

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Intimate Partner Stalking: Contributions to PTSD Symptomatology Among a National Sample of Women Veterans

Dardis, C. M., Amoroso, T., & Iverson, K. M. (2017). Intimate partner stalking: Contributions to PTSD symptomatology among a national sample of women Veterans. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 9(S1), 67-73. doi:10.1037/tra0000171

SUMMARY: Female Veterans may be more vulnerable to intimate partner violence (IPV; e.g., stalking) than civilians. Female Veterans' answers to questionnaires were used to examine the prevalence of intimate partner stalking and the association between stalking and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. Results revealed that intimate partner stalking was a common form of IPV among female Veterans and it was related to PTSD symptoms.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Most female Veterans (64%) who experienced IPV also reported being stalked by an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime.
- Female Veterans who experienced both IPV and stalking were 4.2 times as likely to have PTSD symptoms than those who experienced IPV without stalking.
- Female Veterans who had a history of physical and sexual IPV were 2.5 times as likely to be stalked by an intimate partner than those who experienced psychological IPV (e.g., humiliation, being afraid of partner).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer support groups for Service members and military spouses who experienced IPV
- Disseminate information on military bases regarding how to identify IPV and, if it happens, how to seek help
- Provide marriage education programs for military couples to promote healthy communication skills

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage awareness campaign on military bases regarding the importance of preventing, reporting, and intervening in IPV situations
- Continue to support marriage education programs that address the unique challenges that military couples encounter
- Recommend professional education on improving detection of different forms of IPV in military families

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METHODS

- Data were collected from the Women Veterans and IPV-related Care Survey conducted in 2014; participants were recruited randomly from a national sample, and the response rate was 75%.
- Participants completed a 30-minute on-line survey, and measures included their experiences of IPV, intimate partner stalking, and PTSD symptoms.
- Data were analyzed to examine the lifetime prevalence of intimate partner stalking as well as the associations between stalking and PTSD symptoms.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 225 female Veterans with a history of IPV; the average age of the sample was 49.9 years (SD = 13.3).
- Most participants identified themselves as White (63%), followed by Latino (16%) and Black (12%); the race/ethnicity of the other 9% of participants was not reported.
- The military branches that the Veterans used to serve in were: Army (44%), Air Force (24%), Navy (23%), Marines (7%), and Coast Guard (22%).

LIMITATIONS

- The cross-sectional design of the study did not allow for examining the potential causal relationship between intimate partner stalking and PTSD symptoms.
- Only four screening questions were used to assess IPV in the study; therefore, they may not fully capture the complexity of IPV (e.g., duration, severity).
- It was unclear whether stalking and IPV were perpetrated by the same partner; therefore, it was difficult to know whether partners who perpetrated IPV were also more likely to engage in stalking.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine the prevalence of intimate partner stalking and its association with PTSD symptoms in female Active Duty Service members
- Conduct longitudinal studies to explore the causal relationships between IPV, stalking, and PTSD symptoms
- Examine factors (e.g., age, personality, socioeconomic status) that are associated with the risk of experiencing IPV and stalking

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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