

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

Patterns of Intimate Partner Violence and Associated Risk Factors Among Married Enlisted Female Soldiers

Forgey, M. A., & Badger, L. (2010). Patterns of intimate partner violence and associated risk factors among married enlisted female soldiers *Violence & Victims*, 25(1), 45-61. doi:10.1891/0886-6708.25.1.45

SUMMARY: Relationships between psychosocial risk factors and six patterns of intimate partner violence (IPV) among Active Duty females and their spouses were examined. To explore these relationships 248 Active Duty female Soldiers were surveyed about sex-role attitudes, marital satisfaction, alcohol use, childhood trauma, and depression. The six patterns of violence between partners were no violence, bidirectional symmetrical severe violence or injury, bidirectional symmetrical severe psychological aggression only, bidirectional symmetrical minor physical and/or sexual violence, female perpetrator- unilateral/bidirectional asymmetrical, and male perpetrator- unilateral/bidirectional asymmetrical. Overall, significant relationships were found between psychosocial risk factors and patterns of violence.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Active Duty females who experienced severe bidirectional violence were likely to be the most depressed across the six patterns of violence.
- Active Duty females who experienced minor bidirectional violence did not share any of the psychosocial risk factors found for females experiencing severe bidirectional violence.
- Active Duty females who perpetrated unilateral violence toward their spouses were found to be as satisfied in their marriages as nonviolent couples.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Continue to provide training opportunities for professionals who work with Service members and their families to learn more about IPV and its effects on the individual as well as their family
- Engage female Service members and their intimate partners in classes that aim to increase communication and decrease physical or verbal aggression
- Disseminate information regarding possible warning signs of IPV to professionals who work with Service members and their families

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Promote the development of structured workshops for Service members and their partners on healthy relationships
- Encourage awareness among professionals who work with female Service members and their partners on the importance of developing programming and support for IPV victims
- Recommend collaboration between DoD programs and local community organizations to support treatment programs for female Service members who are IPV victims

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METHODS

- Participants were recruited by their Army installation commander and invited to attend an informational session about the study.
- The survey administered comprised the following scales: Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ), Short Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test (SMAST), Sex-Role Egalitarianism Scale (SRE), Short Marital Adjustment Test (SMAT), Conflict Tactics Scale 2, and the Zung Self Rating Depression Scale.
- Statistical analyses examined the relationships between psychosocial risk factors and the six patterns of violence identified in the authors' previous study.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were married an average of 6 years and served in the military an average of 7 years.
- Forty percent of the sample were Black, 37% were White, 11% were Latino, 5% were Asian American, 3% were Native American, and 4% were other.
- Fifty-two percent of the Active Duty female sample had a high school diploma, 6% had a GED or less, 35% had an Associates degree, and 7% had a Bachelors degree or higher.

LIMITATIONS

- Black enlisted females were underrepresented in the sample (40%) compared to the installation population (51%); which could have biased results.
- The study did not measure the witnessing of IPV as a child, which limited the strength of the analysis.
- The study did not measure motives or the emotional impact of IPV which could have influenced which violence pattern group participants were placed.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore combat-related risk factors, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury and the Active Duty female's IPV experience within the military
- Examine the relationship between adult sexual trauma outside of the marital relationship and IPV among Active Duty female Soldiers
- Evaluate diverse approaches used to address the different patterns of unilateral and bidirectional violence for Active Duty female Soldiers

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