

knowledge snapshot



The impact of gambling-related advertising: An umbrella review

What this article is about

People who gamble can experience harms. Harms to health can happen even at low levels of gambling. There are risk factors that increase the likelihood of experiencing gambling-related harms. These include individual, psychosocial, political, economic, and commercial factors.

Gambling advertising can be seen in different forms of media (e.g., television, newspapers, internet, and social media). Previous research has found a link between exposure to gambling advertising and gambling-related harms. The authors of this review summarized research evidence on the impact of gambling advertising on gambling-related harms.

What was done?

The authors conducted an umbrella review of previous systematic reviews. First, the authors conducted database and citation searches between February and March 2022. They searched PsycINFO and Web of Science based on subject headings and free-text terms. The authors also checked the reference lists and citations of included papers. They also searched the grey literature.

To be included, the reviews had to meet the following criteria:

- Conducted using a systematic method
- Written in English
- Published after 2000
- Focused on any population/region exposed to gambling advertising, including subgroups (e.g., young children)

Why is this article important?

People who gamble can experience harm. Gambling advertising can increase gambling-related harms. This article summarizes research evidence on the impact of gambling advertising. The authors conducted an umbrella review of previous systematic reviews. A total of eight systematic reviews were included in the umbrella review. The reviews included a total of 74 unique studies, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method studies.

Overall, the reviews found evidence of a 'dose-response effect'. People who are exposed to more gambling advertising are more likely to feel positively about gambling. They are more likely to feel that gambling is a normal activity. They are also more likely to intend to gamble. People who are at higher risk of gambling-related problems are more aware of and more exposed to gambling advertising. Children and adolescents who see more gambling advertising have a high recall of the advertising and the brands being advertised. Those at risk of gambling problems also report a desire to gamble when viewing such advertising.

- Included exposure to any form of gambling advertising. This could be experimental, observed, or self-reported recall of exposure
- Focused on any outcome related to gambling (e.g., attitudes, intentions, and behaviour)

The initial search found 1024 records, of which 24 were retrieved as full papers. Only five reviews met the inclusion criteria. Three additional reviews were also identified using website searches or through

recommendations by a topic expert. Thus, a total of eight reviews met the inclusion criteria.

What you need to know

The eight included reviews were published between 2019 and 2021. Of the eight included reviews, three reviews included studies that examined both people at risk of problem gambling and general populations. Only two reviews included studies of children. One review focused on migrant communities. These reviews included quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method studies. The eight reviews included a total of 74 unique studies.

The reviews showed that people who are exposed to more gambling advertising are more likely to feel positively about gambling. They are more likely to feel that gambling is a normal and acceptable activity in society. They are also more likely to intend to gamble. This association is called a 'dose-response' effect.

People who are at higher risk of gambling-related problems are more aware of and more exposed to gambling advertising. They tend to feel more positively about advertising. People at higher risk are more likely to say that advertising has caused them to gamble more.

Children and adolescents who see more gambling advertising are more likely to recall the advertising and the gambling brands being advertised. Those at risk of gambling problems reported wanting to gamble when viewing such advertising. But many studies found that adolescents and youth believe that advertising does not influence their own behaviour.

A review focusing on migrant communities found that gambling advertising may target migrant groups. Some advertising campaigns use cultural events and symbols to attract ethnic communities and encourage them to gamble.

Who is it intended for?

Policy makers can use this review to inform public health harm prevention strategies. These strategies can include policies that limit exposure to advertising, especially among children and vulnerable groups.

About the researchers

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Citation

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