Coping with a loved one’s addictive disorder: The role of intimate partner violence

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What is addiction?

- DSM 5: alcohol and drug use disorders, gambling disorder
  - Excessive use (misuse) of substances or gambling
  - May include tolerance (need more to get same effect)
  - Continuing use despite problems & consequences

- “Problem” drinking, drug use, gambling
Addictions & families

• Addiction is a family problem:
  • Even if only 1 person with addiction,
  • Other family members are affected
Effects of addiction on families

• Chaos, unpredictability, stress
• Distress, strained relationships
• Financial or legal issues
• Physical/mental health problems
• Risk for family violence
How many people are affected?

- 8.2% of U.S. residents have alcohol and/or drug use disorders
  - 22.2 million
- 1-2% of population with gambling disorder
  - 2/3 cross-addicted to alcohol/drugs, so ~1-2 million more
- “At-risk” people with problematic alcohol/drug use or gambling:
  - Same or higher #'s
What about treatment?

• Despite:
  • Increased health insurance coverage under the ACA (91%) &
  • Mandated coverage for addiction treatment,

• <11% of people with addictions get treatment each year
What about treatment?

• Many with addictions don’t get treatment
• Treatment not always “1 & done”
• (Surgeon general: addiction should be managed as chronic disease/condition)

• Therefore, families must deal with addictions over time
Families & addictions

- Addictions are long-term stressors
- Wide-ranging outcomes for millions of families
- This process is described by the Stress-Strain-Coping-Support (SSCS) model (Orford, et al., 2010)
Stress-Strain-Coping-Support theory

- The addiction is a stress on family members
As a result of the addiction, family members experience strain.
Stress-Strain-Coping-Support theory

- Selected coping strategies can help family members reduce strain
Stress-Strain-Coping-Support theory

- Receipt of social support may also lessen strain
How are addictions stressful for families?

• Difficult behaviors
  • Partner is late/unpredictable, takes $ → financial troubles, skips/disrupts family occasions, argues/threatens, is moody, communicates poorly

• Worry
  • About partner’s health, mental health, ability to work, self-care

• Family Member Impact Questionnaire
How do families experience strain?

- Psychological distress
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Stress
- Quality of life

- Depression Anxiety Stress Scale, Personal Wellbeing Index
Coping theory

- Problem-focused (active)
- Emotion-focused
- Avoidance-focused
- Detachment-focused
How do families cope?

• Engaged
  • Talked/argued/pleaded, set limits, threw out alcohol, checked on partner

• Tolerant
  • Felt frightened/helpless, took care of partner when using, gave partner $

• Withdrawal
  • Avoided/ignored partner, took care of yourself/family, didn’t lend $

• Coping Questionnaire
Social support theory

- Emotional
- Informational
- Instrumental
- Companionship
What support do families receive?

- Informal
  - From friends/family
- Formal
  - From professionals and/or information about addictions
- Negative
  - Unhelpful “support”

- Alcohol, Drugs, and the Family Social Support Scale
Context: IPV

- Context may be important to SSCS Model. Example: IPV

- General population: 1-14% experience intimate partner violence

- Families with addictions: higher risk
  - Alcohol/drugs: 3-6 times higher
  - Gambling: 10 times higher
What is IPV?

- Physical violence
- Sexual violence
- Emotional/psychological abuse
- Coercive control
  - Control time/$/outside contact, threaten/scare, harm property/pets

- Woman Abuse Screening Tool, Mediator’s Assessment of Safety Issues and Concerns
Violence vs. coercive control

• IPV laws focus on violence

• Not illegal to be abusive/controlling

• But coercive control may be the central experience, with violence used as often as necessary to maintain control
Women And Coping Study
The current study

- 222 women whose partners had alcohol, drug, and/or gambling problems
- 77% Caucasian, 22% African-American, 7% Latino, 8% other
- Educated (>90% at least some college)
- 2/3 work full-time
- Income $50-60,000/year
Partners’ addictions

- Alcohol: 70%
- Drugs: 37%
- Gambling: 28%
Strain

Depression (U.S. avg.=2.9)

Anxiety (U.S. avg.=2.0)

Stress (U.S. avg.=4.1)

Quality of life (western avg.=7.5)
Intimate partner violence

- No IPV: 15%
- Violence/abuse: 7%
- Coercive control: 10%
- Violence/abuse and coercive control: 68%
Types of violence/abuse

- Physical violence: 50%
- Sexual violence: 35%
- Emotional abuse: 83%
Frequency of coercive control

- Yearly (avg. 7.5 tactics): 91%
- Monthly: 53%
- Weekly: 38%
- Daily: 18%
Participant summary

