

Young People's Reactions to Gambling Content on Social Media: An Experimental Insight

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Research Project

Problem Gambling and Social Media: Social Psychological Study on Youth Behavior in Online Gambling Communities (funded by the Finnish Foundation for Alcohol Studies, 2017–2019)

- Principal investigator: Professor of social psychology Atte Oksanen
- Researchers: Anu Sirola, Markus Kaakinen, and Iina Savolainen
- The project analyzes problem gambling and social media usage from social psychological perspective

Demographically balanced *YouGamble* Survey of 15–25 year-old Finnish respondents (n=1200) was collected during spring 2017

- Measures on gambling (SOGS, ATGS-8), alcohol (AUDIT-C) and drug use, internet use (e.g. CIUS), social relationships, personality and subjective well-being (e.g. GHQ-12)
- Experimental vignette design on gambling content online
- Similar datasets will be collected from the United States and South Korea in spring 2018

Gambling, social media and young people

- Young people are active online users and vulnerable to gambling-related problems
- The amount and use of gambling-related online sites have increased over the last years
- Internet is an important source of health information and peer-support, particularly for young people
- Studies show that user-generated content and peer-experiences may be more appealing for young people than information from health authorities
- Social networks, group norms and self-selection shape the information consumption online

Research questions

1. How do other online users influence online reactions?
2. How do perceived in-group norms in social media settings influence online reactions?
3. How do the characteristics of gambling-related content influence online reactions?

Hypotheses

H1 (social conformity hypothesis): the positive majority opinion will induce more positive reactions

H2 (in-group norm hypothesis): the explicit group membership will enhance conformity with other people's reactions

H3 (negative orientation hypothesis): anti-gambling content will receive more positive reactions from the respondents

H4 (gambling attitude hypothesis): pro-gambling content will receive more positive reaction among those with highly positive attitude towards gambling

H5 (experience over fact hypothesis): experience-driven argumentation will induce more positive reactions than fact-driven content

- **Preregistration of the hypotheses:** Oksanen, A., Sirola, A., & Kaakinen, M. (2017). Problem Gambling and Social Media: Social Psychological Study on Youth Behavior in Online Gaming Communities. *Open Science Framework*, retrieved from <https://osf.io/m72hz/>

Experimental vignette design

- Respondents were first randomly assigned into group-identity condition and control condition
- Then they were shown four social media messages on gambling with following manipulated characteristics:
 1. **experience-driven** (first-person narration) or **fact-driven** (third-person narration) gambling-related messages
 2. **Positive or negative stance** on gambling
 3. **Positive or negative majority reactions**

Vignette scenarios

Positive stance on gambling [**experience-driven**] [**fact-driven**]

”[**Me and many of my friends**] [**According to a recent report, 80 % of the Finnish people**] gamble. Gambling brings [**me enjoyment**] [**enjoyment**], and it [**has caused significant benefits for me and my family’s well-being**] [**causes significant benefits for the society and people’s well-being**]. Behind the following link, you can find more [**Finnish people’s experiences**][**research findings**] on gambling.”

Negative stance on gambling [**experience-driven**] [**fact-driven**]

”[**Me and many of my friends**][**According to a recent report, over 120,000 Finnish people**] suffer from gambling problems. Gambling causes [**me problems**] [**problems**], and it has caused significant damage for [**me and my family’s well-being**] [**the society and people’s well-being**]. Behind the following link, you can find more [**Finnish people’s experiences**] [**research findings**] on gambling.”

