

Gambling, intimate partner violence and economic abuse against women: Insights from people with lived experience

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- Women's Health in the North
- Salvation Army Crossroads Family Violence Service
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Overview of presentation

What is intimate partner violence (IPV)?

Relationships between IPV and gambling

The ANROWS study

IPV linked to the perpetrator's gambling

Economic abuse linked to the perpetrator's gambling

IPV linked to the victim's gambling

Some considerations for future research

What is intimate partner violence?

- **Intimate partner violence (IPV)** refers to behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours.¹

Types of violence ²⁻³

Situational couple violence

- Specific conflicts that are situationally-provoked and escalate to abuse in response to rising tensions or emotions – but are not connected to a general pattern of controlling behaviours.

Intimate partner terrorism

- Instrumental pattern of coercive control, characterised by intimidation, isolation, control, micro-regulation and assault to subordinate and control the victim and acquire privileges.
- Overwhelmingly, the main type of violence reported by women in this study.

Relationships between IPV and gambling

Person with gambling problem perpetrates IPV

PG associated with 3x increase in IPV perpetration.⁴

Meta-analysis: 37% of people with PG report perpetrating physical IPV.⁵

IPV perpetration also increases with LR and MR gambling.

Person with gambling problem is a victim of IPV

PG associated with 3x increase in IPV victimisation.⁴

Meta-analysis: 38% of PGs report being a victim of physical IPV.⁵

Victim gambles to cope with IPV or escape to a “safe space”

The ANROWS study

Aim

Investigate the **nature of the relationship** between gambling and IPV against women.

Methods

Interviews with women with lived experience and who had accessed help. Recruited through help services and online advertising; \$40 gift voucher.

- 72 women victim-survivors of IPV linked to gambling:
 - 48 male partner's gambling
 - 24 woman's own gambling
 - aged 20-69 yrs, in relationship 2-30+ yrs
- 39 service providers with relevant professional experiences

Analysis

- Adaptive grounded theory using inductive and deductive methods.
- Gender-sensitive perspective, because IPV is a highly gendered issue:
 - Men’s and women’s experiences of IPV are different.
 - Victims of IPV are more likely to be women.
 - Perpetrators of IPV are more likely to be men.
 - Women’s violence is more likely to be reactive, retaliatory and in self-defence and less likely to be lethal or cause serious injury. Mainly situational violence.
 - Men tend to use violence more instrumentally and injuriously to control women’s lives. Often involves coercive control.
 - IPV more likely to occur in contexts of gender inequality.
- Recognised in the wider IPV literature.
- And in policy (e.g., WHO, COAG, OECD, European Commission).

Results: IPV linked to the perpetrator's gambling

Why is gambling linked to IPV perpetration?

Anger, frustration and stress over gambling losses

- Most common explanation: Gambling losses fuel the gambler's anger, frustration, stress and relationship conflict, which can trigger violent incidents.

He tried to throw me out of a moving car one day when he lost a race. A bad day of losses was always a bad day for us.

Shared psychological characteristics

- Inconsistent results on whether gambling problems are uniquely associated with IPV after adjusting for other psychological factors, e.g. anger, impulse problems.
- Perpetrators tend to use their violence mainly against their partner, and seem able to control their anger or impulses in other circumstances.

You could call [him] the typical abuser. He's charming and lovely. People didn't believe me until they saw it themselves.

Substance use

- Can exacerbate IPV by increasing gambling and weakening pro-social behaviour.
- Cannot be sole cause, since most people who use substances don't perpetrate IPV.

After gambling, he would be abusive, but also that was the alcohol. He gave me about 10 punches to my face, 2 black eyes, chipped teeth, the whole side of my face was black.

Why is gambling linked to IPV perpetration?

Behavioural drivers of gambling disorder

Not all people with PG perpetrate IPV so cannot be the sole cause. But exacerbates it.

- **Preoccupation and obsession with gambling, irrational beliefs**

He was obsessed he knew the final outcome of the race, and if I didn't hand money over, I was being abusive to him. To me, I was handing over rent, food and nappy money.

