

research snapshot

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Esports viewing, and not video gaming, is associated with increased gambling participation

What this research is about

Some past research has linked playing video games to increased participation in gambling. This has raised concerns that video gaming may lead to the development of problem gambling behaviours. This may be because recent video games and gambling games have many similarities. There are now social network casino games, free-to-play gambling games, and video games that allow gambling using virtual goods and skins.

Esports are organized, multiplayer video game competitions. Betting on the outcomes of esports matches has been on the rise. Therefore, esports are expected to be another predictor of involvement in gambling.

The current study aimed to investigate two research questions:

- 1) Is playing video games and esports associated with increased levels of gambling?
- 2) Are higher rates of problematic video gaming associated with higher rates of gambling and problem gambling?

What the researchers did

Participants were 613 video game players who also watched esports and/or who had gambled within the previous 12 months. Participants completed an international online survey. The survey included the Game Addiction Scale (GAS), a measure of problematic gaming behaviours. It also included the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI), a measure of problem gambling behaviours and consequences. Additionally, participants reported their habits for

What you need to know

The findings of the current study suggest that playing video games in itself does not lead to gambling. But esports viewing is associated with video game-related gambling and gambling on the Internet. Esports viewing is not associated with offline gambling. Also, problematic video gaming appears to act against involvement in both online and offline gambling, and the development of problem gambling behaviours. This suggests that those who are addicted to video gaming are unlikely to seek out gambling activities.

each of the following activities: video gaming, esports watching, offline gambling, online gambling, and video game-related gambling. Habits included frequency, average weekly hours, and average monthly spending. Video game-related gambling included betting on esports matches, wagering on in-game items, and social network gambling games.

What the researchers found

Participants with increased video gaming habits (more time and money spent playing video games) engaged in more video game-related gambling. Increased video gaming also predicted increased esports viewing among participants. It also predicted more severe problematic gaming behaviours among participants.

Participants with increased esports viewing habits engaged in more video game-related gambling and online gambling. The relationship was stronger between esports viewing and online gambling. Esports viewing was not related to offline gambling. This suggests that esports viewing is associated with

increased gambling via video games and the Internet, but not with offline gambling.

Participants with increased video game-related gambling habits engaged in more online gambling. Video game-related gambling habits were not related to offline gambling habits.

Participants who had more severe problematic gaming behaviours were less likely to gamble online or offline. There was no relationship between problematic gaming behaviours and problem gambling behaviours. This suggests that problematic gaming may act against involvement in both online and offline gambling, and the development of problem gambling behaviours.

Participants who had more severe problem gambling behaviours engaged in more video game-related gambling and online gambling. There was no relationship between problem gambling severity and offline gambling.

How you can use this research

The findings suggest that problematic gaming and problem gambling require different criteria for screening and different treatment approaches. These must be based on the unique characteristics of each activity. Also, clinicians should consider the role and effect of esports viewing in the development of problem gambling.

About the researchers

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Keywords

Esports, free-to-play, gambling, games, addiction, virtual goods

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