Characteristics of Problem Gamblers with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

What this research is about

This study examined the role of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in problem and pathological gamblers. It looked at clinical differences in problem gamblers who did, and did not have a history of PTSD. The researchers measured characteristics of gambling severity, mental health issues, personality traits and gambling motivations. No previous study has explicitly examined this relationship between PTSD and problem gambling in individuals sampled from the community at large, rather than from problem and pathological gamblers seeking treatment.

What the researcher did

The researchers recruited 150 problem and pathological gamblers from the community and from an Ontario university. Participants completed assessments to measure problem gambling severity, current psychiatric conditions including PTSD, gambling motivations and personality traits.

What the researcher found

Among the problem and pathological gamblers, almost 20% met the criteria for a lifetime diagnosis of PTSD. They were more likely to be women, and had lifetime challenges with substance abuse, depression and anxiety. Problem and pathological gamblers with histories of PTSD experienced greater difficulties in multiple areas of mental health than those without PTSD. Problem and pathological gamblers with PTSD were more likely to use gambling as a way of coping with stressful events.

How can you use this research?

Policy-makers and clinicians will benefit from increased awareness of the prevalence of PTSD among problem and pathological gamblers, especially among women. Better outreach is needed to encourage problem and pathological gamblers with a diagnosis of PTSD to seek treatment. Researchers are encouraged to undertake further study to better understand the relationship between gambling and trauma, to determine whether current problem gambling treatments are effective at addressing both conditions.

What you need to know

Problem gambling and PTSD often occur together. A surprisingly large number of participants - almost 20% of problem and pathological gamblers studied - met the criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD. Problem and pathological gamblers with PTSD were more likely to be women, and more likely to use gambling as a way to cope with negative emotions. Problem and pathological gamblers with histories of PTSD experienced greater difficulties in multiple areas of mental health such as substance abuse, depression and anxiety than those without PTSD.
About the Researcher

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Citation


Keywords

Post-traumatic stress disorder, trauma, gambling disorder, psychiatric co-morbidity

Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO)

Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (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 responsible 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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