- **Gambling urges: anger, frustration and blame when unable to gamble**

He was driving, trying to run me over, like it was my fault that he didn't win at gambling. So it was, like, well, someone has to pay.

- **Threats to continued gambling often met with violence**

If he wanted money he would road rage with us in the car...to terrify the kids. Or he'd have a big melt down screaming.

Gambling...if he asks me for \$50 and I don't have it, he'd throw food around...then hit me.

- **PG worsened over time, accompanied by intensifying cycles of violence**

The longer the relationship went on the worse it got...financial, verbal, psychological, physical abuse, hours at the pokies...It creates a cycle of domestic violence. He'd apologise, promise to change, then you're walking on eggshells until things explode again.

Why is gambling linked to IPV perpetration?

- Not all people with psychological comorbidities, who use substances, who lose at gambling, or with PG perpetrate IPV. So, they cannot be the cause.
- But these factors can exacerbate IPV.

So what was the common denominator amongst the women in our study?

- Every woman characterised their partner as controlling, domineering, self-centred and misogynistic – gendered attitudes that are known to underpin IPV against women.
- Widespread recognition and evidence that male IPV against women is more likely to occur in contexts of gender inequality.^{1,6-8}
- Gambling intensified IPV where gendered drivers of violence against women were present in the relationship and manifested as coercive and controlling behaviours.

Gambling exacerbates violence where gendered drivers of violence are present

Gendered drivers of violence against women

Women described **expressions of gender inequality** in male partners that are known to predict higher rates of IPV, e.g.,

- rigid and hierarchical gender roles and expectations
- attitudes that excuse, trivialise or justify violence against women
- maintaining power and control in the relationship and over decision-making
- restricting the woman's independence

An attitude to real entitlement like “I had a bad day. Why aren't you pandering to me?”

He made the rules and everybody else had to go by them. He was the man of the house.

Women are objects, and they are there for his personal use, to gain what he wants.

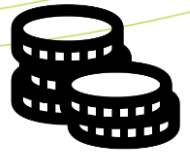
Narcissistic, very controlling and very blaming. He won't take responsibility for anything.

He likes to control...like I wasn't allowed to do anything.

The more that I tried to regain control of my life, the worse the abuse got. I felt very unsafe around him, I felt my life was threatened. I didn't know what he was capable of.

Results: Economic abuse linked to the perpetrator's gambling

Economic abuse linked to gambling



- PG provides a strong motivation for perpetrating economic abuse.
- 2 overarching behaviours involved in EA:
 - **economic exploitation** of the victim's resources.
 - **economic control** preventing victim's access to and use of resources.
- Partners vulnerable due to shared bank accounts, access to personal ID, opportunities for theft, often 1 partner managing household finances.
- Where the partner managing the finances has a gambling problem, the risk of EA appears high.
- Every woman whose partner had a gambling problem reported EA.

Economic abuse in the ANROWS study

Economic exploitation

- unauthorised withdrawals from savings and credit accounts
- redraws on mortgages without permission
- unauthorised sale of family property
- forcing her into debt and into lending him money
- forging signatures for loans
- stealing money and personal property
- gambling all his income, household money and family savings
- leaving her to pay bills and provide for family

Economic control

- complete control over the family's finances and denied access to money, including for family essentials.

In terms of the male gambler, putting the woman on accounts, taking out loans that have also got the woman's name on them. Or borrowing against the mortgage that has the woman's name on it, for gambling, and then they shove off and the woman also has a financial liability. I mean this has happened countless times. (Service provider).

Economic abuse in the ANROWS study

In addition to the harm from the EA...

Physical and psychological violence used to reinforce the economic abuse

“You’ve got money and you won’t give it to me”. He turns into nasty. He’ll follow me around the house, like every step I take for 2 hours...hurtful spiteful things that he’s saying...restricts me from being able to leave the house, cornering me in the bedroom.

Trapped in the relationship by poverty, which extended victimisation

I was a 100% frightened of him being violent. I tried in vain to get out. But I had no money, so I had to come back. I stayed another 5 years because I had nowhere to go.

Ongoing poverty and financial stress after the relationship

I’ve lost my money. I’m still in debt. I’ve got no assets. I’ve got 10 years before I retire.

