

Impacts of gambling on members of the entourage and intervention needs

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Results from the research project:

Atteintes au réseau social du joueur : Impacts et conséquences

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Why initiate this project?

- Literature has documented a large number of impacts that can be experienced by individuals due to their gambling habits
- However, there is little literature documenting the impacts that can be experienced by family and friends of gamblers (members of their entourage – ME)
 - Information known to this effect is almost exclusively related to partners/spouses of gamblers
 - During the year preceding entry into treatment, 8 ME of gamblers suffered consequences (Ferland et al., 2016)

Content for today's presentation

- Present different types of impacts experienced by ME due the habits of the gambler
- Document the service needs for ME

How were the results collected?

○ Step 1

- Face-to-face meetings with 50 gamblers receiving treatment within an addiction rehabilitation centre (AHC) in order to identify members of their entourage who have experienced impacts as a result of their gambling habits
 - The gamblers should not have substance use problems

○ Step 2

- Face-to-face meetings with 50 ME of gamblers
 - One ME per gambler was consulted
- Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and was transcribed

Overview of the gamblers and ME consulted

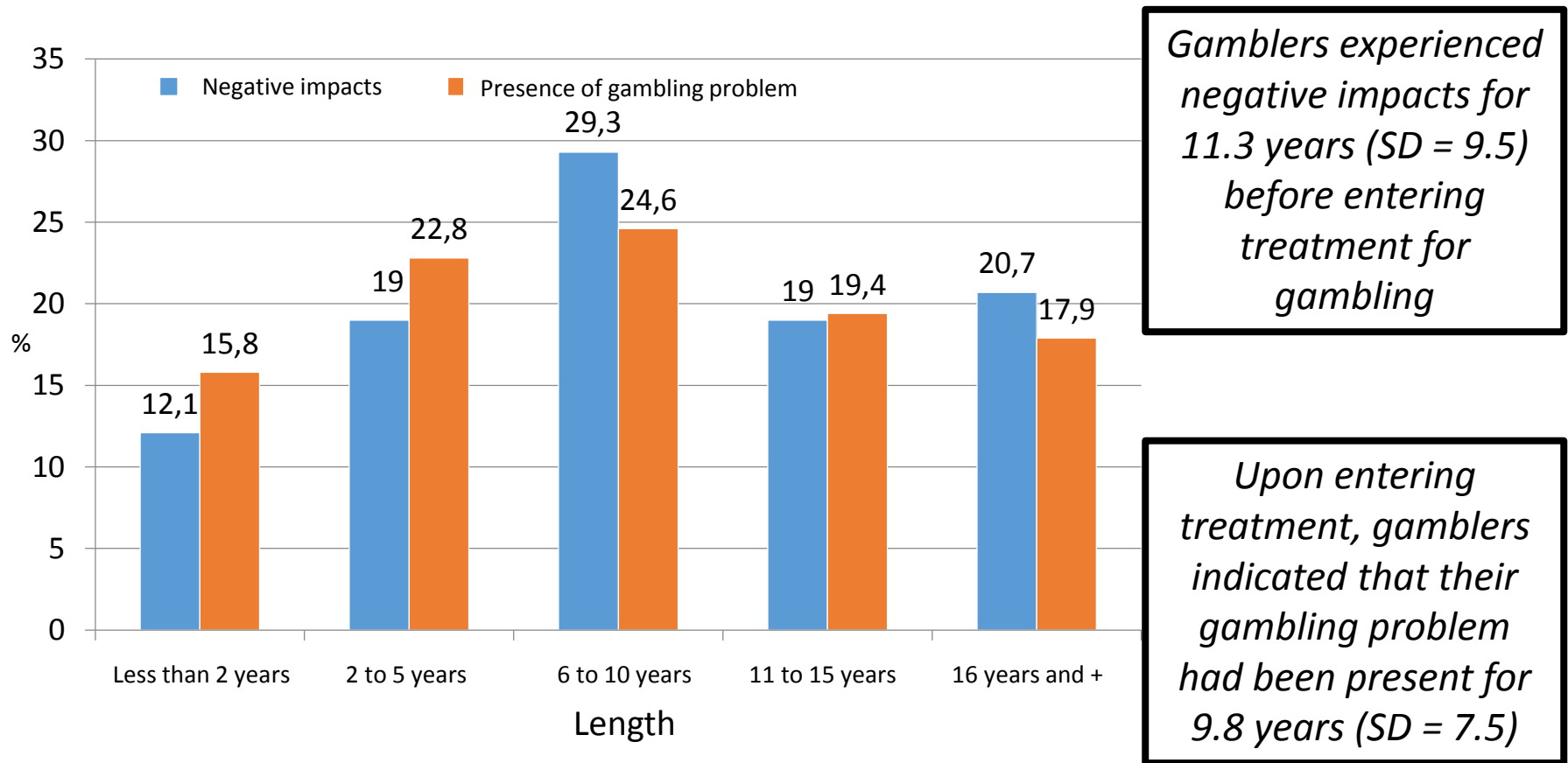
Gamblers

- 66% were men
- Ages varied between 18 and 68 years old ($M = 45.2$; $SD = 13.6$)
- 50% were in a relationship
- 31% had a college or university degree
- 60% had an annual revenue of less than \$40 000
- 53% held a full-time job

