

*Bochumer Gespräch zu
Glücksspiel und Gesellschaft |*

Gambling and Gender

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GLÜG

11:30 – 13:00



Does gender matter? How is gender understood and employed by men and women recovering from gambling disorder?

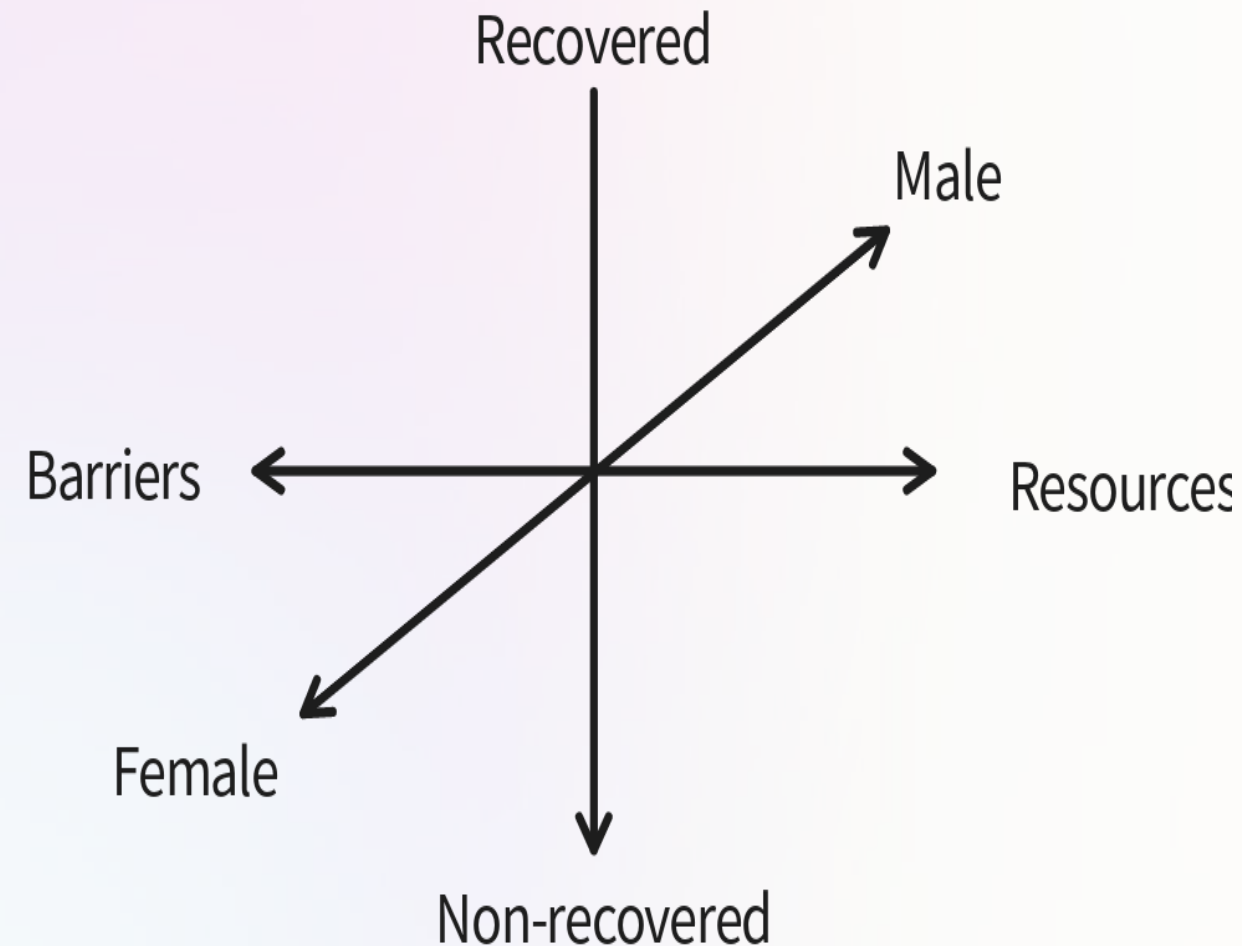
Bochum Conference on Gambling and Society 2023

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Recovery: a process of change in which individuals improve their physical and psychological health, enhance their wellbeing, and live a meaningful life in the face of daily difficulties

Gender: a multidimensional construct that both constrains and expands individuals' behaviors, attitudes, opportunities, and experiences according to the meanings ascribed to it by societies and cultures. It is a critical dimension of mental health and mental illness

Recovery capital: a central conceptual framework in recovery from addictions that relates to internal and external human, social, community and financial resources that individuals employ and/or have access to while trying to overcome addictions . This framework also encompasses negative RC; i.e., elements that hinder recovery .



