

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Men Who Sustain Intimate Partner Violence: A Study of Helpseeking and Community Samples

Hines, D.A., & Douglas, E.M. (2011). Symptoms of Posttraumatic stress disorder in men who sustain intimate partner violence: A study of helpseeking and community samples. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 12(2), 112-127.
doi:10.1037/a0022983

SUMMARY: Although 25-50% of interpersonal violence victims are male, few studies have explored the association between interpersonal violence and posttraumatic stress disorder in men. This study investigated two types of interpersonal violence, intimate terrorism and common couple violence, and examined differences in the development of posttraumatic stress symptoms. Findings indicate an association between interpersonal violence and posttraumatic stress. Moreover, men who sustained intimate terrorism had a highly increased risk of meeting clinical criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Roughly 60% of men who experienced intimate terrorism exceeded the DSM-IV clinical cut-off for posttraumatic stress disorder.
- Among men who sustained interpersonal violence, those who seek help are likely victims of intimate terrorism as opposed to common couple violence.
- For men in the community sample, results suggest experiencing controlling behaviors is more traumatic than actual physical violence.
- Risks for developing posttraumatic stress disorder and sustaining interpersonal violence increased if men experienced abuse as a child.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Facilitate support groups for men that acknowledge interpersonal violence can be traumatizing and teach them how to safely leave unhealthy intimate relationships
- Attend trainings that teach how to differentiate between common couple violence and intimate terrorism

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide education to decrease stigmatization of men seeking help after experiencing interpersonal violence
- Provide programs for men and women at risk of interpersonal violence that focus on emotion regulation and effective communication

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support the development of institutions or support groups for men who sustain intimate terrorism
- Advocate for further research regarding men who experience interpersonal violence, particularly intimate terrorism

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.



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover™



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- Data were collected from two sources: a help-seeking sample and a community sample. Eligibility for the help-seeking sample included having sustained a physical assault by their partner in the last year and sought assistance and participants from both samples must have been involved in an intimate relationship lasting at least 1 month within the previous year.
- Participants were recruited using online websites, newsletters, blogs, listservs, and hotlines, including the Domestic Abuse Hotline for Men and Women.
- Both samples were administered the same questionnaires that assessed demographics, possible aggressive behaviors from and toward female partners in previous year, mental health, and risk factors. The help-seeking sample was asked additional questions regarding the assault and why they stayed in the relationship.
- Researchers analyzed associations between intimate terrorism, common couple violence, and posttraumatic stress disorder.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 822 heterosexual men with an average age of 42 years old.
- Approximately 85% of men were White with a large majority being middle-class.
- The help-seeking sample ($n = 302$) only included men who experienced intimate terrorism and sought help whereas men in the community sample ($n = 520$) had experienced common couple violence.

LIMITATIONS

- The data may be biased by relying solely on self-report measures and not including data from female partners.
- Causality cannot be determined due to this being a cross-sectional study that did not include a pretest or comparison group to contrast against a control group.
- The study may not be relevant to the overall general population since a large majority of participants were White, middle-class, and all identified as heterosexual.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Gather information from multiple sources to limit self-report bias and to obtain external validation
- Conduct studies that recruit a more diverse sample to broaden relevance to the general population
- Explore additional factors that may contribute to the development of posttraumatic stress disorder (e.g., shame and self-blame)

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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