

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Domestic Violence and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Severity for Participants of a Domestic Violence Rehabilitation Program

Gerlock, A.A. (2004). Domestic violence and post-traumatic stress disorder severity for participants of a domestic violence rehabilitation program. *Military Medicine*, 169(6), 470-474. doi:10.7205/milmed.169.6.470

SUMMARY: Completion of a rehabilitation program for Service members that perpetrate domestic violence can be vital for the well-being of military families and the community. Characteristics of Service members that successfully completed a domestic violence perpetrator rehabilitation program were examined. Findings indicate that Service members' ages, employment, and posttraumatic stress (PTSD) severity have a significant effect on program rehabilitation completion.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The participants of the domestic violence rehabilitation program were more likely to be employed and under 35 years old.
- Other characteristics of program participants included higher reported mutual respect in their relationships, lower levels of stress and posttraumatic stress, and being actively monitored by the court or probation service
- Severity of PTSD was significantly related to severity of domestic violence.
- Military status, ethnicity, witnessing domestic violence as a child, and substance use did not significantly impact completion of the program.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Enhance education opportunities to teach military couples skills that improve relationship mutuality and problem solving
- Provide workshops to help teach stress and posttraumatic stress management to military couples who may be at risk for domestic violence
- Tailor rehabilitation efforts to address aspects that may arise when working with a military population, such as required military duties

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend collaboration among DoD programs and the VA system to increase access to effective rehabilitation programs for perpetrators of domestic violence
- Encourage rehabilitation professionals to receive training on military culture and PTSD to better serve a military population
- Promote rehabilitation programs that address the unique challenges of Service members

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



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METHODS

- Participants were voluntarily recruited from a domestic violence perpetration rehabilitation program offered by an Army medical center and a Veteran's Administration medical center in a joint effort.
- Self-report questionnaires were given to the participants to collect information on demographics, battering history, exposure to violence, substance use, criminal history, and court-ordered status.
- Data were analyzed in order to better describe program participants and to observe characteristics of completion or non-completion of the program.

PARTICIPANTS

- Sample size was 62 men, ages ranging from 20 to 62 years old (M = 38.81).
- Races and ethnicity of the sample were White (55%), Black (29%), Latino (6%), Asian-American (5%), Native American (3%) and Multiracial (2%).
- Military status of the participants was Active Duty (23%) and Veteran (77%). Breakdown of the service branches was not included.

LIMITATIONS

- There was a high attrition rate in the study. Participants that withdrew from the study may differ than those that remained in a significant way.
- A small sample size was used from one location, limiting the generalizability of this sample to other military populations.
- There was no evidence of the effectiveness of the rehabilitation program long term since no follow-up was conducted.
- It is unclear how participant information was collected, leading to a potential bias in how participants responded.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Recreate this study with a larger sample in a military population to improve generalizability
- Explore the relationship between domestic violence perpetration and the type of PTSD (from civilian or military trauma)
- Examine the relationship between PTSD level, domestic violence, and attrition rates

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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