ADOLESCENT GAMBLING ON THE INTERNET: A REVIEW

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SOURCE MATERIAL


OVERVIEW

• A comprehensive search of the relevant literature was undertaken. The areas covered in this talk:

• Empirical studies on adolescent Internet gambling
• Online gambling-like experiences in adolescence
• Adolescent gambling via social networking sites
SOME SCENE SETTING

• A national Internet gambling prevalence survey of 2098 people in the UK by Griffiths (2001) included data from 119 adolescents (aged 15 to 19 years).

• No teenagers reported gambling on the Internet, but 4% of teenagers said they would like to try online gambling.

• Another study in Canada suggested at least a quarter of young people with serious gambling problems may be gambling on the Internet using ‘free play’ sites (for ‘practice’ and ‘demonstration’ purposes) (Hardoon, Derevensky & Gupta, 2002).
MAIN EMPIRICAL STUDIES (N > 1500) (DEMOGRAPHICS)

- Griffiths & Wood (2007) - 8,017 schoolchildren (12-15 years)
- Ipsos MORI (2009) - 8,598 schoolchildren (11-15 years)
- Brunelle, Gendron et al - 1876 adolescents (14-18 years)
- Olason et al (2009a) - 1513 adolescents (16-18 years)
- Olason et al (2009b) - 1537 adolescents (13-18 years)
- Byrne (2004 cf. Derevensky & Gupta, 2007) - 2,087 adolescents and young adults
EMPIRICAL STUDIES (PREVALENCE)

- Griffiths & Wood (2007) - one in twelve young people aged 12 to 15 years (8%) said they had played a lottery game on the Internet in past year.
- Ipsos MORI (2009) - 1% reported gambling on the Internet for money in the seven days prior to the survey
- Brunelle, Gendron et al - 8% had gambled on the Internet in the previous 12 months.
- Olason et al (2009a) - 20% had gambled on the Internet, and just under 4% were regular Internet gamblers
- Olason et al (2009b) - 24% had gambled on the Internet, and just over 4% were regular Internet gamblers.
- Welte et al (2009) - They found that 2% of respondents reported gambling online in the past year.
- Byrne (2004) - Over the past year, almost one in twenty (4.6%) of the participants had gambled online with their own money.
**EMPIRICAL STUDIES (GENDER DIFFERENCES)**

- Griffiths & Wood (2007) - Boys were more likely than girls to say they have played National Lottery games on the Internet (10% vs. 6%),

- Brunelle, Gendron et al – 13% males and 3% females had gambled on the Internet in the previous 12 months

- Olason et al (2009b) - males were significantly more likely than females to gamble on the Internet (32% boys vs. 9% girls)

- Olason et al (2009b) - males were significantly more likely than females to gamble on the Internet (37% boys vs. 11.5% girls)

- Welte et al (2009) - 3% males and 0% females had gambled online in the twelve months preceding the interview.

- Byrne (2004) - Over the past year 7.8% males and 2.3% females had gambled online with their own money. When examined by age, those under 18 years were more likely to be male (8.6%; over 18 years 6.8%) than female (3.2%; over 18 years 1.3%).
EMPIRICAL STUDIES (PROBLEM GAMBLING)

• Griffiths & Wood (2007) – ‘Problem gamblers’ were more likely than ‘social gamblers’ to have played a National Lottery game on the Internet (37% compared with 9%).

• Brunelle, Gendron et al - significantly more Internet gamblers (11%) were likely to be problem gamblers than those who did not gamble on the Internet (1.5%).

• Olason et al (2009) – Prevalence of problem gambling among gamblers was 3% However, among those who had gambled on the Internet, the problem gambling prevalence rates were significantly higher at 10.1%
EMPIRICAL STUDIES (PROBLEM GAMBLING)

- Olason et al (2009) – Prevalence of problem gambling among gamblers was 2.2%. However, among those who had gambled on the Internet, the problem gambling prevalence rates was 7.5%.

- Welte et al (2009) – Internet gamblers were likely to experience more problem gambling symptoms by virtue of gambling on more forms of gambling, as opposed to the properties of Internet gambling itself.

- Byrne (2004) - For those who gambled on the Internet, the prevalence rate of problem gambling was almost 19%.
Bill Gates arrives at the port to heaven and hell. Petrus says "You see Bill, we don't know what to do with you. You may choose heaven or hell".

Bill peeks in heaven and sees a couple of old boring men sitting around at a table. Bill takes a look in hell and sees really beautiful women, sex, drugs, rock and roll, and most of all, gambling.

Bill says "I am a gambling man, I want to go to hell!" Once in hell, Bill is immediately thrown into the fire. Bill says "Hey, what the hell is this, I saw all the gambling, women, and sex?" The devil says 'That was just a demo version."
ONLINE GAMBLING-LIKE EXPERIENCES IN ADOLESCENCE

• North American studies have reported that anywhere between 25% to 50% of teenagers have played 'free play' games via Internet gambling sites (Derevensky & Gupta, 2007; McBride & Derevensky, 2009; Poulin & Elliot, 2007).

• Griffiths & Wood (2007) - Of the 8% who had gambled online, a quarter said they had played free instant win games (24%)

• Ipsos MORI (2009) - Just over quarter of adolescents had played in 'money-free mode' in the week preceding the survey, with opportunities on the social networking sites four or five times more popular than those presented on real gambling sites.

