



Online gambling is related to various impulse control behaviours

What this research is about

The Internet allows easy access and unlimited opportunities for people to gamble. There is also rising concern about people being addicted to the Internet. When people spend a lot of time using the Internet, such as for gambling or playing games, it can negatively affect their social life, work and study. However, it is not clear if 'Internet addiction' is a condition on its own or if the Internet is a common factor for several impulse control behaviours. Impulse control behaviours occur when individuals fail to resist an impulse or urge. As a result, they may lose control over their behaviours.

Past research has found that gambling disorder is related to a variety of impulse control behaviours. These include substance use, suicidal attempt and sexual behaviour. These relationships have not been studied much among military personnel, who have higher rates of substance use and gambling involvement. The current study explored online gambling among Greek military personnel and its relationship with several impulse control behaviours. These included Internet addiction, online sexual engagement, suicidality, and substance use.

What the researcher did

The researchers invited Greek military personnel to complete a survey during their annual medical examination in 2013. The survey collected demographic information (age, sex, education) and online gambling practices in the past year. It also assessed online sexual engagement (e.g., online sex, visit websites with sexual content) and Internet addiction in the past year. Internet addiction was determined based on the degree that one was pre-occupied with and compelled to use the Internet, as well as behavioural problems,

What you need to know

This study explored the link between online gambling and various impulse control behaviours among Greek military personnel. Results showed that the strongest predictor of online gambling was Internet addiction. That is, people who had Internet addiction were more likely to gamble online than those without Internet addiction. Other predictors of online gambling were substance use, especially the use of cocaine or heroin, having past suicidal attempts, and engaging in online sex.

emotional changes and impacts on relationships because of Internet use. Finally, the survey asked about suicidal thoughts and attempts and substance use in the past year. Substance use included alcohol abuse, cannabis, heroin and cocaine use. The researchers analyzed data from 789 military personnel for the purpose of this study.

What the researcher found

About 12% of the Greek military personnel in this study had gambled online. But only 0.4% suffered from Internet addiction. Younger participants were more likely to gamble online than older participants. Also, men were more likely to gamble online compared to women.

Internet addiction was the strongest predictor of online gambling. This means that participants who had Internet addiction had higher levels of online gambling than those who did not. Participants who used substances in general, and, especially, those who used cocaine or heroin, had higher levels of online gambling than those who did not. Participants who reported that they had attempted suicide also had higher levels of

online gambling than those who did not. Finally, participants who engaged in online sex had higher levels of online gambling than those who did not. But there was no association between online gambling and alcohol abuse.

How you can use this research

This study highlights the need for government to plan and implement online gambling prevention programs for military personnel. Gambling prevention programs should be web-based or telephone based to reach people who are stationed in different locations. Future research should consider other factors, such as motivation and attitudes, when exploring online gambling. Also, future research should explore how online gambling is related to various impulse control behaviours over time. This would help determine if online gambling precedes or follows the development of these behaviours.

About the Researcher

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