

knowledge snapshot

Who uses self-exclusion to control problem gambling?



What this article is about

Self-exclusion involves gamblers voluntarily banning themselves from gambling venues (online or offline) for a set period of time. It exists to help gamblers control their gambling and prevent gambling problems. Past research has found that self-exclusion has positive effects on gambling behaviour and quality of life. However, it is not used by many gamblers. There is a need to better understand who uses self-exclusion, their motives and goals, and barriers to use.

This review explores the characteristics of people who self-exclude from land-based or online gambling. It also compares between self-excluders from land-based and online gambling. The information may lead to the development of better strategies in promoting the use of self-exclusion.

What was done?

The authors searched for published research studies on gamblers who excluded themselves from land-based and/or online gambling. The authors searched five electronic databases: PsycINFO, PubMed, PSYINDEX, MEDLINE, and Embase. They searched for studies that were published between 1997 and 2017. The studies had to be written in German or English. They could use quantitative methods (i.e., collect data through surveys and rely on statistical procedures), qualitative methods (i.e., seek in depth understanding through open-ended questions and observations), or a combination of both methods. The studies must provide information on the number of participants involved.

The authors rated the quality of each study using the *Standard Quality Assessment Criteria for Evaluating*

Why is this article important?

This review describes the sociodemographic and gambling characteristics of people who self-excluded from land-based or online gambling. It addresses the reasons why people used self-exclusion and the barriers to use. Main reasons for self-exclusion included financial problems and the role of significant others. Main barriers included complicated enrollment processes, lack of support from venue staff, and not being able to exclude from multiple venues at once. Self-excluders were also not given enough information about self-exclusion programs. This review offers information on how to increase the use of self-exclusion as an early intervention for gambling problems.

Primary Research Papers for a Variety of Fields. The authors looked for relevant information about self-excluders of land-based and online gambling, and organized their findings by common themes. The authors focused on sociodemographic features, gambling behaviours, use of other health care support, goals and reasons for self-exclusion, and barriers to using self-exclusion.

What you need to know

There were 16 studies included in the review: 13 quantitative studies, two qualitative studies, and one study using both methods. Twelve studies researched gamblers who self-excluded from land-based gambling venues. Four studies researched gamblers who self-excluded from online gambling websites.

Gamblers who had excluded themselves from land-based gambling were generally men and in their 40s. Self-excluders from online gambling were on average 10 years younger than self-excluders from land-based gambling. There were more men among self-excluders from online gambling than from land-based gambling.

The main reasons for self-exclusion were financial problems, feelings of losing control, and relationship problems with significant others. Financial problems and significant others were reported less often by online self-excluders than land-based self-excluders. The primary goal of self-exclusion was to prevent further gambling or to stop gambling completely. This suggested that self-exclusion was used more often at a later stage of problem gambling.

Barriers to self-exclusion were only examined for land-based gambling. The main barriers included complicated enrollment processes, not being able to self-exclude from multiple venues at once, little support from venue staff, and limited information on self-exclusion programs. Many land-based and online self-excluders disagreed with the need for other forms of support, such as counselling.

Who is it intended for?

This review is intended for public health, gambling operators, and gambling regulators to promote the use of self-exclusion among gamblers. Self-exclusion programs could target gamblers who are at risk of problem gambling. They could address reasons for self-exclusion, such as financial or relationship issues. Gambling venue staff could be trained to recognize signs of problem gambling and inform gamblers about self-exclusion programs. Barriers to self-exclusion could be reduced by providing the option to self-exclude from multiple venues or gambling websites at once. There could also be the option for gamblers to select the length of time of their self-exclusion. Finally, self-exclusion could be promoted with other forms of support, such as counseling.

About the researchers

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Citation

Motka, F., Grüne, B., Slecza, P., Braun, B., Örnberg, J. C., & Kraus, L. (2018). Who uses self-exclusion to regulate problem gambling? A systematic literature review. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions, 7*(4), 903-916. <https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.7.2018.96>

Study Funding

FM, BG, PS, BB, and LK were supported by the Bavarian State Ministry of Finance, Regional Development and Regional Identity via the Bavarian State Ministry of Public Health and Care Services in the context of the Bavarian Coordination Centre for Gambling Issues (LSG Bayern). Funding for JCÖ and LK was provided by the Swedish program grant “Responding to and Reducing Gambling Problems – Studies in Help-seeking, Measurement, Comorbidity and Policy Impacts” financed by the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte).

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