



The Association Between Problem Gambling and Major Depression

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Introduction

- Evidence derived from various studies suggest problem gamblers are more likely to experience comorbidity with additional mental disorders, suggesting nearly 96% of problem gamblers are diagnosed with an additional mental disorder, including major depression (Bücker et al., 2018).
- Problem gamblers exhibit higher rates of low mood and depression in comparison to non-gamblers, with 37% of problem gamblers experiencing lifelong depression (Moodie & Finnigan, 2006). Additionally, amongst problem gamblers, certain studies suggest between 22-81% experience suicidal thoughts along with low mood. Despite this, 90% of problem gamblers do not seek treatment (Källmén et al., 2008).
- Although gambling is more common amongst males, various studies have suggested that female gamblers are more likely to experience suicidal thoughts (Marionneau et al., 2022).

Research Questions

- Is there an association between problem gambling and major depression?
- How may major depression vary based on the severity of an individual's problem gambling?
- Does this relationship differ amongst males and females?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents were drawn from the U.S National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC).
- The NESARC data is a representative sample of the adult, non-institutionalized, civilian population of the United States and includes the oversampling of young adults (18-24).

Measures

- To measure problem gambling, a quantitative variable was developed through ten questions that revolved around respondents life habits and their relationship with gambling. The response options were "yes (1)" or "no(0)." The scores were combined to create a total problem gambling score with lower numbers indicating less severe gambling tendencies, and higher scores indicating more severe gambling tendencies.
- Major depression was measured utilizing the "yes(1)" or "no(0)" question derived from NESARC's DSM-IV diagnostic section, "Major Depression in a Lifetime," indicating whether a participant had been diagnosed with major depression in their lifetime or whether they had not.

Results

Bivariate

- Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed that total problem gambling scores were significantly and positively associated with the presence of major depression (P-value<0.05).
- Post hoc ANOVA tests reveal statistical significance between total problem gambling and major depression.

