Gambling behaviour of adolescents in Imphal, India

What this research is about

This study took place in Imphal, the capital city of the Indian state of Manipur. Gambling is widespread in Manipur even though it is illegal. Many adults and adolescents gamble for fun and enjoyment since entertainment is limited in Manipur. Housie bumper draw (a type of bingo) has been used by churches, local clubs and state organizations to raise funds for charity. Public gambling is also held during festivals. Adolescents are encouraged and allowed to play in these events. This study examined personal and environmental factors that affected gambling behaviour of adolescents in Imphal. Personal factors included gender, age, ethnic group, religion, and motives for gambling. Environment factors included availability of local gambling, families, friends and media.

What the researcher did

The researcher recruited students from 8 high schools from middle-class communities in Imphal. The survey was administered during class upon approval from the principals, and then mailed back to the researcher. A total of 384 students completed the survey. These students were from grades 7 to 12 and between the ages of 11 to 21. The survey collected the following information:

- Demographic information including age, gender, educational level, ethnic group and religion.
- Gambling behaviour in the last 12 months, including types of games played, frequency, amount of money spent, if they had gambled for a price or value, if they played with friends, families, relatives and organizers, and if they were likely to gamble again in the future.
- Gambling problem, such as feeling tense and restless when trying to cut down on gambling, chasing losses, betting with more and more money, and gambling to escape from problems.

What the researcher found

Of the 384 adolescents, 162 (42.4%) reported that they had gambled in the last 12 months. Most adolescents (over 90%) did not have a gambling problem. Personal factors that influenced gambling behaviour were gender, educational level and ethnic group. There were more male adolescents who gambled than females. Males were more likely to play games of skills, whereas females were more likely to play games of chance. No adolescent in grade 7-8 had gambled. Half of the gamblers were in grade 9-10 and the other half in grade 11-12. Most were from Meetei and Naga ethnic groups. Parents did not seem to have an influence on adolescent gambling. Having friends who gambled was the main environment factor. About 77% indicated that they played with their friends and 83% learned how to play a game from their friends.

What you need to know

This study examined personal and environmental factors that affected gambling behaviour of adolescents in Imphal, India. Of the 384 adolescents who completed the survey, 162 (42.4%) had gambled in the last 12 months. Most adolescents (over 90%) did not have a gambling problem. Personal factors that influenced gambling behaviour were gender, educational level and ethnic group. There were more male adolescents who gambled than females. Males were more likely to play games of skills, whereas females were more likely to play games of chance. No adolescent in grade 7-8 had gambled. Half of the gamblers were in grade 9-10 and the other half in grade 11-12. Most were from Meetei and Naga ethnic groups. Parents did not seem to have an influence on adolescent gambling. Having friends who gambled was the main environment factor. About 77% indicated that they played with their friends and 83% learned how to play a game from their friends.
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There were more male adolescents who gambled<br>than female adolescents. The most popular games<br>for males were sports betting, housie bumper draw<br>(bingo), and card games. The most popular gambles<br>for females were ludu (dice game), housie bumper<br>draw, and lottery. Thus, males were more likely to<br>play games of skills, whereas females were more<br>likely to play games of chance.

Among the gamblers, the majority indicated they<br>were likely to gamble again in the future. Over 90%<br>did not have a gambling problem. There were 9<br>adolescents who might be at-risk and 3 adolescents<br>who might have probable pathological gambling.<br>Their most common problem was chasing losses.<br>This was followed by thinking about gambling all the<br>time, spending more and more money on gambling,<br>becoming tense and restless when trying to cut down,<br>and gambling as a way to escape from problems.

Parents and the media did not seem to have an effect<br>on adolescent gambling. Over 80% indicated that<br>their parents did not gamble in the past year. Few<br>(6%) reported that they had gained knowledge about<br>a game from advertisement in the media. Friends<br>seemed to be the main environment factor. About<br>77% played with their friends and 83% learned how<br>to play a game from their friends.

Gender (male), education level (grades 9 to 12), and<br>ethnic group (Meetei or Naga) predicted whether<br>adolescents participated in gambling. Parents’<br>gambling frequency, parents’ marital status, age,<br>and religion did not have an effect on adolescent<br>gambling.

How you can use this research
This study suggests that schools and educators<br>should raise awareness of gambling and its<br>consequences among youth and their parents.<br>The government of Manipur should also tackle widespread gambling issues in the state. This study can be used by researchers to compare adolescent gambling cross-culturally.

About the Researcher
Pisgahbuan Gonmei was a Master student at<br>Bangkok University, where he did this study.

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