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A comparison of gambling beliefs among people who bet on sports versus other forms of gambling in Singapore

What this research is about

Gambling is a popular recreational activity. It is widely accepted in Singapore. Frequent gambling can lead to problem gambling. People with problem gambling are at risk of social, psychological, and financial issues.

Sports betting is one form of gambling. During sports broadcasts, there are a lot of advertisements about sports betting opportunities. These marketing campaigns spread messages that give the impression that gambling activities are fun and exciting. Such messages can foster cognitive distortions about gambling. Cognitive distortions are beliefs and assumptions that are exaggerated or untrue. Cognitive distortions related to gambling are linked with problem gambling and gambling frequency.

Two cognitive distortions are the gambler's fallacy and the illusion of control. The gambler's fallacy is a belief that certain outcomes are more or less likely to happen than they really are, based on what has happened so far. For example, people may believe that they are on a winning streak, even though each win and loss is independent of each other. The illusion of control is a belief that one can influence the outcome of a wager via skill or strategy.

Previous research has found that there are different profiles of people who gamble, depending on the gambling activity they prefer. For example, people who bet on sports are distinct from people who gamble on other activities. This is because sports betting is often thought of as a more skill-based form of gambling. In this study, the researchers compared the gambling beliefs of people who bet on sports,

What you need to know

Gambling is a popular recreational activity. It is widely accepted in Singapore. Cognitive distortions are beliefs and assumptions that are exaggerated or untrue. Cognitive distortions related to gambling are linked with problem gambling and gambling frequency. The researchers compared the cognitions of people who bet on sports and people who gambled but not on sports. A total of 713 participants were recruited in Singapore. This included 80 participants who bet on sports, 270 participants who gambled on other activities, and 363 participants who did not gamble. Participants completed the Gamblers Beliefs Questionnaire (GBQ) and the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS). People who bet on sports had higher scores for Luck/Perseverance than those who did not gamble and those who gambled on other activities. People who bet on sports also scored higher on the Illusion of Control than people who did not gamble and those who gambled on other activities. In addition, participants who bet on sports were more likely to have problem gambling based on the SOGS.

people who gamble but not on sports, and people who do not gamble.

What the researchers did

This study was conducted in Singapore. Participants were recruited at subway stations situated around Singapore. Both men and women participants were recruited. To be included in the study, participants had to be either a Singaporean citizen or a permanent

resident. They also had to be over 21 years, which is the minimum legal age for gambling in Singapore.

Participants were asked to fill out an online survey via a link that could be accessed through mobile phones. The survey included questions about demographics (e.g., age, gender), and gambling activities that the participants engaged in over the last 12 months. Gambling beliefs were measured using the Gambler's Beliefs Questionnaire (GBQ). The GBQ includes questions that measure two cognitive distortions, including Luck/Perseverance and the Illusion of Control. The South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS) was also used to measure pathological gambling tendencies.

A total of 713 responses were collected. Based on their responses, the participants were divided into three groups: (1) 80 participants who engaged in sports betting; (2) 270 participants who engaged in non-sport betting gambling activities; and (3) 363 participants who had not gambled.

What the researchers found

The researchers found that people who bet on sports had higher scores for Luck/Perseverance than those who did not gamble and those who gambled on other activities. This suggests that people who bet on sports are more likely to have luck-based thinking. This kind of thinking may make people who bet on sports believe that they will eventually recover their losses or make more money if they continue to bet.

People who bet on sports also scored higher on the Illusion of Control than people who did not gamble and those who gambled on other activities. In other words, people who bet on sports are more likely to believe they can control the outcomes of their wagers.

In addition, people who bet on sports scored higher on the SOGS than the other two groups. Thus, they were more likely to have problem gambling behaviours than the other two groups. The researchers suggest that cognitive distortions related to Luck/ Perseverance and the Illusion of Control may make people who bet on sports more vulnerable to

problem gambling compared to people who do not gamble and those who gamble on other activities.

How you can use this research

The findings of this study can inform prevention and treatment programmes. For example, practitioners could tailor prevention and treatment protocols to address the cognitive distortions of people who bet on sports.

About the researchers

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