

research snapshot

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Happiness declines with increasing gambling

What this research is about

While gambling may be considered a fun and exciting activity, it can also negatively impact one's well-being. For some people, gambling becomes an addiction. They continue to gamble despite the negative consequences to their lives. Many studies have shown that gambling can impact mental health and increase the risk of suicide. However, most research has focused on the negative aspects of mental health, such as how gambling is related to depression. Few studies have explored how gambling is related to overall well-being. This study seeks to understand the relationship between well-being and gambling. In the context of this study, well-being is considered one's general happiness.

What the researcher did

The researcher used data from the British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2010 (BGPS). The BGPS was a national survey in UK to examine gambling participation and prevalence of problem gambling. Participants were aged 16 and over. They were invited to complete an online survey. Aside from gambling, the survey also included questions about subjective well-being (general happiness). The researcher analyzed data from 6,624 participants who responded to questions about gambling and well-being.

Gambling was assessed using two self-reported scales. The first scale was based on DSM-IV criteria. Based on this scale, participants were divided into distinct groups of abstainers, social gamblers, at-risk gamblers, and pathological gamblers. The second scale was the Population Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). Participants were categorized into non-problem

What you need to know

Gambling is an interesting phenomenon that draws a great deal of attention. On the one hand, it could be related to fun and socializing. On the other hand, studies have found that it could lead to depression and even suicide. Yet, some people continue to gamble despite experiencing negative consequences in their lives. This study examined the relation between well-being and gambling based on survey responses from 6,624 respondents in UK. Results showed that gambling and happiness were inversely related to one another. In other words, happiness decreased as the severity of gambling increased. Therefore, gambling had a clear impact on one's well-being.

gamblers, low-risk gamblers, moderate-risk gamblers, and problem gamblers.

What the researcher found

There was a negative relationship between happiness and gambling. In other words, happiness decreased when gambling increased. Based on the DSM-IV criteria, abstainers and social gamblers had similar levels of happiness. At-risk and pathological gamblers had lower levels of happiness, but were similar to each other. There was a 22% drop in happiness when participants moved from being social gamblers to being at-risk gamblers.

Similarly, there was a decline in happiness as gambling increased based on the PGSI. The decline was more gradual compared to the sharp decline based on DSM-IV criteria when moving from social to at-risk gamblers. That is, based on the PGSI, non-problem gamblers had

the highest levels of happiness. Low-risk gamblers had higher levels of happiness than moderate-risk gamblers, who had higher levels than problem gamblers.

Overall, the results showed that moving from social gamblers to being at-risk gamblers had important impact on one's happiness. But, in general, happiness declined with increasing gambling.

How you can use this research

This research can be used for improving treatment for people with gambling problems. People's levels of happiness could be enhanced by helping them become engaged in other activities. The results demonstrated that when people had less severe gambling, their happiness increased. Prevention methods should target gamblers with lower subjective well-being. Future research could expand on this research by exploring gender and age differences.

About the researcher

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Keywords

Gambling, happiness, DSM-IV, PGSI, subjective wellbeing

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