Risk Perceptions and Adolescent Gambling Behavior

Results From a National Study

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RISK PERCEPTIONS AND ADOLESCENT GAMBLING BEHAVIOR: RESULTS FROM A NATIONAL STUDY

SØREN KRISTIANSEN, PHD

This study (which is part of a larger project on gambling behavior among Danish primary school children) focuses on risk-perception and irrational beliefs as well as gender differences in gambling behavior. It specifically explores the correlations between gambling frequency and the perception of skill and luck in gambling activities among Danish youngsters and whether irrational beliefs and the perception of skill and luck differentiate across groups of gambling severity.

METHOD

Participants included 2,223 students from the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th grades ranging in age from 11 to 17 years. Self-completion questionnaires were administered to students during normal lessons by a member of the research team (a senior researcher or a research assistant). The questionnaire contained an adolescent gambling screen, SOGS-RA (Winters, Stinchfield & Fulkerson 1993a, 1993b), and a series of questions clustered in three main domains: (1) gambling behavior (types games played, gambling frequency, age of debut, gambling partners, gambling motives), (2) social network/family gambling (parent's gambling behavior, friend's gambling behavior) and (3) cognitive perceptions i.e. notions of skill vs luck in relation to gambling, risks involved in gambling relative to other activities such as smoking or drinking alcohol, and understanding of probabilities.

RESULTS

The majority of respondents in all three gambling groups thought that luck plays an important role with regard to the outcome of chance-based games. Regarding the correlations between gambling frequency and the perception of skill and luck, more problem gamblers and at-risk gamblers believed that skill plays an important role in gambling. Perception of skill and luck involved in gambling thus seem to be contingent upon gambling frequency and the severity of gambling problems. The cross sectional nature of this study allows no causal inferences, however the findings might suggest that the level of gambling engagement affects the development of mistaken and faulty conceptions of skill and luck which in turn may lead to increased gambling involvement. Recent research among adult gamblers suggests that increased gambling frequency is positively correlated with irrational beliefs (Lund 2010). Longitudinal research is needed in order to clarify the causal relations between gambling frequency, preferred types of games and irrational beliefs among young gamblers.

DISCUSSION

In terms of perceptions of luck versus skill some significant differences appeared across the three gambling groups. Thus, more at-risk gamblers and problem gamblers compared to non-problem gamblers believed that skill plays an important role in gambling. Perception of skill and luck involved in gambling thus seem to be contingent upon gambling frequency and the severity of gambling problems. The cross sectional nature of this study allows no causal inferences, however the findings might suggest that the level of gambling engagement affects the development of mistaken and faulty conceptions of skill and luck which in turn may lead to increased gambling involvement. Recent research among adult gamblers suggests that increased gambling frequency is positively correlated with irrational beliefs (Lund 2010). Longitudinal research is needed in order to clarify the causal relations between gambling frequency, preferred types of games and irrational beliefs among young gamblers.

REFERENCES

Lund, Ingeborg (2010). Irrational beliefs revisited; Exploring the role of gambling preferences in the development of misconceptions in gamblers. Addiction Research and Theory, 19, 40-46


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PUBLICATIONS FROM THE PROJECT:


Table 1. Perception of luck vs skill in chance-based games across gambling groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill vs luck</th>
<th>Non-problem gamblers</th>
<th>At-risk gamblers</th>
<th>Problem gamblers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only or mostly luck</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only or mostly skill</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Gamma test. Statistically significant (p<0.05), (p<0.001), (p<0.000).