Reviewer's report

Title: Concerned significant others of people with gambling problems in Finland: a cross-sectional population study

Version: 1 Date: 3 February 2014

Reviewer: Alun Jackson

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This is an important paper in that it is a population study of the concerned significant others (CSOs) of people with problematic gambling behaviours, as distinct from research on presentation of help-seeking CSOs. As such it provides useful data from which to consider community education programs and service planning for this population.

Below are a number of comments and suggestions which constitute MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS. While a number of grammatical and stylistic issues are noted below, the paper would benefit from a thorough English language review following the changes being made.

1. page 5 para 1 line 2: Among THE Norwegian population
2. page 5 para 2 line 3 needs rephrasing. Suggest "Specifically, single males were found to be the most prevalent type of CSO, while being a single parent was more likely to be associated with being female."
3. page 6 para 1: Sentence beginning: Moreover, CSOs..." needs to be expressed more clearly.
4. page 6 para 2 line 8: "...including headaches..." Remove 'the'.
5. page 7 para 1 line 4: change to "...to investigate who the CSOs were concerned about..."
6. page 7 under Method, the Finnish Gambling 2011 report (in Finnish) is the only reference to the major study from which this paper is derived. It should be made clear that there are other publications arising from this study, especially as some of the method description is found also in these, for example: Castrén et al. Factors associated with disordered gambling in Finland, Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy 2013, 8:24.
   http://www.substanceabusepolicy.com/content/8/1/24
7. page 8 under discussion of gambling related correlates. There needs to be a more extensive discussion of the SOGS with its alpha for this study reported. The authors may consider something like: "The SOGS was developed as a clinical tool to identify probable pathological gamblers. It demonstrated good reliability and validity, and not surprisingly, high correlation with DSM–III-R criteria for pathological gambling (r=.94) and was able to accurately classify Gamblers Anonymous members (98.1 per cent), university students (95.3 per cent) and
hospital employees (99.3 per cent). Taken out of the clinical context, however, there is concern that the SOGS may yield a high false positive score in population studies", and go on to justify why it was used here and the rationale for a 12 month rather than lifetime use, for example: "Using a lifetime frame of reference, rather than a past month, past six months or past 12 months for the SOGS items may overestimate current prevalence, as it captures in population surveys, those who may have had a problem with their gambling but now no longer do so. For this reason a 12-month timeframe was adopted. In the limitations section, some mention may be made of the limitations of the SOGS eg: Excessive weight is given to items concerned with borrowing money, with nearly half of the 20 equally weighted items dealing with sources of funding gambling.

8. page 9 para 1 line 1: "Health and wellbeing correlates were also ENQUIRED INTO.

9. What measure of general health was used? If this was a non-validated measure this needs to be stated. Similarly, was a loneliness measure used?

10. page 9 para 2 line 3: just "summing" rather than "summing up".

11. page 10 first results section heading should read: "The CVSOs and who they were concerned about". This phrasing should be used throughout rather than "of whom they were concerned about".

12. page 11 para 1, line 7 and throughout (including tables 2&3), refer to "risky alcohol consumption" rather than "alcohol risk consumption". consumption".

13. page 13 para 1 line 4: what does 'past year gambling problems' mean? Is this SOGS 3-4 or SOGS 5+ or 3+?

14. page 12 first para under Discussion: When you say "Internationally, the Finnish problem gambling rate of 2.7% is considered average", you need to state how this rate was established. If it is SOGS 12 month rather than lifetime, then it may be expected to be less than surveys which report lifetime SOGS.

15. page 14 para 2 line 2 needs to be expressed more clearly.

16. page 15, para 1 lines 9 and 10 need re-working with a different word than mediocre. This is a statement of quality, not the range of people encompassed in the definition, which I assume is the intent here.

17. The discussion would benefit from a brief comparison with the CSO help seeking studies to point out major similarities and differences between help-seekers and the present study's population-based group. May also wish to look at the following:


18. In discussion / limitations it would be worth noting whether the sampling frame was drawn from landline phones only, and if so, what the implications may be. This is especially so in Finlands as the European Mobile Observatory has reported that Finns make 94% of their phone calls on mobiles. Many people will now have mobiles only and unless study samples are dual frame, results will be seriously biased. See: 26. Jackson, A.C., Pennay, D., Dowling, N.A. Coles-Janess, B., Christensen, D.R. (2013). Improving gambling survey research using a dual - frame survey of landline and mobile phone numbers. Journal of Gambling Studies, Online first DOI: 10.1007/s10899-012-9353-6

18. Reference 34 correct to Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

None to declare