

research snapshot

summarize | mobilize



Similarities and differences between gambling and gaming disorders: Insights from communications with a help service

What this research is about

The International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) considers both gambling and gaming disorders to be behavioural addictions. The ICD-11 lists three major criteria. People with gambling or gaming disorder show reduced control over their behaviour. They also prioritize gambling/gaming over other activities. Finally, they continue to engage in gambling/gaming despite the negative consequences.

Although gambling and gaming disorders have many similarities, they also have differences. For example, gaming disorder is more common in adolescents, while gambling disorder is more common in adults. Many models of behavioural addiction focus on the similarities between the two disorders, especially on psychological profiles. However, few models focus on the differences. Additionally, few studies compare the experiences of people with gambling vs. gaming disorder. This study looked at contacts made to a help service for gaming and gambling in France. The goal was to understand how gaming and gambling affected the people who contacted the service.

What the researchers did

The researchers analyzed communications made to Joueurs Info Service, which is a national gaming and gambling help service in France. This service helps people who game/gamble as well as the relatives of those who game/gamble. People can call the service to talk to a psychologist. The psychologist who takes the call writes a summary of the call. People can also contact the service using an online chat system.

The researchers performed text analysis on the call summaries and chat logs about gambling or gaming problems. They analyzed all 14,564 documented

What you need to know

Gambling and gaming disorders are both considered behavioural addictions. Gambling and gaming disorders have many similarities but may also have important differences. This study looked for similarities and differences in how people experience gambling and gaming problems.

The researchers analyzed communications from people who contacted a gambling and gaming help service in France. They found six main themes in what people discussed with the help service. Some themes were common to both gambling and gaming (e.g., psychological distress), but others were distinct. For example, people discussed a loss of control with gambling, but no such mention was made about gaming. Violence during conflict with parents and negative childhood events were made in regard to gaming only. Future research could aim to better understand these differences.

contacts from 2010–2018. The researchers analyzed the text to find main themes across the contacts.

What the researchers found

Of the 14,564 contacts, 69% were made by people who gamble or game themselves. The remainder were made by relatives of those who game/gamble (e.g., partners, parents, and children). Almost 98% of people who contacted the service did so via telephone. Additionally, 88% of the contacts were about gambling, and only 2.7% were about gaming.

The researchers found six main themes in the contacts. Some themes were shared between gambling and gaming, while others were distinct.

Shared themes:

i) Shared distress and negative emotions

This theme was often brought up by relatives, especially partners of the person who gambles or games. Both relatives and people who gamble/game described feeling distressed and angry. People who gamble/game also mentioned feelings of shame, guilt, and loneliness.

ii) Referring contactors to help

This theme came from the service providers' notes saying that they referred the caller to a clinic for help.

Distinct themes:

iii) Specific aspects of gaming

Most contacts about gaming specifics came from relatives of those who game. They often linked negative childhood events to gaming, such as divorce or death of a loved one. They also described violence by the person who games during conflict with parents about the gaming behaviour. This violence was often directed at themselves, their parents, or the furniture.

iv) Specific aspects of gambling

Most contacts about gambling specifics came from people who gamble. These contacts often used terms like "control", "desire to make money", and "chasing". These terms reflect the symptoms of gambling disorder. The ICD-11 considers loss of control to be a core symptom of addiction. It is notable that a loss of control was not linked to gaming in these contacts.

v) How to be banned from gambling

This was asked by people who gamble. For example, they asked how to ban themselves from gambling.

vi) Financial problems

This was most often discussed by relatives of someone who gambles or games. It was much more common for gambling than gaming. For example, relatives talked about debts caused by gambling. Some said gambling debts led to suicidal thoughts.

How you can use this research

This research shows that there may be distinct aspects to how people experience gambling and gaming disorders. Researchers can use this

information to guide further studies that compare gambling and gaming disorders.

About the researchers

Amandine Luquiens and **Pascal Perney** are affiliated with the University Hospital of Nîmes at the University of Montpellier in Nîmes, France, and UVSQ, CESP, INSERM, Paris-Saclay University at the University of Paris-Sud in Villejuif, France. **Cora von Hammerstein** and **Amine Benyamina** are affiliated with the Addictions Department, Paul Brousse Hospital at Paris-Saclay University in Villejuif, France. Cora von Hammerstein is also affiliated with the University Research Team of Health Adjustment, Measurement and Assessment, Interdisciplinary Approaches at the University of Lorraine in Metz, France. For more information about this study, please contact Amandine Luquiens at amandineluquiens@gmail.com

Citation

Luquiens, A., von Hammerstein, C., Benyamina, A., & Perney, P. (2021). Burden and help-seeking behaviors linked to problem gambling and gaming: Observational quantitative and qualitative analysis. *JMIR Mental Health*, 8(11), e26521. <https://mental.jmir.org/2021/11/e26521>

Study funding

No funding was received.

About Greo

Greo has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. Greo is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization with almost two decades of international experience in generating, synthesizing, and mobilizing research into action across the health and wellbeing sectors. Greo helps organizations improve their strategies, policies, and practices by harnessing the power of evidence and stakeholder insight.

Learn more about Greo by visiting greo.ca or emailing info@greo.ca.