

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

“Strength at Home” Intervention for Male Veterans Perpetrating Intimate Partner Aggression: Perceived Needs Survey of Therapists and Pilot Effectiveness Study

Love, A. R., Morland, L. A., Menez, U., Taft, C., MacDonald, A., & Mackintosh, M. A. (2015). “Strength at Home” intervention for male veterans perpetrating intimate partner aggression: Perceived needs survey of therapists and pilot effectiveness study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 30(13), 2344-2362. doi:10.177/0886260514552445

SUMMARY: This study examines the experience of a small group of Veterans participating in a pilot study of a program called the Strength at Home intervention, a 12-session group treatment program for military personnel with a history of intimate partner aggression. Participants in this pilot study showed decreased emotional abuse and anger expression after participating in the program.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Veterans who participated in the Strength at Home pilot study showed decreased psychological aggression and increased anger control, both shortly after treatment and at the six-month follow-up.
- The program retention rate was quite high, with 86% of the Veterans who began the treatment completing the 12-session protocol.
- During post-treatment focus groups, Veterans expressed a positive response to the program and reported that it was culturally appropriate.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide workshops for Service members to enhance skills, such as effective communication, that may help prevent intimate partner aggression in those who have experienced combat trauma
- Provide workshops for Service members to enhance skills, such as effective communication, that may help prevent intimate partner aggression in those who have experienced combat trauma
- Offer peer support programs for Service members at risk for perpetrating intimate partner violence

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend periodic screening of Service members and their families for family violence perpetration and victimization
- Promote the development and evaluation of military-specific family violence prevention and treatment programs
- Encourage providers who care for families affected by intimate partner violence to receive training that includes information about the specific context in which this violence may occur for military families

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METHODS

- Male Veterans were recruited from the Veteran's Administration (VA) Pacific Island Health Care System through provider referral or self-referral from posted flyers.
- Veteran participants and their female partners completed assessments of conflict, physical aggression, psychological aggression, and anger at three time points: baseline, shortly after treatment, and six months after treatment.
- Following treatment, Veterans participated in focus groups to collect qualitative data about their experiences.

PARTICIPANTS

- There were six Veterans who participated in the pilot study, ranging in age from 24 to 67 years old, with a mean age of 43.8 years old (SD = 16).
- These Veterans were Latino/Latina (33%), Multiracial (33%), White (17%), and Native American (17%).
- Of those participating, 67% of the Veterans served in the Army, 17% in the Air Force, and 17% in the Marines.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample was very small, with only six participants, so it is difficult to generalize results to larger populations.
- The Veterans self-selected into the program, so participants may differ from non-participants in some important ways that limit the ability to extend findings beyond this specific group.
- There was a wide age range among participants, and with the small sample size, it is difficult to differentiate results within or across age groups.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Survey a broader sample of mental health providers to assess the need for military-specific intimate partner violence (IPV) treatment programs nationwide
- Run larger-scale clinical trials of the Strength at Home intervention to increase knowledge about the program's effectiveness
- Investigate characteristics of the eligible Veterans who were referred to the study but did not complete treatment to better understand possible self-selection bias

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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