Title: Gender Differences in Treatment Seeking Gamblers with a Comorbid Eating Disorder

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Abstract: Recent literature suggests that gambling and eating disorders may co-occur more frequently than once thought. However, no studies have directly examined whether gender differences exist in comorbid gambling and eating disorders. The present study investigated gender differences in current gambling behaviors, gambling severity, gambling-related cognitive distortions, and psychiatric comorbidities in dual-diagnosed participants. The sample consisted of 349 treatment-seeking gamblers at a university hospital in São Paulo, Brazil. Gambling disorder and other psychiatric comorbidities were assessed via comprehensive clinical interviews. Of the total sample, 43 participants met criteria for both a gambling and eating disorder, and subsequently completed a series of self-report measures to evaluate gambling behaviours, gambling severity, and cognitive distortions related to gambling. No gender differences were found in any gambling variables. In contrast, several gender differences were found in current psychiatric co-morbidities. Although women were more likely to have an eating disorder diagnosis (n = 28; 8.0%) than men (n = 15; 4.3%), men were more likely to report comorbid depression, alcohol use disorder, and compulsive sexual behaviors. The gender differences observed provide further evidence for the need to consider gender-specific patterns of presentation in treatment for eating and gambling disorders.

Implications/so what? The greater psychopathology observed in male versus female gamblers with an eating disorder may call for clinicians to carefully consider and screen for other associated psychological problems in this population and to incorporate brief eating disorder screens such as the ‘SCOFF clinical prediction guide’ within gambling intervention programs.
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Author bios:

Maryam Sharif-Razi is a Ph.D. student at the University of Calgary working under the supervision of Dr. Hodgins. In her research, she is interested in the psychological and cognitive correlates of gambling disorder. Her Ph.D. dissertation focuses on the relationship between early traumatic experiences and addictive behaviour using a longitudinal research design. Maryam is also currently completing a clinical practicum placement which involves delivery of a wide-range of evidence-based treatments to individuals struggling with addiction.

Kristin von Ranson is a Professor at the University of Calgary. Her research focuses on eating disorders, specifically questions related to etiology, classification, and assessment of eating problems and body image across the lifespan. She uses various methods to examine risk, resilience, and maintenance factors for eating disorders in pre-teens, adolescents, and adults.