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Neglected Areas of Gambling Research: Challenges and Opportunities

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Introduction

Over the past 2 decades, I have conducted several bibliometric studies on major topics or journal outlets across myriad sub-fields in the general field of Psychology. The findings usually present both prominent and under-represented areas of scholarly investigation. When I share my research with both academic colleagues and clinical researchers, the typical reaction is much gratitude that my articles report *under-studied* topics of research attention. Based on my research, I have concluded that the evolution of a select body of scholarship can advance more from grasping and appreciating neglected topics of study than from recognition of prominent areas of research interest. And the same applies to the recent findings of my content analysis of contemporary gambling research (Piotrowski, 2025).

The study utilized a bibliometric approach to examine subject matter coverage in 2 prominent journals in the field (*Journal of Gambling Studies*, *Journal of Gambling Issues*) over the past 10 years (2015-2025). The content analysis, comprising 824 studies, indicated that the most prominent areas of research focus were, in rank order: treatment approaches, theory/models, sporting events, sub-types/profile, cognitive distortions, measurement/assessment, etiology/risk factors, substance abuse, and prevention. The review affirmed extensive research attention on the detrimental impact of problem gambling on adolescents, particularly in the context of video-gaming. As copious avenues for sports-betting have proliferated in recent years, researchers have shifted their investigatory focus to this emergent area. In terms of etiology, the role of cognitive distortions in the maintenance of pathological gambling is a major area of study. The recent literature is also concentrated on salient issues such as prevention, responsible gambling, and co-morbidity factors. Based on contemporary trends, researchers are increasingly focused on the confluence of video-gaming and gambling (Turner & Shi, 2021), online gambling avenues, and more recently, easy access to sport-betting opportunities (e.g., Weston & Clark, 2025).

This bibliometric analysis also identified copious subject areas largely neglected in these top-tier gambling journals. Table 1 (see page 3) lists topics representing less than .5% (1-4 studies) of the dataset of 824 articles under review.

Table 1.

Fear of missing-out (FOMO)	Early childhood events	Anxiety
Loneliness	Parenting issues	Dropouts from treatment
Sleep/circadian rhythms	General life stress	Treatment relapse
Cue-reactive urge	‘Chasing’	Barriers to treatment
Suicide	Disinhibition	Gambling limitations
Multiple addictions	Attachment styles	Military/Veterans
Religion/Spirituality	Social support	the Disabled
Body image	Shame/Guilt	Intergeneration influence
Physical health outcomes	Day-traders (investments)	Sensation-seeking
Virtual/Augmented reality	Race/Ethnicity	Gambling crisis-hotline
Incarcerated prisoners	LGBTQ+	'Personality disorders'

In order to ascertain whether these topics are also under-represented in the general psychological literature on gambling, an online search of *PsycINFO* was performed. Since keyword searches tend to over-represent researched topics, I utilized a more restrictive strategy by tailoring output based on a Boolean (two-terms) approach. This ensures that both topics are a major focus of study. Table 2 presents the results of this exercise, using several of the ‘neglected’ topics noted in Table 1. Interestingly, several topics are somewhat well represented in the literature, whereas some investigatory subjects (i.e., guilt, loneliness) receive scant research attention.

Table 2.

<i>Boolean Search Terms + Gambling</i>	<i>Both Terms in Title of Article (# of Studies)</i>
Adverse childhood experiences	7
Loneliness	4
Guilt	3
Sleep	13
Suicide	26
Veterans	23

Hence, based on the current findings, researchers (and editors) are facing a host of contemporary challenges reflecting the emergent nature of this expanding field. Much of the subject matter noted above are particularly salient issues in both responsible and pathological gambling. Yet, it seems rather inexplicable that these topics garner limited research interest. Perhaps an encouraging indicator, recent research has appeared on critical factors such as the confluence of suicide/suicidal ideation and gambling (Etxaburu et al., 2025; Kristensen et al., 2024), and on select populations such as veterans (Grubbs et al., 2024). However, my bibliometric analysis shows that the extant research landscape lacks empirical work on a host of investigatory topics regarding the many facets of gambling. Perhaps, this commentary will serve as a scaffold and catalyst for future research efforts in the study of gambling and gambling-related disorders.

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None.

Ethics Approval

N/A

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