

research snapshot

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Mental illness and socio-economic factors among women and men with gambling disorder in Sweden

What this research is about

Gambling is a popular activity for both men and women. Women who gamble may be at as much risk for developing gambling disorder (GD) as men who gamble. GD is a mental health condition. People with GD may have other mental health conditions that co-occur (e.g., depression and anxiety disorders). People who gamble may also have socio-economic vulnerability. In particular, people with a lower income tend to spend a higher percentage of their income on gambling.

The researchers of this study compared men and women with GD to see if there were gender differences in the co-occurrence of mental health conditions and socio-economic vulnerability. They also examined whether these factors appeared before, at the same time, or after a diagnosis of GD.

What the researchers did

The researchers used information from the following databases: (1) the National Patient Register; (2) the Swedish Prescribed Drug Register; and (3) the Longitudinal Integrated Database for Health Insurance and Labour Market Studies (LISA) register. The first two are administered by the National Board of Health and Welfare. The LISA register is administered by Statistics Sweden. The data retrieved included information about adults with a diagnosis of GD in Swedish specialized healthcare from 2005 to 2019.

The researchers matched each of the participants with GD with two control participants from the general population. These control participants were randomly selected from the LISA register. They were matched to the same gender and the same age as the person with GD. The control participants could not

What you need to know

People with gambling disorder (GD) may have other mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety. They may also have socio-economic vulnerability. This study compared men and women with GD to see if there were gender differences in the co-occurrence of mental health conditions and socio-economic vulnerability. The researchers examined data from 10,776 adults from Sweden. They matched each of the 3,592 adults with GD with two controls without GD, based on age and gender. Women with GD were more likely to have a co-occurring mental health condition than men with GD. Women were more likely to be diagnosed with another mental health condition before their GD diagnosis. But men were more likely to receive both diagnoses at the same time. Women were more likely to receive social welfare payments and sickness support than men. There was no gender difference in unemployment. Women were also more likely to receive sickness/activity/rehabilitation compensation before their GD diagnosis. Men were more likely to receive these types of support after their GD diagnosis.

have ever been diagnosed with GD. Only adults aged 18 and older were included in this study. In total, 10,776 people were included in the analysis. Among them, 3,592 had a GD diagnosis.

The researchers used the data from the National Patient Register to identify whether participants had a co-occurring mental health condition. Participants with in- and out-patient visits as noted in the National

Patient Register, as well as those with a medical prescription for a mental health condition, were identified as having a mental health diagnosis. This study included alcohol use disorders, other substance use disorders, psychotic disorders, affective disorders, anxiety disorders, phobias, PTSD, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and dissociative syndromes. It also included neuropsychiatric disorders/behavioural and emotional disorders with onset in childhood or adolescence, as well as mental health disorders not specified. Medical prescriptions included drugs for alcohol dependence, antidepressants, sedatives, and sedatives and hypnotics.

Socio-economic status was defined by any period of unemployment, social welfare payments, or sickness/activity/rehabilitation compensation in the LISA database.

What the researchers found

Around 78% were men and 22% were women. Most men were between 34 and 35 years old, while women were between 39 and 41 years old.

Participants with GD were over two times more likely to have a co-occurring mental health condition than those without GD. Among those with GD, women were more likely to have a co-occurring mental health condition than men, especially affective and anxiety disorders. Women were more likely to be diagnosed with another mental health condition before their GD diagnosis. But men were more likely to receive both diagnoses at the same time.

Participants with GD were more likely to have a drug prescription for a mental health condition than those without GD. Women were more likely to have a prescription of hypnotics, sedatives, and/or antidepressants than men. Drug prescriptions were more likely to be given before a GD diagnosis for women. For men, drug prescriptions were more likely to happen at the same time as their GD diagnosis.

Women were more likely to receive social welfare payments and sickness support than men. There was no difference in unemployment between men and women. Women were also more likely to receive sickness/activity/rehabilitation compensation before

their GD diagnosis. Men were more likely to receive these types of support after their GD diagnosis.

How you can use this research

Practitioners can use this information to identify opportunities for gambling disorder screenings.

About the researchers

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