



Use of cannabis while gambling has outcomes as severe as use of both alcohol and cannabis among youth

What this research is about

Gambling is popular among adolescents and young adults, as is using alcohol and cannabis. Adolescents and young adults who drink alcohol before or while gambling experience more negative consequences from gambling. They tend to take greater risks and lose more money. To date, no study has looked at the impact of cannabis use before or during gambling. Understanding the impact of cannabis use on gambling behaviour appears key to prevention of associated harms. Moreover, although most university students who drink do not use cannabis, those who use cannabis tend to also drink. This suggests that students who use cannabis are at greater risk because they are more likely to use multiple substances. This study examined the impact of alcohol and cannabis use prior to or while gambling on gambling behaviour among American college students. It looked at whether students who reported use of alcohol or cannabis only, or both, experienced more negative gambling outcomes.

What the researcher did

The researchers invited college students from a large west-coast university in the USA to participate in an online survey. The survey asked about gambling, use of alcohol and use of cannabis. Data from 1,834 students who reported use of both alcohol and cannabis within the past 3 months and who reported on whether they used alcohol and cannabis before or while gambling were included in this study. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 24 years. About half of the participants (1,018) did not use alcohol or cannabis before or during gambling. Another 559 used alcohol only, 54 used cannabis only, and 203 used both alcohol and cannabis. The survey asked participants about their gambling frequency (number of days they gambled per month) over the past 6 months, as well as their gambling losses

What you need to know

This study examined if American college students who used alcohol or cannabis only, or both, within two hours prior to or while gambling experienced more negative outcomes from gambling. Results showed that students who used alcohol or cannabis, or both, gambled more often than those who did not use either substance immediately before or while gambling. They experienced greater gambling losses and more severe negative consequences from gambling.

Compared to those who used alcohol only, students who used both alcohol and cannabis gambled more often and had greater gambling losses. They also reported more negative consequences from gambling. Students who used cannabis only did not differ from those who used both alcohol and cannabis. Thus, use of cannabis before or while gambling could place an individual at the same level of risk for negative gambling outcomes as use of both alcohol and cannabis.

and experience of negative consequences as a result of gambling over the past 3 months. The South Oaks Gambling Screen was included in the survey to assess symptoms of disordered gambling within the past 6 months. In addition, participants were asked about substance use, and if they used alcohol or cannabis in the 2 hours before gambling or while gambling.

What the researcher found

Students who used alcohol only, cannabis only, or both, gambled on more occasions per month than those who did not use either substance prior to or while gambling. They also reported greater gambling losses, more severe

negative consequences from gambling, and greater symptoms of disordered gambling than those who did not.

Compared to those who only used alcohol prior to or while gambling, students who used both alcohol and cannabis gambled more often and had greater gambling losses. They also reported more negative consequences from gambling. Students who used cannabis before or while gambling did not differ from those who used both alcohol and cannabis. These results suggest that use of cannabis before or while gambling could place a person at the same level of risk for negative gambling outcomes as use of both alcohol and cannabis. It should be noted that the study did not distinguish between people who used alcohol before or while gambling on one occasion and cannabis on another, or both substances at the same time. That is, they were all considered users of both alcohol and cannabis prior to or while gambling even though they may have never used the substances together.

How you can use this research

This study could be useful for prevention and treatment providers who want to target substance use and gambling in university students. They may want to design prevention efforts that target students who use cannabis. These students may be at greater risk of having multiple problems, including problems related to gambling and alcohol use. This study assessed alcohol and cannabis use broadly and relied on self-report from participants. Future research should use methods that collect data in real-time to assess the exact effects of cannabis use on gambling behaviour.

About the Researcher

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Citation

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