- Well-educated, working, adequate diversity
- Partners’ addictions: mostly alcohol, with drugs, gambling, & multiple addictions also common
- Strain: high psychological distress & lowered quality of life
- IPV: appalling amount/frequency

- How do coping, social support, & IPV affect strain?
Aside: mediation & moderation

• Before going further, explore stressors & outcomes
  • Mediation
  • Moderation
Stressors & outcomes

• Sometimes outcomes are not direct
• Other factors are involved

• Example:
  • https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdHEB03vrSw
Events leading up to dog collar

1. Cable is on the fritz
2. You get frustrated
3. Your daughter imitates
4. She gets thrown out of school
5. She meets undesirables
6. She ties the knot with undesirables
7. You get a grandson with a dog collar
Events leading up to dog collar

Stressor
- Cable is on the fritz
- You get frustrated
- Your daughter imitates
- She gets thrown out of school
- She meets undesirables
- She ties the knot with undesirables

Outcome
- You get a grandson with a dog collar
Events leading up to dog collar

Stressor
Cable is on the fritz

Mediators
You get frustrated
Your daughter imitates
She gets thrown out of school
She meets undesirables
She ties the knot with undesirables

Outcome
You get a grandson with a dog collar
Remove stressor?

Stressor: Don't watch the fritz

Mediators:
- You get frustrated
- Your daughter imitates
- She gets thrown out of school
- She meets undesirables
- She ties the knot with undesirables

Outcome: You get a grandson with a dog collar
Remove stressor, better outcome

Direct TV! → No frustration → Your daughter imitates → She stays in school → She meets desirables → She ties the knot with desirables → You get a wonderful grandson
If stressor can’t be changed...

Stressor: Cable is on the fritz
Mediators: You get frustrated, Your daughter imitates
She gets thrown out of school, She meets undesirables, She ties the knot with undesirables
Outcome: You get a grandson with a dog collar
Change your reaction?

Stressor: Cable is on the fritz

You get frustrated

Your daughter imitates

She gets thrown out of school

She meets undesirables

She ties the knot with undesirables

Outcome: You get a grandson with a dog collar
Your reaction influences outcome

Stressor: Cable is on the fritz

Mediators:
- You take a deep breath & count to 10
- Your daughter imitates
- She stays in school
- She meets desirables
- She ties the knot with desirables

Outcome: You get a wonderful grandson
The whole picture

Stressor

Cable is on the fritz

You react

Count to 10

Smack table

Your daughter imitates

She stays in school

She meets desirables

She ties the knot with desirables

You get a wonderful grandson

Outcome

Mediators

Your daughter imitates

She gets thrown out of school

She meets undesirables

She ties the knot with undesirables

You get a grandson with a dog collar

Outcome
Your reaction: moderator

Stressor: Cable is on the fritz
Moderator: You react

Count to 10
Smack table

You react

Your daughter imitates

She stays in school

She meets desirables

She ties the knot with desirables

You get a wonderful grandson

Your daughter imitates

She gets thrown out of school

She meets undesirables

She ties the knot with undesirables

You get a grandson with a dog collar
Stressor, mediators, moderator, outcome

Stressor: Cable is on the fritz

Mediators:
- Your daughter imitates
- School
- Friends

Moderator: You react

Outcome: Marriage → Grandson
Summary: mediators

• Intervening factors between cause & effect
  • Example: coping, social support
• How cause \(\rightarrow\) effect
• One or many causal paths \textit{at same time}
Summary: moderators

• Factors directing/influencing causal paths: “fork in the road”
  • Behavior (your reaction),
  • Innate (gender/age/race), or
  • External (daughter not in room, cable problem is brief so you didn’t react, IPV)
• “Interactions” (regression)
Back to results

• First see if coping & social support help with (mediate) psychological distress & quality of life
  • Overall, then using specific types of coping, social support, & distress
• Then see if/how IPV changes (moderates) effects of coping & social support

• Analysis: regression, via Andrew Hayes’ PROCESS macro
Overall effects on quality of life

Direct (c') path $b = -0.12$ (-0.15, -0.08)
Total social support $b = 0.007$ (0.001, 0.02)
Overall effects on distress

Direct (c’) path $b = 0.67$ (0.42, 0.91)
Total social support $b = -0.03$ (-0.07, -0.0001)
Overall summary

- Burden of addiction lowers quality of life & raises distress
- Social support appears to be helpful
- Coping (as a whole) isn’t helpful
- But different types of coping & social support may work independently
Effects on quality of life

Direct (c') path: $b = -0.11$ (-0.15, -0.07)
Informal social support: $b = 0.01$ (0.01, 0.02)
Effects on depression

Direct (c’) path: $b = 0.22 (0.13, 0.32)$
Informal social support: $b = -0.02 (-0.05, -0.001)$
Effects on anxiety

Engaged coping
Tolerant coping
Withdrawal coping

Burden of addiction

Informal soc. sup.
Formal soc. sup.
Negative soc. sup.