I’m still bankrolling him. We’ve been forced to co-parent because we have equal shared responsibility. There is nothing equal, shared or responsible about an abusive gambler.

Results: IPV linked to the victim's gambling

Why is gambling linked to IPV victimisation?

Anger, mistrust and stress due to the victim's gambling

- Most common explanation: Accumulated anger, mistrust and stress from the victim's gambling fuel conflict which can trigger violent incidents.
- But not all people are violent towards a partner with a gambling problem, so, it cannot be the sole cause.
- In our study, very few women started gambling before experiencing abuse.

Gambling exacerbates abuse in contexts of coercive control

Instead, a pattern of violence was already present, and perpetrators were reported to use the victim's gambling as a trigger to express their violence.

He was cold, very violent and stalkerish. He knew that I'd spent my last money on the pokies, and I've gone to pick my stuff up from his place. He kept saying, "Come closer". So I've gone closer. He fractured my eye socket, covered my mouth, and dragged me like a ragdoll down the 30-metre driveway. Then stripped me naked and abused me, and said, "You look hot with a black eye".

Why is gambling linked to IPV victimisation?

Gambling can be a response to IPV

- Most women reported frequent, severe, chronic IPV before they started gambling.
- Gambling used to cope with violence-induced trauma.

- **Went to gambling venues to physically escape the violence**

I would run away to the club. I wouldn't leave until it was closed and maybe he was asleep. If I'd wake him up, I didn't know what I was in for.

- **For psychological escape to cope with the resultant trauma**

When something [violence] happens, I get flashbacks to all the other incidents, and then I seem to find myself in the comfort of a poker machine room.

- **Hope to be able to escape the violent relationship**

I felt trapped. I'm thinking, "my god, if I got a big windfall I'm just going to leave".

Why is gambling linked to IPV victimisation?

- **Gambling venues can be attractive, accessible venues for women**

People, free snacks, lights, noise and music; “Oh, this is nice”. It was an excuse to spend time in this lovely environment, which was unlike anything else I had to go to.

- **Women are left alone in venues**

I always sat by myself, particularly if I had make-up on covering a black eye, which happened more often than not.

- **No interruptions to EGM play to which they became addicted**

When the abuse started that’s when I used it as an escape, and the real addiction took over. Venues just turn a blind eye.

- **Gambling can compound IPV victimisation**

That was my safe haven until I left, and then it was worse.

- **Gambling and IPV tended to be cyclical and self-reinforcing, with both issues escalating over time**



Summary

- Most people with PG are not perpetrators or victims of IPV, so gambling not the cause.
- This study highlights the role of hierarchical gendered attitudes, and the use of power and control in relationships, that were central to the use of violence.
- Goes beyond considering only situational violence, to examine how gambling interacts with instrumental patterns of coercive control.
- The temporal sequence of gambling and IPV varies:
 - A gambling problem can precede the IPV and then trigger situational violence.
 - A pattern of coercive controlling behaviours can precede the gambling, which then exacerbates these behaviours to intensify the violence. This was by far the most common pattern in this research.
- Gambling not a cause of IPV, but a harm multiplier that exacerbates its frequency and severity, particularly in contexts of gender inequality.

Considerations for future gambling research

Extend focus beyond situational violence to include coercive control

- Acts-based instruments used in gambling research focus on situational violence.
- Asking 1 or a few items about whether each type of violent act has occurred does not consider frequency, severity, self-defence, patterns of violent control.
- Stark differences between situational violence and coercive control.
- Coercive control involves more injurious, frequent and persistent violence, resulting in ongoing fear, trauma, hypervigilance, isolation.
- If we want a more complete and accurate picture of gambling-related IPV, we need to also consider patterns of coercive control.

Considerations for future gambling research

Consider gender differences in experiences of violence

- Focusing on situational violence obscures qualitative and quantitative gender differences in IPV.
- E.g., insulting a partner once a year equal to frequent rape?
- Explains why gambling studies find that women perpetrate IPV at similar or higher rates than men.
- Research using a wider range of data provides clear evidence that men are more likely to perpetrate IPV, and with more severe impacts including lethality.
- Gambling research needs to shift:
 - beyond a situational violence perspective that mainly interprets IPV as arising from escalating conflicts in relationships
 - to also recognise the use of power and control in violent relationships, particularly by men against women.

