Gambling Interacts with Trauma to Predict Alexithymia Scores among College Students

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Gambling Interacts with Trauma to Predict Alexithymia Scores among College Students
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Introduction

- Gambling is fairly common among college age students, with estimates ranging from 15% (Kilburg, 2005) to 42% (LaBrie, Shaffer, LaPlante, & Wechsler, 2003). Furthermore, gambling among college students is associated with a variety of negative outcomes, particularly for men (Schuck, Torm, & Neubeck, 2006). Despite this, little is known about psychological factors linking gambling among college age students.
- A recent study conducted among college students, the relationship between pathological gambling and psychological variables (e.g., alexithymia) was examined. Findings indicate that psychological variables like alexithymia might be a noteworthy risk factor to problem gambling (Park, Smith, & McConaghy, 2003).

Method

- The study used a cross-sectional design with a convenience sample of college students. Participants were recruited through e-mail, social media, and on-campus flyers. The sample consisted of 160 (Female = 68%) with a mean age of 19.79 years. The sample was predominantly Caucasian (86.8%), with smaller percentages of African American (3.1%), Hispanic (2.5%), and Asian (2.5%). The sample was predominantly female (68%).

- Participants completed the following assessments:
  - Alexithymia Scale (AS): This is a 20-item scale that measures the ability to identify and describe feelings, externally oriented thinking, and limited imaginative capacity. Higher scores indicate more difficulty with these dimensions.
  - Trauma: This is a 20-item questionnaire that incorporates four scales examining general traumas, physical punishment, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse. Higher scores indicate greater trauma exposure.
  - Gambling: This is a 20-item questionnaire that examines gambling habits, including frequency, amount spent, and perceived control over gambling.

- Data were analyzed using SPSS software. A factorial ANOVA was conducted to examine the interactive effects of gambling (high/low) and trauma (high/low) on alexithymia scores for males and females. Post-hoc analyses were conducted using a Least Significant Difference (LSD) test.

Results

- The study found a significant interaction between trauma and gambling for males and females. Specifically, males with high trauma and low gambling had higher alexithymia scores than males with high trauma and high gambling. Females with low trauma and high gambling had lower alexithymia scores than females with high trauma and low gambling.

- There was a significant three-way interaction among trauma, gambling, and gender as they relate to alexithymia. Males with high trauma and low gambling had higher alexithymia scores than females with high trauma and low gambling. Additionally, males with high trauma and low gambling had higher alexithymia scores than males with low trauma and high gambling.

Discussion

- Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between trauma, gambling, and alexithymia among college students. The findings support the idea that trauma and gambling may interact to predict alexithymia levels. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of considering gender differences in these relationships.

Table 1. Summary of Factorial ANOVA Analyses (N = 160, df = 203, Mse = 139.255)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Alexithymia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trauma</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling*Gender</td>
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<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trauma*Gambling</td>
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<td>.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alexithymia*Gender</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alexithymia*Gambling</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexithymia*Trauma</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexithymia<em>Gender</em>Trauma</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexithymia<em>Gender</em>Gambling</td>
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<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexithymia<em>Gambling</em>Trauma</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexithymia<em>Gender</em>Gambling*Trauma</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Alexithymia Scores for Males

Figure 2. Alexithymia Scores for Females

Project supported by UCARE

Summary

The study found a significant interaction between trauma and gambling for males and females. Males with high trauma and low gambling had higher alexithymia scores than males with high trauma and high gambling. Females with low trauma and high gambling had lower alexithymia scores than females with high trauma and low gambling. The study also found a significant three-way interaction among trauma, gambling, and gender as they relate to alexithymia. The findings suggest that trauma and gambling may interact to predict alexithymia levels, with gender playing a significant role in these relationships.

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