



Examining the factors of impulsivity to predict problem gambling in adults

What this research is about

Problem gambling is a disorder that makes it difficult for people to resist impulses to engage in harmful gambling acts. Research shows that impulsivity, the tendency to act without thinking, is strongly related to problem gambling. Understanding what factors make up impulsivity can help explain and treat problem gambling behaviours. The UPPS-P Impulsive Behaviour scale assesses five factors that measure five distinct aspects of impulse behaviour: negative urgency, (lack of) premeditation, (lack of) perseverance, sensation seeking and positive urgency. This study explored how the five impulsivity factors from the UPPS-P Impulsive Behaviour Scale is linked to different gambling activities and which factors would best predict who may experience problem gambling in Australian adults.

What the researcher did

Participants were recruited via online mediums including forums, social media and email. Undergraduate psychology students from a regional university also participated in the study. In total, 200 Australian adults, aged 18-49 who had gambled at least once in the previous six months prior to the study completed a survey measuring the five factors of impulsivity, problem gambling severity and gambling behaviour. Researchers analyzed the data to assess which impulsivity factors would best predict problem gambling.

What the researcher found

Negative urgency and positive urgency are strong predictors of problem gambling. Adults who engage in impulsive behaviour to relieve negative moods or maintain or enhance positive moods are more likely to experience problem gambling.

What you need to know

Out of the five impulsivity factors, negative urgency and positive urgency are the strongest predictors of problem gambling. Adults who act impulsively when they are in a positive or negative mood are more likely to engage in problem gambling behaviours and be at greater risk of becoming problem gamblers. Health promoters and treatment providers can identify impulsivity factors in adults to help treat and prevent problem gambling behaviours.

Adults who displayed positive urgency were more likely to engage in gambling activities as gambling may be a way to enhance positive mood states. Adults who displayed negative urgency were more likely to engage in electronic gaming machine gambling and problem gambling. This may suggest that some problem gamblers seek out fast-paced automatic games as a form of distraction from negative mood states.

Sensation seeking was related to all types of gambling behaviour, which may predict gambling styles and behaviours.

How you can use this research

Health promoters may use this information to develop health promotion strategies that target impulsivity factors such as positive urgency and negative urgency to prevent the development of problem gambling. Specifically, adult gamblers may respond to programs on preventing impulsive reactions to emotional states and coping methods for negative moods to prevent problem gambling behaviours. Treatment providers may use this information to screen for adults who display high levels

of positive and negative urgency characteristics to help treat and prevent problem gambling.

About the Researcher

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Keywords

problem gambling, mood, emotion regulation, impulsivity, negative urgency, positive urgency

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