



How does a male partner's gambling contribute to intimate partner violence?

What this research is about

Gambling disorder refers to gambling behaviours that are recurrent and difficult to control despite resulting in negative consequences. One negative consequence of gambling disorder is intimate partner violence (IPV). IPV is any behaviour that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm to a partner in the context of an intimate relationship. Financial abuse is also a form of IPV. Research has found a strong link between IPV and gambling disorder.

There are several explanations for why this occurs. This study focuses on the role of gendered drivers. Gendered drivers are gender inequality-related factors that contribute to violence against women. Four distinct gendered drivers are recognized. The first is condoning violence against women. The second is men's control of decision making. The third is gender roles and stereotypes that emphasize male authority. The fourth is peer relations amongst men that accept aggression and disrespect towards women. The aim of this study was to examine the role of gendered drivers in IPV linked to a male partner's gambling.

What the researchers did

The researchers interviewed 30 women who had experienced IPV that was related to gambling from a male partner. To be in the study, participants had to live in Australia, be over the age of 18, and speak English. They also had to have contact with a gambling support or IPV support service.

Each interview took place over the phone and was recorded. Participants were asked to share their story and how gambling affected their experience of IPV. Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. The

What you need to know

Research has demonstrated that gambling disorder and intimate partner violence (IPV) are strongly related to each other. The aim of this study was to better understand this relationship from the perspectives of women who had experienced IPV due to a male partner's gambling. Thirty women were interviewed. Five themes were identified: rigid gender roles and identities, peer and family relationships that emphasize aggression and disrespect toward women, attitudes condoning violence against women, men's control of decision making, and limiting women's independence and their isolation. The women described cycles of violence that created a climate of fear. Alcohol and drug misuses by the male partner also added to the IPV and gambling.

interviews were transcribed. Two of the researchers read the transcriptions independently of each other. They took notes of potential themes and categories of the interviews. They met every two weeks to go over the emerging themes and categories. A third researcher reviewed their work and compared it to the interview transcriptions. Finally, several researchers reviewed the drafts of the analysis.

What the researchers found

The women ranged in age from 20 to 69. Most of the participants were between the ages of 30 and 49. All women had separated from their partner who had perpetrated the IPV. Roughly 2/3 of participants had experienced physical violence and another 1/3 had experienced sexual violence. All had experienced verbal, psychological, and financial abuse.

The male partners most frequently gambled on poker machines, casino games, and sports betting. Their gambling was described as problematic. All women reported that their partner spent all available money and were frequently absent because of gambling.

Five themes related to gendered drivers were reported. The first theme was rigid gender roles and identities. Gender roles and identities influenced IPV, relationships, and the partner's gambling. Stereotypical gender roles, especially viewing the man as the authority in the relationship, played a role in many women's experience of IPV and their relationship.

The second theme was peer and family relationships that emphasize aggression and disrespect toward women. Family and friends normalized the abuse and encouraged the women to stay with their partners despite serious physical injuries. Men who value male friendships more than their relationship with their female partner tended to be disrespectful towards women. Friends and family also normalized or minimized the male partner's excessive gambling.

The third theme was attitudes condoning violence against women. Violence was more likely to occur after gambling losses, where the men vented about their gambling frustration to women.

The fourth theme was men's control of decision-making. All participants said that their male partner was dominant and viewed women as lesser beings. They used their dominant control over finances to prioritize their gambling habits over family welfare.

The fifth theme was limiting women's independence and their isolation. Male partners limited their female partner's autonomy in various ways, such as sabotaging her job or education. Some did this to prevent the women from leaving. Others forced the women to work to enable their gambling.

These gendered drivers interacted with the male partner's gambling to increase the IPV. Participants described cycles of violence that created a climate of fear. Alcohol and drug misuses by the male partner also added to the IPV and gambling.

How you can use this research

This research could be useful for researchers and service providers. The results demonstrated a need for supporting female partners of men who gamble problematically. For example, screening for IPV in gambling support services, and public education on the co-occurrence of IPV and gambling disorder, could be useful applications of this study.

About the researchers

Nerilee Hing, and **Catherine O'Mullan** are affiliated with the School of Health, Medical and Applied Sciences at Central Queensland University in Bundaberg, Australia. **Lydia Mainey** is affiliated with the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Sciences at Central Queensland University in Cairns, Australia. **Helen Breen** and **Elaine Nuske** are affiliated with the Faculty of Business, Law & Arts at the Southern Cross University in Lismore, Australia. For more information about this study, please contact Helen Breen at helen.breen@scu.edu.au.

Citation

Hing, N., O'Mullan, C., Breen, H., Nuske, E., & Mainey, L. (2021). How gambling by a male partner contributes to intimate partner violence against women: A gendered perspective. *International Gambling Studies*. Advance online publication.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2021.1973534>

Study funding

This study was funded by the Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety.

About Greo

Greo has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. Greo is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization with almost two decades of international experience in generating, synthesizing, and mobilizing research into action across the health and wellbeing sectors. Greo helps organizations improve their strategies, policies, and practices by harnessing the power of evidence and stakeholder insight.

Learn more about Greo by visiting greo.ca or emailing info@greo.ca.

