Gambling frequency and symptoms of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder in relation to problem gambling among Swedish adolescents: a population-based study.

Hellström C, Wagner P, Nilsson KW, Leppert J, Åslund C.


Abstract

AIM:
To investigate the associations between gambling frequency, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms, and problem gambling among adolescent boys and girls. One hypothesis was that adolescents with increased ADHD symptoms have a higher frequency of gambling compared to adolescents with fewer ADHD symptoms.

METHOD:
A population-based sample of adolescents (aged 15-18 years) completed a questionnaire on demographics, gambling habits, ADHD symptoms, and problematic gambling; 1412 adolescents (from 4440 sampled) with gambling experience were included in the final sample.

RESULTS:
A zero-inflated negative binomial regression analysis revealed that increased ADHD symptoms, higher gambling frequency, and higher age were associated with lower odds of being non-susceptible to gambling problems. Moreover, gambling frequency interacted with ADHD symptoms in predicting the probability of being non-susceptible to gambling problems. However, when analyzing those already susceptible to problem gambling, ADHD symptoms did not modify the effect of gambling frequency on the expected magnitude of gambling problems. In susceptible individuals, problem gambling increased with both increased ADHD symptoms and increased gambling frequency, but the level of problems due to gambling frequency did not change depending on the ADHD symptom level. There was an interaction effect between sex and gambling frequency in relation to gambling problems.

CONCLUSIONS:
Adolescents with ADHD symptoms seem to be more sensitive to gambling, in terms of being susceptible to developing gambling problems. However, once susceptible, adolescents with ADHD symptoms are affected by gambling frequency similarly to other susceptible participants.