Measures

- Dependent variable: positive reactions to vignette contents
 - Respondents were asked to rate their interest in presented content (6 survey items with scale 1–10 including e.g. "I would consider this message interesting")
 - Range 6–60, M=17.23, SD=11.59
- Independent variables
 - experimental factors (dummy coded)
 - gambling attitudes (Attitudes Towards Gambling Scale, ATGS-8)
 - Range 0–31, M=15.41, SD=5.09

Statistical techniques: Multilevel linear regression analysis with random coefficient modeling (Bliese & Ployhart, 2002)

Results of multilevel linear regression analysis: main effects

Condition	Control	Group
Dependent variable	Positive reactions	Positive reactions
Fixed effects	Coefficients	Coefficients
Intercept	18.35(0.47)	18.55(0.46)
Experimental factors		
Positive majority	0.72(0.23)	1.07(0.29)
Pro-gambling	-2.79(0.34)	-2.45(0.29)
Experience-driven	-0.56(0.23)	-0.92(0.24)
Random effects		
Intercept std	9.66	9.89
Positive majority std	0.72	1.20
Pro-gambling std	6.00	4.15
Experience-driven std	0.00	0.01
Log-likelihood	-7958.97	-9090.82
Number of observations	2252	2548
Number of groups	563	637

Note. Statistically significant p-values at the 95% confidence level are bold-faced.

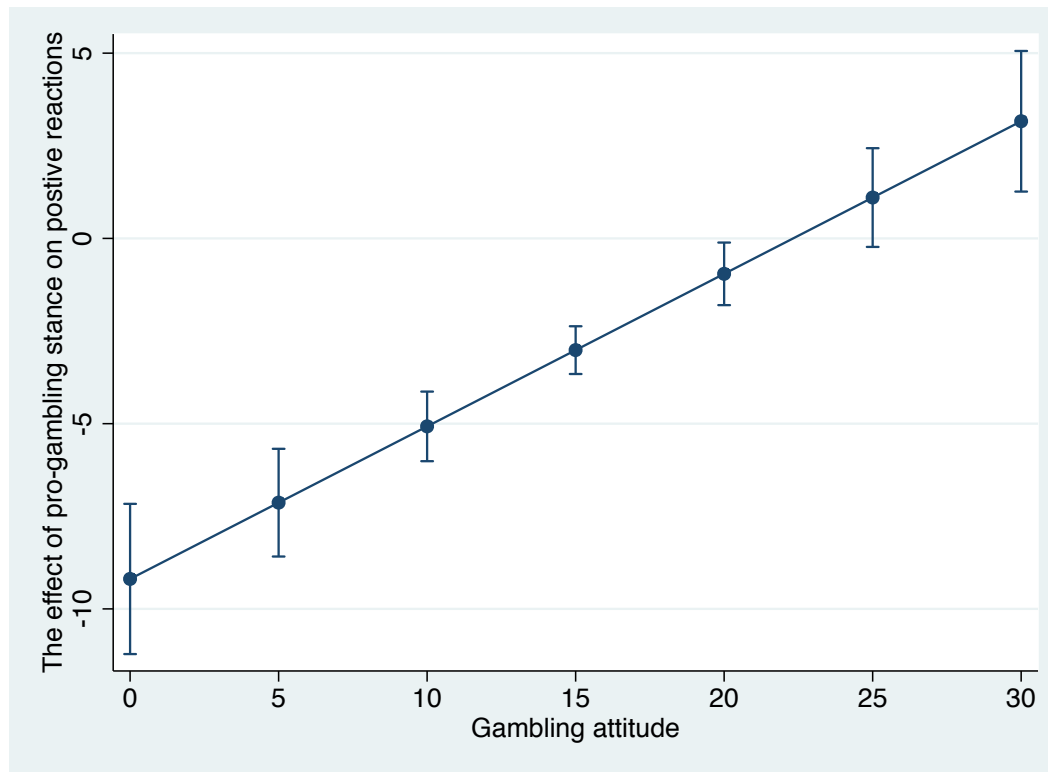
Results of multilevel linear regression analysis: interaction effect added

