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The power of collaboration and diversity in interdisciplinary research: in the case of a responsible gambling project

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By Dr Ruijie Wang, a Soapbox Science speaker, an interdisciplinary researcher and a Lecturer in Psychology based at Bournemouth University. Her research interest lies in Cyberpsychology and Human Computer Interaction. As a woman working in STEM disciplines, Ruijie gives a talk about "Being 'GambleAware': How science and tech can help and why collaboration matters" at Brighton seafront for Soapbox Science 2022.

With the emergence of online gambling and continuous digitalisation of daily life, gambling has been made accessible 24/7 through the Internet and technology. No matter whether you gamble, have you ever thought about why people keep gambling even when it is causing more harm than fun? The colourful animated flashing lights and the triumphant sounds simulating clinking coins to reinforce each "winning" at a slot machine might have provided some insights into the answer. Likewise, online gambling websites and platforms are also designed using persuasive mechanisms to be engaging for people to stay and play longer, not to mention various gambling adverts and promotion overspreading websites and social media. Moreover, gamblers may have cognitive distortions and erroneous beliefs such as "gamblers' fallacy" (Tversky & Kahneman, 1971). When random events have deviated from the population average in a short run, gamblers may believe that the opposite deviation would be more likely to happen even though the odds stay the same. They may also hold "illusion of control", overestimating the control their actions have over outcomes in games of chance (Langer, 1975). All these internal and external factors can potentially make people lose control and continuously chase losses and eventually lead to at-risk and problem gambling, causing harm to not only gamblers, but also their families and the society.

At Bournemouth University we have an interdisciplinary research group working on a GambleAware-funded research project titled *Powerful Social Norms, Meaningful Transparency and Data-Informed Behavioural Change for Responsible Online Gambling (EROGamb 2.0)*. Responsible Gambling encompasses both Responsible Consumption of Gambling which refers to individuals' safer gambling behaviour within personally affordable limits of money, time, and other resources (Hing et al., 2016), and Responsible Provision of Gambling which refers to good practice of gambling industry such as providing gaming fairness with reasonable odds (Hing et al., 2018). In terms of individual's positive behavioural change towards responsible consumption of gambling, the accessibility and interactivity of the online gambling environment, and the persuasive techniques used to keep gamblers online can be utilised to prevent them from developing problem gambling behaviour. For example, safer gambling interventions can be sent to gamblers in a personalised manner based on their gambling behaviour retrieved from gambling operators' database. In terms of the industry's best practice towards responsible provision of gambling, we advocate information transparency in both the promotion material and games to tackle gamblers' erroneous beliefs and facilitate their informed decision making.

Our responsible gambling project is highly interdisciplinary as it involves collaboration among different scientific disciplines to integrate multidisciplinary perspectives, theories and methods (Godemann, 2006). We have adopted multidisciplinary approaches including systematic literature review, randomised controlled feasibility study, eye tracking, interviews, website and social media analysis, as well as co-design workshops with experts both from academia and the gambling industry who have practical experience. We are a diverse research team in terms of not only the wide range of research backgrounds and interdisciplinary expertise, but also gender, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds. Our team comes from different departments at Bournemouth University

including Psychology, Computing and Informatics, Business, Health and Social Science. This has allowed us to adopt the abovementioned multidisciplinary approaches and establish knowledge in the core areas of this interdisciplinary project, including social norms, health psychology, transparency, consumer trust and corporate social responsibility.

With diversity and collaboration in our mind and practice, we have worked with multiple stakeholders, including other researchers working in relevant areas, policy makers, gambling operators and gamblers, and produced reports for both lay audience and the gambling industry to inform the best practice towards responsible gambling. Coming from a multidisciplinary background myself (with a BSc degree in Psychology, MSc in Human Computer Interaction, and PhD in Computer Science) and working on interdisciplinary research fields, I strongly believe that integrating diversity, collaboration and an open mind to different disciplinary perspectives into our research practice is always important not only to create an inclusive research environment and succeed in interdisciplinary research, but also to enrich our lives with fairness of opportunity, freedom from bias and discrimination and openness to a diversity of people, thoughts and ideas.

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