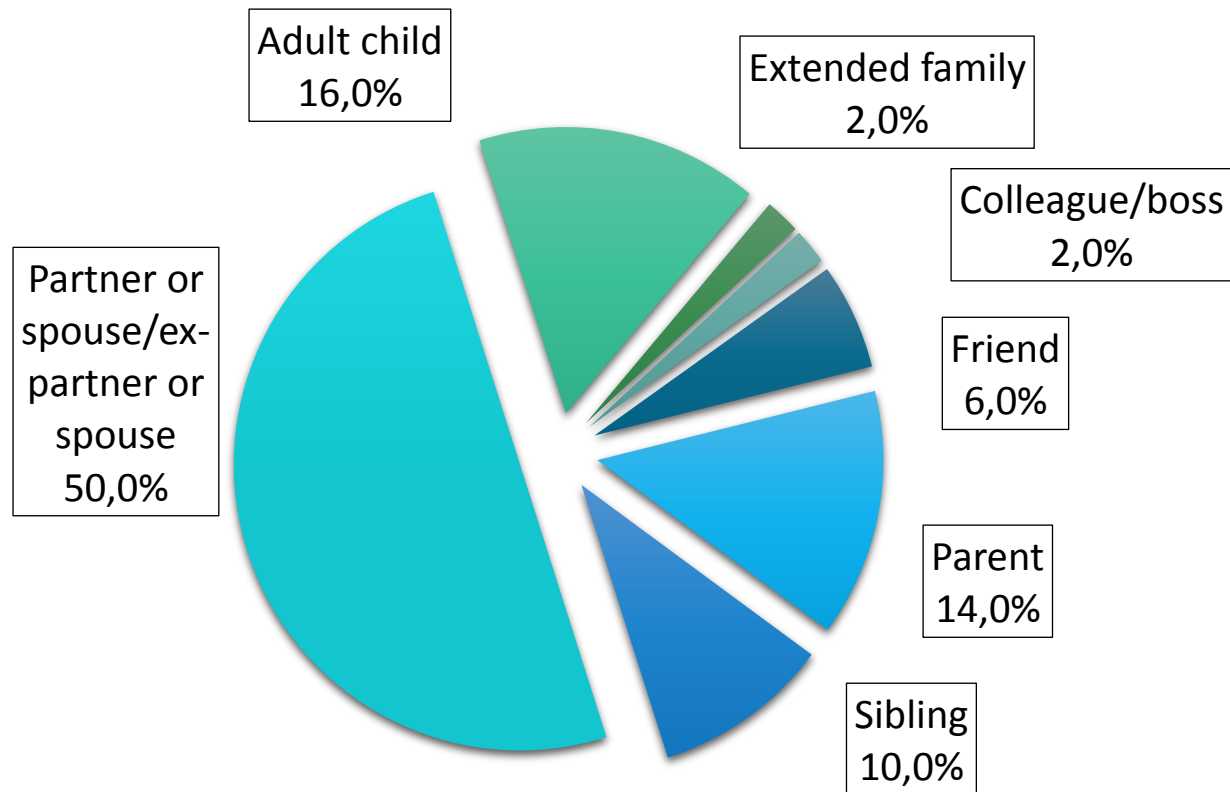
ME

- 80% were women
- Ages varied between 19 and 76 years old ($M = 44.9$; $SD = 14.9$)
- 72% were in a relationship
- 52% had a college or university degree
- 60% had an annual revenue of less than \$40 000
- 56% held a full-time job

Length of the gambling problem and presence of negative impacts in their lives ($N = 58$)



Who were the ME consulted? (N = 50)



Impacts experienced by ME regarding habits of gamblers

The impacts are presented for the consulted ME
as a whole.

However, specific impacts for partners/spouses
are presented when possible.

Impacts experienced by ME regarding habits of gamblers ($N = 50$)

- Categories of impacts identified by ME
 - The relationship between the ME and the gambler
 - The feelings of the ME
 - The finances of the ME
 - The social life of the ME
 - Other impacts experienced by the ME
 - Ex.: Physical health, professional life, quality of life, future projects
 - Positive impacts

Impacts on a **relational** level experienced by the ME due to the habits of the gambler ($N = 50$)

- Deterioration of the trust relationship

- Lies
- Promises not kept
- Feelings of betrayal
- Blackmail
- Threats of any kind

- Trust relationship

- Hard to rebuild
- Completely destroyed

Impacts on a **relational** level (Cont'd)

- Putting the relationship in jeopardy
 - Creating distance
 - Lack of projection into the future
 - Withdrawal/disengagement
 - Questioning the relationship

Impacts on a **relational** level (Cont'd)

- Difficulty communicating or speaking about the problem with the gambler
- Physical and psychological absence of the gambler
 - Less activities together
 - Less intimacy
- Sense of abandonment
- No longer recognizing the gambler

Impacts on a **relational** level (Cont'd)

