



Division of Addictive Diseases

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Violence, Trauma, and Problem Gambling

Research suggests that gambling related violence does occur, and often manifests in domestic violence incidents, as gamblers may take out their anger over gambling losses on their partners¹. Furthermore, experiencing traumatic events has been found to be related to problem gambling. There is a need to screen those who have indicators of problem gambling, and to provide treatment. In addition, problem gambling prevention programs should be targeted at individuals who have experienced trauma, as they are at increased risk for the development of gambling problems.

Intimate Partner Violence [IPV] and Family Violence

Among a sample of problem gamblers²

- 62.9% reported perpetrating and/or being the victims of IPV in the past year
- 25.4% reporting perpetrating severe IPV
- 64.5% had clinically significant anger problems
 - anger problems increased the risk of being both the perpetrator and victim of IPV
 - lifetime substance use disorder among those with anger problems increased the risk of both IPV perpetration and victimization

Among women seeking treatment in an emergency room³

- Women who reported having a partner with a gambling problem were 10.5 times more likely to have experienced IPV than those who did not have a partner with a gambling problem
- Women who reported that their partners had a gambling and a drinking problem were 50 times more likely to have experienced IPV than those who did not have a partner with either of these problems
 - the odds of experiencing IPV among women who reported their partner had only a drinking problem were 6.1 times that of women who did not have a problem drinking partner

Among pathological gamblers

- Nearly 25% reported engaging in spousal abuse⁴
- Over 15% reported engaging in child abuse⁴
- Children of problem gamblers are 2 to 3 times more likely to be abused by a parent than their peers⁵

Among women who experienced IPV⁶

- 37% explained that the reason for being assaulted was due to their spouses' gambling or alcohol intake (second only to not understanding why the assault occurred, cited by 41.5%)

Violent Tendencies

Problem gambling is associated with a propensity for violence⁷

- Substance abusers with violent tendencies are roughly 3 times more likely than those without violent tendencies to be problem gamblers (controlling for socio-demographic variables)
- Research is needed to assess underlying constructs, and interaction effects of other variables to elucidate risks of problem gambling, and to inform prevention and intervention programs.

Trauma

A twin cohort study found that (after adjusting for genetic and environmental covariates) experiencing traumatic events increases the risk of having a gambling problem.⁸ Specifically, having experienced:

- child abuse increased the risk of being a pathological gambler by 131%
- child neglect increased the risk of being a pathological gambler by 453%
- witnessing someone badly hurt or killed increased the risk of being a pathological gambler by 183%
- a physical attack increased the risk of being a pathological gambler by 239%

Problem gambling is a significant predictor of the onset of post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD]⁹

- Problem gamblers are 620% more likely to develop PTSD (controlling for age, ethnicity, and gender)

Combat Experiences

Problem gambling is associated with increased risk-taking¹⁰ and overconfidence¹¹. Combat experiences, including exposure to violent combat, killing someone, and experiencing high levels of trauma, predicted¹²:

- Greater risk-taking propensity upon return from deployment
 - The authors asserted that an increased sense of invincibility may partially explain this increase
- Greater exposure to these combat experiences predicted actual past month risk-related behaviors
- Although the relation between violent combat experiences and problem gambling was not assessed, the increase in risky behaviors suggests that those returning from combat who experienced violence are at risk of developing a gambling problem; screening and developing gambling prevention and intervention programs for returning war veterans may be warranted

LIE-BET TOOL TO RULE OUT PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING¹⁶

This 2-item measure has been found to be reliable and valid at discriminating between pathological and non-problem gamblers. A response of “Yes” to either question indicates further assessment is warranted.

- 1) **Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?**
- 2) **Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gambled?**

¹Griffiths, M., Parke, A., & Parke, J. (2005). Gambling related violence: An issue for the police? *The Police Journal*, 78(3), 223-227.

²Korman, Collins, Dutton, Dhayanathan, Littman-Sharp, Skinner, (2008). Problem gambling and intimate partner violence. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 243.

³Muelleman, R. L., Den Otter, T., Wadman, M.C., Tran, T. P., & Anderson, J. (2002). Problem gambling in the partner of the emergency department patient as a risk factor for intimate partner violence. *The Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 23(3), 207-312.

⁴Bland, Newman, Orn, & Stebelsky (1993). Epidemiology of pathologic gambling in Edmonton. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 38, 108-12.

⁵Lesieur H.R. & Rothschild J. (1989) Children of gamblers anonymous members. *Journal of Gambling Behaviour* 5 (4), 269-281.

⁶Balci YG, Ayranci U. 2005. Physical violence against women: Evaluation of women assaulted by spouses. *Journal of Clinical Forensic Medicine* 12(5), 258-263.

⁷Cunningham-Williams, R.M., Abdallah, A.B., Callahan, C., & Cottler, L. (2007). Problem gambling and violence among community-recruited female substance abusers. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 21(2), 239-243.

⁸Scherrer, Hong, Kapp, Waterman, Shah, Volberg, Eisen (2008). Association Between Exposure to Childhood and Lifetime Traumatic Events and Lifetime Pathological Gambling in a Twin Cohort. *Journal of Nervous & Mental Disease*. 195(1), 72-78.

⁹Kessler, R. C., Hwang, I., LaBrie, R. A., Petukhova, M., Sampson, N. A., Winters, K. C., Shaffer, H. J. (2008). DSM-IV Pathological Gambling in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Psychological Medicine*. doi: 10.1017/S0033291708002900.

¹⁰LaBrie, ShafferLaPlante, & Weschler (2003). Correlates of college student gambling in the United States. *Journal of American College Health*, 52, 53-62.

¹¹Goodie, A.S. (2005). The role of perceived control and overconfidence in pathological gambling. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 21(4), 481-502.

¹²Killgore, W. D., et al. (2008). Post-combat invincibility: Violent combat experiences are associated with increased risk-taking propensity following deployment. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, In Press.

¹³Johnson, E. E., Hamer, R., Nora, R. M., Tan, B., Eistenstein, N., & Englehart, C. (1988). The lie/bet questionnaire for screening pathological gamblers. *Psychological Reports*, 80, 83-88.