



RESEARCH SYNOPSIS

Raylu, N., & Oei, T. P. (2004). Role of culture in gambling and problem gambling. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23(8), 1087-1114. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2003.09.005>

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is currently known about the role played by cultural variables in the initiation and maintenance of gambling?

PURPOSE

To explore cultural variables related to the initiation and maintenance of gambling since culture is not considered in most of the investigations of gambling and problem gambling (PG).

PROCEDURE

A review of relevant articles from the electronic databases PsycINFO, Social Science Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts, Humanities Index, Health and Society Index, and Austrom was conducted.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES

Rates of gambling and problem gambling among different cultural groups; cultural variables that may play a role in initiating and maintaining gambling.

KEY RESULTS

Rates of gambling among different cultural groups: Studies suggest that most cultures have gambling and the presence of PG. Research suggests high rates of gambling among some cultural groups (e.g., Jewish and Chinese), ethnic minorities, and indigenous groups (e.g., the Maoris in New Zealand and American Indians in the United States) in several countries. Cultures that have cultural values and beliefs that favour gambling (such as the Chinese because, for example, many Chinese people have a strong belief in luck) are more likely to gamble or develop PG compared to cultures that do not have values that encourage gambling (e.g., Muslims). Cultural variables that may play a role in initiating and maintaining gambling: Individuals from collective cultures (i.e., cultures that give priority to group goals over personal goals) are more likely to initiate and continue to gamble and subsequently develop PG if members of their cultural group (regardless of whether they are family members or other members of their culture group) model or teach them their

culture's positive values, beliefs, and attitudes regarding gambling. Furthermore, individuals from collective cultures are less likely to initiate, continue to gamble, and subsequently develop PG if members of their cultural group show disapproval towards gambling. Second, cultural beliefs and values can determine the kinds of gambling that would be punished and the ones that would be reinforced. The GAMECS Project (1999) found that casino gambling was most popular with Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, and Croatian participants. Cards were most popular with Greek, Italian, and Arabic participants, with cards accounting for 15% of total money spent gambling among this group. Macedonian, Korean, and Spanish participants preferred club gaming machines. Horse race gambling was more prevalent among Croatians and Macedonians. Studies that have investigated presentation rates to PG services report individuals from some cultural groups (e.g., Arabic, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese) as being less likely to seek professional help than other cultural groups despite having higher amounts of unpaid debts, having problems clearing their gambling debts, spending more money than they could afford, or thinking their gambling was a problem. Shame was claimed to be a major factor preventing ethnic minorities from accessing PG support services. When individuals immigrate to a new country, stress and circumstances related to the acculturation process (e.g., stressors encountered when trying to adapt to a new environment/ country) could increase the risk of their taking up gambling.

LIMITATIONS

Methodological issues for the studies included in this review that need to be addressed for future research include problems relating to the instruments used to assess problem gambling. The SOGS and DSM-IV are frequently used to assess PG yet there appears to be susceptibility to high rates of wrongly categorizing individuals as problem gamblers. There are also issues relating to the categorization of individuals into global ethnic and racial categories. Many prevalence studies have used global group

comparisons (Caucasians and non-Caucasians) without acknowledging that these global categories contain a range of subgroups with very different characteristics. The final methodological issue relates to controlling for other independent variables. Cultural or ethnic group is only one of the independent variables among a large number explored in some studies yet most do not examine the various aspects of ethnicity/culture (e.g., belief in luck, religious beliefs) and how they are related to problem gambling.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been hypothesized that the cultural variables that play an important role in the development and maintenance of other mental health issues are the same ones that influence initiation and maintenance

of gambling (e.g. cultural beliefs and values, culturally determined help-seeking attitudes, and the process of acculturation). There is a gap in knowledge regarding the role of culture in the higher participation rate of ethnic minorities/non-Caucasians in gambling and problem gambling compared to the dominant cultural group of a country. Further research into the role of culture in gambling and PG is suggested as a means to improve treatment and enhance prevention.

KEYWORDS: culture, ethnicity, gambling, problem gambling, treatment

URL:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0272735803001120>