Reviewer’s report

Title: The Impact of Pop-up Warning Messages of Losses on Expenditure in a Simulated Game of Roulette: A Pilot Study

Version: 0 Date: 27 Aug 2018

Reviewer: Sari Castrén

Reviewer's report:

Date: 27.8.2018

It was a pleasure being invited to review a manuscript Title: "The Impact of Pop-up Warning Messages of Losses on Expenditure in a Simulated Game of Roulette: A Pilot Study" for BMC Public Health.

This is an interesting and important topic on much needed topic of responsible gambling tools. This study's aims were to test the impact of expenditure-specific warning messages on subsequent gambling expenditure following exposure to two different warning message contents and one message containing no warning as a control message. 45 university students participated in this study. Expenditure-specific warning messages about current losses were more effective than generic messages for reducing expenditure.

Overall this manuscript is clear, specifically introduction section, where authors have addressed the earlier research creditable well. This pilot study gives an important contribution to the field of gambling research and suggestions to the further research in regards RG tools content.

I have few points and questions to the authors to address prior to publication of this manuscript. Look forward seeing this manuscript published.
Title
Title reflects accurately the content of the paper.

Abstract
Abstract will be complete and stand-alone, when statistical values are added, when significant.

Keywords
Appropriate

Introduction
Introduction is well written and flows soundly.

Methods and results
This section would benefit some re-organizing and clarifications.

For me it would be logical order to report, (please see also author guidelines)

Ethics and study design
Study population (you may include description of recruitment process in detail here)

Procedure:
  o This is my main question: it looks to me that authors use PGSI measure as inclusion criteria with no exclusion criteria. There are some questionable interpretations regarding scoring of the scale (ref 34), please see the scoring key below and explain what was your inclusion criteria based on Ferris and Wynne scoring key? Or if you somehow modified the severity levels (low, moderate-level gambling scores) please give it a clear rationale and provide supportive reference to do so. In its current state it is unclear what was a scoring. Please see the PGSI scoring here: PGSI - Total your score. The higher your score, the greater the risk that your gambling is a problem. Score of 0 = Non-problem gambling. Score of 1 or 2 = Low level of problems with few or no identified negative consequences. Score of 3 to 7 =
Moderate level of problems leading to some negative consequences. Score of 8 or more = Problem gambling with negative consequences and a possible loss of control.

- In addition, please report PGSI Cronbach Alpha.

- Perhaps adding PGSI - measure and scoring key as supplementary form, would be beneficial to those readers who are not familiar with the scale.

- Your sample (PGSI) mean score was 0.85. Please specify when reporting how many (N) participants were categorized in each severity group rather than using percentages, or you may use both.

- What is the timeline you used in PGSI: lifetime or past 12 months? Please state that and note that certain timeline may have some limitations, thus address that in the discussion section, if relevant.

- Authors state: "While a score of zero on the scale would not indicate any behavioural problems, participants in this category may still be frequent or 'heavy' gamblers with regards to time and money spent gambling." Please support your statement with relevant reference.

- Description of your sample as a Table 1 is highly recommended (age (mean and SD missing), severity, gender).

Materials:

- Is it possible to add picture of the actual screen in all three conditions, that would be really helpful to the reader to understand and see what was done.

Statistical analysis.

Results

- Table 2 is informative

- It would be interesting and informative to know, perhaps adding Table 3: were there differences in genders, age, low or moderate gamblers, if yes please discuss, if no please state that.

Discussion
Well written discussion section. Authors have addressed limitations of the study and suggestions to future research.

References
Appropriate.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

**Declaration of competing interests**
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

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If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

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