More specifically for partners/spouses

- Less support
- Less attention
- Tense climate at home
- Lack of respect from the gambler
- Having the feeling that the gambler depends on them
- Specific lies regarding the family or marital relationship
- Sense of marital failure
- Suspecting infidelity
- Separation
- Feeling responsible for the happiness of the gambler
- Presence of physical, psychological and financial violence

Impacts on a **relational** level: Interview excerpts

I don't feel him anymore, when he plays, it's like I'm constantly losing pieces, it comes back, but it's hard. (spouse, 28 years old)

Yes, I thought that he had a mistress, and that he was not able to admit it to me. I thought he was a coward. I could not believe that he was gambling, it just couldn't be. It was like one of the scenarios that seemed improbable, because I could see that things were not going well...he became more and more distant... (spouse, 30 years old)

Impacts on an **emotional** level experienced by ME due to the habits of the gambler ($N = 50$)

- Worries about the gambler concerning:
 - His/her gambling habits
 - His/her general behaviour
 - Risk of suicide
 - His/her finances
 - His/her current and future quality of life

Impacts on an **emotional** level (Cont'd)

- Fears
 - Of being lied to
 - Of no longer being able to help the gambler
 - Of addiction
- Feeling guilty
 - For not being able to help financially
 - Feeling responsible with respect to the problem
- Psychological isolation

Impacts on an **emotional** level (Cont'd)

- Sadness
- Stress / Anxiety
- Anger/ Irritability
- Impatience with the gambler and his/her habits
- Disappointment
- Feeling discouraged
- Shame
- Feeling powerless when faced with the situation

Impacts on an **emotional** level (Cont'd)

