

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

A Latent Profile Analysis of Aggression and Victimization Across Relationship Types Among Veterans Who Use Substances

Anderson, R. E., Bonar, E. E., Walton, M. A., Goldstick, J. E., Rauch, S. A., Epstein-Ngo, Q. M., & Chermack, S. T. (2017). A latent profile analysis of aggression and victimization across relationship types among veterans who use substances. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 78(4), 597-607. doi:10.15288/jsad.2017.78.597

SUMMARY: To provide effective violence prevention services for Veterans post-deployment, it is important to understand the nature of violence experienced by Veterans. This study investigated the patterns and forms of violence experienced by Veterans with both intimate partners and non-intimate partners. Using a sample of 839 Veterans who participated in a randomized control trial, findings indicated that a large majority of participants reported engagement in some form of violence and a majority of these incidents occurred with non-intimate partners.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Majority of the participants (86.3%) reported engaging in a form of violence, with 75.6% reporting engagement in non-intimate partner violence and 64.6% reporting engagement in intimate partner violence.
- Psychological violence (86%) was the most reported form of violence among both non-intimate partner violence and intimate partner violence.
- Less than half of the participants engaged in some form of physical violence (48%) and injury related violence (30%).
- All participants fell into one of four distinct profiles characterized by relationship type and severity of violence involvement: no/low violence profile, predominately intimate partner violence profile, predominately non-intimate partner violence profile, and high general violence profile.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Disseminate information about the impact of mental health symptoms on violence involvement to Service members and their families
- Provide education on intimate partner violence and healthy conflict resolutions skills to Service members and their intimate partners
- Develop support groups for Service members who have engaged in some form of violence

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend collaboration with community-based organizations to provide violence prevention resources to Service members and their families
- Recommend professional education on the four violence profiles to professionals providing services to Service members and their families
- Promote the integration of violence prevention modules into reintegration activities for Service members

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METHODS

- Data were collected as part screening process for participation in a randomized control trial. Participants received \$10.00 gift cards for completing the screening.
- The screening process included multiple surveys on past intimate partner violence and non-intimate partner violence, depression symptoms, posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, past substance use, and legal problems (e.g., shoplifting, assault, rape). The screening lasted 30 minutes.
- Data were analyzed by identifying the different sub-types of violence and organizing the data into four profiles.

PARTICIPANTS

- Study participants included 839 Veterans recruited from a Veterans Affairs Medical Center who completed screening surveys to participate in a randomized control trial between 2012 to 2015.
- Majority of the participants were male (93.4%), White (71.5%), unemployed (75.9%), single (69.6%), with an average age of 48 years and an average income between \$10,000 - \$19,999.
- Over half of the Veterans served in either Vietnam (30%) or Afghanistan and/or Iraq (30%).

LIMITATIONS

- The study utilized participant self report data of violence engagement, which limits the study as self reports may be biased with participants under-reporting their own aggression involvement.
- As majority of the participants in this study were male, White and single; therefore, the study findings may not be able to generalize to diverse groups.
- Findings of the study represented the perspectives of a unique population: participants who were actively seeking treatment for substance abuse. Therefore, this sample of participants limits the study's ability to generalize findings to all Veteran groups.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Include the perspective of partners on Veteran's violence involvement
- Replicate the study with a better representation of female Veterans and Service members
- Examine the impact of relationship status on Service members violence involvement by comparing single and partnered samples of Service members

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