



RESEARCH SYNOPSIS

Griffiths, M. D., & Bingham, C. (2005). A study of superstitious beliefs among bingo players. *Journal of Gambling Issues*, 13, 1-14.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What beliefs do bingo players have regarding superstition and luck? How are bingo players' beliefs about superstition and luck related to their gambling behaviour?

PURPOSE

To date, little research has been conducted on bingo players, and the research that had been conducted on them is dated. The purpose of the present research was: to examine bingo players' beliefs regarding superstition and luck as well as to examine how bingo players' beliefs regarding superstition and luck relate to their gambling behaviour.

HYPOTHESIS

None stated.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 412 adult bingo players (14% males; average age = 45 years) from Nottingham, United Kingdom. The sample was an opportunity sample of players (i.e., participants were those who agreed to take part when asked) with no controls over gender or age.

PROCEDURE

The study was carried out in a large bingo hall over four evenings. Participants completed a self-report measure of superstitious beliefs, demographics, and gambling behaviours. All questionnaires were handed out early in the evening to give players time to complete the questions before the end of the session. Completed questionnaires were collected during the intervals of the main games.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES

A self-completion questionnaire was devised that asked players about their everyday superstitious beliefs, as well as their superstitious beliefs regarding bingo. A number of independent variables were also investigated including: gender, age, belief in astrology, frequency of play, and average session spend. Finally, players were asked to choose whether bingo was a game of skill, luck, or chance. Those who

were 45 years and under were defined as younger players (53%) and those aged 46 years and over were defined as older players (47%). Those who always or almost always read their horoscope were defined as astrological believers (25%), whereas those who occasionally, very occasionally, or never read their horoscope were defined as non-astrological believers (75%). Those who reported playing bingo three or more times a week were defined as heavy players (20%), whereas those playing twice a week or less were defined as light players (80%). Those who reported regularly spending £20 (approx. \$38.50 Cdn) or more in one bingo hall visit were defined as heavy spenders (29%), and those spending less than £20 per bingo hall visit were defined as light spenders (71%).

KEY RESULTS

The majority (73%) thought that bingo was a game of luck with the remaining participants thinking it was mostly a game of chance. Approximately 81% of bingo players had at least one superstitious belief. Such beliefs included not opening an umbrella indoors (49%), not walking under ladders (55%), not putting new shoes on a table (60%), touching wood (50%), and not passing someone else on the stairs (40%). Only 10% of the sample was superstitious while playing bingo (with a further 13% claiming they were sometimes superstitious while playing). This was reflected in such behaviours and beliefs as having a lucky night of the week (5%), having a lucky friend (4%), having a lucky mascot (6%), sitting in the same seat for luck (21%), believing certain numbers are lucky or unlucky (13%), and changing pens or doppers to change bad luck (29%). Further, 27% of players believed in winning and losing streaks, 25% always or almost always read their horoscopes, and 57% believed in fate. Gender. Superstitious beliefs were strongly associated with gender. Only 16% of women reported having no superstitious beliefs, as opposed to 39% of the men. Women were more likely to not put new shoes on a table, not walk under ladders, not put up an umbrella in the home, not pass someone on the stairs, and touch wood. A smaller percentage of women (11%) than men (32%) reported never reading their horoscope. More women (62%) than men (47%) expressed a belief in fate, but this

was not found to be significant at the 1% level. With regards to specific superstitious beliefs concerning bingo, there were no gender differences except that more women (32%) than men (15%) changed pens or dobbers to change runs of bad luck. Age. A greater percentage of the older age group (80%) than the younger age group (67%) believed bingo to be a game of luck. In general, young bingo players were more superstitious, although older bingo players were more likely to believe in both astrology (31% old, 21% young) and fate (67% old, 52% young). Younger bingo players were more likely not to walk under ladders (63% young, 49% old), believe the number 13 was unlucky (42% young, 33% old) and generally be superstitious while playing bingo (30% young, 20% old) than older bingo players. Astrological beliefs. In general, those who were astrological believers were more likely to be superstitious than non-astrological believers. With regards to their bingo playing, astrological believers were more likely to have a lucky friend, to believe in lucky numbers, to change pens/dobbers to change runs of bad luck, and to be generally superstitious while playing bingo. Frequency of play. Compared with light bingo players, heavy bingo players were more likely to believe in fate, be more superstitious while playing bingo, be more likely to have a lucky friend, be more likely to have a lucky seat, and be more likely to believe that some numbers are lucky/unlucky. Average session

spend. Compared with light spenders, heavy-spending bingo players were more likely to be superstitious, believe that the number 13 is unlucky, have a lucky friend, sit in the same seat for luck, and believe in astrology.

LIMITATIONS

The sample was an opportunity sample of players with no controls over gender or age. Whether superstitious beliefs regarding fate and luck increase with age, or whether they are becoming less common within the younger generation in society, could not be examined in the present study.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, a large percentage of bingo players report beliefs in luck and superstition. However, the findings were varied, with a far greater percentage of players reporting everyday superstitious beliefs than beliefs concerned with bingo.

KEYWORDS: gambling, bingo, superstitious beliefs, luck

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