Problem Gambling and Family Violence in Chinese Problem Gamblers: Prevalence, Impact and Coping

Elda Mei-lo CHAN, Tung Wah Group of Hospitals; The University of Melbourne, Hong Kong & Australia
Alun C JACKSON, The University of Melbourne, Australia
Daniel Tan-lei SHEK, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong
Nicki A DOWLING, The University of Melbourne, Australia

First Asia Pacific Conference on Gambling & Commercial Gaming Research
Macao, 5th-8th November 2012
Literature review – Family impacts

Impacts of Pathological Gambling on family

- Financial and debt problems
- Family conflicts and arguments
- Neglect of family
- Development of problem gamblers and other addictions

(Kalischuk et al., 2006)
Literature review – Family impacts

Impacts of Pathological Gambling on Spouse

- Separation and divorce
- Depressive thoughts and suicidal attempts
- Dysfunctional coping such as excessive drinking, overspending, overeating and gambling
- Increased risk of violence

(Lorenz & Yaffee, 1988; Abbott, 2001; Crisp, et al., 2001; Krishnan & Orford, 2002)
Literature review – Family violence

Korman et al. (2008)
• 62.9% of PGs being a perpetrator and/or victim of intimate partner violence

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

Affifi et al. (2009)
• Both problem and pathological gambling were associated with higher possibilities of severe dating and marital violence and child abuse
Literature review—Family coping

Orford et al. (1998)
• Suggested 3 broad ways of coping including engaging, tolerating, withdrawing that would have different impacts on the family

Rychtarik and McGillicuddy (2006)
• Coping behavior and functioning of partners of PGs had improved after intervention through a coping skills enhancement programme
Background – gaps in literature

- Associations between problem gambling and adverse consequences were found in previous studies.
- Limited effort was put in studying family coping styles and impacts on family including family violence.
- Scientific studies on the above issues amongst Chinese communities are non-existent.
Aims

1. To determine the prevalence of family and couple violence among families who experience gambling problems;
2. To explore how family members cope with their family members’ gambling problems;
3. To examine the relationships between family coping styles and family impacts
Methodology

Data collection and Inclusion criteria
- From March 2011 to February 2012
- Service users who sought gambling treatment from TWGHs Even Centre
- Age 18 or above
- Chinese ethnicity, able to read and speak Chinese
- n = 285 (182 problem gamblers; 103 family members of gamblers)
- Response rate of 62%

Exclusion criteria
- Manifestation of signs of cognitive impairments or imminent suicidal risk
Measures

1. **Socio-demographic information**
2. **Gambling-related information**
3. **Family violence:** Screening items based on the HITS scale (Sherin, Sinacore, Li, Zitter, & Shakil, 1998) in the past 12 months
   - Hurt physically
   - Insulted or talked down to
   - Threatened with
   - Screamed or cursed at
Measures

4. **Family coping**: 30-item Coping Questionnaire (CQ; Orford, 1994) covering 3 major ways:
   - Engaged coping
   - Tolerant-inactive coping
   - Withdrawal coping

5. **Family impact**: 16-item Family Members Impact (FMI; Orford et al., 2005) scale includes two subscales:
   - Worrying behavior
   - Active disturbance

