

research snapshot

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How to customize responsible gambling messages to specific groups of gamblers

What this research is about

Often times, people with gambling problems do not seek treatment unless their problems have become severe. Even in the most severe cases, many factors may prevent treatment seeking. For instance, individuals may deny having problems or lack information about help services. Therefore, preventive tools, such as responsible gambling (RG) messages, have been widely used to prevent the development of gambling problems. These messages can be targeted to individuals to help them make informed choices and play responsibly.

RG messages can be effective, but they depend on several factors. For instance, message content is important. The information needs to be accessible and understandable. It is also important to address how messages are framed. Positive messages are more effective than negative ones. Some messages can use self-appraisal to encourage people to reflect on their own behaviour. More recently, with technological advancements, messages can be more personalized to the gambling patterns of specific gamblers.

RG messages may have different impact depending on the type of gambler they reach. There may be differences in how young adults, older adults, skill-game gamblers, and frequent gamblers respond to RG messages. This study explored how these four groups of gamblers responded to various RG messages.

What the researchers did

The researchers recruited 39 adult gamblers from Manitoba, Canada. They represented four different groups: 10 young adults (18-24 years old), 10 seniors (60 and older), 10 skill game gamblers, and 9 frequent

What you need to know

This study examined what young adults, older adults, skill game gamblers, and frequent gamblers thought about various responsible gambling (RG) messages. The researchers did online focus groups to obtain feedback from the four groups. The results revealed that the wording of RG messages was important. All groups preferred positive messages that were simple and not judgmental. Younger adults wanted messages to have more tips on how to play better, while older adults liked messages about limit setting. Skill game gamblers were interested in messages about their own their own gambling and reminders of the consequences of overspending. Frequent gamblers also wanted messages about their own gambling. Some RG tools were preferred over others. For instance, frequent gamblers did not find the play summary tool as useful as the other groups. On the other hand, frequent gamblers were the only group to like the self-assessment quiz.

gamblers who gambled at least once a week. Each group participated in an online focus group via iTracks, an online focus group platform.

The researchers created six messages about five types of RG tools based on RG programs and previous research in health messaging. The five types of RG tools were: 1) Play Summary tool that shows the gambler's play history; 2) Play Assessment Quiz that helps gamblers understand their gambling behaviour; 3) Responsible Gambling Tips include seven tips that encourage gamblers to play responsibly; 4) Odds Knowledge Quiz that tests gamblers' knowledge of

the odds of winning; and 5) Limit Setting tool that allows gamblers to set a weekly limit on how much they can transfer into their gambling account.

During the focus group, participants gave feedback on these messages. They first talked about their initial response to each message and why they would or would not engage with the tool. Participants then gave feedback on what they would change about the message to make it more relevant for them.

What the researchers found

All four groups (young and older adults, skill game and frequent gamblers) were more responsive to positive messages. They addressed the importance of tone. All four groups did not like messages that sounded accusatory or condescending. They preferred simple, honest messages that were straightforward and short. Skill game gamblers were the only group who spoke about terminology. They preferred the use of the term 'gamblers' instead of 'players'.

Young adults said that messages should include tips on how to save money or how to gamble better. Older adults looked for lighthearted messages with reminders about keeping gambling fun. Skill game gamblers noted that messages should remind people about the consequences of overspending and odds of gambling. They also preferred more direct messaging about their own gambling, including risks.

Young and older adults, as well as skill game gamblers, liked the 'Play Summary tool'. Frequent gamblers did not think this tool was useful, with most saying that they were already aware of their limits. Unlike the other groups, frequent gamblers liked the self-assessment quiz and wanted to see which category of gamblers they would fit. All groups responded well to the quiz testing knowledge of gambling odds. Older adults seemed to prefer limit setting.

How you can use this research

This research could be used by public health and prevention service providers. They could use these findings to improve RG messages targeted to different groups of gamblers. Future research could examine what at-risk gamblers think of RG messaging.

About the researchers

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