Application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour within School-Based Prevention Programs for Adolescent Gambling

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Abstract

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and the concept of anticipatory negative emotions have attracted considerable research attention in the formulation of effective preventive interventions. This approach has identified several key constructs (i.e., attitudes, subjective norms, perceptions of control, anticipation of negative emotions) as valid predictors of gambling intentions and behaviour. However, no empirical investigation has utilized these constructs in the design or evaluation of a youth problem gambling prevention initiative.

Research Objectives

- Evaluate the effectiveness of Clean Break, a school-based youth problem gambling prevention video that addresses attitudinal, normative and control beliefs about gambling through testimonials and dramatic vignettes.
- Specifically, study aims to compare the effectiveness of the video in modifying students’:
  - attitudes towards gambling
  - family and peer subjective norms regarding gambling
  - perceptions of control over gambling
  - anticipation of negative emotional reactions related to gambling
  - intentions to gamble

Methods

- A sample of 328 Québec high school students (ages 14-17) were randomly assigned to a video condition (n = 171) or a control condition (n = 155).
- All participants were assessed at pre-intervention (Time 1) and immediately post-intervention (Time 2) using a survey instrument.
- Survey consisted of previously validated scales:
  4. Gambling Intention Scale (Moore & Ohtsuka, 1997)
- Survey also included a scale adapted from previous research (Caron et al. 2004, Conner et al., 2006) to measure negative anticipatory emotions related to gambling.
- Repeated measures ANOVAs were used to estimate the video’s effectiveness.

Results

(a) Changes in Attitudes

(b) Changes in Perceptions of Control

(c) Changes in Negative Anticipatory Emotions

Results (cont’d)

- No significant changes in family and peer subjective norms regarding gambling observed from Time 1 to Time 2.
- No significant modifications in intentions to gamble observed from Time 1 to Time 2.

Discussion

- Consistent with empirical literature on the TPB in behaviour change, the Clean Break prevention video was effective in:
  - decreasing positive attitudes towards gambling;
  - lowering perceptions of control over gambling;
  - enhancing anticipation of negative emotions following excessive participation in gambling.
- However, the Clean Break prevention video did not result in changes in students’ intention to gamble in the next month.
- It is plausible that floor effects, the measurement period (immediately post-intervention) or the time interval assessed (in the next month) may have invariably influenced the result for gambling intentions.
- Given that the purpose of any prevention initiative is to reduce the incidence of potential problems, future research investigating the long-term effectiveness (1 week, 3 months, 12 months post-intervention) of the Clean Break prevention video on gambling intentions and actual behaviour is needed.