



Patterns of Intimate Partner Violence among Married Women in the Military: Type, Level, Directionality and Consequences

Forgey, M. A., & Badger, L. (2006). Patterns of intimate partner violence among married women in the military: Type, level, directionality and consequences. *Journal of Family Violence, 21*(6), 369-380. doi: 10.1007/s10896-006-9033-3

SUMMARY: Different types of intimate partner violence (IPV) between female Service members and their male civilian partners were examined. IPV was assigned multiple categories: as either bi-directional (perpetrated by both spouses) or unilateral (perpetrated by one spouse), as well as either asymmetrical (unequal in severity of violence) or symmetrical (equal in severity of violence). Results indicated that enlisted females were more likely to be the victims of asymmetrical violence and of unilateral violence than their male spouses.

KEY FINDINGS

- Enlisted females were more than three times as likely to be victims of unilateral severe violence compared to their male civilian spouses.
- Sexual violence was more likely to be reported as perpetrated by male spouses (36%) than by enlisted females (20%).
- Less than half of the sample (40%) was in a non-violent relationship; of the remaining participants who were in a violent relationship, 45% of sample reported that the violence was bi-directional.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS

Programs could:

- Develop programming for IPV that accounts for the high level of bi-directional abuse
- Provide peer support groups for female Service members that allows them to address the experiences of IPV in military families
- Offer trainings for professionals who work with military families on how to recognize and address bi-directional IPV

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES

Policies could:

- Increase awareness of different types of IPV through creation and dissemination of materials educating military families and professionals who work with military families
- Continue to recommend additional support for female Service members and their families when there are identified incidents of IPV
- Support programs that focus on building protective factors, such as groups on healthy relationships for female Service members

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METHODS

- Participants were recruited via a letter from their installation commander requesting them to attend an information session about the study. After hearing the details about the study, interested Service members completed self-report questionnaires.
- Female Service members completed questionnaires about demographics, and conflict tactics, which includes subscales about negotiation, physical aggression, physical violence, sexual violence, and injury.
- Statistical analyses were conducted to determine the patterns, types, and severity of IPV.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants (n = 248) were Army enlisted females who were married to civilian males; dual military couples and female officers were excluded from analyses.
- Participants' mean age was 29.8 years (SD = 7.0), and spouses' mean age was 31.8 years (SD = 8.2). Participants were married an average of 6.2 years (SD = 5.4).
- Participants were Black (40%), followed by White (37%), Hispanic (11%), Asian Pacific (5%), and Native American (3%) with remaining participants indicating another race/ethnicity (4%).

LIMITATIONS

- Self-report bias could influence results as only female Service members (not their spouses) were asked about violence inflicted on and by them.
- No data were collected on who initiated the violence and what motivated the violence, which doesn't provide a context under which to understand the findings
- The data that were presented are from a prevalence study design, which limits the ability to determine casual relationships or the chronicity of IPV.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- A similar study could be conducted with female officers to examine differences in interpersonal violence between ranks.
- Future studies could include larger sample sizes, additional military branches, and both members of a relationship to determine the agreement of responses between spouses.
- Further research is needed on effectiveness of intervention and prevention programs aimed at reducing IPV among female Service members.

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