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Online gamblers' experiences and views regarding Playscan, a responsible gambling tool

What this research is about

Responsible gambling (RG) tools have been used as intervention to reduce excessive gambling and associated harms. RG includes features such as limit setting, behaviour tracking, self-test, and self-exclusion. Many studies have investigated how effective RG tools are. Most findings reveal that these tools do help people offset risks associated with problematic gambling. Moreover, the majority of gamblers hold a positive attitude toward them.

Two RG tools, Mentor and Playscan, have been proven to be effective in reducing gambling behaviour, such as amount of money spent. Yet, there are no studies that examine why people choose to use these tools and their experiences with them. This study explored user's experiences and views regarding Playscan. It collected information qualitatively through face-to-face interviews.

What the researchers did

The researchers recruited 20 registered users of Playscan on Svenska Spel's gambling website. Svenska Spel is a state-owned gambling company in Sweden. The researchers first emailed the participants a screening questionnaire about their gambling habits and gambling problems. The participants were then interviewed in person about their views of Playscan, how they joined and how they had used the tool.

What the researchers found

Two main themes were identified. The first theme concerned the use of Playscan and the gambling website. Many participants reported that they did not repeat their use of the tool. Some did not even know they were registered. Those who used the risk

What you need to know

This study examined gamblers' experiences and views regarding a responsible gambling tool, Playscan. The participants were 20 registered users of Playscan on a Swedish gambling website. They were interviewed in person about their views of Playscan, how they joined and how they had used the tool. Results revealed that most of them did not know they were registered and did not understand the purpose of the tool. They also showed limited use. Many participants held the opinion that this tool was not for them because they did not need it. Most did not think that Playscan had changed their gambling behaviour or attitude. While some found its risk assessment reliable and fair, others were not satisfied. The majority suggested that Playscan should give more tailored feedback about their gambling patterns.

assessment function of the tool were curious to see their risk level. If they had a low-risk rating, they were less likely to do the self-test again. Some participants were interested in the "advice" function of the tool. Many participants felt that there was not enough feedback regarding their gambling patterns.

With regards to the gambling website, participants gambled online because it was easier and more convenient. They did not stay on the website for long when placing their bets. Thus, they never explored the other content on the website. They viewed Playscan as part of the website and had a hard time distinguish it from other features of the website.

The second theme concerned experiences of Playscan. Many participants used Playscan out of curiosity and

did not know that they had become users. They showed confusion regarding its purpose. A few stated that it was to limit excessive gambling, but some were not aware of that. There was a general view that Playscan could change gambling behaviour and was beneficial. Participants described it as a wake-up call for high-risk gamblers. However, they did not see themselves as being the target for this.

Most participants responded that the risk assessment was communicated with a neutral tone. However, a minority claimed that it was too harsh and did not agree with the risk rating. Few participants mentioned that they had a positive experience with the communication. In regards to the risk assessment, most participants found it reliable and fair although a few participants did not think so.

Participants reported that their gambling behaviour and attitude did not change as a result of Playscan. Many thought that they did not need to change their gambling behaviour. Only a few participants mentioned that they decreased their gambling. However, they gave reasons related to life circumstances such as having children. Similar trend was found with respect to gambling attitude. Of the few who mentioned having a more negative attitude, they did not think the change was due to Playscan.

Finally, participants made some suggestions regarding improving the tool. They wanted more feedback via emails, text messages, or pop-up messages when logging into the gambling website. Participants also wanted feedback tailored to their gambling patterns.

How you can use this research

This research could be used by online gambling companies to improve their RG tools and enhance their feedback to users. Further research is required to assess why Playscan does not seem to affect gambling behaviour and attitude. Future studies should include a larger number of participants.

About the researchers

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Keywords

Responsible gambling tool, qualitative study, thematic analysis, usage, feedback

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