToWin gaming (spend money on F2P games)	Problem gaming (PGSI 5et+)
	among: all people	F2P gamers	P2W gamers
Predictive factors			
Sociodemographic characteristics			
to be a man	-	ns	+
be young	+	+	+
have a professional activity	+	ns	ns
to be a student	+	-	-
to be unemployed	+	+	-
have a modest degree level	+	ns	ns
have a modest income level	-	+	+
Play patterns			
high frequency of play	[Dotted pattern]		-
high play spending			+
playing time			ns
also gamble			+
+: positively associated factors, which reinforces the studied variable			
-: negatively associated factors, which attenuate the studied variable			
ns: no significant association			

Limits and conclusions

13

- ✓ **Difficulty in defining fast-changing gaming spaces with fuzzy borders**
- ✓ **Internet users panel sampling leads to limitations**
- ✓ **First results on picture of players and patterns of these games**
 1. **F2P likely played by women, young people, active population and people with an medium level of education. P2W gamers are even younger and have a more modest social background**
 2. **Great variability of practices of these games designed for the greatest number and paid for by a few**
 3. **P2W practice causes problems in about a third of players: time control, relationship and financial**
 4. **Strong link between Pay-to-Win practices and gambling**
- ❖ **A need for regulation of the Free-to-Play games industry**
- ❖ **A new survey focusing on all Free-to-Play practices and related problems**

**FreeToPay
and
PayToWin
Gaming
in France**

Introduction

Methodology

Findings

Conclusion



Thank you for
your attention



FreeToPay
and
PayToWin
Gaming
in France

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Findings
- Conclusion