Condition	Control	Group
Dependent variable	Pos. reactions	Pos. reactions
Fixed effects	Coefficients	Coefficients
Intercept	19.63(1.39)	17.87(1.38)
Experimental factors		
Positive majority	0.72(0.23)	1.07(0.24)
Pro-gambling	-9.19(1.03)	-7.14
Experience-driven	-0.56(0.23)	-0.91(0.24)
Individual-level factors		
Gambling att.	-0.08(0.08)	0.04(0.08)
Cross-level interactions		
Pro-gambling*gambling att.	0.41(0.06)	0.31(0.06)
Random effects		
Intercept std	9.62	9.85
Positive majority	0.63	1.08
Pro-gambling	5.62	3.81
Log-likelihood	-7938.39	-9074.534
Number of observations	2252	2548
Number of groups	563	637

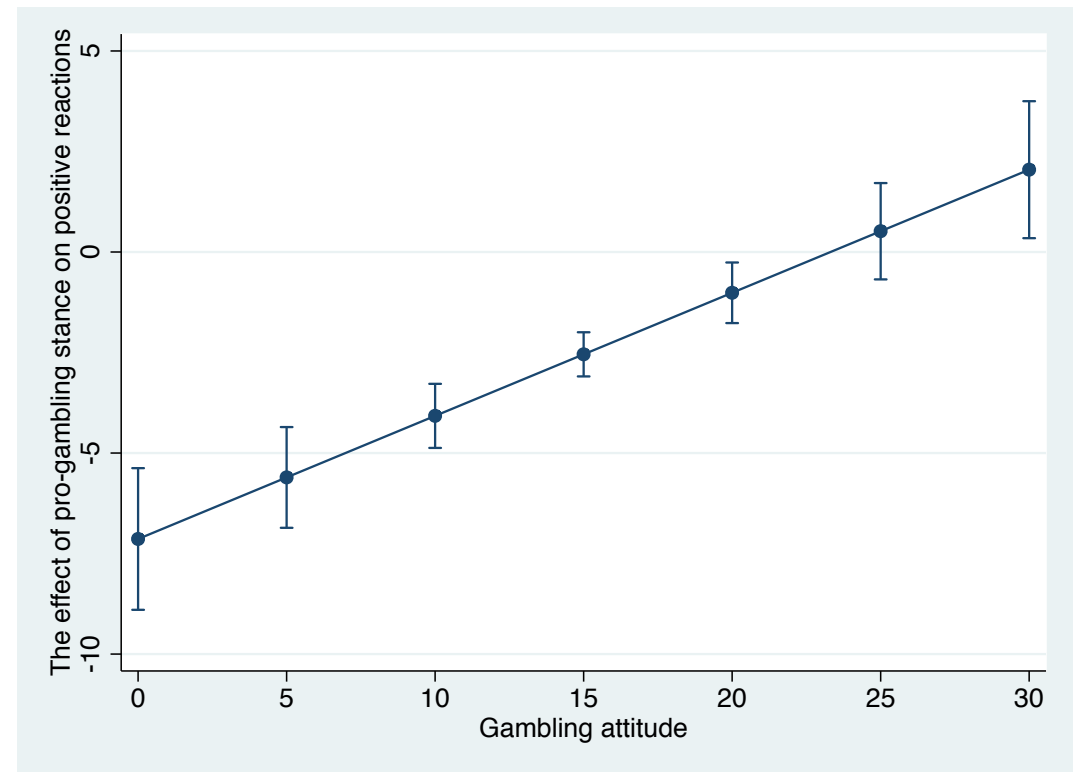
Note. Statistically significant p-values at the 95% confidence level are bold-faced.

The conditional effects of pro-gambling stance on positive reactions in two models

Control condition



Group condition



Discussion: main findings

- **SUPPORTED**

- H1 social conformity hypothesis

- H3 negative orientation hypothesis

- H4 gambling attitude hypothesis

- **NOT SUPPORTED**

- H2 in-group norm hypothesis

- H5 experience over fact hypothesis

Conclusion

- Young people in general are critical towards gambling contents (NORMATIVITY)
- Social media group processes affect the way young people approach gambling material online (SOCIAL INFLUENCE)
- Those young people who already have highly positive attitudes towards gambling are most likely to engage with pro-gambling content (SELECTIVITY)

Thank you!

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