



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

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# 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

	<b>Problem Gamblers (N = 182)</b>	<b>Family Members (N = 103)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	83.5%	15.5%
Female	16.5%	84.5%
<b>Age</b>	Mean = 44.6	Mean = 47.1
<b>Marital status</b>		
Never married	27.5%	15.5%
Married or cohabited	55.5%	70.8%
Divorced, separated or widowed	17.0%	13.7%

## Basic demographic information

	<b>Problem Gamblers (N = 182)</b>	<b>Family Members (N = 103)</b>
<b>Economic status</b>		
Full-time or part-time work	79.6%	68.9%
Unemployed	9.3%	0%
Homemakers	2.7%	22.3%
Retired	5.5%	7.8%
Others (e.g. students)	2.7%	1.0%

## Basic demographic information

	Family Members (N = 103)
Relationship with gamblers	
Spouse, partner or ex-partner	63.1%
Parents	3.9%
Siblings	13.6%
Children	17.5%
Others (e.g. other relatives)	2.0%

# Gambling characteristics of problem gamblers and those reported by family members

	<b>Problem Gamblers (N = 182) Mean (SD)</b>	<b>Family Members (N = 103) Mean (SD)</b>
Length of gambling problems	11.2 (9.7)	8.8 (7.1)
Frequency of gambling (times/week)	8.2 (4.6)	3.9 (2.5)
Duration of gambling (hours/week)	19.4 (21.0)	21.1 (18.5)
Gambling amount (\$/week)	Median = 5000	Median = 4000
Perceived severity of gambling problems (1-10)	7.2 (2.7)	8.1 (2.1)

## Prevalence of family violence (FV) in help-seeking problem gamblers and family members of gamblers

	<b>Problem Gamblers (N = 182)</b>	<b>Family Members (N = 103)</b>
FV victimization only	24.2%	11.6%
FV perpetration only	6.0%	12.6%
Both FV victimization and perpetration	4.9%	14.6%
Presence of FV in the family	35.2%	38.8%

# Gambling-related family coping

Coping Questionnaire (CQ)	Problem Gamblers (N = 182) Mean (SD)	Family Members (N = 103) Mean (SD)
Engaged Coping ** (0-42)	18.0 (10.1)	23.7 (8.2)
Tolerant-inactive coping ** (0-27)	6.9 (5.5)	8.9 (5.4)
Withdrawal coping ** (0-24)	12.0 (3.9)	13.9 (3.4)
Note ** p<0.01, *p<0.05		



# Gambling-related family impacts

Family Member Impact (FMI)	Problem Gamblers (N = 182) Mean (SD)	Family Members (N = 103) Mean (SD)
Worrying behavior (0-30)**	11.8 (7.0)	17.0 (7.2)
Active disturbance (0-18)**	5.3 (3.5)	8.1 (4.3)
Note ** $p < 0.01$ , * $p < 0.05$		

# Psychological distress

<b>Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10)</b>	<b>Problem Gamblers (N = 182) Mean (SD)</b>	<b>Family Members (N = 103) Mean (SD)</b>
Level of Psychological Distress (10-50)	21.3 (8.1)	20.2 (7.3)
Note ** $p < 0.01$ , * $p < 0.05$		

# Correlations between family coping and psychological distress

	Psychological Distress (K10)
Coping Questionnaire (CQ)	
Engaged Coping	0.44**
Tolerant-inactive coping	0.51**
Withdrawal coping	0.33**
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



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**Thank You !**