• Brunelle et al – 35% of youth (49% males; 21% females) had played on the ‘free play’/‘demo’ mode on gambling sites.

• Byrne (2004) - More individuals under the age of 18 years than 18 to 24 years played ‘free play’ games on Internet gambling sites (43% vs. 33% for males; 42% vs. 29% for females).
Forrest, McHale and Parke (2009) reported gambling in money-free mode was the single most important predictor of whether the child had gambled for money and important predictors of PG. This relationship is correlational and not causal.

The possibility and extent to which money-free gambling is responsible for real gambling participation and gambling-related risk and harm could only be confirmed using longitudinal data.

It has been alleged that such opportunities encourage teenagers to practice before ‘graduating’ to playing for money games at online casinos (Kelley, Todosichuk, & Azmier, 2001).

‘Precautionary principle’ should be applied which prevents adolescents from being exposed to gambling-like experiences (Hyder & Juul, 2008).
ADOLESCENT GAMBLING VIA SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

• Downs (2008) noted this activity has not been investigated, yet young people using these sites are able to gain access to gambling.

• Downs’ pilot research, - 25 Poker applications on Bebo (and over 500 separate poker groups) and in excess of 100 poker applications on Facebook (and over 1000 separate poker groups).

• Poker sites featured some with real prizes, some with cash-play options

• All easily downloadable by children along with many free trial games.

• Largest of these poker groups had over several thousand members and in one group surveyed, 15% of those in the group declared they were under the age of 18 years.
• Furthermore, gambling applications typically contain sidebar advertisements and hyperlinks to real gambling sites.

• Downs also reported a type of pseudo-gambling among ‘Fluff Friends’ that had over 100,000 active users per month.

• Users (typically young girls) create ‘Fluff’ Art to earn ‘munny’ (sic) – a type of virtual money through pet racing.

• Pet racing costs 1-point per race and winnings can be up to 4000 points.

• Clearly there is no money changing hands but young children are learning the mechanics of gambling.
• Downs asserts there are serious questions about whether gambling with virtual money encourages positive attitudes towards gambling in young people.

• For instance, does gambling with virtual money lead to an increased prevalence of actual gambling?

• She also asks to what extent are gambling-related groups on social networking sites being used by those under 18 years and whether membership of such a groups facilitates access to commercial gambling sites?

• It also seems only natural for youth to question whether they should game on Internet sites if they were winning “play money”.
DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

• Adolescents can and do gamble on the Internet

• Adolescent Internet gamblers are significantly more likely than non-internet gamblers to be problem gamblers

• It may be the case that problem gamblers are more vulnerable to gambling online and the fact that it provides convenience gambling is a cause for concern in this particular sub-group of gamblers.

• However, it may also be that adolescent problem gamblers gravitate to the Internet, adding it as an additional mode of gambling to their general repertoire of gambling behaviours
• Given the paucity of the available evidence, the role of Internet gambling in creating adolescent problem gamblers should be treated with caution.

• However, it is clear that research that can help to identify the impact of Internet gambling on either creating or facilitating gambling-related harm among adolescents should be made a research priority.

• Such research should consider the potentially different roles that Internet gambling may play in creating new forms of harm and in exacerbating current forms of harm.
• Parents must have the appropriate attitudes, awareness, and intentions to prevent underage gambling.

• They may permit or assist their child as result of viewing such behaviour as a harmless and/or fun activity.

• Even if parents are motivated to prevent underage Internet gambling, they must be prepared to monitor their child’s behaviour.

• Where made available, spending on credit and debit cards and other forms of account should be monitored.

• Educating parents should be one of key components of any strategy aimed at preventing/minimising underage Internet gambling.
• Finally, there is evidence to suggest that ‘money free’ gambling plays an important role for adolescents in conceptualising and experiencing Internet gambling.

• Approx. quarter to a third of adolescents have been reported to gamble in money free mode

• Ipsos MORI (2009) reporting that 28% of 11- to 15-year olds in a UK sample had done so within the last week.

• It is through money free gambling (using social networking sites or ‘demo’ modes of real gambling sites) that children are being introduced to the principles and excitement of gambling without experiencing the consequences of losing money.
• Based on the available literature, it may be important to distinguish between the different types of money-free gambling being made available - namely social networking modes and ‘demo’ or ‘free play’ modes.

• Initial considerations suggest that these may be different both in nature and in impact.

• For example, as Downs (2008) argues, players gambling in social networking modes, may experience a different type and level of reinforcement than those gambling in ‘demo’ mode.

• On some social networking sites the accumulation of ‘play money’ or ‘points’ may have implications for buying virtual goods or services or being eligible for certain privileges. This may increase the value and meaning of the gambling event to the individual.
• Individuals accessing money free gambling through social networking sites may be more likely to be induced or persuaded to play given that these web-site visitors’ primary intention may have been social interaction (i.e., the primary function of the website).

• This is different to those playing in ‘demo’ mode where gambling is the primary function of the website.

• Four or five times more children appear to report money free gambling on social networking sites compared to ‘demo’ or ‘free play’ modes on gambling websites.

• The nature and impact of various forms of money free gambling should be the subject of further research and empirical investigation.
OTHER POTENTIAL CONCERNS

• Finally, it is worth noting there are other convergent gambling-like technologies that adolescents appear to be engaging in.

  – The convergence of online gambling and video gaming

  – Online penny auctions

  – Television phone competitions via premium rate telephone lines