What this research is about

Disordered gambling is defined as repetitive gambling that leads to emotional or financial distress. Many research studies have explored the role of personality in disordered gambling. These studies commonly consider the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality. However, there are concerns regarding its comprehensiveness. An alternative model is HEXACO. This model examines six personality traits: honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience.

Honesty-humility is a unique trait of the HEXACO model compared to the FFM. People high in honesty-humility are sincere and modest. Only one study has examined the associations between HEXACO traits and gambling. As such, the current study explored which HEXACO traits were related to gambling behaviour, gambling severity, and motivations to gamble.

What the researchers did

Participants included 326 undergraduate students from the University of Calgary in Canada. These young adults answered several questions. The questions assessed their gambling behaviour, motives, and severity. Their personality was also assessed using the HEXACO model. Gambling behaviour included gambling activities they participated in the past 12 months. Examples of activities included lottery, casino games, and internet gambling. Gambling motives included gambling to cope with negative emotions, to improve mood, to socialize, or to make money. Personality traits included in the HEXACO model were honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Researchers also recorded which HEXACO traits were observed by a friend of each participant.

For all participants, the researchers analyzed which HEXACO traits were related to a greater likelihood of gambling. Among the young adults who gambled in the past 12 months, the researchers examined associations between personality traits and gambling severity. The researchers also analyzed whether any of the motives for gambling explained why people with certain personality traits were more likely to develop gambling problems.

What the researchers found

The majority of participants were non-disordered gamblers. Common gambling activities included lottery, raffles, and casino games. Males were more likely to report gambling in the past 12 months compared to females. Young adults with low honesty-humility were more likely to report gambling problems. In contrast, young adults with low conscientiousness and agreeableness had more severe gambling problems. The personality traits showed unique motivational pathways that led to gambling problems. These results may be useful in developing effective prevention and treatment programs.

What you need to know

This study examined the influence of personality on gambling. The researchers used the HEXACO personality model. They found that young adults with high honesty-humility were more likely to be non-gamblers. These individuals also reported less severe gambling problems. In contrast, young adults with low conscientiousness and agreeableness had more severe gambling problems. The personality traits showed unique motivational pathways that led to gambling problems. These results may be useful in developing effective prevention and treatment programs.
involvement compared to those with high honesty-humility scores. Observer reports of personality traits given by a friend confirmed that low honesty-humility was associated with gambling involvement. Observer reports also found that participants’ who were considered to have more openness to experience were more likely to gamble.

Among gamblers, males had more severe gambling problems than females. Young adults with low conscientiousness, agreeableness, and honesty-humility had more severe gambling problems than those that scored high in these traits. Observer reports of personality traits showed that only agreeableness predicated gambling severity.

Young adults low in honesty-humility appeared to gamble to reduce their negative emotions, to improve their mood, or to make money. Young adults low in agreeableness mostly gambled to reduce their negative emotions or to make money. Conscientiousness did not influence gambling severity through any of the gambling motives.

**How you can use this research**

Clinicians can screen young adults for gambling disorder using their personality traits. For example, people showing low honesty-humility may be at greater risk and may benefit from prevention efforts. Gambling treatment providers can further explore gambling motives to help reduce gambling in young adults. Future research can study the HEXACO traits in clinical samples of disordered gamblers to further determine the influence of personality on aspects of gambling.

**About the researchers**

Daniel S. McGrath, Tessa Neilson, Kibeom Lee, Christina L. Rash and Mandana Rad are affiliated with the Department of Psychology at the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada. For more information about this study, please contact Dr. Daniel S. McGrath at daniel.mcgrath@ucalgary.ca.

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**Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO)**

Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO) has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. GREO is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. Our goal is to support evidence-informed decision making in responsible gambling policies, standards and practices. The work we do is intended for researchers, policy makers, gambling regulators and operators, and treatment and prevention service providers.

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