Considerations for future gambling research

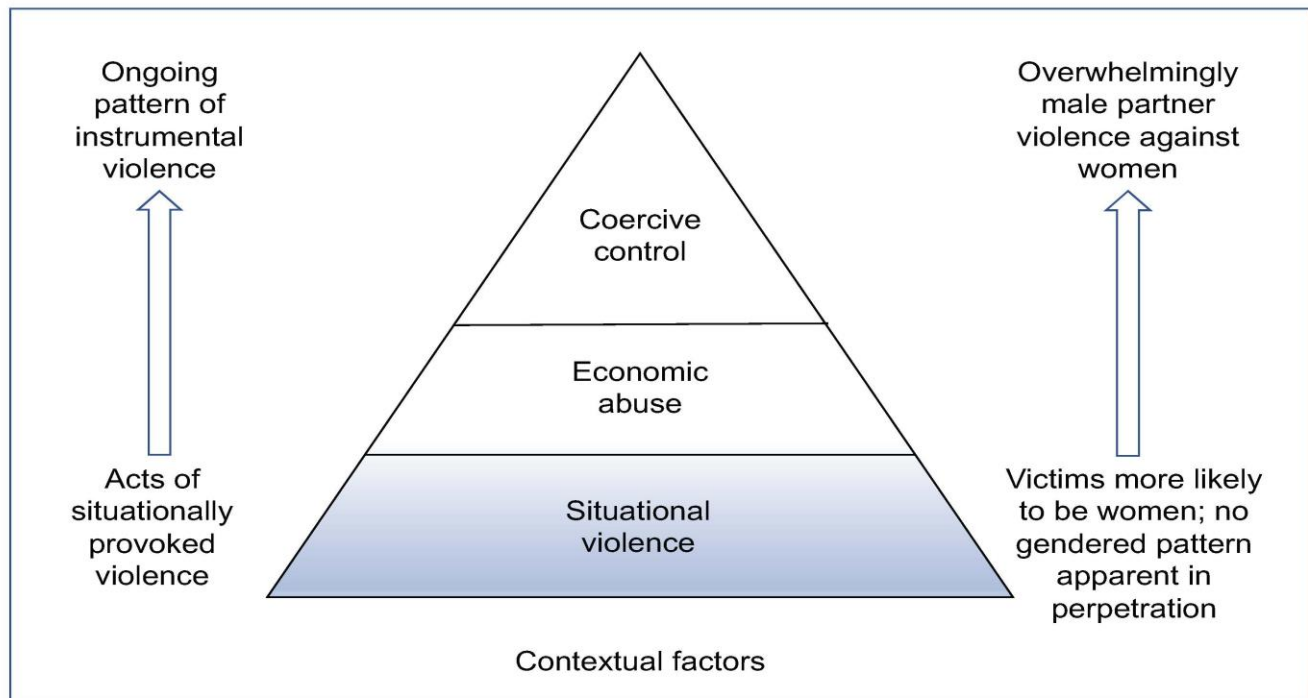
Include economic abuse linked to gambling as a type of IPV

- To provide a more complete understanding of IPV linked to gambling.

Examine contextual contributors to IPV linked to gambling

- Little research has examined factors that contribute to gambling-related IPV beyond victims and perpetrators.
- In alignment with a public health perspective on gambling harm, research could valuably examine how gambling industry products, practices and environments are contributing to IPV. And what industry could/should do.

Past research focus and gaps in knowledge in gambling-related IPV



- Shaded: focus to date on situational violence in response to gambling losses and tensions.
- Unshaded: little research attention.
- Coercive control is more likely to be male partner violence against women, whereas current research indicates more gender parity in perpetration.
- Research to date provides only a partial picture of IPV linked to gambling.
- Opportunity to address remaining gaps: coercive control, economic abuse, chronic and gendered patterns of violence, and contributing contextual factors.

Thank you!



The relationship between gambling and intimate partner violence against women

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