

Review of: "Gambling Prevalence and Factors Associated with Gambling Participation among University Students in Uganda"

Russell Deighton¹

¹ Cairnmillar Institute

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

General comments

Thanks for the chance to review this interesting investigation of student gambling in Uganda. The topic interested me in particular due to its Ugandan location and the associated cultural context, as well as the biopsychosocial perspective. I found the field research was competently carried out, the data were proficiently analysed, and the results were interesting, making a good contribution to the field of gambling studies. I felt that the clarity of writing and the thread of argument in the introduction and the discussion could be improved, as I've detailed below.

Abstract

The abstract gives a clear overview of the key features of the study. I felt there were wording issues, here are my suggestions:

- "examines... and to gain" → "aims to examine... and to gain"
- "psycho" --> "psychological"
- "points to" used twice --> can it be varied?

Introduction

I found the introduction about the cultural context of gambling and student gambling in Uganda very informative and helpful. I found myself wanting to know more about the types of gambling people mostly engage in in Uganda – is it mainly these 'sports betting houses'? Also, although University Student Psychosocial Problems Development Theory (USPPDT) is referred to as the theoretical basis of the investigation, I didn't feel that I had a good understanding of what it is, apart from that it is based on a biopsychosocial perspective. More specific details about this model would be helpful. Also, the relevance of some of the correlates of problem gambling that are investigated in the study don't seem to be clearly laid out to in the introduction, e.g. health and mental health, program of study – somehow weaving this into the argument more would be helpful.

I felt the rationale for the study presented in the problem statement could be clearer in its thread of argument: there seem to be three different ideas in the paragraph starting with "Studies in Uganda...": increased prevalence, different

motivations to gamble, and the burden of problem gambling. I feel that reworking the organising of these ideas would help the reader get a better sense of the rationale.

Here are my wording suggestions and other comments:

- “Monotheistic” --> “People with monotheistic...”
- “consider monetary reasons” --> “do so for monetary reasons”
- “Most spectacular...” --> “Most noticeable...” or “of most concern...”?
- “...fields of public health, addictions, and security” – the kind of security here is not clear to me
- “ludomania” – “problem gambling” is potentially less stigmatizing
- “Kren-zolok” --> “Krenzelok”
- “Despite the overall...” – this sentence is unclear to me
- “apart from taking it” --> “alongside taking it...”?
- “The available research...” – this point is not clear to me (‘anecdotal correlates’ seems contradictory)
- “Other researchers...” - also could be clearer, more concise
- “Existing theories informing gambling...” – unclear which theories are meant, how they are insufficient - is the point that they are too narrowly focussed?
- “These perspectives...” – seems to suggest that psychological factors are often ignored
- “Mutually exclusive theories ...today” – ‘today’ but the reference seems to be from 2001
- Research questions are given but no hypotheses – it would seem fitting to include hypotheses, given the nature of the study, even if they only state that differences will be found.
- The referencing style doesn’t seem to be APA7, but I’m not sure what referencing style is being applied to the final version

Materials and methods

The methods and materials were generally clearly described. I felt the USEPP would need to be introduced more thoroughly first, before describing its individual variables.

Here are some more specific suggestions and comments:

- “randomly selected” – was this convenience sampling or was there a random aspect?
- This seems to be pen-and-paper administration – is that right? And did respondents fill out the questionnaire themselves?
- “that contained the voluntary nature...” --> “that described the voluntary nature...”
- Where 4-point scales were dichotomised, I assume this means 0= no, 1,2,3 = yes (it would be good to specify this). It also doesn’t seem clear what the health burden items were dichotomised from.
- Citing the specificity and sensitivity of the USEPP (or one of its scales?) in determining psychological distress would seem to imply that distress is a natural binary variable, which I think is problematic. A measure of association would seem better. Also, was this distress based on the HSCL-10 or something else?

Data Analysis

I found the data analysis was proficiently carried out and clearly described, with very clearly laid out tables.

Specific suggestions and comments:

- Chi square statistics seem to work well here. Although I wondered if Spearman rank correlations could also have been considered in some cases which would mean less information loss.
- No need to give the detailed chi square statistics for non-significant results.
- “by separate logistic regression” --> “...regression analyses”

Discussion and conclusion

I found that the discussion took the helpful approach of comparing the present results with those of previous studies, which provided good structure. I felt the clarity of writing and argument within individual paragraphs could be improved.

Specific suggestions and comments:

- “at increased odds” --> “..risk” or “...more likely...”?
- “belonging to a religious faith” – does the “other” category imply no religious faith?
- “contrary to...” --> “As opposed to...”?
- “Being Muslim, Protestant and Catholic...” --> “Being either..., ... or...”
- “making a distinction between religious faith and behavioural measures of religiosity...” – unclear to me
- “This result may allude...” – this sentence is also unclear to me
- “as ways” --> “as a means”
- “May also include different reasons...” --> “This may...”
- “...than those who felt physically healthy...” --> “... compared to those...”
- “experiences outcomes” – wording
- “emphasizing that those are not psychosocial risk variables...” – this is idea not clear to me
- “The significant difference in the results can be stated that most studies on gambling...” – this seems to imply that which variable is chosen as the predictor when measuring a cross-sectional association is relevant here, but I don’t see how this could be the case.
- ‘dis-orders’ --> “disorders”
- “studied in this study” --> “examined in...”
- “This suggests that antisocial behaviour studied in this study has antecedent explanatory factors in common...”- this point is unclear to me
- “were much higher...” --> “...more highly represented...”
- Last two sentences seem to be one sentence and also seem very general - I wonder if something more specific to the study can be said here.

