What this research is about

People may drink alcohol when they gamble. Alcohol affects people’s ability to make decisions and inhibits their ability to stop impulsive or risky behaviours. There are concerns that drinking alcohol while gambling can lead to problematic gambling behaviours. Research has shown that people who drink alcohol are more likely to gamble and are more likely to gamble in a problematic way. However, the research is mixed as to whether this is the result of long-term alcohol consumption or the short-term effects of alcohol itself.

The aim of this study was to assess whether people who gamble while drinking do so in a different way compared to people who gamble but do not drink while gambling. Another aim was to assess whether certain gambling behaviours might predict the percentage of time spent gambling while under the influence of alcohol.

What the researchers did

The authors recruited people who gambled weekly or more and who were over the age of 18. Participants had to reside in the U.S. Participants were recruited from the online survey platform Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk). This study consisted of several questionnaires that were completed online.

Participants answered questions about their demographics (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, and education). Gambling behaviours were assessed by asking participants how many days per week they gambled; how many hours they gambled in a typical gambling session; how much money they wagered in a typical gambling session; and which forms of gambling they engaged in, including online and in

What you need to know

It is common for people to consume alcohol when gambling. Gambling under the influence of alcohol may lead to riskier gambling behaviours. However, it may also be the case that long-term alcohol use is associated with more problematic gambling behaviours. The researchers of this study recruited 769 American adults who gambled at least once a week. Participants responded to an online survey with several questionnaires about their alcohol use and gambling behaviours.

The researchers did not find any differences between gambling behaviours when comparing people who did and did not consume alcohol while gambling. However, people who spent more days drinking per month showed more problematic gambling behaviours, spent more time gambling per session, and were more likely to drink and gamble simultaneously. The researchers suggested that drinking while gambling does not appear to cause an increase in gambling behaviours during a gambling session. But, it indicates that the person has a higher rate of alcohol use in their daily life and is at greater risk for gambling problems.

Alcohol consumption while gambling

Alcohol consumption was assessed by asking participants three questions. Participants were asked how many days per month they consumed alcohol; what percentage of time that they gambled was spent under the influence of alcohol; and how many drinks they consumed when they drank and gambled.
What the researchers found

A total of 769 participants completed the study. Most participants were men (66%), White (69%), and married (59%). Most participants held a bachelor’s degree or higher (72%). The average time spent gambling was nearly 4 days per week and approximately 5 hours per session. The average spending was roughly $257 USD per session.

Approximately 73% of participants gambled while consuming alcohol. They estimated that they spent 38.89% of the total time spent gambling under the influence of alcohol and averaged approximately 4 standard drinks per gambling session. About 59% of participants who drank and gambled were at high-risk for development of gambling problems.

The researchers examined whether there were predictors for gambling and drinking at the same time. A predictor is a factor that is statistically associated with an increase or a decrease in an outcome (i.e., gambling while drinking). Having a higher PGSI score and spending more days drinking per month were predictors of drinking and gambling simultaneously. The researchers also found that participants who spent more hours gambling per gambling session, who scored higher on the PGSI, and who spent more days drinking per month were more likely to spend at least half of the time they gambled under the influence of alcohol.

The researchers did not find any differences in gambling behaviours between people who drank and gambled simultaneously and those who did not drink alcohol when they gambled. The researchers suggested that drinking while gambling does not appear to cause an increase in gambling behaviour during a gambling session. However, it indicates that the person has a higher rate of alcohol consumption in their daily life and is at greater risk for gambling problems.

How you can use this research

This study could be useful for researchers and clinicians. Researchers interested in the relationship between alcohol and gambling could use these results to further investigate the harm of combining these two activities together, especially on a long-term basis. The results of this study indicate that the effects of alcohol while gambling are not necessarily the problem, but are indicative of someone who may engage in riskier behaviours overall. Clinicians could use these findings to inform their practice and treatment of people who struggle to control their alcohol use and gambling behaviours.

About the researchers

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Citation


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