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Modeling the relationship between gambling years of experience, frequency of casino visits, and budget per casino visit in Macao

What this research is about

There are two main hypotheses about how gambling exposure affects people's gambling engagement. The exposure hypothesis suggests that the longer people are exposed to gambling opportunities, the more likely they are to gamble. The adaptation hypothesis suggests that gambling exposure only affects people temporarily. When people have gotten used to the gambling opportunities, they will reduce their gambling behaviour soon after.

Previous research has found that gambling exposure and gambling engagement is not linear. Rather, their relationship is bidirectional. In other words, gambling exposure influences gambling engagement, but gambling engagement also influences gambling exposure. This study examines the relationship between gambling engagement and years of gambling experience. It aims to identify if there are time intervals when gambling is at its peak, when it is at the lowest point, and when the transition occurs.

What the researchers did

The researchers used survey data collected in the Macao Special Administrative Region. A survey was administered both online and offline. The offline survey was conducted at local retail markets, bus stops, or similar places between 2018 and 2019. Potential respondents were approached by trained field investigators.

The link to the online survey was sent to trainees at the Macau Gaming Teaching and Research Center and undergraduate students studying at the Center while working in casinos. The link was also sent to the WeChat groups of casino junket operators and members of a casino trade union. The results from the offline and online surveys were combined. A total of 687 responses were collected and analyzed.

Potential respondents were asked two screening questions: whether they had ever gambled at any casino before and whether they gambled at any

What you need to know

This study examined the relationship between gambling engagement and years of gambling experience. The survey data were collected both online and offline in Macao, China, between 2018 and 2019. Respondents had to be at least 21 years of age and had gambled at a casino in the last 12 months. A total of 687 responses were collected and analyzed. The researchers found that a quadratic model best helped to explain the relationship between years of gambling experience and frequency of casino visits. The respondents' likelihood of visiting casinos daily increased over time until they had about 13 years of gambling experience. After this point, their casino frequency declined. A quadratic model also helped to explain the relationship between years of experience and budget per casino visit. The likelihood of people gambling unrestrainedly (i.e., having a gambling budget greater than the first quartile of all respondents regardless of years of experience) increased until they had 22 years of gambling experience. After this, they decreased how much they budgeted per casino visit. The odds of having a gambling budget greater than the second quartile increased until the respondents reached 22.4 years of gambling. After this point, they decreased their budget per casino visit.

casino in the last 12 months. Only those who answered 'yes' to both questions were included in the survey. These screening questions ensured that respondents were at least 21 years old, which is the minimum age for gambling in Macao's casinos.

The surveys asked about the respondents' years of gambling experience, frequency of casino visits, average gambling budget per casino visit, and how much they spent each month on gambling in proportion to their monthly income. The respondents were grouped by their years of gambling experience.

What the researchers found

About 58% of the respondents were men. Almost half of the respondents (48%) were between 31 and 40 years of age. Most (58%) were married. On average, men gambled for more years than women but they visited casinos less often than women.

A quadratic model best helped to explain frequency of casino visits. The frequency of casino visits (measured as likelihood of visiting casinos daily) was related to a rise in years of gambling experience. This increase was seen until the respondents had 13.3 years of gambling experience. After this, their likelihood of daily casino visits declined.

A quadratic model also explained the relationship between average gambling budget per casino visit and years of gambling experience. The likelihood of people gambling very unrestrainedly increased over time until they reached their 22nd year of gambling. After this, people tended to decrease their budget per casino visit. Relatively unrestrained gambling was defined as having an average budget per casino visit in the past year greater than the first quartile of the gambling budget among all respondents (regardless of their gambling experience).

People who gambled at least moderately unrestrainedly had a budget per casino visit greater than the second quartile of the gambling budget among all respondents (regardless of their gambling experience). The likelihood of moderately unrestrained gambling increased until they reached 22.4 years of gambling experience. After this point, people decreased their budget per casino visit.

How you can use this research

Practitioners can use this research to inform their gambling behavioural interventions.

About the researchers

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