

research snapshot

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Exposure to different types of gambling promotions and gambling behaviours among Australian secondary school students

What this research is about

Most adolescents have gambled at some point in their lives. Adolescent gambling can lead to harms, including missing and dropping out of school, family disruptions, and substance use. Advertising can have a powerful impact on children and adolescents' health behaviours. But there is little research on the impact of gambling advertisements on young people's gambling behaviours. The purpose of this study was to explore the links between exposure to types of gambling advertising and promotions and adolescent gambling behaviours.

What the researchers did

The researchers used data from the 2017 Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug (ASSAD) Survey. A random sample of schools, based on education sector (e.g., Government, Catholic, and Independent schools), was developed for each of the two participating Australian states. Within each participating school, classes of students in Years 7 to 12 were randomly selected to complete the 2017 ASSAD survey.

In the survey, students reported:

- Gambling behaviours (ever gambling and gambling in the last month, types of gambling activities).
- How many people they knew (e.g., mother, father, caregiver, sibling, relative, best friend) who gambled in the last 30 days.
- Exposure to gambling promotions during the last 30 days (e.g., ads for gambling on TV, social media, websites, live studio crosses).
- Sociodemographic characteristics. These included, postcode, age, gender, money to spend on self per week, school achievement and attendance, etc.

What you need to know

Adolescent gambling can lead to harms. Harms may include missing and dropping out of school, family disruptions, and substance use. Advertising can have a powerful impact on children and adolescents' health behaviours. The purpose of this study was to explore the links between exposure to types of gambling advertising and promotions and adolescent gambling behaviours. The researchers used data from the 2017 Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug (ASSAD) survey. A total of 6,377 student responses were used in this study. About 6% of students reported gambling in the past month. Most students (81%) had been exposed to some form of gambling promotion or advertisement in the last month. This was most commonly seen on television (85%), social media (46%), or at sporting events (40%). Exposure to online gambling (e.g., websites, social media) in the last month was linked to gambling in the last month and being classified as at-risk or problem gambling.

Students were also asked to complete the 12 item Diagnostic Statistics Manual IV adapted for Juveniles (DSM-IV-[MR]-J) to assess their problem gambling.

What the researchers found

A total of 93 schools from Victoria and Queensland participated in the ASSAD survey in 2017. Over 7,000 students took part in the survey. Students with missing responses to the gambling questions were removed from the dataset. The final sample size was 6,377 students.

Over half of the students were female (56%). The largest age group was those aged 16 years (23%). Most were from major cities (65%). Just over half of the students (54%) were classified as being disadvantaged based on the Australian Government's Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA).

About 6% of students reported gambling in the past month. Around 10% of these students were classified as at-risk or problem gambling. The most common type of gambling in the last month was betting on horse or dog races. About 4% of all students reported gambling on any hard modality (e.g., card games, casino games, sports betting, and poker machines) or any soft modality (e.g., lottery tickets, raffles).

Most students (81%) had been exposed to some form of gambling promotion or advertisement in the last month. This was most commonly seen on television (85%), social media (46%), or at sporting events (40%).

The researchers identified four groups of gambling promotion exposure. These groups included: (1) Online ads (e.g., websites, pop-ups, social media); (2) Retail, pubs, & clubs ads (e.g., shops, clubs, pubs); (3) Sports/celebrity ads (e.g., sporting events, celebrity promotions); and (4) Traditional media ads (e.g., television, radio, billboards).

Except for traditional media ads, exposure to other types of gambling advertising was linked to gambling outcomes (e.g., gambling in the last month, participation in hard gambling activities, and being classified as at-risk or problem gambling).

After the researchers adjusted for sociodemographic characteristics, only exposure to online ads in the last month was linked to gambling in the last month and being classified as at-risk or problem gambling. Exposure to online ads was not associated with participating in hard gambling activities.

How you can use this research

Policy makers can use this research to support imposing restrictions on gambling advertisements and promotions, especially those on the internet.

About the researchers

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Citation

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