Differences between men and women in recovery from gambling disorder

Differences between men and women related to the recovery capital dimensions

Cloud and Granfield's (2008) conceptual framework of RC highlights the complex role of gender in recovery from addiction. They argued that gender could be a negative factor that impedes people's ability to successfully recover from substance addiction. However, gender may also be an incentive for recovery and a positive RC.

Research questions:

How do men and women diagnosed with a lifetime GD understand and employ gender as a relevant/ meaningful factor in their recovery?

Do men and women identify different gender-related elements?



Method:

Participants with GD ($N=133$) answered open-ended questions on gender as a component in their recovery

How did the fact that you are a man/woman affect your recovery process?

Which specific resources did you employ as a woman/man?

Did you experience any specific barriers to recovery because you are a man/woman?

Findings

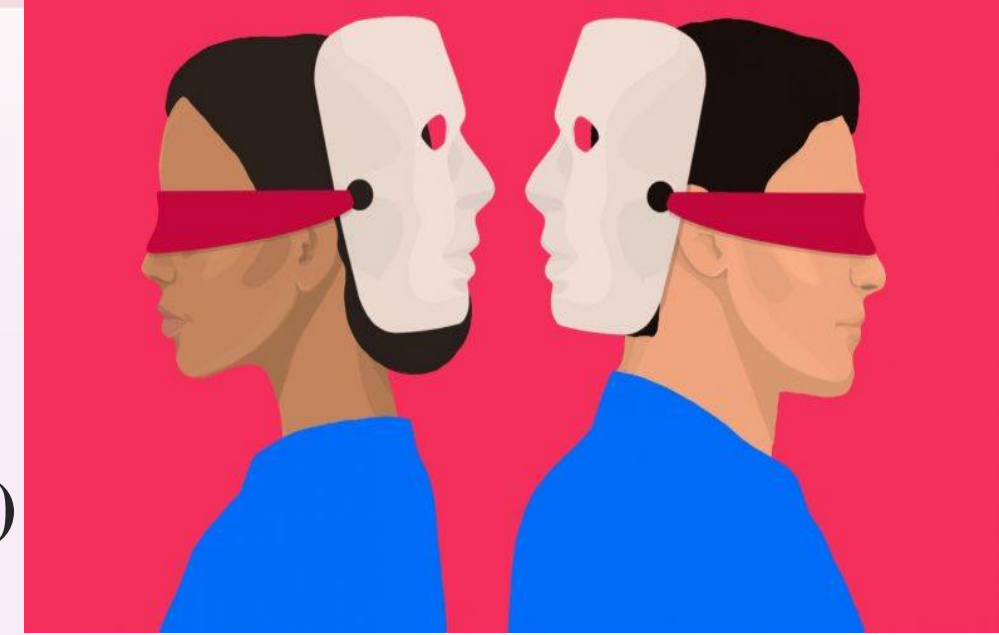
Content analysis

Some participants (43%) did not consider gender as a significant factor in their recovery, while others viewed gender as important and identified gender-related elements that either enhanced or hindered their recovery.

The quantitative findings did not show any statistically significant differences between men and women regarding the role they ascribed to gender in recovery, or for most of the elements identified.

Findings

Gender is not a significant factor in the recovery process (43.35%)



Gender blindness: (11.28%) - The issue of gender was not seen as relevant to their recovery:

"I don't think about it too much. I don't do research, I look ahead. In any case, it's all crap. Someone with a family and two kids who hasn't earned a living for three months, you don't understand to what extent these questions are irrelevant. It doesn't interest me. I am busy trying to put food on the table." (#108, man, age 41, recovered)."

Gender neutral (30.07%) - The recovery process is identical for both men and women

"There is no difference between a man and a woman. The emotions are the same. The uncertainties are the same. There is no commitment that a woman has that a man doesn't have... The process is the same. (#426, man, age 48, recovered)."

