

Title: Alcohol and other drug moderators of the relationship between negative emotional states, emotional impulsivity, and problematic gambling

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Introduction / Issues OR Introduction: Problematic gambling is often associated with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and substance use. Harms associated with gambling may be increased by impulsivity, with negative emotional states and correlate impulsivity one of the most salient psychological risk factors moderating substance use and gambling severity.

Method / Approach OR Methods: Baseline client outcome measure data from Lives Lived Well from the period of 24/08/2020 to 06/12/2023 were analysed. Model 14 of the PROCESS Macro (version 4.2) by Andrew Hayes was used to conduct moderated mediation analysis.

Key Findings OR Results: Higher risk problematic gambling was associated with increased symptoms of depression and anxiety, emotional impulsivity, and harms associated with methamphetamine use, however not for alcohol or marijuana. The relationship between negative emotional states and problematic gambling was mediated by emotionally driven impulsivity, and in turn moderated by methamphetamine use but not alcohol or cannabis.

Discussions and Conclusions: Harms associated with problematic gambling may be greater where there are co-occurring harms associated with use of methamphetamine. Service providers supporting individuals experiencing harms surrounding problematic gambling should be alert to the potential contribution of mood symptoms, emotionally driven impulsivity, and co-occurring methamphetamine use, particularly for individuals reporting higher levels of problem gambling behaviour.

Implications for Practice or Policy (optional): A transtheoretical approach to treatment may address common factors of impulsivity underlying both gambling and substance use behaviours to reduce harm experienced by clients.

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