

Study finds playing Fantasy Football for money may be bad for your mental health

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A [study](#) led by Dr. Gary Ian Britton of Queen Mary University of London, published in the journal *Simulation & Gaming*, looks at the effects of taking part in Fantasy Football on the mental health of its

players.

The study surveyed 635 active Fantasy Football players and asked them how many leagues they played in that involved a cash-prize, and found that players involved in the highest number of cash-prize leagues reported the highest number of [mental health concerns](#).

The researchers also found that players who reported a high level of general engagement with the game reported more mental [health](#) concerns than those who reported less engagement with the game.

Additionally, the study found that players who reported that they spent a high amount of time comparing their Fantasy Football team with those of other players, and those who reported frequently checking how their team was performing, reported more mental health concerns than players who engaged less in these types of behaviors.

Mental health concerns were measured in the study by asking people how often Fantasy Football makes them feel, for example, anxious or stressed.

While the study may appear to shed an unfavorable light on playing Fantasy Football, the picture is not all negative. Dr. Britton explained, "While the results of the study might seem worrying on the one hand, on the other hand all of these involved/engaged groups also reported also more [positive mood](#) as a result of playing Fantasy Football compared to people who are less involved/engaged in the game."

"When your Fantasy Football team does badly you are more likely to feel down if you are more financially invested in the game, or if you are just invested in the game more generally, but equally, if your Fantasy

Football team performs well in any given week, this is going to positively boost the mood of an engaged Fantasy Football player more than it would the mood of a less engaged player."

While the results of the study show that a player's mood can be positively affected by playing Fantasy Football if they are invested in the game, the fact that it can also negatively affect their mood, and mental health, is concerning.

While Fantasy Premier League discourages players from creating cash leagues on their version of the game, players still frequently do this, and there is no way that the Premier League can monitor this.

More worryingly, there are many other Fantasy Football games which involve players essentially putting their money down ahead of time on how their [players](#) and team will perform, which essentially makes those games a form of gambling.

"The Premier League, at the very least, need to put a warning on their website about the potential negative effects of their version Fantasy Football, and other versions, if a player becomes overly invested in the game, be that financially or just in terms of their time" Dr. Britton suggested.

The study, which is the first to link financial involvement in Fantasy Football with mental health concerns, also involved the contributions from Luke Wilkins (La Trobe University), Jamie Churchyard (University of West London), and Ross Dowsett (Nottingham Trent University).

More information: Luke Wilkins et al, Exploring Fantasy Football Involvement and Mental Health through Player Experience, Engagement Levels, Social Comparisons, and Financial Incentives, *Simulation &*

Gaming (2024). [DOI: 10.1177/10468781241261663](https://doi.org/10.1177/10468781241261663)

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