

research snapshot

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The links between gambling disorder, cyberbullying, emotion regulation, and coping strategies

What this research is about

People, especially adolescents, may have greater difficulty controlling their gambling behaviours if their coping skills are lacking. For example, they may use emotion-focused coping skills. Emotion-focused coping skills suppress or control negative emotions instead of changing what causes the stress, such as by escaping or avoiding. People who are victims of cyberbullying often use emotion-focused coping skills. Cyberbullying is behaviour performed through electronic or digital media that communicates hostile or aggressive messages. These messages are intended to cause harm or discomfort to others.

In this study, the researchers examined cyberbullying in a clinical sample of young people with gambling disorder and a community sample. They also looked for differences in emotion regulation, coping strategies, and substance abuse in the two samples.

What the researchers did

The researchers recruited two samples for this study. The first sample was a clinical sample of 31 young patients who voluntarily asked for treatment at the outpatient Gambling Disorder Unit at Bellvitge University Hospital in Spain. These patients were diagnosed using the DSM-5 criteria. Most of the patients were men (90%). All were born in Spain. On average, participants in this sample were 21 years old.

The second sample was a community sample. Participants in this sample were recruited from secondary education schools from the Basque Country region in Spain. The researchers sent invitations to local schools about the study. A research team member then travelled to the participating schools to help administer the

What you need to know

People, especially adolescents, may have greater difficulty controlling their gambling behaviours if their coping skills are lacking. Victims of cyberbullying often use coping skills that are not ideal. The researchers examined differences in emotion regulation, coping strategies, and substance abuse among two samples of adolescents and young adults. The first sample was 31 young patients who were being treated for gambling disorder at a Spanish hospital. The second sample was a community sample of 250 adolescents recruited from secondary education schools in Spain. In both groups, exposure to cyberbullying behaviours was linked to worse emotion regulation. It was also linked to the use of maladaptive coping strategies. In the community sample, participants who experienced cyberbullying were more likely to use/abuse alcohol. In the clinical sample, higher cyberbullying was linked to lower gambling severity.

questionnaires. Students completed the survey in their classroom. A total of 250 students were recruited. Most of these participants were born in Spain (90%). About half of the participants were men. On average, these participants were 18 years old.

Participants completed the following questionnaires:

- The Cyberbullying Questionnaire-Victimization
- The Canadian Adolescent Gambling Inventory
- The Coping Strategies Inventory
- The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale
- The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test

- The Drug Use Disorders Identification Test

What the researchers found

In both samples, between 32% (clinical sample) and 38% (community sample) of participants reported being exposed to cyberbullying. There was no difference in the severity of cyberbullying experienced by participants in the two samples. There was no difference in gambling disorder severity when comparing participants who had experienced cyberbullying and those who had not.

In the community sample, exposure to cyberbullying was linked to worse emotion regulation and the use of maladaptive coping strategies. Having experienced cyberbullying was also linked to alcohol use/abuse.

In the clinical sample, participants who experienced more cyberbullying had less severe gambling problems. However, they reported a lack of emotional clarity (i.e., not being able to understand their emotions) and the use of most maladaptive coping strategies. Participants of older age had more severe gambling problems; in turn, higher gambling severity was linked to lower exposure to cyberbullying.

How you can use this research

Practitioners can use this research to promote emotional and coping skills in classrooms. This may be carried out as part of a cyberbullying intervention.

About the researchers

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Citation

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