

research snapshot

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Exploring how players could use their online gambling data to gamble responsibly

What this research is about

Online gambling has many features that make it popular and easy to access. People can play gambling games on computers, tablets, and cell phones. Sounds and visual effects make online gambling exciting to play. Online gambling may have interactive platforms that allow players to socialize. Gambling websites also use persuasive techniques, such as rewarding high-scoring players with badges, status, and points, to encourage them to keep gambling. Features that make online gambling popular could also be used to encourage people to gamble responsibly.

Websites that offer gambling games collect data on players' gambling behaviour. These data include games played, how much they spend, and if they set any gambling limits. Players could use gambling data to identify when their gambling is problematic. They could set limits around how much time and money they spend gambling. Treatment service providers, researchers, and family members could also use players' data to encourage them to gamble responsibly. Gambling websites could notify gamblers when they show signs of problematic gambling.

This study explored the range of data and modes of interaction for online gambling that could support responsible gambling. The researchers investigated the types of limits players could set to control their gambling. They investigated different online interactive strategies that could help players gamble responsibly. The researchers also explored types of data that could be used to encourage players to gamble responsibly.

What the researchers did

What you need to know

The researchers investigated types of limits, strategies, and data that could be used to encourage people to gamble responsibly. The researchers interviewed experts and people in treatment for gambling disorder (GD). The experts suggested that players set money, time, and access limits to control their gambling. People with GD agreed that limits were a good idea. The experts identified seven strategies to consider when designing online interventions. People with GD had mixed feelings about these strategies. Both experts and people with GD thought that gambling data and other data sources could be helpful in encouraging players to stay in control. Some people with GD thought that collecting data through personal digital devices was too intrusive.

The researchers recruited two different groups of participants. One group included 13 experts in addiction, persuasive technology, and the gambling industry. The other group included six people who were in treatment for gambling disorder (GD). The researchers recruited people with GD using social media and snowball sampling. In snowball sampling, researchers ask study participants to encourage other people to take part in the study.

The researchers interviewed the experts and people with GD. At the beginning of the interviews, the researchers showed all participants how a player's gambling data and other data sources could be shared and used, with the permission of the player. The researchers asked the experts to suggest the types of limits players could set to control their gambling,

types of interactive strategies that could help players gamble responsibly, and types of data that could inform players about their gambling behaviour. The researchers interviewed people with GD to get their opinions about the experts' suggestions.

What the researchers found

The experts suggested that players set money, time, and access limits to control their gambling. They suggested players set their own limits. Players' limits should be specific and challenging, but realistic. Participants with GD thought that setting money, time, and access limits was a good idea. They thought gambling websites should set time limits for players and show them how to set money limits. Few participants with GD thought it was a good idea to ask a family member to help them set limits.

The experts identified seven strategies that could be used to support responsible gambling using gambling data collected from websites. The strategies included using graphs, infographics, notifications, and educational materials. The experts also suggested information on how much players gamble compared to others. Participants with GD thought it would be helpful to see graphs and other visual formats about their gambling activity. They had mixed feelings about the other strategies, such as comparative information.

The experts suggested six types of data that could be used to encourage players to gamble responsibly. These included data that gambling websites, digital devices (e.g., cellphones), and third parties (e.g., banks) collect. For example, players, family members, and service providers could use data about time, location, emotion, and stress to identify when players might gamble too much. Participants with GD thought it was a good idea to collect data from gambling websites and third parties. Some thought collecting data through personal devices invaded their privacy.

How you can use this research

Policy makers can use this research to develop online responsible gambling interventions. More research is needed to investigate how useful various technologies are at encouraging players to gamble responsibly in the long-term.

About the researchers

George Drosatos is affiliated with the Department of Computing and Informatics at Bournemouth University in Dorset, United Kingdom (UK) and the Institute for Language and Speech Processing at Athena Research Centre in Xanthi, Greece. **Emily Arden-Close** is affiliated with the Department of Psychology at Bournemouth University. **Elvira Bolat** is affiliated with the Department of Marketing, Strategy and Innovation at Bournemouth University. **Raian Ali** is affiliated with the College of Science and Engineering at Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Doha, Qatar. For more information about this study, please contact George Drosatos at gdrosato@athenarc.gr.

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About Gambling Research Exchange (GREO)

Gambling Research Exchange (GREO) has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. GREO is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. Our goal is to support evidence-informed decision making in safer gambling policies, standards, and practices. The work we do is intended for researchers, policy makers, gambling regulators and operators, and treatment and prevention service providers.

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