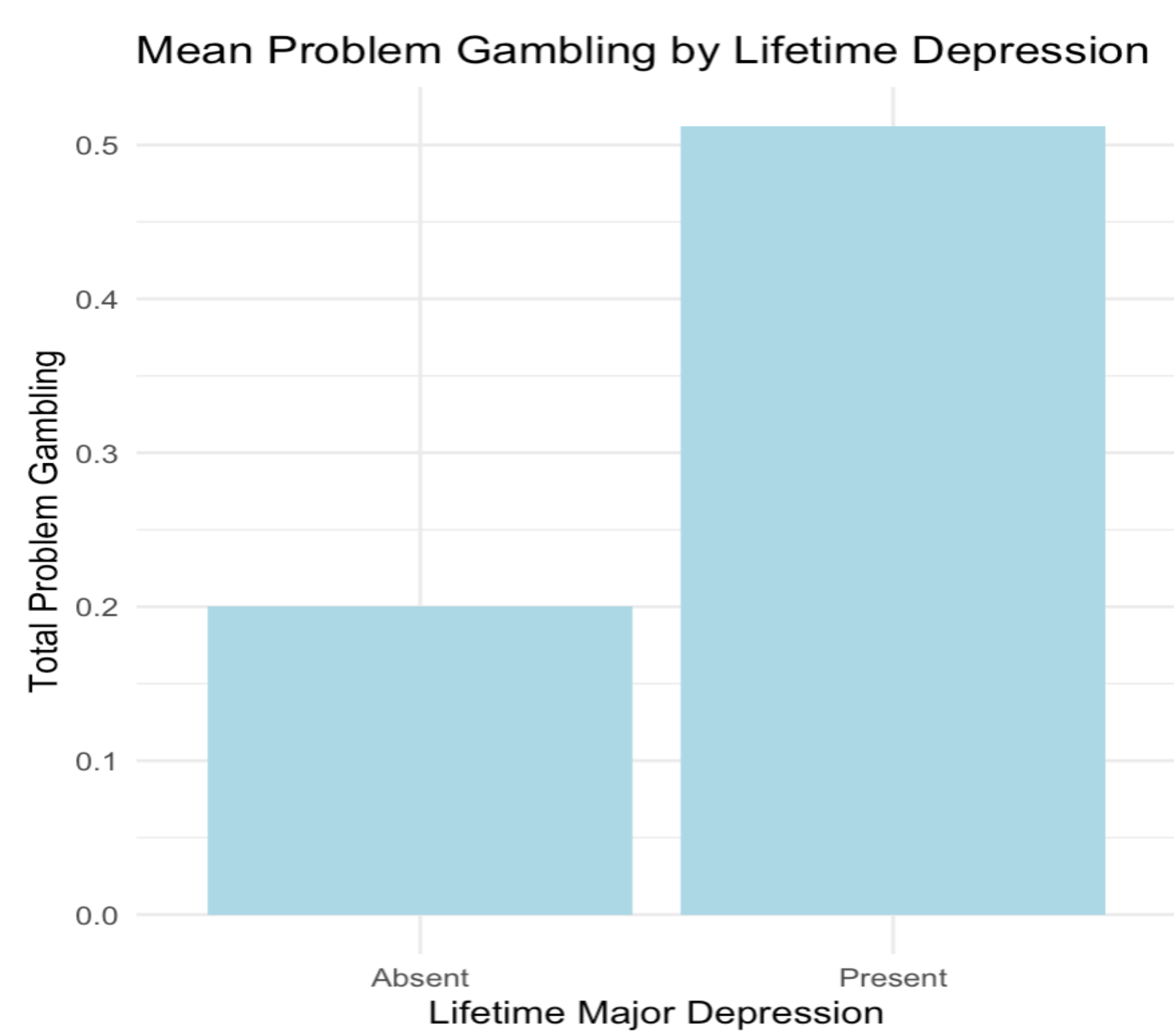


Figure 1: The Presence/Absence of Major Depression and Problem Gambling

Multivariate

- After controlling for gender, simple regression analyses reveal total problem gambling remains significantly and positively associated to major depression (P-value<0.0001).
- Furthermore, the relationship between total problem gambling score and major depression varies slightly by gender with female gamblers diagnosed with major depression exhibiting less severe total problem gambling scores than male problem gamblers however this variation is found to not be significant (Beta= -0.05997, P-value=0.138).

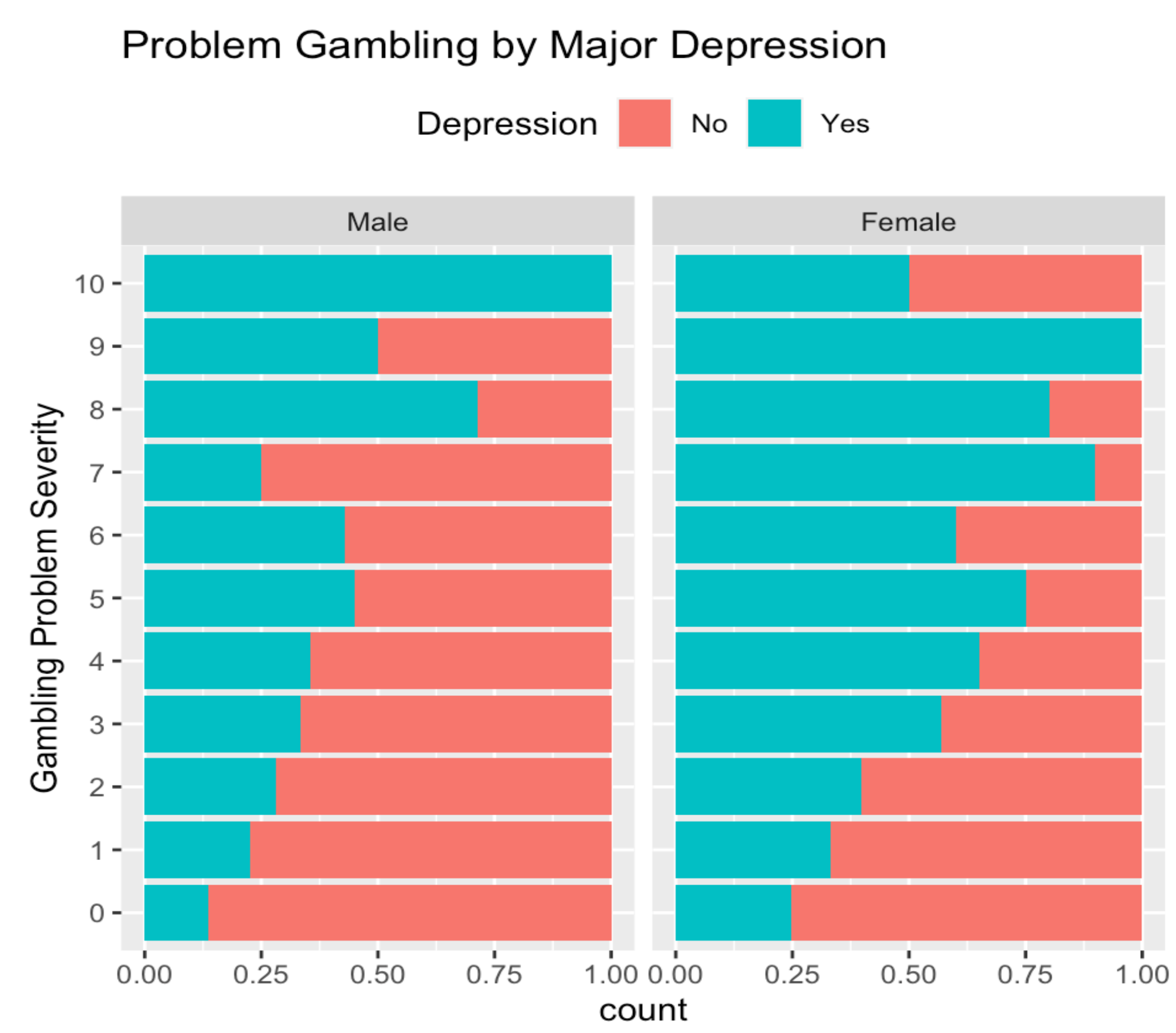


Figure 2: Problem Gambling and Major Depression based on Gender

Discussion

- As illustrated in Figure 1, there is a strong association between problem gambling and major depression.
- The greater an individual's total problem gambling score, the more frequent the presence of major depression.
- When considering gender, Figure 2 reveals that there is a strong, positive association between problem gamblers and major depression across both genders.
- These findings help to identify problem gamblers as a critical risk group for major depression and future research may enhance these findings through an exploration of treatment options such as intervention methods.
- Furthermore, future research should examine whether additional covariates such as age, race, or socioeconomic status may impact the likelihood of problem gamblers being diagnosed with major depression.

References

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