

research snapshot

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Development of a brief measure that covers all domains of gambling harms

What this research is about

Gambling is a popular recreational activity which can, unfortunately, lead to negative consequences. Harms from gambling can potentially affect finances, occupations, physical and mental health, relationships, and more. It is estimated that problem gambling affects between 0.12% and 5.8% of the population worldwide. Problem gambling estimates, however, fail to reflect the true range of harms caused by gambling. Gambling harms can also affect people at low or moderate risk for developing gambling problems.

Gambling harms have been assessed in several ways. In a previous study, gambling harms were categorized into seven domains. This study involved a large literature review, focus groups and interviews with health professionals, interviews with people experiencing gambling problems, and forum posts on problem gambling. The seven domains are financial harms, work/study harms, health harms, emotional/psychological harms, relationship harms, cultural harms, and crime activity. This led to the development of a 72-item checklist of gambling harms. The Short Gambling Harm Screen (SGHS) was later developed to be a more practical measure. However, the SGHS covers only three domains, namely, financial, emotional/psychological, and relationship harms.

There is a need for a brief measure that examines all seven domains of gambling-related harms. Brief gambling measures can be particularly useful for large, survey-based studies. In the current study, the researchers aimed to examine if a new 7-item scale covering all seven domains could be an accurate

What you need to know

Gambling is an extremely popular activity which can lead to the development of gambling problems. Gambling harms are negative consequences that affect finances, physical and mental health, and other important areas of life. Various measures have been created to assess gambling harms. However, there is need for a brief measure that captures all seven domains of gambling harms proposed in the research literature.

In this study, the researchers created and evaluated a new, brief measure of gambling harms called the 7-item domain-general harm scale (DGHS-7). The researchers administered a survey to 2558 adults in the United Kingdom that included measures of problem gambling, well-being, gambling harms, and the DGHS-7. They found that the DGHS-7 is a valid and reliable measure, supporting the use of the DGHS-7 as a brief measure of gambling harms. This brief measure is valuable to researchers and clinicians who may need to quickly examine gambling harms in research or clinical populations.

measure of gambling harms. This scale is called the 7-item domain-general harm scale (DGHS-7).

What the researchers did

The researchers conducted a large survey in the United Kingdom. The sample consisted of 2558 people who reported gambling activity within the last 12 months. Participants were recruited via Prolific. Most participants were women (62.4%). The average age

was 40.1 years old. The researchers collected information about participants' demographics, problem gambling, personal well-being, and gambling harms.

The 7-item domain-general harm scale (DGHS-7) was administered to participants. In addition, participants completed the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI), the 72-item checklist, the SGHS, and the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI). The researchers examined various aspects of the DGHS-7 including the scale's consistency, reliability, and validity.

What the researchers found

The researchers found support for the DGHS-7 as a brief gambling measure that captures all seven domains of gambling harms. The results indicate that the DGHS-7 is a valid measure of gambling harms when compared with the PGSI, the 72-item checklist of gambling harms, and the SGHS. Participants who scored higher on the DGHS-7 also scored higher on the PGSI, the 72-item checklist, and the SGHS. Moreover, the DGHS-7 exhibits discriminative validity as scores on the DGHS-7 are negatively related to scores on the PWI, a measure of well-being that does not capture gambling harms. Participants who scored higher on the DGHS-7 reported lower well-being.

The researchers also found that the DGHS-7 can be used among people of different genders and income levels. Additionally, the DGHS-7 measures gambling harms in the same way when comparing between people aged 38 and above to those aged below 38.

These findings indicate that gambling harms can be assessed using various valid measures. One key difference of the DGHS-7 from other measures of gambling harms is that it does not provide descriptions of specific harms. Instead, the DGHS-7 asks people to reflect on an overall category of harm. Additionally, the DGHS-7 uses a rating scale (i.e., from 0 to 4) instead of a binary checklist (i.e., yes or no) as used by other measures. The results of this study support the use of the DGHS-7 as a brief measure of gambling harms.

How you can use this research

The DGHS-7 is a useful brief measure that captures all seven domains of gambling harms. It can be used by researchers who need a short measure of gambling harms for large-scale studies. It can also be used by clinicians to quickly evaluate gambling harms their clients may be experiencing. Further research is needed to validate the use of the DGHS-7.

About the researchers

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