The Problem Gambling Research and Treatment Centre

An initiative of the Victorian Government, the University of Melbourne and Monash University

Problem gambling and family violence: Findings from a community survey

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• The relationship between problem gambling and family violence is likely to be invariably complex and the problem behaviours may be related in any number of ways
• Problem gambling leads to family violence – e.g., gambling-related stressors
• Family violence leads to problem gambling – e.g., escape
• Problem gambling and family violence both mediated by one or more factors – e.g., impulsivity, emotion dis regulation, psychopathology
Early empirical literature

- **Lorenz & Shuttlesworth (1983)**
  - 43% of Gam-Anon members emotionally, verbally, and physically abused by gambling partner
  - 10% reported partner had abused the children

- **Lesieur & Rothschild (1989)**
  - Children of GA and Gam-Anon members more likely to have experienced parental physical violence than norms

- **Bland et al. (1993)**
  - PGs reported higher rates of spouse physical abuse (23%) and child physical abuse (17%) than general population
Recent studies

- **Muelleman et al. (2002)**
  - Relative odds of experiencing IPV were 10 times higher for emergency department patients whose partners were PGs

- **Korman et al. (2008)**
  - 60% of PGs reported being a victim of IPV and 56% reported IPV perpetration

- **Schulter, Abbott, & Bellringer (2008)**
  - No association between IPV victimisation and PG in NZ couples with a Pacific infant

- **Affifi et al. (2010)**
  - PGs were 6 to 12 times more likely to perpetrate dating violence, 20 times more likely to perpetrate severe marital violence, and 13 times more likely to perpetrate severe child abuse
Contemporary research

• Expand to family violence
• Gender
  – No gender differences in victimisation but more women than expected reporting IPV perpetration (Korman et al., 2008)
• Substance use/abuse and psychopathology
  – Relative odds of experiencing IPV were 50 times higher for women whose partners were both PG and problem drinkers (Muelleman et al., 2002)
  – “Multiple-problem” parents more likely to be violent and abusive toward children than “pure” gambling parents (Lesieur & Rothschild, 1989)
  – No significant relationships between IPV perpetration and/or victimisation and substance use (Korman et al., 2008)
  – Relationship attenuated when adjusted for lifetime mental disorders (Affifi et al., 2010)
Aims

1. establish the co-occurrence of PG and FV victimisation and perpetration and identify which family members of problem gamblers are victims and perpetrators of FV

2. determine the degree to which the relationship remains significant after controlling for socio-demographic factors and comorbid conditions

3. determine the degree to which participant gender and comorbid conditions (mental health issues, alcohol use problems, and substance use) moderate the relationship – “for whom” does the relationship occur?
**Measures**

- **Socio-demographic information**
- **Problem gambling severity**: Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI: Ferris & Wynne, 2001): 9 items, $\alpha = .86$
- **Family violence**: Screening item based on the HITS Scale (Sherin, Sinacore, Li, Zitter, & Shakil, 1998)
  - *In the past 12 months, has a family member physically hurt you, insulted or talked down to you, threatened you with harm, or screamed or cursed at you?*
  - *In the past 12 months, have you physically hurt, insulted or talked down to, threatened with harm, or screamed or cursed at a family member?*
  - Participants asked to identify family member(s) from a list
- **Mental health problems**: Kessler 10 (Kessler et al., 2002): 10 items, $\alpha = .85$
- **Alcohol use problems**: Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test-Consumption (AUDIT-C: Bush et al., 1992): 3 items, $\alpha = .62$
- **Substance use**: Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST: WHO ASSIST Working Group, 2002): 3 month frequency item
Procedure and Data Analyses

- Targeted random digit dialling telephone survey
- \[ n = 3953 \text{ (1938 males, 2015 females)} \]
- Sample representative of the general population for age, sex, and geographic location
- **Magnitude of relationship**: Pearson’s bivariate correlations and cross-tabulations
- **Specificity of relationship**: Partial correlations
- **Moderation of relationship**: Moderated multiple regression analyses. Follow-up split file regression analyses for categorical moderators and simple regression slopes on interaction viewer for continuous moderators.
## Results: Rates of family violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FV vict</th>
<th>FV perp</th>
<th>Both FV vict &amp; perp</th>
<th>Either FV vict &amp; perp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-PG</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low risk</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mod risk</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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• There was a significant positive relationship between PG and FV victimisation ($p < .001$)

• Relationship remained significant even after controlling for socio-demographic factors ($p < .001$) and comorbid conditions ($p = .001$)
### Results: Family violence perpetrators identified by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non PG</th>
<th>Low risk</th>
<th>Mod risk</th>
<th>PG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male in-law</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female in-law</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: Moderators of PG and family violence victimisation

- The relationship between problem gambling and family violence victimisation was stronger for participants who:
  - were male ($p < .001$)
  - reported higher levels of alcohol use problems ($p < .001$)
  - reported higher amphetamine use frequency ($p < .001$)
  - reported higher inhalant use frequency ($p < .001$)
  - reported higher hallucinogen use frequency ($p = .03$)
Results: Relationship between problem gambling and family violence perpetration

- There was a significant positive relationship between PG and FV perpetration ($p < .001$)
- Relationship remained significant even after controlling for socio-demographic factors ($p < .001$)
- However, the relationship did not remain significant after controlling for comorbid conditions ($p = .30$)
## Results: Family violence victims identified by participants

<table>
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<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.0%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• The relationship between problem gambling and family violence perpetration was stronger for participants who:
  – were male \( (p < .001) \)
  – reported higher levels of mental health problems \( (p < .001) \)
  – reported higher levels of alcohol use problems \( (p < .001) \)
  – reported lower cannabis use frequency \( (p = .01) \)
  – reported higher amphetamine use frequency \( (p = .003) \)
  – reported higher sedative use frequency \( (p < .001) \)
Implications: Magnitude and specificity of relationship

- Rates of family violence may be overestimated due to use of screening instrument
- Strong relationship between family violence victimisation and problem gambling, even after controlling for other factors
- Strong relationship between family violence perpetration and problem gambling, but not after controlling for comorbid conditions
- Potentially reciprocal pattern of family violence and perpetration
• In-laws and fathers display most victimisation and perpetration – important to study family violence as well as IPV
• However, type and severity of violence must be taken into consideration in future research
• Relationship significant for low risk and problem gamblers, but not moderate risk gamblers – similar pattern of rates and family members for victimisation and perpetration
  – Low risk: in-laws
  – Moderate risk – fewer family members but male in-laws and fathers
  – Problem gamblers – almost all family members but especially male/female in-laws and fathers
• Results seem to suggest that problem gambling leads to family violence victimisation and perpetration
Implications: Moderation of relationship

- Male problem gamblers are more likely to be both victims and perpetrators of family violence.
- Alcohol use problems and substance use increase the likelihood of family violence victimisation and perpetration.
- Comorbidities are important in the investigation of this relationship.
- Important to break down by substance.
- Future research: direction and mediators of relationship between family violence victimisation/perpetration and problem gambling.