

Predictors of fatigue to responsible gambling messages and effects on gambling-related outcomes

What this research is about

Responsible gambling (RG) messages are designed to minimize or prevent gambling-related harms. RG messages are varied. They may share information about how to engage in safer gambling (e.g., setting deposit limits) or present a slogan (e.g., “When the fun stops, stop”). RG messages appear in different places, including on slot machines, on the internet, and alongside gambling advertisements.

Previous research has suggested that seeing the same messages repeatedly or seeing too many messages on the same topic might cause people to become ‘fatigued’ by them. This may reduce the impact of the messages. This study examined predictors of fatigue towards RG messages. The researchers also examined how fatigue may impact gambling outcomes, such as intention to gamble, and who may be most likely to feel fatigued.

What the researchers did

A total of 901 users of Amazon Mechanical Turk were recruited to complete an online survey. Participants had to be at least 21 years old and from the United States. The researchers used CloudResearch, an online research and participant recruitment company, to ensure the sample was appropriate for the study.

The researchers removed responses from participants who (1) failed attention checks; (2) had low reCAPTCHA scores; or (3) completed the survey too fast. The final sample consisted of 822 participants.

Participants completed a series of questions about the following:

- Message fatigue, measured using the exhaustion subscale from So et al. (2017)’s message fatigue

What you need to know

This study examined the predictors and effects of message fatigue towards responsible gambling (RG) messages. Users of Amazon Mechanical Turk who were at least 21 years old and from the United States were recruited to complete an online survey. The final sample consisted of 822 participants. Respondents who had more severe gambling problems or gambled more often were more likely to feel fatigued by RG messages. Respondents who worked in the gambling industry were less likely to report feeling fatigued by RG messages. Feeling fatigued by RG messages was linked to higher levels of reactance and inattention. In turn, higher levels of reactance and inattention were linked to greater gambling intentions. Finally, higher levels of reactance and intention were also linked to lower intentions to share RG messages with others.

scale. This scale has four items, such as “I am burned out from hearing that gambling is a serious problem”.

- Inattention, measured using four items to determine whether participants paid attention to RG messages.
- Reactance, which referred to participants’ anger and counter arguments towards RG messages. Anger was measured using Dillard and Shen’s (2005) scale. Counter arguments were measured using Moyer-Gusé’s and Nabi’s (2010) scale.
- Sharing intentions, measured using two items from Song et al. (2023). This assessed participants’ intentions to share RG messages with others.
- Intentions to gamble in the next two weeks, measured using the Gambling Intention Scale. Two

additional items on day trading and cryptocurrency trading were also included.

- Gambling frequency, measured by asking participants the extent to which they engaged in various forms of gambling over the past year.
- Problem gambling, assessed using the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). Scores of 0 indicate non-problem gambling, while scores of 1–2 indicate low-risk gambling. Scores of 3–7 indicate moderate-risk gambling and scores of 8+ indicate problem gambling.
- Demographic and control variables, including gambling preference (skill or chance games), employment in the gambling industry, regional exposure to gambling (calculated using the Regional Impact of Gambling Exposure measure), age, sex, income, education, and race/ethnicity.

What the researchers found

On average, participants were 41.5 years old. Most participants were female (52%) and White (75%). In terms of education, over half had a two-year degree or higher (58%), and earned \$49,999 or less (53%). Most participants had never worked in the gambling industry (93%). About 46% of the participants indicated that they preferred chance-based games, while 41% preferred skill-based games. According to the PGSI, 5.4% of participants had moderate-risk gambling and 0.4% had problem gambling.

Participants who had higher scores on the PGSI or gambled more often were more likely to feel fatigued by RG messages. Participants who worked in the gambling industry were less likely to report feeling fatigued by RG messages. However, very few participants (6.8%) worked in the gambling industry.

Feeling fatigued by RG messages was linked to higher reactance and inattention. In turn, higher levels of reactance were strongly linked to greater intentions to gamble. Higher levels of inattention were also weakly linked to greater gambling intentions. Finally, higher levels of reactance and intention were linked to lower intentions to share RG messages with others.

How you can use this research

Public health organizations, policy makers, and gambling operators can use the findings to design more effective responsible gambling messages. This study can also inform future research. For example, research can explore which types of RG messages are more or less likely to cause message fatigue.

About the researchers

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