

Gambling Addiction Among Teenagers: Risk Factors, Protective Factors, Prevention

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Abstract: *Gambling has recently become one of the major public health problems. Although most efforts are focused on adult gamblers, there is growing concern about teenagers and young adults being more vulnerable to gambling addiction. Gambling practices and opportunities have evolved to the point where they are widely available and seen as a socially acceptable form of entertainment while becoming increasingly attractive to young people. My aim in this paper was to identify risk factors, protective factors in gambling addiction in adolescents, and prevention methods for this type of addiction. With the help of data obtained from studies and specialized literature, I was able to highlight the most important features of this addiction among teenagers. Male sex, young age, alcohol and drug consumption, depression, and poor academic performance were identified as risk factors for gambling. In terms of protective factors, parental supervision, and high socioeconomic status are recognized. Considering that there is a significant prevalence of adolescent gambling and numerous adverse effects associated with it, prevention efforts such as awareness programs and a healthy family environment can be helpful.*

Keywords: *psychiatry, adolescents, addictions, gambling.*

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INTRODUCTION

Gambling is becoming more popular, being frequently mentioned in the media and private space. One of the elements that favor gaming, abuse, or perhaps addiction is the availability and accessibility of games, especially the earlier the exposure.

According to one analysis, 0.2 to 12.3% of young people meet the criteria for problem gambling, with some experts anticipating that the incidence of problem gambling among adolescents will be comparable to that of adult populations (Calado et al., 2017).

Poor school performance, school dropout, financial difficulties, depressive symptoms, suicide, low self-esteem, deterioration of social relationships, and substance abuse are examples that can lead to gambling addiction among teenagers.

More than two-thirds of adult gamblers reported that exposure to gambling during youth was a major factor in current gambling addiction, indicating that increased preventive efforts to limit gambling during adolescence could minimize the prevalence of problem gambling in the adult population (Min et al., 2007).

AIM

This paper aims to identify risk factors, protective factors in gambling addiction in adolescents, and prevention methods for this type of addiction.

I especially wanted to underline the importance of a good family support system and a healthy school environment that can protect young adults against this type of addiction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We carried out a review study that evaluates gambling addiction among young people, as well as the risk factors, protective factors, but also the prevention of this addiction.

With the help of data obtained from studies and specialized literature, we highlighted the most important features of this addiction among teenagers.

RESEARCH RESULTS

We identified several key risk factors associated with gambling in adolescents and young adults that have been consistently reported in studies, such as:

- Young men engage in more gambling and have more gambling problems than women (Bozzato et al., 2020)
- Poor academic performance was linked to problem gambling in both males and females.
- Positive attitudes towards gambling from family or friends (Andrie et al., 2019)
- Substance and/or alcohol abuse
- Weak attachments to both their parents and their peers

When it comes to protective factors, they are linked to the family support and friendship system, some of which are (Paleologou et al, 2019):

- Positive relationships with both parents and other siblings
- Participation in extracurricular activities
- Offline communication rather than those who use the online environment to socialize.

The main goal of pathological gambling prevention actions is to reduce or avoid future consequences at the individual level that may or may not be associated with the signs of the disorder. To achieve this, the social environment of adolescents must be changed, through awareness raising, education, learning new skills, and changes in social and public policies. Because gambling is widely spread through advertisements and extremely easily accessible to all age groups, these safety measures must be implemented from an early age (Yu& Ma, 2019).

It is very important to insist on abstinence from games until reaching the legal age, to minimize the impact of a premature start of this addiction.

STUDIES

According to a study carried out in 2015 (Kang et al., 2019) among Korean students grades 7–11 (ages 13–17 years) and included 14,011 study subjects (average age 14.9 years, 52.5% male) they were able to identify factors such as personal relationships with friends that gamble, male adolescents, school dropout as risk factors for this addiction.

Another study conducted in schools from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, among students from age 12 to 21 years (Abdi et al., 2015) also concluded

that severe problematic gambling occurs in young male with low support system at home, usually associated with another addiction as well such as alcohol or substance abuse

CONCLUSIONS

Male sex, young age, alcohol and drug use, depression, and poor academic performance have been identified as risk factors for gambling addiction.

Regarding the protective factors, parental supervision, high socioeconomic status, social connectivity, and involvement in extracurricular activities are recognized.

Given the significant prevalence of gambling in adolescents and its numerous adverse effects, prevention efforts are important for this age group in this regard, and prevention programs can be used in the school environment and at home.

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