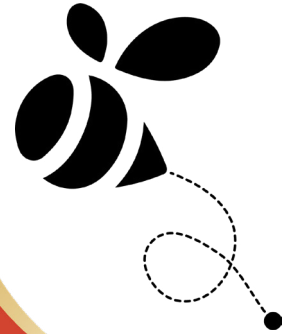


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Boredom and Gambling: How are They Related?

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

Research has linked boredom proneness with problem gambling. However, the exact nature of this relationship is unclear. One theory is that people who are prone to boredom are chronically understimulated by their environments and are therefore motivated to engage in gambling because it increases their excitement and feelings of pleasure. A second theory is that boredom prone individuals seek escapist experiences such as gambling to avoid the unpleasant feelings that accompany boredom.

The current study sought to determine which theory most accurately represents the relationship between boredom proneness and gambling. The study also examined if boredom proneness predicts gambling problems over and above personality characteristics that are associated with being prone to boredom, namely sensitivity to reward and sensitivity to punishment. Sensitivity to reward refers to one's inclination to approach pleasant or rewarding situations. Sensitivity to punishment refers to the degree to which individuals worry about and avoid adverse situations.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

A form of boredom proneness that is related to a need for excitement predicts non-chronic, less severe gambling problems. This form of boredom proneness predicted gambling problems even after considering the impact of broader personality characteristics on gambling. There are two distinct types of boredom proneness that should not be measured interchangeably because they predict different behavioural outcomes.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The researchers asked participants to complete self-report scales assessing gambling problems. Then they asked participants to complete two different scales of boredom proneness; one that measures a tendency to feel bored **that is characterized** by a high need for excitement and pleasure. The other measures a tendency to feel bored **that is characterized** by a high need to avoid negative emotions. The broader personality traits of sensitivity to reward and sensitivity to punishment were also measured.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

The type of boredom proneness defined by a strong need for excitement predicted gambling problems while the type of boredom proneness defined by a strong need to avoid unpleasant feelings did not. These findings are in accordance with the first theory of gambling and boredom - that bored individuals gamble because they want to increase their levels of excitement. Also, sensitivity to reward, but not sensitivity to punishment, predicted gambling problems. Finally, boredom proneness was found to significantly predict gambling problems over and above these broader personality traits, suggesting there is something specific to boredom proneness that links it to gambling problems.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

This study highlights that the kind of boredom proneness that is associated with a need for excitement is an important predictor of problem gambling. Thus, further research should investigate the role of this type of boredom in identifying and treating gambling problems. Because the researchers looked at people with less severe, non-chronic gambling problems, future work should examine if the relationship between boredom and gambling is different for individuals with more longstanding and serious gambling problems. This study also enriches our understanding of boredom as a multifaceted concept. Specifically, the findings from this study suggest that different types of boredom proneness are related to different behavioural outcomes. Researchers are urged, therefore, to consider the repercussions of generalizing results across studies that have measured different types of boredom proneness.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

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KEYWORDS

Boredom, Gambling, Predictors, Prevention, Measurement

CITATION

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