



Cross-cultural study of youth problem gambling

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Research has demonstrated that youth from certain cultures have higher rates of problem gambling than others. Acculturation difficulties and belonging to a cultural group that approves of gambling are two factors thought to be associated with a higher risk of developing gambling problems. A recent study by the International Center for Youth Gambling and High-Risk Behaviors compared the prevalence of frequent and problem gambling among Quebec youth from different cultural backgrounds. Unlike prior studies which compared the rates of minority and majority group members in a given country, this study examined English and French speaking youth, two groups that would not ordinarily be considered minorities, in addition to an Allophone group.

A convenience sample of 1273 Quebec high school students aged 12-18 was divided into three linguistic groupings: Anglophone (English; 192 boys, 212 girls), Francophone (French; 141 Boys, 157 Girls), and Allophone (other; 272 boys, 291 girls). Most of the youth were functionally bilingual and therefore the English/French division was made with respect to language spoken at school. In addition, youth were considered Allophone if a language other than French or English was spoken at home, most commonly Italian (N = 199), Spanish (N = 107), Portuguese (N = 49), Arabic (N=47), and Chinese (N=46). All schools served youth from middle-class to upper middle-class neighbourhoods located in the greater Montreal area.

Youth who met the DSM-IV-MRJ criteria for being either at-risk or probable pathological gamblers were considered to have gambling problems (cut off score of 2 or more). Results revealed that Allophone boys had the highest proportion of youth who gambled on a weekly basis (38%) and who reported gambling problems (23%), followed by Anglophone (20% and 10% respectively), and finally



Francophone (12% and 4% respectively) boys. Allophone girls were more likely to gamble weekly (16%), compared to Anglophone (12%) and Francophone (8%) girls, while this latter group was found to have a lower prevalence of problem gamblers (1.3%), in contrast to Allophone (5%) and Anglophone (6%) girls.

The linguistic groupings demonstrated few meaningful differences with respect to factors related to problem gambling, i.e., comorbidity with other risk factors, coping, family functioning and resiliency. Acculturation difficulties were associated with problem gambling, but only 6% of Allophone youth reported experiencing such problems. It is hypothesized that the principal reason Allophones, and to a lesser degree Anglophones, are more susceptible to gambling problems is due to their more frequent participation in gambling activities.

These findings are important because they suggest that certain minority groups may be at increased risk for problem gambling for reasons that go beyond poverty and other disadvantages. The results of the present study are consistent with those of a province-wide survey conducted in 2002 that found problem gambling rates to be higher among Non-Francophone youth. However, a provincial survey conducted in 2000 found no such differences. Further research is therefore necessary to establish whether the rate of problem gambling is increasing among the non-francophone youth population in Quebec, or whether some other factor (e.g. methodological differences) is responsible for these divergent findings.

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