More specifically for partners/spouses

- Guilt
 - For not having seen the problem before
 - For believing the person when he/she was hiding the gambling habit
 - For not having done enough to help
- Distrust
- Exhaustion
- Diminished self-esteem
- Negative attitude regarding the situation
- Questioning one's self
- Feeling like a victim of the gambling problem
- Worries
 - Regarding their relationship
 - Regarding the future of their children
- Aggression

Impacts on an **emotional** level: Interview excerpts

When I noticed that he had started gambling again, well, I asked myself why I believed his failures. Yes, they were perhaps true, his defeats, but there was that as well. (spouse, 33 years old)

Sometimes he would go to work, and I knew that he was either in Montreal or around Charlevoix and all that. And I told myself, "I hope he isn't going to gamble." You know, it would stress me out. I would spend the day thinking about it... (sister, 57 years old)

Impacts on an **emotional** level: Interview excerpts

As we say, financially, I would like to have the means to pay for my groceries and to do all of that, but in one year, I will be retired...I will only have a third of my salary. And well...I mean, it won't end. My son, I can take care of him 24/7, but it would not be enough. I would still not have enough time. (mother, 56 years old)

You really are a victim here, because we aren't...we weren't trying to be in this...you know, we didn't gamble away too much money, we don't have that sickness, but we are living it nonetheless. (spouse, 43 years old)

Financial impacts experienced by ME due to the habits of the gambler ($N = 50$)

ME having faced debts in response to the habits of the gambler ($N = 50$)

| | ME | | |
|-----|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | All ($N = 50$) | Spouse ($n = 24$) | Other ME ($n = 25$) |
| No | 68,0 % | 35,3 % | 64,7 % |
| Yes | 30,0 % | 80,0 % | 20,0 % |
| DK | 2,0 % | 0,0 % | 0,0 % |

Financial impacts (Cont'd)

- Methods used by ME to help the gambler
 - Giving money
 - Paying debts (general of from gambling)
 - Advancing money
 - Providing materials (i.e. food, furniture)
 - Borrowing money to pay bills for the gambler
 - Lending money to the gambler to help him/her
 - Some specified not having been paid back

Regardless of the method used to help the gambler, the ME do not necessarily perceive the help provided as being a loan or a monetary donation.

Financial impacts (Cont'd)

- Depriving self
 - Savings
 - RRSPs
 - Other personal expenses

Financial impacts (Cont'd)

More specifically for partners/spouses

- Assuming family, marital and personal expenses (of gambler)
- Paying the bills
- Paying the debts
- Financial insecurity
- Concrete consequences
 - Electricity being cut off
 - Borrowing upon the mortgage
 - Diminished personal credit score
 - Selling house
 - Selling personal objects
 - Having to work more to support the family
 - Falling victim to fraud/theft by gambling partner

Financial impacts: Interview excerpts

We were making car payments for him for many years because we didn't want him to lose his car. (mother, 54 years old)

You know, I was no longer even able to buy myself an item of clothing. All of my clothes had become too small or too big. The only thing I would buy myself would be cigarettes and food. The rest, all of it, went into paying off the debts he was creating. (spouse, 28 years old)

Impacts experienced by ME in their **social lives**

- Global reduction in social activities
 - Going out less often
 - Having less hobbies
 - Diminishing social activities
 - Isolating or distancing one's self from family to not hear the comments of others regarding the gambler
 - Feelings of being judged by other ME regarding the gambler's problem
- Conflicts with other ME

Impacts experienced by ME in their **social lives**

(Cont'd)

- ME not in an intimate relationship with the gambler may have their own relationship affected due to the support that they are providing to the gambler

Impacts experienced by ME in their **social lives** (Cont'd)

More specifically for partners/spouses

- Diminished family or marital activities
- Fear of being judged by others
- Burden associated with having to lie to other members of the entourage

Impacts experienced by ME in their **social lives**: Interview excerpts

I take part in less activities and things...for prevention purposes, because we get into fights, because he relapses, or because I don't feel like it...so I'm just not in the mood to see anyone. (spouse, 29 years old)

Other impacts experienced by ME due to the habits of the gambler ($N = 50$)

