



RESEARCH SYNOPSIS

Martin, R. J., Usdan, S., Nelson, S., Umstattd, M. R., LaPlante, D., Perko, M., & Shaffer, H. (2010). Using the theory of planned behavior to predict gambling behavior. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 24, 89-97.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Can the theory of planned behavior be used to predict gambling behavior?

PURPOSE

The theory of planned behavior attempts to predict whether or not individuals will engage in certain behaviors. The theory of planned behavior suggests that behavior is influenced by one's intention to perform a behavior, which in turn is influenced by attitudes about that behavior, perceived subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control over the behavior. The purpose of this study was to test the effectiveness of the theory of planned behavior in predicting gambling behavior within a college student population.

HYPOTHESIS

Past year gambling and gambling frequency would be positively related to favorable attitudes toward gambling, favorable perceptions of friend, family, and peer attitudes towards gambling, and negatively related with perceived behavioral control. The relationship between past year gambling and gambling frequency and attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control would be explained by gambling intention.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 785 students attending a large public university in the southeastern United States (60% = female, average age = 20.5 years).

PROCEDURE

Participants completed questionnaires assessing gambling frequency, gambling attitudes, behavioral control over gambling, and perceived subjective norms about gambling. Questionnaires were distributed in general education courses and students could choose whether or not to participate in the study.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES

Gambling frequency was assessed by asking students to indicate how often they gamble (from never to every day). The Gambling Attitudes and Injunctive Norms Scale was used to assess gambling attitudes and the subjective norms of peers. Perceived behavioral control was assessed using the 16-item Gambling Self-Efficacy Questionnaire. Subjective norms of family and friends was assessed using the 12-item Gambling Injunctive Norms Scale. The Gambling Intention Scale was used to assess intention to gamble.

KEY RESULTS

Consistent with hypotheses, peer and friend/family norms, attitudes towards gambling and perceived behavioral control all predicted past year gambling behavior. However, the relationship between peer norms and past year gambling behavior was in the opposite direction as predicted. Specifically, participants who believed that their peers gambled frequently were less likely to gamble during the past year. Consistent with hypothesis, intention to gamble predicted past year gambling and gambling frequency. All the factors in the theory of planned behavior (with the exception of peer norms) predicted intention to gamble. Intention to gamble mediated the relationship between perceived behavioral control and past-year gambling. In other words, when intention to gamble was included in the model, perceived behavioral control no longer predicted past-year gambling, indicating that this relationship can be explained by gambling intention. Similarly, intention to gamble mediated the relationship between perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, gambling attitudes, and gambling frequency. In other words, the relationship between gambling frequency and the other factors could be explained by intention.

LIMITATIONS

The study relied on participants to self-report their gambling behavior. Participants may have misrepresented their gambling behavior, especially if this behavior was problematic.

CONCLUSIONS

These results indicate that the theory of planned behavior can be used to predict gambling frequency. Perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and gambling attitudes predicted gambling behavior, and these associations were mediated by gambling intention. These results indicate that interventions to reduce college student gambling should attempt to decrease students' personal approval of gambling and increase their perceptions of their ability to control

gambling. The finding that peer norms were negatively associated with gambling frequency suggests that social norms campaigns concerning peer gambling may not be an effective intervention strategy.

KEYWORDS: gambling, college students, gambling intention, theory of planned behavior, youth, gambling frequency, attitude

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