

research snapshot

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Experiences of older women with intimate partner violence in the context of gambling

What this research is about

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is behaviour by an intimate partner or former partner that causes harm. Harms from IPV can include physical, sexual, psychological, and financial harms. Problem gambling can increase how often episodes of IPV occur and how severe they are. There is not much known about how women from earlier generations experienced gambling and IPV. The social historical period in which women from older generations grew up likely shaped their experiences. Cohort effects refer to the generational characteristics of a group born at a particular time. Period effects are the history, events, and external conditions at the time of the abuse, such as laws, services, and practices.

The authors of this study explored the past experiences of older women who experienced male partner violence that was linked to gambling. They also looked at how these experiences were influenced by cohort and period effects.

What the researchers did

This study was part of a larger research project. In the larger project, the researchers interviewed 72 women who experienced gambling-related IPV, 5 men who committed IPV, and 39 service providers. Participants were recruited through online ads (Google, Gumtree, Gambling Help Online). The researchers also asked the service providers to promote this study to suitable clients. They invited previous participants who had agreed to receive information about future studies.

The current study analyzed data from 22 women who were at least 50 years old. All women had engaged with a support service for IPV and/or gambling, and had experienced IPV from a male partner related to

What you need to know

There is not much known about how women from earlier generations experienced gambling and intimate partner violence (IPV). The social historical period in which women from older generations grew up likely shaped their experiences. This study explored the past experiences of older women who experienced male partner violence linked to gambling. Phone interviews were conducted with 22 women who were at least 50 years old and who experienced IPV from a male partner in the context of gambling. The researchers identified both cohort effects (e.g., generational characteristics of a group born at a particular time) and period effects (e.g., history, events, and conditions at the time of the abuse). Cohort effects included gendered attitudes, traditional views of marriage, an expectation to keep quiet, and little understanding of problem gambling. Period effects included a lack of services to support women experiencing IPV and those with problem gambling. There was not much legislation around IPV at the time, police responses were limited, and violence against women was often not taken seriously.

gambling. The authors conducted telephone interviews that were unstructured and did not follow a set interview guide. This allowed the participants to speak freely about their experiences.

What the researchers found

Among the 22 older female participants, 13 had experienced IPV related to their male partner's gambling problems. The other 9 participants

experienced IPV in the context of their own gambling problems. All participants experienced IPV when they were younger. Over 77% had ended the relationship. Participants discussed experiencing a wide range of abuse from their male partner. This included verbal, emotional, and financial abuse, as well as physical assault and sexual violence.

Cohort effects

Gendered attitudes and behaviours: The women accepted traditional gender norms within their relationship. These norms meant that the women often self-blamed and self-sacrificed. They accepted the situation which involved tolerating abuse and male partners' gambling. Their male partners were seen to have authority over the relationship. The women described how their male partners with gambling problems often became violent when they were unable to gamble or lost money through gambling. The women with gambling problems sometimes felt that they deserved the abuse.

Expectations to keep domestic problems private: The women often kept the abuse and gambling problems hidden due to shame. They did not expect their family and friends would be helpful. Some women mentioned how others would not believe them when they disclosed the abuse.

Marriage as a permanent relationship: Marriage was seen as a permanent relationship with gendered roles. This increased the pressure for the women to stay in the relationship despite the abuse.

Lack of recognition of abuse: Many women did not recognize abuse linked to gambling as IPV as gambling was considered a normal and harmless pastime. Some women thought that IPV meant physical abuse and did not recognize other forms of abuse as IPV.

Period effects

There were little professional services that addressed IPV at the time. There were no domestic family violence services, financial support, or childcare available to help women escape violent relationships. There also were no services for problem gambling. There was not much legislation around IPV at the

time, police responses were limited, and violence against women was often not taken seriously.

How you can use this research

This study can inform treatment programmes and research. Practitioners need to consider historical and contextual factors that are linked with women's experiences with IPV and problem gambling.

About the researchers

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Citation

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