



## The link between being financially focused and gambling disorder

### What this research is about

People gauge their self-worth based on their performance in various life domains. These may include the quality of their relationships, education and job achievements, appearance, and physical health. Also, some people focus on how much money they have when evaluating their self-worth. They believe that having more money will increase their happiness and enhance their lives. Financially focused people may look for ways to increase the amount of money they have, such as through hard work and saving. Past research has found that some financially focused people gamble to make money.

The researchers of the current article did two studies to determine if having a financially focused self-concept would contribute to gambling disorder. Study 1 tested if a new scale, the Financially Focused Scale (FFS), would be able to assess the presence of a financially focused self-concept. It also tested if financially focused people would be more apt to gamble problematically. Study 2 examined how gambling motivations could lead financially focused people to develop gambling problems.

### What the researcher did

*Study 1:* Participants were 197 community gamblers living in the United States. They completed a survey online. The survey included the FFS, a scale that the researchers had developed based on the beliefs about appearance scale (BAAS). The BAAS is used in research on eating disorders to determine how important body shape and weight are for self-worth. Participants also rated the degree of importance they attached to 13 life domains for evaluating their self-worth. One domain was the amount of money they had. The other domains were common life domains such as work achievements,

### What you need to know

The researchers did two studies to explore how having a financially focused self-concept might contribute to gambling disorder. In Study 1, the Financially Focused Scale (FFS) was developed and tested. Results showed that participants with higher scores on the FFS (i.e., more financially focused) had more severe gambling problems. Study 2 found that the link between having a financially focused self-concept and gambling disorder was mediated, or explained, by a motivation to gamble to win money. That is, people who were financially focused were more likely to gamble to win money. In turn, being motivated to gamble for money led to more severe gambling problems.

having an attractive look, and quality of relationships. Participants were assessed about the severity of their problem gambling, personal income, personality traits, self-esteem, personal deprivation and materialism. Past research has shown that people who feel deprived relative to others are more likely to gamble. Materialism is the extent to which people use material things to gauge their success and happiness.

*Study 2:* Participants were 220 community gamblers living in the United States. They completed a shorter version of the FFS and an assessment of problem gambling severity online. They also completed an assessment of their motivations for gambling. These included: monetary motives (e.g., 'to win money'); coping motives (e.g., 'to forget worries'); enhancement motives (e.g., 'to feel good'); and social motives (e.g., 'to be sociable').

### What the researcher found

*Study 1:* The FFS was found to be a valid measure of having a financially focused self-concept. Participants who were financially focused judged that the money they had was more important to their self-worth than other life domains. These participants reported more severe gambling problems. They also had lower self-esteem, felt more deprived, and were more materialistic. In terms of personality traits, they were more neurotic, less conscientious and less extraverted than participants who were not as financially focused. But the links between financially focused self-concept and personality traits were very modest. Thus, the extent to which people are financially focused is likely to be independent of personality traits. People with varying personality traits may have a self-concept that is focused on financial success.

Financially focused self-concept predicted problem gambling severity above and beyond factors that had been shown to predict problem gambling in past research (e.g., income, personality traits). This means that participants who were more financially focused had more severe gambling problems.

*Study 2:* Similar to study 1, having a financially focused self-concept was associated with more severe gambling problems. The motivation to gamble for money mediated, or explained, the link between being financially focused and gambling disorder. This means that being financially focused motivated people to gamble to win money. In turn, being motivated to gamble for money led to more severe gambling problems. Coping motives also mediated the link between being financially focused and gambling disorder.

#### How you can use this research

Clinicians and treatment providers can use the FFS to screen problem gamblers for the presence of a financially focused self-concept. If a client's self-worth is focused on financial success, clinicians and treatment providers might want to modify the degree of importance that the client has attached to financial success. For example, they might help their clients avoid comparing the amount of money they have to the amount of money other people have. Also, they might

help their clients find new activities from which they can derive a sense of self-worth.

#### About the Researcher

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#### Keywords

Disordered gambling, gambling motives, money, self-concept, self-worth

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