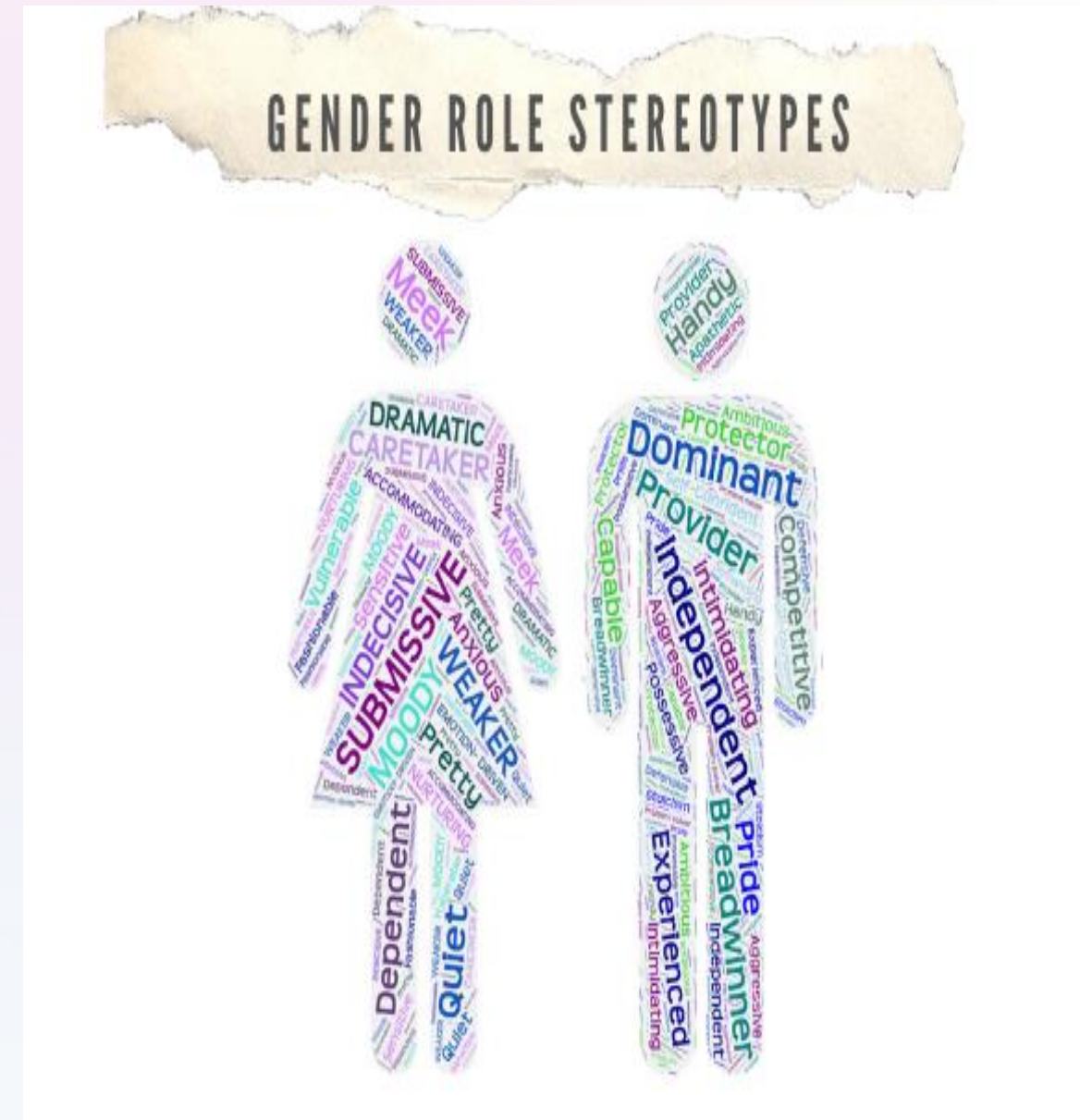
Gender awareness: Gender as a meaningful factor in recovery (58.65%):

Gender stereotypes

Gender roles and power relations in the domestic arena

Mixed gender therapeutic space

Sex in exchange for money for gambling



Gender stereotypes (personal traits and characteristics)

“Women are stronger emotionally. They are better able to deal with emotional intensity in... like an emotional down, they are better equipped for recovery... They are more able to cope from an emotional standpoint than a man, in my opinion... They can get through therapy better. They are able to achieve better outcomes.”
(#442, woman, age 55, recovered).