Anxiety

Tolerant coping: $b = 0.07$ (0.02, 0.13)
Direct (c') path: $b = 0.16$ (0.07, 0.25)
Informal social support: $b = -0.03$ (-0.06, -0.007)
Formal social support: $b = 0.05$ (0.01, 0.10)
Negative social support: $b = 0.06$ (0.01, 0.10)
Effects on stress

- Engaged coping
- Tolerant coping
- Withdrawal coping
- Informal soc. sup.
- Formal soc. sup.
- Negative soc. sup.

Burden of addiction

Stress

Direct (c°) path: $b = 0.20$ (0.11, 0.29)
Summary: specific effects

• Burden of addiction worsens quality of life, depression, stress & anxiety
• Neither coping nor social support helps with stress
• Informal social support helps with quality of life, depression, & anxiety
• Anxiety is exacerbated by tolerant coping, formal support, & negative “support”

• Note: results not necessarily causal
What about IPV?

- Goal: see if IPV changes effectiveness of coping or social support
- Analysis strategy: add violence/abuse & coercive control (separately) as moderators
  - IPV has an effect (moderates) if the index of mediated moderation is significant
Effects of violence/abuse

• Violence/abuse = # questions endorsed on WAST
• Violence/abuse associated with worsened strain (increased depression, anxiety, & stress, & lowered quality of life); however,
• It did not change effects of coping or social support on strain
  • No moderation
Effects of coercive control

- Coercive control = # tactics that happened in the past year
Effects of coercive control

- Burden of addiction
- Coercive control
- Support
- Coping
- Quality of life

Direct (c’) path: $b = -0.12 (-0.15, -0.08)$
Total social support index of moderated mediation = $-0.001 (-0.003, -0.0001)$

*Mediation is strongest under low coercive control
Direct (c’) path: $b = 0.22$ (0.13, 0.32)
Informal social support index of moderated mediation = 0.002 (0.0002, 0.007)
\(^\dagger\)Mediation is strongest under low coercive control
Tolerant coping: $b = 0.06$ (0.02, 0.11)
Direct (c’) path: $b = 0.16$ (0.07, 0.25)
Formal social support: $b = 0.04$ (0.01, 0.08)
Negative social support: $b = 0.04$ (0.008, 0.08)
Informal social support index of moderated mediation = 0.003 (0.0003, 0.008)
* Mediation is strongest under low coercive control
Summary: effects of coercive control

• Coercive control is associated with worsened quality of life, depression, anxiety, & stress
• No impact on coping strategies
• It *does* influence the effects of social support
Summary: effects of coercive control

• Coercive control doesn’t change availability of social support
• It changes how social support works
  • Low coercive control: social support is helpful
  • High coercive control: social support is ineffective
Why wasn’t violence/abuse important?

• I don’t know
• I’m not confident in this result
  • WAST isn’t very detailed – no severity or frequency info on violence
  • Low power for IPV moderation effects (not enough participants)
• High rate of IPV in participants – is this typical?
Importance of coercive control

• Power & control = center of violence/abuse
  • Violence used to keep control intact
  • But we focus on violence & ignore coercive control
  • (IPV laws not focused on coercive control)
Importance of coercive control

- Perhaps coercive control is more critical to task of dealing with addiction

- What does this mean for clients?
  - Is coercive control a hidden problem?
Implications for clinicians

• Find a way to work with families
  • Whether or not person with addiction gets treatment

• Screen for IPV
  • Ask both clients and family members if possible
  • Ask about coercive control as well as violence/abuse
Screening for IPV

• MASIC is best option for coercive control at present
• It also includes violence/abuse questions (but I didn’t use them)
• The MASIC is available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227667044_The_Mediator%27s_Assessment_of_Safety_Issues_and_Concerns_MASIC_A_Screening_Interview_for_Intimate_Partner_Violence_and_Abuse_Available_in_the_Public_Domain
Implications for clinicians

- What information should you get about IPV, if present?
  Determine:
  - If violence/abuse is typically one-sided, one starts & other fights back, or mutual
  - What physical injuries occur (bruises/lacerations/more severe)
  - Role of addictive behaviors in IPV
- Remember that survivors of IPV may minimize it
Implications for clinicians

• What if violence/abuse or coercive control is present?
  • May not be appropriate to do couples work
  • Refer to domestic violence services
  • Expect distress & complex family issues
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