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Emotion dysregulation mediates the connection between work stress, burnout, and problem gambling

What this research is about

Many people work in stressful environments. Someone's job may be more stressful if it has high demands and if they have little control over their work. People who experience a lot of work stress may 'burnout'. Work burnout is when someone is constantly emotionally exhausted from their work and has negative feelings about their work.

People who have good coping skills may be able to manage high levels of stress. Good coping skills include the ability to regulate one's emotions. However, some people are not good at regulating their emotions. Instead, they may try to suppress or ignore them. If someone with poor emotion regulation has a stressful job, they may try to escape work stress and burnout by gambling. This could lead to problem gambling, which is when someone's gambling habits cause them harm. Problem gambling is associated with poor individual and family well-being. Therefore, people who have stressful jobs and poor emotion regulation may be at risk of developing problem gambling.

This study aimed to understand the psychological factors that influence problem gambling. The researchers predicted that people who have a lot of work stress may burnout. If they burnout and have poor emotion regulation, then they may be at higher risk of developing problem gambling.

What the researchers did

The researchers recruited participants using Amazon Mechanical Turk (an Internet marketplace for crowdsourcing). A total of 1233 people participated in the study. All participants were full-time employees in the United States and were at least 25 years old. Each

What you need to know

Many people work in stressful environments which can cause them to burnout. Burnout is when someone is constantly emotionally exhausted from their work. People who are not able to regulate their emotions may try to escape work stress and burnout by gambling. Therefore, people with stressful jobs and poor emotion regulation may be at risk of problem gambling.

Participants were 1233 full-time employees. They completed online questionnaires about gambling, work stress, burnout, and emotion dysregulation. About 10% of participants were at moderate to high risk of problem gambling. These participants also had the highest emotion dysregulation scores, which suggested poor ability to regulate their emotions. Emotion dysregulation and burnout linked work stress to problem gambling. Therefore, people who experience high work stress and burnout are at risk of problem gambling if they also have emotion dysregulation.

participant answered a survey with four questionnaires online.

First, participants completed the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). The PGSI measures the severity of gambling behaviours over the past year. Based on their scores, participants were grouped as people with no gambling problems, low-risk, moderate-risk, or problem gambling.

Next, participants completed the Demand-Control-Support Questionnaire (DCSQ). The DCSQ measures how demanding someone's job is and how much

control they have over their work. Participants' scores on the DCSQ indicated their level of work stress. They also completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS) which measured their level of burnout from work.

Finally, participants completed the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale-Short Form (DERS-SF). The DERS-SF measures awareness of one's emotions, as well as ability to regulate them. The researchers used the DERS-SF scores to calculate each participant's level of emotion dysregulation (i.e., inability to regulate emotions).

What the researchers found

Based on the PGSI scores, 4.3% of participants experienced problem gambling and 5.5% were at moderate risk of problem gambling. Nine percent were low-risk gamblers and 81% were non-gamblers. The participants with problem gambling had the highest scores for work stress and burnout. They also had the highest emotion dysregulation scores.

Emotion dysregulation was the strongest predictor of problem gambling. It mediated the relationship between work stress and problem gambling. This means that if someone has work stress and emotion dysregulation, then they are at a higher risk of problem gambling. However, if they experience work stress, but are good at regulating their emotions, then they are not at a higher risk of problem gambling.

The researchers predicted that burnout and emotion dysregulation, would be important connectors between work stress and problem gambling. Their results agreed with this prediction. Therefore, people who experience high work stress and burnout are at higher risk of problem gambling if they also have emotion dysregulation.

How you can use this research

This research suggests that people with good emotion regulation abilities may be at lower risk of problem gambling. Therefore, therapists could focus on improving emotion regulation skills with clients who have problem gambling. This could help them reduce their stress levels in general and also reduce their

gambling. Programs that try to reduce work stress could also focus on teaching emotion regulation skills.

About the researchers

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Citation

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About Gambling Research Exchange (GREO)

Gambling Research Exchange (GREO) has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. GREO is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. Our goal is to support evidence-informed decision making in safer gambling policies, standards, and practices. The work we do is intended for researchers, policy makers, gambling regulators and operators, and treatment and prevention service providers.

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