

research snapshot

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Intimate partner violence in patients seeking treatment for problem gambling

What this research is about

Problem gambling is when someone experiences harm and distress because of their gambling behaviour. People who have problem gambling often experience mental health issues such as anxiety or depression. They may also face other personal problems, such as difficulties with their finances, work, or relationships.

Some people who have problem gambling experience major difficulties with their relationships. Relationship problems can include intimate partner violence (IPV). IPV is any physical, sexual, or psychological aggression from one intimate partner to another. Research shows that IPV may be common among people with problem gambling. However, only five studies have examined IPV among people seeking treatment for problem gambling. All of these studies have taken place outside of the United Kingdom (UK). This is the first study to look at IPV in people who are seeking problem gambling treatment in the UK.

What the researchers did

The researchers based their study on routine data collected from patients who were seeking treatment from the National Problem Gambling Clinic (NPGC) from March to October 2014. The NPGC is part of the National Health Service (NHS). All patients completed questionnaires prior to meeting with a clinician. In total, 204 patients consented to the use of their data (185 men and 19 women).

First, participants completed the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). The PGSI is a 9-item scale that measures problem gambling severity in the past year. Scores range from 0 to 27, with higher scores indicating more severe problem gambling. Based on

What you need to know

People who have problem gambling may experience difficulties in many aspects of their lives, including their relationships. Relationship problems can include intimate partner violence (IPV). IPV is any physical, sexual or psychological aggression from an intimate partner. IPV may be common among people with problem gambling. This study measured how common IPV was in patients who were seeking treatment for problem gambling in the UK.

A total of 204 participants completed questionnaires about their gambling behaviour and mental health. They also answered questions about their experiences with IPV, specifically verbal and physical violence. Overall, 20% of participants reported IPV in their relationship. Participants who reported IPV had higher anxiety and depression levels than participants who did not. Some of the participants who reported IPV were perpetrators, others were victims, and some were both. Victims of IPV had more severe gambling problems than non-victims.

the PGSI scores, all participants met the criteria for problem gambling.

Next, participants completed the Jellinek-Inventory for assessing Partner Violence (JIPV). The JIPV has four questions that ask about verbal and physical violence. Two questions ask whether the participant was a victim of IPV in the past year. For example: 'Has a situation with your partner gotten so out of hand that your partner threatened you or physically abused you?' The other two questions ask whether they were

the perpetrator of IPV in the past year. For example: 'Has a situation with your partner gotten so out of hand that you became physically violent?'

The participants then completed the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ 9), which measures depression. They also completed the Generalised Anxiety Disorder scale (GAD-7) and the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test-Consumption Questions (AUDIT-C). Finally, they answered questions about their age, gender, and employment status, and described their total debts and losses from gambling.

What the researchers found

Overall, 20% of the participants reported IPV in their relationship (as either a victim and/or a perpetrator). Fourteen percent said they were a victim of IPV, and 12% said they were a perpetrator.

Participants who were victims of IPV had more severe gambling problems than non-victims. Therefore, there might be a link between problem gambling and being a victim of IPV. Victims of IPV also had higher depression and anxiety levels than non-victims. Similarly, perpetrators of IPV had higher depression and anxiety levels than non-perpetrators. They also tended to be older than non-perpetrators.

The researchers did not find any links between IPV and alcohol use, current debts, or gambling losses.

How you can use this research

This study shows that IPV is relatively common in people seeking treatment for problem gambling. Therefore, clinicians who have patients with problem gambling may want to screen for IPV. That way, they can provide targeted help to gamblers who experience IPV. Clinicians could also refer patients to specialist services or interventions for IPV to help keep them safe. The JIPV does not cover sexual and other non-physical forms of violence. Future research could use a more comprehensive scale to assess IPV.

About the researchers

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Citation

Roberts, A., Sharman, S., Landon, J., Cowlshaw, S., Murphy, R., Meleck, S., & Bowden-Jones, H. (2020). Intimate partner violence in treatment seeking problem gamblers. *Journal of Family Violence*, 35, 65–72. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-019-00045-3>

Study funding

No funding was received.

About Gambling Research Exchange (GREO)

Gambling Research Exchange (GREO) has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. GREO is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. Our goal is to support evidence-informed decision making in safer gambling policies, standards, and practices. The work we do is intended for researchers, policy makers, gambling regulators and operators, and treatment and prevention service providers.

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