



## Motivation for playing social casino games can influence gambling behaviour

### What this research is about

Social casino games are free games available on social networking sites, such as Facebook. They are set up to be similar to gambling games. No money is required to play and no money is won or lost. Instead, players are given free credits to wager and the aim is to win more credits to continue play. However, players can buy additional credits to continue play or to progress in the games. There is some evidence that suggests playing social casino games can reduce gambling behaviour in people with gambling disorder. But other research has also suggested that playing social casino games can lead to future gambling behaviour. A research study reported that players of social casino games made the move to online gambling when they were re-contacted six months later.

The motivations or reasons that people play social casino games may have an influence on gambling behaviour. Some people may try to build their gambling skills by playing social casino games even though skill building is not possible with games of chance (e.g., slot machines). Others may play social casino games to help them avoid engaging in real gambling. Thus, this study examined how motivations for playing social casino games might affect the gambling behaviour of disordered gamblers.

### What the researcher did

The researchers recruited gamblers who played social casino games to complete an online survey. In total, 140 disordered gamblers who had moderate-risk or problem gambling were involved in this study. Their age ranged from 19 to 70 years. They completed an online survey that assessed their problem gambling severity, motivation for playing social casino games, and if their

### What you need to know

People may have different motivations or reasons for playing social casino games. This can have an impact on their gambling behaviour. The current study examined how motivations for playing social casino games might affect gambling behaviour. In total, 140 disordered gamblers who had moderate-risk or problem gambling completed an online survey.

Disordered gamblers who played social casino games for social reasons reported an increase in their gambling behaviour. Those who were motivated to build their gambling skills also had an increase in their gambling behaviour as a result of playing social casino games. On the other hand, playing social casino games to reduce the urge to gamble was associated with a decrease in gambling behaviour.

gambling behaviour had decreased or increased as a result of playing social casino games.

Motivation for playing social casino games included: coping motives or playing to cope with negative life events and forget about worries; social motives or playing to have social contact with others; and enhancement motives or playing to have fun and excitement. Participants were also asked if they played social casino games to build skills for later gambling and if they played to reduce the urge to gamble.

### What the researcher found

Participants who increased their gambling behaviour reported more social motives and a greater desire to build gambling skills. Those who decreased their gambling behaviour reported a greater desire to reduce the urge to gamble.

Playing social casino games for social motives and to build gambling skills was associated with an increase in gambling behaviour. On the other hand, playing social casino games to reduce the urge to gamble was associated with a decrease in gambling behaviour. Playing social casino games to cope with negative life events or to have fun and excitement had no effect on gambling behaviour.

#### How you can use this research

Problem gambling prevention and treatment providers may find this study useful. The results suggest that social casino gaming may be able to replace real gambling for some disordered gamblers. Specifically, social casino games may assist disordered gamblers who want to cut down on their gambling behaviour. However, for those who want to abstain from gambling completely, social casino games may be too similar to online gambling games and may trigger the urge to gamble. More research is still needed to examine how social casino games can be used as a tool to help disordered gamblers.

#### About the Researcher

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#### Keywords

Social casino gaming, disordered gambling, gambling, motivation, craving, benefits, harm

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