

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

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article is in general well written and is an interesting topic. However there are some details that need to be restructured or rewritten

Abstract:

The following statement is unclear "These risk factors for gambling are not presumed as causation, identifying them points to important implications in terms of prevention and intervention on student gambling behaviour." If they are not causation related then using the risk factors with regards to prevention or intervention does not make complete sense. The primary analysis is logistic regression on a cross-sectional study therefore the results identify associations between factors of interest and the outcome (gambling participation), therefore some risk factors are potentially caused by gambling or co-existing and others may be a precursor to gambling. Therefore the above statement is over-reaching with regards to the implications of this research.

The wording of the following statement could be improved "This points to a considered interplay of different players in designing transversal strategies for a student at risk for gambling." The use of the term "players" is problematic in the gambling context, but it also follows on from the previous statement, while I agree that there is a complex set of associates that all need to be addressed in order to impact on gambling participation, the wording of these two sentences does not directly address the issue of concern.

Introduction:

The section on the prevalence of gambling among college students is a long list of results from multiple studies with very little or no synthesis of results. At least a summary statement of these results would make this section more readable and fit the narrative of the whole article.

In the problem statement section there is a statement "Given a noticeable change in the psychosocial environment of universities like the increasing numbers of campuses and the student population (Nsereko, 2018) gambling prevalence is expected to rise from various angles within the Uganda campus infrastructure." It is not clear what the term "various angles" means, it is too general and non-specific for the point being made.

The following statements are over 20 years old and are very much dated, and more problematically they are used to state why the research reported in this article is new and innovative. "The available research on college student gambling worldwide has concentrated on correlates based on the realm of anecdotal evidence (Sperber, 2000). Other researchers, Griffiths and Delfabbro (2001) have noted that gambling research has been solely confined to narrow areas of singular theoretical perspectives with an assumption that a single explanation or theory can address every aspect of gambling behaviour and outside this perspective, it is misguided research. Existing theories informing gambling have been found to have limitations when compared to three increasingly specific levels of analysis in gambling behaviour: social, psychological and biological. Mutually exclusive theories and adherence to singular perspectives have been labelled as untenable today in gambling research (Griffiths, & Delfabbro, 2001)." The multidimensional nature of gambling participation and problem gambling has been well recognized for a number of years, making these statements as a basis for this research problematic.

The use of the dated references and as this research builds on the lead author's previous work with the USPPDT model and USEPP tool which means the article is self referencing the author's previous work without reviewing how their previous work compares with other research in this area. This means that more work does need to be done to better contextualize the previous work with other international work in the gambling area and with students.

Materials and Methods - Measures

The USEPP scale was the primary measure, however it is confusing about how it was utilized in this research. There are 17 items that encompasses 4 sub-scales (emotional, academic, traumatic, antisocial). However in the beginning of the psychosocial functioning section one subscale is treated differently, namely that of antisocial, where the separate items are utilized. Then the second half of this section relates to the full scale. Only internal consistency is reported and is slightly different between the two halves of this section, also it is not clear if the internal consistency relates to this survey or previous research, reliability and validity should also ideally be presented. Lastly one of the items of the antisocial scale is chosen as the outcome of interest namely "Gambling/betting for financial gain".

I also note that each of the subscales is composed of 3 to 5 items and it is not explicitly stated how these subscales are calculated from the items and allocated to negative/positive or presence/absence.

If a scale is going to be cut up into it's component parts as presented in this research, it needs to be stated up front and not be inferred by an in depth reading of the methodology. It does also raise some potential issues with the psychometric properties of the scale.

Materials and Methods - Data Analysis

I would query presenting both logistic regression and chi-square test results for each of the factors of interest as they are essentially performing the same statistical test, making multiple testing an issue. A multiple variable logistic regression would also add value to the research here.

The table formatting could be improved by indenting the categories for each question under the heading.

Discussion:

Points made under the abstract heading are also relevant here.