What this research is about
Betting on the outcomes of sports is a popular activity worldwide. Sports betting is typically thought of as a form of gambling. However, it has been argued that sports betting is distinct from other forms of gambling. There is a lot of information available for many types of sports, such as performance statistics. Many sports fans have extensive knowledge of the sports and the teams playing. This can influence the ways that people bet and may even improve their chances at winning. Some fans may even bet on certain teams to demonstrate loyalty to their favourite teams. These reasons demonstrate that motivations for sports betting are unique and distinct from other forms of gambling.

The aim of this study was to create an instrument, the Sports Betting Motivation Scale (SBMS), to measure motivations for sports betting. The researchers also aimed to adapt a measure of problematic gambling behaviour, the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI), to be used for sports betting. Together, these instruments were used to study how sports betting motivations affect the risk of problematic sports betting behaviour.

What the researchers did
The researchers designed three studies. The aim of the first study was to develop the SBMS. The researchers interviewed 30 Turkish men who bet on sports regularly. Participants were asked why they bet on sports. This information was analyzed to create a pool of potential items to be included in the scale. The items were reviewed by five experts and adjusted accordingly. The items were then tested in two stages with a total of 481 people who bet on sports to create the SBMS. Over 90% of participants were male.

The aim of the second study was to adapt the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) to Turkish and to measure problematic sports betting only. The word “gambling” was replaced with “sports betting”, and “bet” was replaced with “sports bet”. The measure was translated from English to Turkish. The new instrument was called the Problem Sports Betting Severity Index (PSBSI). The instrument was then tested on people who bet regularly on sports.

The aim of the third study was to see how sports betting motivations are related to problematic sports betting. A total of 643 people who regularly bet on sports and identified as sports fans participated in the study. They filled out the SBMS and the PSBSI.

What you need to know
Sports betting is a popular form of gambling. People may bet on sports for a variety of reasons that are unique to sports betting (as opposed to other forms of gambling). The aim of this study was to develop a scale, called the Sports Betting Motivation Scale (SBMS), to assess motivations for sports betting. The researchers also wanted to know how sports betting motivation is related to the risk of sports betting addiction. They adapted the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) to assess problematic sports betting. The researchers identified several motivations related to sports betting addiction: making money, socialization, and being in the game. In contrast, betting on sports for fun was related to a lower risk of addiction.
What the researchers found

In the first study, the researchers had an initial pool of 74 items that was reduced to 63 items after consultation with five experts. These items were tested with 251 people who bet regularly on sports to yield a smaller scale with 37 items and 7 dimensions. Each dimension was a motivation for sports betting: make money, for fun, socialization, recreation/escape, knowledge of the game, interest in the sport, and being in the game. The 37 items were tested again on 230 new participants. The analyses confirmed that the SBMS was a valid instrument for measuring motivations in Turkish people who bet on sports.

In the second study, the researchers tested the PSBSI in the same group of 251 participants as the first study. The analyses confirmed that the PSBSI was a valid tool to measure problematic sports betting.

In the third study, most of the participants were male (89.3%) and between 18 to 28 years old (64.9%). Of note, all participants had a PSBSI score equal to or greater than 9. In the PSBSI, a score greater than 8 is categorized as problematic sports betting. The researchers found that the motivations of “making money”, “socialization”, and “being in the game” were positive predictors of sports betting addiction. People who bet on sports for these motivations are more likely to develop a sports betting addiction. “Fun” was a negative predictor, suggesting that people who engage in sports betting for fun are less likely to develop a sports betting addiction. The motivations of “recreation/escape”, “knowledge of the game”, and “interest in sport” were not related to the development of sports betting addiction.

How you can use this research

This research could be useful for gambling researchers, particularly those interested in sports betting. The results of this study showed that the SBMS is a valid tool that can be used to measure motivations for sports betting specifically. The researchers also demonstrated that several motivations of sports betting are risk factors of sports betting addiction.

About the researchers

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About Gambling Research Exchange (GREO)

Gambling Research Exchange (GREO) has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. GREO is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. Our goal is to support evidence-informed decision making in safer gambling policies, standards, and practices. The work we do is intended for researchers, policy makers, gambling regulators and operators, and treatment and prevention service providers.

Learn more about GREO by visiting greo.ca or emailing info@greo.ca.