

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Examining Intimate Partner Aggression Assessment Among Returning Veterans and Their Partners

LaMotte, A. D., Taft, C. T., Weatherill, R. P., Scott, J. P., & Eckhardt, C. I. (2014). Examining intimate partner aggression assessment among returning veterans and their partners. *Psychological Assessment, 26*(1), 15-Aug. doi:10.1037/a0034579

SUMMARY: Deployment and combat exposure can put stress on both a Service member and their intimate relationships. The rate of intimate partner aggression, concordance of intimate partner aggression reporting, and associations with relationship satisfaction and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were examined among male OIF/OEF combat Veterans and their female partners. Partners of OIF/OEF Veterans perpetrated more physical intimate partner aggression than did Veterans; however, agreement between Veterans' and partners' reports of perpetration was low to moderate.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Partners of OIF/OEF Veterans perpetrated more physical intimate partner aggression than did the Veterans themselves.
- There were moderate to low levels of agreement between Veterans and their partners on the perpetration of physical and psychological intimate partner aggression; agreement was lower on the Veterans' physical intimate partner aggression than partners.
- Partners' own PTSD symptoms were associated with reporting more of the Veterans' and their own intimate partner aggression.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Screen for physical and psychological intimate partner aggression problems among Service members and partners in all military relationship or marriage classes
- Educate Service members and partners about the signs and associated problems of intimate partner aggression so they can accurately report it and seek help
- Coordinate media campaigns on military bases and the surrounding communities to reduce the stigma related to reporting and seeking out help for intimate partner aggression problems

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs targeting assessment and treatment of intimate partner aggression in military families
- Promote further research regarding intimate partner aggression and effective programs for prevention and intervention in the military
- Recommend professional education regarding intimate partner violence for all providers serving military families

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METHODS

- Participants were drawn from a larger study and recruited via flyers posted in the VA, a central database of Veterans, and mailings to Service members.
- Male Veterans exposed to combat during deployment who experienced a life threatening event and who were married or living with a partner for a minimum of six months and experiencing relationship distress were interviewed via telephone about conflict tactics, relationship satisfaction, and PTSD.
- Levels of intimate partner aggression, concordance of intimate partner aggression reported, and associations with relationship satisfaction and PTSD were examined.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included 65 male OIF/OEF combat Veterans, with an average age of 39.98 years (SD = 9.14), and their female partners, with an average age of 38.85 years (SD = 10.12).
- The majority of Veterans (85%) and their partners (86%) were white.
- Veterans were either in the Army (60%), Marines (17%), Navy (12%), or Air Force (11%), and 74% were National Guard or Reserves.

LIMITATIONS

- Data included sensitive information and were collected via a phone survey, potentially resulting in biased responding if participants were concerned about confidentiality or social acceptability.
- There were low rates of concordance in intimate partner aggression reporting, and it is unclear whether this may have been influenced by the measure used.
- The sample consisted of male Veterans, primarily in the Army, and their female partners, and results may not generalize to other military couples.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Further examine the associations between gender, military status, and perpetration of intimate partner violence, including utilizing studies with both male and female Service members
- Explore whether anger management and other emotion regulation skills trainings may help Service members and their partners reduce intimate partner aggression
- Conduct a similar study with multiple measures of intimate partner aggression to understand how reporting and concordance may differ across measures

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