

Social risk perception can influence sports lottery gambling in China and the role of social support

What this research is about

In China, sports lottery gambling has grown. There is increasing concern about the impact it may have on people and society. Social cognitive theory suggests that how people view and interpret their social environment, shapes their emotional responses and influences whether they engage in certain behaviours. People who perceive high levels of social risk, such as economic insecurity, may experience negative emotions and symptoms like anxiety and depression. Thus, they may engage in addictive behaviours like gambling to try to relieve these negative emotions and stress.

On the other hand, social support can help reduce the influence of social and economic stressors. Previous research has found that social support can reduce the negative impact of behavioural addictions (e.g., internet addiction) on people's lives.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between social risk perception and sports lottery gambling addiction. This study also looked at how social support might influence that relationship.

What the researchers did

The researchers surveyed 362 Chinese adults who bought sports lottery tickets. The survey was distributed both online (e.g., through Wenjuanxing, a Chinese online survey platform, and social media groups) and offline.

The survey included questions about the following:

- Perceived social risk, measured using a 14-item scale developed to assess perception of social risks

What you need to know

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between social risk perception and sports lottery gambling addiction in China. The study also looked at the role of social support. The researchers surveyed 352 Chinese adults who bought sports lottery tickets. They found that people who reported higher levels of perceived social risk were more likely to experience gambling addiction related to sports lottery. Two dimensions of social risk perception, namely economic risk (e.g., financial insecurity) and psychological risk (e.g., mental stress), were linked to a higher likelihood of gambling addiction. On the other hand, higher levels of social support were linked to a lower likelihood of gambling addiction. In particular, people with strong emotional or appraisal support were not as likely to develop gambling addiction when they experienced various social risks.

across four dimensions: economic risk, interpersonal risk, psychological risk, and physical risk.

- Sports lottery addiction behaviour, assessed using a 10-item scale adapted from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition.
- Social support, measured using a scale developed based on previous research.

A total of 415 responses were collected. After removing responses with missing data or careless responses, a total of 362 responses were included in the analysis. The number of male participants was

three times that of female participants (76% vs. 24%). This gender imbalance reflects the actual demographic characteristics of the Chinese adult population engaging in sports lottery gambling.

What the researchers found

The researchers found that people who reported higher levels of perceived social risk were more likely to experience gambling addiction related to sports lottery. In contrast, people who reported higher levels of social support were less likely to experience gambling addiction related to sports lottery.

Specifically, two dimensions of social risk perception, namely economic risk (e.g., financial insecurity) and psychological risk (e.g., mental stress), were linked to a higher likelihood of gambling addiction. But interpersonal risk and physical risk were not associated with a higher likelihood of gambling addiction. These results suggest that perceived economic risk may prompt people to gamble to relieve financial pressures. At the same time, people may gamble to cope with anxiety and stress when they perceive high levels of psychological risk.

The researchers found that social support weakened the impact of perceived social risks on gambling addiction. Specifically, the researchers found that people with strong emotional or appraisal support were not as likely to develop gambling addiction when they experienced various social risks.

How you can use this research

The findings can inform prevention and intervention programs for gambling addiction. For example, community-based resources, such as financial counselling and social support programs, could be strengthened to address the social and economic stressors that drive people to gamble.

About the researchers

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Citation

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