Spouse Abuse and Alcohol Problems among White, African American, and Hispanic U.S. Army soldiers


SUMMARY: Differences in the association between alcohol use and spousal abuse was examined in married, enlisted, Active-Duty Soldiers from three different racial groups: Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. The findings indicate that the pathway between alcohol use and spousal abuse may vary depending on race.

KEY FINDINGS
- The following factors were associated with a risk of spousal abuse: alcohol abuse, low educational attainment, low rank, low job satisfaction, low social support, and depressed mood.
- Alcohol was involved in 29% of abuse incidents, with Whites being most likely to report drinking during perpetration of abuse (34.1%), followed by Hispanics (31.9%), and Blacks (24.4%).
- White Soldiers were more likely to consume more drinks per week than Blacks or Hispanics.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS
- Programs could:
  - Provide informational classes about the relationship between alcohol abuse and domestic violence for Service members and their spouses
  - Offer supportive services that are modified to be culturally sensitive to help Service members reduce their alcohol use
  - Develop trainings for professionals who work with military families about warning signs that suggest a Service member has difficulties with alcohol abuse

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES
- Policies could:
  - Encourage Service members to participate in substance abuse prevention programming as part of their reintegration process
  - Support programs that provide outreach and supportive services to military families who have a Service member diagnosed with alcohol abuse
  - Urge awareness campaigns about the impact of alcohol abuse and domestic violence on family relationships
METHODS

- This study used existing sources of data collected between 1991 and 1998 that were located in the Total Army Injury and Health Outcomes Database (TAIHOD).
- Inclusion criteria in the study included Soldiers with a substantiated case of abuse, but no cases in the system prior to 1991.
- Statistical analyses were used to examine associations between alcohol use and risk of spousal abuse, and to see whether patterns varied by racial/ethnic group.

PARTICIPANTS

- All participants were married and male Active-Duty Army Soldiers. A total of 24,328 Soldiers (6,507 with a documented incident of abuse and 17,821 controls) were included.
- Participants with a documented incident of abuse were all first time offenders.
- No data were provided about the participants’ age. In the sample, 54% were White, 34% were Black, and 12% were Hispanic.

LIMITATIONS

- There may be measurement bias as the determination of alcohol-related abuse was made by the researchers based on their interpretations of interviews of the incident.
- Questions that measured alcohol consumption assessed lifetime experience of alcohol abuse which may not have reflected Soldiers’ current alcohol use when the data were collected.
- Interaction analyses were poorly examined, which limits interpretations of the data.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Further research could collect data on spouses’ alcohol use during domestic violent incidents and explore any relationships to perpetrators’ alcohol use.
- Future research could examine the impact of illicit substances on incidences of intimate partner violence in military couples.
- Additional studies could explore the role of acculturation or racial identity in influencing alcohol use in different racial groups.

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS

Design

Appropriate Research Plan and Sample

Methods

Appropriate Measurement and Analysis

Limitations

Few

For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-works