

Characteristics of concerned significant others of people with problem gambling and problem gaming in Norway

What this research is about

Concerned significant others (CSOs) are people who are worried about the behaviour of someone in their family or social network. CSOs can be 'close' to the person experiencing the issue (e.g., first-degree relatives and current partners) or 'remote' (e.g., friends, grandparents).

Problem gambling occurs when people gamble more than they can afford despite the negative consequences. Problem gaming occurs when gaming takes priority over other activities and leads to negative consequences. Previous research has suggested that gaming may be a gateway to gambling.

The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of CSOs of people experiencing problem gambling and problem gaming in Norway. The researchers examined the characteristics of CSOs, including their own gambling and gaming behaviours, demographics, and personality traits.

What the researchers did

A sample of 2,000 Norwegian residents aged 16–74 years old were randomly drawn from the population register. About half were women (50.2%). The Directorate of Taxation provided information on their name, address, age, and sex. The researchers mailed each person an invitation letter to participate in the study by completing an online survey. A total of 575 people completed the survey. Slightly over half of these participants were women (54%).

What you need to know

People who are worried about the behaviour of someone in their family or social network are referred to as concerned significant others (CSOs). This study examined the prevalence of CSOs of people with problem gambling (CSO/PG) and problem gaming (CSO/GAM) in Norway. A total of 2,000 Norwegian residents aged 16–74 years were randomly drawn from the population register and invited to participate in an online survey. Overall, 575 participants completed the survey. The lifetime prevalence was 23.2% for CSO/PG and 27.1% for CSO/GAM. The researchers examined the characteristics of CSOs based on whether they were in a 'close' (i.e., first-degree relatives and current partners) or 'remote' (e.g., ex-partners, friends, grandparents) relationship.

Participants completed the following measures:

- Demographics, including income, education, and country of birth.
- Whether they were concerned about someone experiencing problem gambling now and earlier.
- Whether they participated in gambling in the past 12 months. If they did, they were asked to complete the Problem Gambling Severity Index. The cut-off for problem gambling was set to a score of 3 or higher.
- Whether they were concerned about someone experiencing problem gaming now and earlier.
- Whether they played video games in the previous 6 months. If they did, they were asked to

complete the Game Addiction Scale for Adolescents. The cut-off for problem gaming was set to a score of 3 or higher on at least four of seven items.

- The Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test – Consumption (AUDIT-C). The cut-off for risky drinking was set to a score of 4 or higher for women and a score of 5 or higher for men.
- The Drug Use Disorders Identification Test – Concise (DUDIT-C). The cut-off was set to a score of 1 or higher.
- The Mini International Personality Item Pool.

What the researchers found

Prevalence rates

The researchers found a higher lifetime prevalence of CSOs of people experiencing problem gambling (CSO/PG) than previously reported in Norway. Overall, the lifetime prevalence of CSO/PG was 23.2%. About 14.7% were current CSO/PG, while 17.8% were former CSO/PG. Most often, the CSO/PG was a friend, sibling, or ex-partner. About 6.8% were a close CSO/PG (i.e., current partner, sibling, parent, or child), while 19.1% were a remote CSO/PG (i.e., ex-partner, friend, colleague, or grandparent).

The lifetime prevalence of CSOs of people with problem gaming (CSO/GAM) was 27.1%. About 17.7% were current CSO/GAM, while 18.5% were former CSO/GAM. Most often, the CSO/GAM was a friend or sibling. About 17.4% were a close CSO/GAM, while 13.9% were a remote CSO/GAM.

There was some overlap between the two groups. Almost half (47%) of CSO/PG were also CSO/GAM, and 41% of CSO/GAM were also CSO/PG.

Characteristics

Close CSO/PG reported higher levels of neuroticism. Neuroticism is a personality trait associated with a greater tendency to experience negative emotions like anxiety, sadness, and anger. Remote CSO/PG tended to have lower education and were more often engaging in problem gambling themselves.

Close CSO/GAM tended to be younger. Remote CSO/GAM tended to be younger, have lower income, and have higher levels of extraversion. Extraversion is a personality trait characterized by being outgoing

and sociable. Remote CSO/GAM were also more likely to be engaging in problem gaming themselves.

How you can use this research

Practitioners can use this research to support problem gambling and problem gaming prevention and treatment efforts, considering the role of social networks.

About the researchers

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