Mental health profiles of adolescents with co-occurring gambling behaviours and benzodiazepine misuse

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Behavioural addictions, such as gambling, have long been associated with substance misuse. To date, no previous study has examined the associations between gambling and benzodiazepine (BZDs) misuse in adolescents. This is particularly troublesome considering that BZD misuse has more than doubled in high school seniors over the past two decades, and that recent evidence suggests that BZDs may be more commonly misused than stimulant drugs. The current study examines the mental health profiles of adolescents with co-occurring gambling behaviours and BZD misuse. Data was collected in 2018 from 7012 high-school students. Chi-square analyses and independent samples t-tests were utilized to examine associations between gender, mental health, gambling, and BZD misuse. A total of 2.5% (n=174) high school students reported engaging in comorbid gambling behaviours and BZD misuse. Individuals who concurrently engaged in the above behaviours reported significantly higher externalizing and internalizing problems than those who engaged in either behaviours alone. Unlike adolescents who solely misused BZDs, there were no significant gender differences in internalizing problems for those who engaged in both gambling and BZD misuse. Our results suggest that internalizing symptoms may motivate one to engage in gambling alongside BZD misuse.

Impact. This work expands our understanding of individuals who present with co-occurring gambling and substance use. Indeed, individuals who present with both gambling and substance problems may be qualitatively different than those who solely engage in gambling. Such improved understanding has the potential to inform health-care professionals, ultimately improving current practice.

Author Biographies.

Émilie Fletcher is a first year MA student in Counselling Psychology at McGill University. Her current research focuses on the differential effects of externalizing problems and depression on addictive behaviours, including both substance use and gambling. Previously, Emilie has worked in the field of eating disorders.

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Dr. Derevensky is a James McGill Professor in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, as well as a Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at McGill University. He is also the director of the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk
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**Dr. Ivoska** is the Vice President of Student Services at Owens Community College where he is responsible for the development, implementation, and supervision of activities. He also helps with the coordination of the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board/Wood County Education Service Center Survey on Alcohol and Other Drug Use.

**Dr. Temcheff** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology at McGill University as well as a Quebec Research Scholar. Her research focuses on the identification of pathways and mechanisms linking childhood Conduct Problems to future trajectories of medical service utilization and the development of mental health problems, such as depression and addictions.