○ Physical health

- Fatigue
- Lack of sleep
- Migraines
- Loss of appetite
- Worsening of existing health problems

○ Work

- Diminished performance
- Relations with co-workers affected
- Impact on company
 - Reorganization of work
 - Advances in salary
 - Loss of productivity

Other impacts (Cont'd)

- Diminished quality of life of ME
 - Financial loss
 - Loss of time
 - Future projects postponed or set aside
- Feeling obligated to protect other ME
 - i.e. Parents, gambler's children

Other impacts: Interview excerpts

Sometimes, I would come home, and yes, it was things that belonged to him, but for example, we had an "illico" recorder and when I came home, it was no longer there. I asked him where it went. He told me that he sold it because we weren't using it! Then after that, he tells me that he sold it to go gamble. (sister, 43 years old)

Positive impacts experienced by ME due to the habits of the gambler ($N = 50$)

The majority of ME spontaneously responded that the habits of the gambler did not bring anything positive to their lives, but despite this...

- Improved relationship with the gambler
 - Bringing them closer together
 - Improving communication
 - Seeing each other more often
- Desire to find a solution to the problem
 - Strengthened family ties
 - Meeting new friends

Help required for members of the entourage

Reasons cited by ME for not seeking help ($N = 50$)

Reasons for not seeking help

- Not knowing what services are available specifically for ME
- Not having the reflex to consult
- Feeling sufficiently equipped
- It isn't them who have the problem
 - If the gambler takes care of his/her problem, then the ME would no longer have any problems

Needs of ME ($N = 50$)

- Support to talk about the gambling problem and the impacts that it has had on them
- Meeting with a professional
- Meeting with a specialist in gambling treatment
- Being involved in the treatment of the gambler

Type of help/services required by ME ($N = 50$)

- Individual help
- Telephone meetings
- Support groups
 - For couples
 - For spouses
 - ME only
- Support while waiting for services
- Specific help for children of gamblers

Type of help/services (Cont'd)

- Meetings to help prepare for the return of the gambler after treatment
- Meetings with the couple
- Having access to a telephone help line that is specialized for gambling
- Receiving documentation on the problem
- Having access to consultations at home
- Having access to a specialist on the internet to correspond with

Type of help/services specific to partners/spouses ($N = 25$)

- Need for help to make the different decisions relating to the problem
- Help to work on the feeling of guilt
- Working to restore one's confidence in the gambler
- Being provided alternatives to suggest to the gambler

Services should be systematically offered to ME when a gambler seeks help

Type of help required by ME: Interview excerpts

The act of talking, even if it is not therapy. But the act of talking about it and venting, already there, it de-dramatizes the situation and it makes you feel like you're not alone. Especially when it's in a group. [...] And the experience of others can help you to clearly understand your situation. (friend, 63 years old)

For me, I'd prefer together, you know why? Because then, I would hear what he has to say and he would be able to see the impact that it has on me, because it has a strong impact. [...] But also, I would like to have meetings together, my spouse and I, so that I can know what he really thinks. (spouse, 65 years old)

Type of help required by ME: Interview excerpts

And I want to have some... me, I want to have solutions, someone who will listen to me and say: ok, well look, you would be better off doing this. What you are doing is OK, but there would be... Talk to him about this. (spouse, 67 years old)

Themes to cover during interventions with ME ($N = 50$)

- Understanding the problem
- How to act with the gambler
- How to protect one's self
- How to provide support to the gambler
- How to manage the financial aspects

Avenues for reflection

Avenues for reflection

- Identify strategies that facilitate reaching ME and promote their engagement in the treatment of gamblers
 - Reflect on how to involve ME in the treatment upon the gambler's entry into treatment
 - Develop adapted services for each type of ME
 - Rethink interventions for gamblers in order to also reach their ME
- Develop an evaluation tool for the needs of ME
- Develop a specific treatment for ME

Avenues for reflection

- It is possible to believe that the needs of ME of persons having problems relating to addiction or mental health could be similar to those experienced by ME of gamblers