

knowledge snapshot



Factors associated with suicidal behaviours among people with gambling disorder

What this article is about

This review explores suicidal behaviours among individuals with gambling disorder (IWGDs). The authors define gambling disorder as the loss of control over gambling. Gambling becomes the only attraction in one's life. All the other interests and activities are compromised. This usually leads to major socio-economic and familial harms.

Studies have found that IWGDs often have co-occurring mental health conditions. Some common conditions include substance use disorders and mood disorders. In addition, a previous study has found a 20% lifetime suicide attempt rate among IWGDs. These people are also 3.4 times at higher risk for suicide attempts compared to non-IWGDs. Overall, the rate for lifetime suicide ideation among IWGDs ranges between 17% and 48% across studies. The rate for lifetime suicide attempts is between 9% and 31%.

There are over 20 models and theories on suicidal behaviours. They are divided into two categories. The first category includes traditional or predictive models that provide a risk score after considering various risk factors. The second category includes more complex models that look at the interaction between biological, environmental, psychological, and social factors. Multiple studies have explored the link between suicidal behaviours and mental health disorders among IWGDs. However, the findings have been inconsistent. There is no meta-analysis that pools together the findings from previous studies.

What was done?

This research is based on the Protocols of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The

Why is this article important?

This review examined the consequences of gambling on suicidal behaviours. The study brings attention to the prevalence of suicidal ideation and lifetime suicide attempts among people with gambling disorder. It pools together the results from multiple studies to estimate this prevalence. It also looks at the impact of co-occurring mental health disorders on suicidal ideation and suicide lifetime attempts.

authors selected articles published between January 1st, 1995, and September 1st, 2022. The articles were obtained from the following data bases: *PubMed*, *Scopus*, *Web of Science*, and *Cochrane Library*.

The authors had multiple inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting the articles. They focused on articles that included IWGDs as the study population. The comparison group would be IWGDs without lifetime suicidal behaviours. Articles must also report on protective and positive associations of sociodemographic characteristics, risky behaviours, mental health disorders, and alcohol use disorders with suicidal behaviours. Finally, the authors selected articles that were cross-sectional, cohort, or case studies. They excluded qualitative studies, studies that used secondary data without collecting data themselves, and review articles.

In the end, 39 studies were retained for the review and meta-analysis. Meta-analysis is a statistical method used to pool together the results from multiple studies to draw conclusions about that body of research.

What you need to know

Overall, 16 articles were from America and Canada, 15 were from Europe, and 8 were from the Western Pacific region. Across all these articles, the overall mean age of participants was of 32.84 years old. In addition, participants were more likely to be male. This varied from 32% to 100% depending on the study.

Of the 39 studies chosen, 27 addressed both suicide ideation and suicide attempts. Five studies addressed suicide ideation only, and six addressed suicide attempts only. Twenty-eight studies used the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders to assess gambling disorder in participants. Another 11 studies used the South Oaks Gambling Screen.

The present meta-analysis showed a significant lifetime suicidal behaviour among IWGDs. In fact, there was a 31% prevalence rate for suicide ideation. In addition, there was a 17% prevalence rate for suicide plans. Finally, there was a 16% prevalence rate for suicide attempts among IWGDs.

Moreover, this meta-analysis showed that IWGDs suffering from chronic physical illness were 1.82 times more likely to report lifetime ideation. The same result was found for IWGDs who had debt. IWGDs who were older than 35 years old were 2.91 times more likely to report lifetime suicide attempts. IWGDs who had a history of sexual abuse were 2.48 times more likely to report lifetime suicide attempts.

In addition, IWGDs with depression were 3.58 times more likely to have lifetime suicide ideations and 5.61 times more likely to have lifetime suicide attempts. When it comes to mood disorders, IWGDs were 5.11 times more likely to have suicide ideations and 5.20 times more likely to have lifetime suicide attempts. Finally, IWGDs with alcohol use disorders were 1.38 times more likely to suicide ideation and 2.08 times more likely to have lifetime suicide attempts.

Who is it intended for?

This study is intended for researchers, clinicians, and public health staff who are interested in the link between suicidal behaviours and gambling disorder.

About the researchers

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