6. **Mental health problems**: anxiety and depressive symptoms from 10-item Kessler 10 (Kessler et al., 2002)
### Basic demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Problem Gamblers (N = 182)</th>
<th>Family Members (N =103)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>Mean = 44.6</td>
<td>Mean = 47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married or cohabited</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced, separated or widowed</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Basic demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic status</th>
<th>Problem Gamblers (N = 182)</th>
<th>Family Members (N = 103)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time or part-time work</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemakers</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (e.g. students)</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Basic demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship with gamblers</th>
<th>Family Members (N =103)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spouse, partner or ex-partner</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (e.g. other relatives)</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Gambling characteristics of problem gamblers and those reported by family members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Problem Gamblers (N = 182) Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Family Members (N = 103) Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length of gambling problems</td>
<td>11.2 (9.7)</td>
<td>8.8 (7.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of gambling (times/week)</td>
<td>8.2 (4.6)</td>
<td>3.9 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of gambling (hours/week)</td>
<td>19.4 (21.0)</td>
<td>21.1 (18.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling amount ($/week)</td>
<td>Median = 5000</td>
<td>Median = 4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived severity of gambling problems (1-10)</td>
<td>7.2 (2.7)</td>
<td>8.1 (2.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prevalence of family violence (FV) in help-seeking problem gamblers and family members of gamblers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Problem Gamblers (N = 182)</th>
<th>Family Members (N = 103)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FV victimization only</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FV perpetration only</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both FV victimization and perpetration</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of FV in the family</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Gambling-related family coping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Questionnaire (CQ)</th>
<th>Problem Gamblers  (N = 182) Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Family Members (N =103) Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Coping ** (0-42)</td>
<td>18.0 (10.1)</td>
<td>23.7 (8.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerant-inactive coping ** (0-27)</td>
<td>6.9 (5.5)</td>
<td>8.9 (5.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal coping ** (0-24)</td>
<td>12.0 (3.9)</td>
<td>13.9 (3.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note  ** p<0.01, *p<0.05
## Gambling-related family impacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Member Impact (FMI)</th>
<th>Problem Gamblers (N = 182) Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Family Members (N = 103) Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worrying behavior (0-30)**</td>
<td>11.8 (7.0)</td>
<td>17.0 (7.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active disturbance (0-18)**</td>
<td>5.3 (3.5)</td>
<td>8.1 (4.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note  ** p<0.01, *p<0.05
# Psychological distress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10)</th>
<th>Problem Gamblers (N = 182) Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Family Members (N = 103) Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Psychological Distress (10-50)</td>
<td>21.3 (8.1)</td>
<td>20.2 (7.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: **p<0.01, *p<0.05
Correlations between family coping and psychological distress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Questionnaire (CQ)</th>
<th>Psychological Distress (K10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Coping</td>
<td>0.44**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerant-inactive coping</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal coping</td>
<td>0.33**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note ** p<0.01, *p<0.05
Discussion

- Gamblers reported relatively higher prevalence rates of victimization than perpetration
  - PGs may adopt gambling to cope with stress and escape from difficult feelings.
  - PGs tend to accept aggressive behaviour from family members as a result of feeling guilty about their own gambling behaviour
  - Forms a vicious cycle and further produces negative impacts on family functioning
Discussion

- Comparatively low prevalence rate of victimization was reported by family members
  - Chinese people tend to consider family violence as aggressive behavior or physical assault only
  - Little attention on other forms of violence like psychological threats, controlling behaviour or social isolation
  - Disclosure of violence is shameful or losing “face” in Chinese culture
  - Family members had limited outlets and knowledge of how to cope with gambling problems
Discussion

- **Gamblers gave a lower estimation of all three coping styles used by family members**
  - Lower sensitivity of the coping strategies adopted by family members due to preoccupation of gambling and financial difficulty.

- **Gamblers perceived a lower level of family impact due to their gambling problems**
  - Underrating of the intensity of disturbance due to preoccupation with their gambling
Discussion

• Positive correlations between family coping and psychological distress of family members
  ◦ All three coping styles were significantly correlated with psychological distress
  ◦ Withdrawal coping style was associated with a lower level of distress than the other two coping styles
  ◦ It is hypothesized that family members with withdrawal coping would end up having less emotional associations and responses to the gambling problems
Recommendations

• Co-occurrence of family violence and gambling problems
  ◦ Early detection through routine assessment

• Intervention for perpetrators and victims
  ◦ Identify adverse consequences of adopting violence or gambling
  ◦ Strengthen stress management and problem solving skills
  ◦ Education on various forms of violence in terms of physical and psychological abuse
  ◦ Strengthen ability for self-protection
  ◦ Encourage adoption of effective coping strategies
Recommendations

• **Community preventive programs**
  ◦ Enhance awareness of nature of family violence and its relationship with problem gambling
  ◦ Encourage early reporting and help-seeking

• **Future study**
  ◦ Relationship between different coping styles and gambling severity
  ◦ Cultural family belief systems as a mediator of coping style and impact
Limitations

• **Cross-sectional data used**
  ◦ Causal relationship between gambling problems, family coping and family violence could not be made

• **Clinical sample used**
  ◦ Generalization of findings to community could not be made

• **Retrospective design adopted**
  ◦ Bias in reporting
Significance of the study

• Provides valuable information regarding family violence and coping among problem gamblers in the Chinese communities and fills a significant knowledge gap
• Helps clinicians develop appropriate preventive and treatment strategies for problem gamblers and their family members
References


References


For further questions, please contact

Elda Chan at (852) 2827 1408
eldा.chаn@tungwах.org.hk
Thank You!