

research snapshot

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Exploring the link between gender role norms and gambling behaviour

What this research is about

Strategic forms of gambling are games where people believe they can use their knowledge to influence or predict the outcomes. These games include poker, casino table games, racing and sports betting. Non-strategic forms of gambling are games that are based on chance and require little decision making or skill. These games include slot machines and lotteries. Research suggests that men tend to prefer strategic games and women tend to prefer non-strategic games. Many studies focus on why women prefer chance-based games. However, several studies have found that men are just as likely as women to play slot machines. Thus, it may be worth exploring why men prefer to play strategic games.

Men may play strategic games to show their masculinity to others. Masculinity refers to the qualities and characteristics that a society expects men to have. In western cultures, masculine traits include being dominant, competitive, decisive, taking risks, and avoiding behaviours that are deemed feminine. Strategic gambling games are seen to be risky, difficult to play well, and based on skill. These are all game characteristics that would allow men to demonstrate their masculinity.

The research team investigated whether masculinity motivates men to gamble on wagering products and casino table games. They also explored whether men who play these games tend to adhere to masculine social norms.

What the researchers did

The researchers recruited 70 men who were being treated for problem gambling at a gambling treatment clinic in Australia. Participants completed a survey

What you need to know

Research suggests that men prefer to play strategic gambling games like casino table games, and women prefer to play non-strategic games such as slot machines. The researchers explored the idea that men prefer to gamble on strategic games to show their masculinity during play. Participants were 70 men receiving treatment for problem gambling. They completed a survey. Participants believed that gamblers who gambled on wagering products and casino table games wanted to be seen as smart and skillful in public. Compared to participants who played slot machines and lotteries, those who gambled on wagering products and casino table games were more likely to follow social norms about masculinity. Policy makers could use these findings to restrict gambling advertising that emphasize male gender roles, which can influence young men and result in gambling-related harm.

with several questionnaires. One questionnaire asked participants about what factors motivated gamblers to play four forms of gambling. These included slot machines, wagering products, casino table games, and lotteries. Another questionnaire assessed the extent to which participants conformed to masculine norms.

Participants also completed the Problem Gambling Severity Index, which was used to assess the severity of their gambling behaviour. In addition, they reported the games they preferred to play, how often, how long they typically played in one session, how much they spent per session, and if they had debt from gambling.

What the researchers found

Of the 70 participants, 50 gambled on slot machines, 27 on racing products, 21 on sports betting, 13 on casino table games, 3 on poker, and 6 on lotteries. Participants thought that people who gambled on wagering products or casino table games wanted to be seen by others as smart and skillful, and also wanted to do things with friends. Participants thought that gamblers who played slot machines did so because they wanted to escape their problems. These findings suggest that wagering products and casino table games allow men to show their masculinity in public.

Compared to participants who preferred slot machines and lotteries, those who gambled on wagering products or casino table games seemed more concerned with adhering to masculine norms. In particular, they appeared to be more competitive, have greater desire for status, and be more willing to take risks. These results suggest that men who gamble on wagering products or casino table games are more motivated to show their masculinity to others. Thus, concerns with masculinity may explain some of the differences in gambling preferences between men and women reported in previous research.

How you can use this research

Policy makers can use this research to reduce the amount of advertising directed towards young men about sports betting and casino gambling. Gambling advertising directed towards men often emphasize male gender roles. Regulating such advertising may reduce men's motivation to play these types of gambling games and protect them from future gambling problems.

Treatment service providers can use this research to design treatment programs that are tailored to form of gambling and gender. For example, treatment providers could work with male casino table gamblers to identify and address their concerns about appearing masculine to others. Addressing these underlying issues may improve treatment outcomes and prevent relapses.

More research is needed to explore how conforming to masculine norms motivates some men to gamble on wagering products and casino table games.

About the researchers

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Citation

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