“Look, a woman is more emotion, a man is more reason. So, I think that a man has an easier time in recovery, for sure. If he says no, then it’s no.”
(#142, man, age 44, recovered)

“I think that a man is stronger in decision making. At least in my case, when I decide something, I go with it all the way and achieve all sorts of goals.”
(#401, man, age 75, recovered).

Gender roles

“In general, being a woman means you are a bit busier in the day-to-day routine at home. So maybe because I am busier, uh... it is easier for me to cope. Men have more freedom: they are not so busy. They don't have to do the washing, cooking, organizing, shopping. They have more time and then they stumble and fall (relapse) So maybe there is something that makes it easier for me.” (#442, woman age 55, recovered)

“The children are something that gives me strength, my family is something that makes me much stronger. And... you know that no woman wants to lose her children... it seems to me that they are more connected to the home. And then it is easier for them to stop.” (#428, woman, age 38, not recovered).

You know that to go [to the group] every day is not easy for women with small children. It's much easier for a man. A man can close the door and say goodbye, I'm off ... The role of a woman in the household is not like that of a man... So, it also makes things much more difficult. (#351, woman, age 55, recovered).



“Men are perceived as obligated to provide economic security for the family. I am not a chauvinist but from a young age I was told to go out and work and to earn a living. I took that on, and I took responsibility for the household’s financial situation... and I think that this male stigma... he is responsible for his family economically is why he falls [relapses].” (#106, man, age 60, recovered).

“I think that it is easier for me since I know that I rely on my husband for money and heaven help me if he doesn’t have any. So, I don’t need to have an income, I don’t bear the economic burden... and that makes things easier for me.” (#179, woman, age 69, recovered).

A tense mixed-gender therapeutic space

“To be in a room with a masculine environment, with the hormones that are on the loose there... it’s very difficult to sit in an alienated, foreign, masculine place.” (#351, woman, age 50, recovered).

“It’s easier for me as a man – everything is. Most of the people in the room are men. When there are women, and in particular new women, or regularly attending women, it is difficult for me to open up, also with respect to sexual problems that are related to recovery... There are things which I am not comfortable talking about. Say for example when I cheated on my wife... Let’s say... In the recovery process, it is very important to open up, to get all this shit out. When it is just men then it has a certain power. I imagine that it’s the same thing for women, where they feel more open. In the language of gamblers “to show your cards”. (#101, man, age 57, not recovered).

Exchanging sex for money:

“For a woman it is harder to recover because if she gets into it then it is intense. I have seen women working as prostitutes to earn money for gambling. I think this is the extreme, it isn’t easy if she gets into gambling since she ends up in places you don’t want to be.” (#174, man age 36, not recovered).

“Don’t forget that women do all kinds of things that have implications going forward in their recovery. If they use their body... for all kinds of things that... are difficult ... She can be clean for three months [not gamble] and then suddenly, she shows up [at a GA meeting]. Suddenly, she sees someone at the next table that gave her \$100 at a casino and she went up to a room with him. He let her play and suddenly you know that she can’t manage, she can’t be there... She leaves, she can’t deal with it... Who can sell her body and recover afterward...? Because she got into a situation in which she sold her body to gamble. Is there anything worse than that for a woman?” (#350, man, age 53, recovered).

How can we best understand these findings?

Ann Swidler (1986) in her watershed work “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies”, considered culture as a 'toolkit' in the sense of a repertoire of habits, skills, and styles. She argued that individuals manage their everyday life by employing strategies of action. They draw upon cultural resources from their cultural toolkit to make sense of the world, organize their actions, and explain their choices. These strategies emerge from an interplay between individual and environmental cultural resources making up individuals' cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Thus, social actors choose different lines of action from their available cultural toolkit, and the same actions may have various and even contradictory meanings and values, depending on the cultural context (Swidler, 1986).

Recovery Capital as a toolkit – comprised of different sets of skills, personal characteristics or traits, diverse relation With family and friends, virtual or actual social networks, Social-economic constructs values, attitudes, norms, and various community support systems – to which gender is a part.



Conclusions and final remarks:

Both men and women recovering from addictions utilize in their every day life, the same recovery resources, which are employed differently according to the context.

The concept “Recovery Capital in action”

Gender can enhance and/or hinder the recovery process of people with GD, thus highlighting the importance of gender for gambling research, policy and practice.

Thank you for your attention!

Thank
You

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