



Greater short-term gambling harm is linked to situational features of sports betting via smartphones

What this research is about

The risk of gambling harm can be elevated by structural features of gambling products, such as game speed and ability to gamble continuously. Situational features of gambling environments, such as ease of accessing gambling products and privacy, can also increase the risk. Betting using smartphones may present situational features that increase the risk of harm. This study examined the role of situational features and betting platforms (smartphone, computer/laptop/tablet, etc.) in harmful betting behaviours and experience of short-term harm.

What the researchers did

The researchers conducted an ecological momentary assessment (EMA) study. EMA studies involve multiple short surveys that measure participants' behaviours close to the real time they happen. Participants were between 18 and 29 years old. They had to live in New South Wales, Australia. They also had to bet on sports, esports, or daily fantasy sports (DFS) at least fortnightly. Qualtrics was used to recruit participants through several panel providers.

A total of 267 participants completed a baseline survey and 10 EMA surveys. Each EMA survey was completed one week apart. A total of 55% of the participants completed the final EMA survey. Each EMA survey asked participants about the following:

- Betting during the last seven days.
- Details about their most recent betting session (e.g., which platform they used, number of bets placed, money and time spent betting).
- Situational features of their most recent betting session. Participants were asked to respond "true" or "false" to 25 statements. Example

What you need to know

This study examined the role of situational features and betting platforms in harmful betting behaviours and experience of short-term harm. An ecological momentary assessment (EMA) study was conducted. A total of 267 Australians between 18 and 29 years old completed a baseline survey and 10 EMA surveys. Each EMA survey was completed one week apart. The data analyzed included details on 1,378 betting sessions on sports, esports, or daily fantasy sports. The findings revealed five situational features of betting sessions: (1) quick, easy access from home; (2) ability to bet anywhere anytime; (3) privacy while betting; (4) greater access to promotions and betting options; and (5) ability to use electronic financial transactions. Three situational features were associated with greater short-term harm, including privacy when betting, ability to bet anywhere anytime, and greater access to promotions and betting options. Only smartphone betting combined all these three features. Participants with more severe gambling problems were more likely to prioritize two situational features linked to short-term harm: ability to bet anywhere anytime and privacy when betting.

statements included "You wanted to bet with cash" and "You wanted to bet from home." The researchers developed these questions based on their previous studies.

- Short-term betting harm, measured using a version of the Short Gambling Harms Screen adapted to betting on sports, esports, and DFS in the last seven days.

The baseline survey asked participants about their demographics and betting over the last 12 months. Participants also completed the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) in the baseline survey. Based on their PGSI score, participants were categorized into one of the following groups: non-problem (0 points), low risk (1–2 points), moderate risk (3–7 points), and problem gambling (8–27 points).

What the researchers found

On average, participants were 25 years old. Half of the participants were women. About 39% of participants had problem gambling, while 14% were at moderate risk and 18% were at low risk. About 11% were not at risk. As reported in the EMA surveys, participants engaged in 2,335 betting sessions. Detailed data were collected on 1,378 betting sessions on sports, esports, and DFS. About half (51%) of these betting sessions were on sports, while 27% were on esports and 22% on DFS. Most betting sessions were carried out using a smartphone (83%).

The researchers found five situational features of betting sessions, including (1) quick, easy access from home; (2) ability to bet anywhere anytime; (3) privacy while betting; (4) greater access to promotions and betting options; and (5) ability to use electronic financial transactions. Three situational features were associated with greater short-term betting harm: (1) privacy when betting; (2) ability to bet anywhere anytime; and (3) greater access to promotions and betting options. Only smartphone betting combined all these three situational features.

Betting with a smartphone was linked to betting impulsively. Betting with a computer/laptop/tablet was linked to spending more money than planned and betting with more operators. Betting with a gaming console was linked to betting with more operators.

Participants with higher PGSI scores were more likely to prioritize two situational features that were linked to short-term harm: (1) ability to bet anywhere anytime and (2) privacy when betting. They were also more likely to take up promotional offers; to bet with more operators; to bet on in-game events; and to experience short-term harm.

How you can use this research

This study suggests that reducing or banning betting inducements can help reduce gambling harm. Also, community education could raise awareness of betting behaviours associated with harm.

About the researchers

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Citation

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