

What is the impact of gambling marketing by social media influencers on children and young people?

What this research is about

Concerns have been raised about the impact of exposure to gambling content on social media among children and young people (i.e., 25-years-old and younger). Gambling promotions are often delivered by social media influencers, which appeal to children and youth through celebrity endorsements, music, and humour. This might increase the vulnerability of this age group to gambling participation and its associated harms.

This review explores the extent that children and young people are exposed to gambling marketing through social media influencers. It addresses how this exposure affects the views and attitudes of children and young people towards gambling. Finally, it looks at which features of influencer marketing are most influential in shaping gambling behaviour among children and young people.

What the researchers did

The authors reviewed 41 studies published from January 2015 to May 2024. All studies looked at exposure to gambling-related influencer marketing and its impact on gambling attitudes and behaviour among people aged 25 years old and younger. The authors selected studies that were published in the English language. In addition, studies must be from countries where gambling laws are comparable to those of the United Kingdom.

What the researchers found

The studies included in this review showed that children and young people are frequently exposed to gambling-related content on social media through influencers. This is especially true on platforms like Twitch and YouTube, where influencers often partner with gambling operators to

What you need to know

Children and young people under 25 years old are vulnerable to gambling promotions delivered by social media influencers. The authors reviewed 41 studies that looked at exposure to gambling-related influencer marketing and its impact on gambling attitudes and behaviour in this age group. The studies generally showed that children and young people are frequently exposed to gambling-related content through influencers. This exposure normalizes and encourages gambling. The authors also identified features of gambling-related influencer marketing (e.g., interactive livestreams, culturally relevant content) that contribute to positive attitudes towards gambling and increase gambling behaviour. The findings of this review suggest stricter regulations and more effective interventions to protect children and young people from gambling-related harms.

subtly promote gambling products through livestreams, videos, and interactive content.

By blurring the lines between entertainment and promotional content, influencer marketing makes gambling a normal part of children and young people's everyday interactions on social media. This highlights the need for policies that require influencers to clearly disclose advertising and paid partnerships in content that is framed as entertainment.

There is also evidence that exposure to gambling-related influencer content encourages positive attitudes and perceptions towards gambling among children and young people. Gambling is portrayed by influencers as socially acceptable and financially rewarding. Influencers often promote gambling products in a personal and relatable way, which

exploits children and young people's trust and appeals to their emotions. This makes paid gambling advertising seem like authentic recommendations, which can increase positive attitudes towards gambling and intentions to gamble. To address this issue, policy makers could develop educational campaigns that encourage children and young people to critically evaluate influencer marketing and protect themselves from its persuasion.

Some studies looked at the specific features of gambling-related influencer marketing. The key features are interactive components (e.g., livestreams that allow viewer comments), playful language, and culturally relevant memes. These features increase the advertised content's appeal and make gambling appear less risky. Tipsters represent a special category of influencers. Tipsters promote gambling by offering betting advice and predictions. Tipsters and their advice are viewed by children and young people as trustworthy, credible, and financially beneficial. These are perceptions that tipsters actively build by interacting frequently with their audience and using visually appealing content.

In addition to having an influence on gambling attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours, these features of influencer marketing also encourage children and young people to spend more time on screen and using social media. This can contribute to negative health effects, including poor sleep, anxiety, and greater vulnerability to cyberbullying. It also inevitably leads to more exposure to gambling-related content, which further normalizes and encourages gambling. Regulations that require clear age restrictions and transparent advertising disclosures from influencers might help address these issues.

The authors recommend that future studies look at the long-term effects of exposure to gambling content on children and young people. Studies could also use technology like machine learning to look at real-time exposure to and interactions with gambling content on social media platforms.

How you can use this research

The findings of this review can be used by policy makers to develop and enforce stricter regulations

surrounding gambling-related influencer marketing. The findings can also inform educational campaigns to protect children and young people from gambling-related harms.

About the researchers

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