

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

Male Soldier Family Violence Offenders: Spouse and Child Offenders Compared to Child Offenders

Martin, S. L., Gibbs, D. A., Johnson, R. E., Rentz, E. D., Clinton-Sherrod, M., Hardison Walters, J. L., & Sullivan, K. (2009). Male soldier family violence offenders: Spouse and child offenders compared to child offenders. *Violence and Victims*, 24 (4), 458-468. doi:10.1891/0886-6708.24.4.458

SUMMARY: Substantiated maltreatment reports of 2,969 married, male Soldiers were used to explore the differences between first-time offenders who engaged in both child and spouse maltreatment (dual offenders) versus those who only engaged in child maltreatment (single offender). Differences between type of abuse, severity (mild or moderate/severe), and demographic variables (e.g., race/ethnicity, paygrade, age, rank, substance use, and subsequent abuse incidences) were found.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Compared to single offenders, dual offenders were more likely to be under the influence of a substance at the time of their offense (9% versus 28%), with the majority of offenders using alcohol (94%).
- For child maltreatment, dual offenders more often perpetrated neglect (49%) and emotional abuse (45%), whereas single offenders more often perpetrated physical (42%) and sexual abuse (11%).
- Physical (81%) and emotional abuse (29%) were the most common forms of spouse maltreatment for dual offenders.
- Dual offenders were more likely to engage in mild forms of child abuse, but more severe forms of spouse abuse compared to single offenders.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide education to military couples to enhance positive communication and the use of healthy coping mechanisms for handling stress and conflict
- Provide support to military families who have experienced abuse and identify appropriate programs and services that help victims of abuse
- Disseminate information to family providers regarding the signs of abuse and how to appropriately report child and spouse abuse within military families

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs that focus on preventing and identifying maltreatment in military families
- Encourage the development of programs that work with family violence offenders to reduce the rate of repeat offenders
- Recommend education for service providers and military leaders regarding the risk factors and signs of child and spouse maltreatment

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METHODS

- Substantiated records from the Army Central Registry for first-time spouse and child maltreatment offenders were utilized for the study.
- Participant records were restricted to Active Duty, male Soldiers, who were married, and had an initial substantiated report occurring between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2004.
- Dual offenders were those who, at the time of the initial substantiated report, had engaged in both child and spouse maltreatment. Single offenders engaged in child maltreatment only.
- A variety of factors were explored as they related to dual and single offenders, such as abuse type, severity, and demographic characteristics.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included 2,969 married, male Soldiers with substantiated maltreatment reports; 26% (n = 760) were dual offenders and 74% (n = 2,209) were single offenders.
- Dual offenders were more likely to identify as Black or Latino/other, were younger (M = 28.6 vs 29.8), and were in lower pay grades (E1-E3) than single offenders.
- Both single and dual offenders were more likely to be enlisted Service members (95%).
- No full sample demographic information was provided.

LIMITATIONS

- Only married, male Soldiers were included in the study, limiting the applicability of results to other types of offenders (e.g., female Soldiers or unmarried couples).
- Participants were only Service members from the Army, limiting the generalizability of results to other branches of the military.
- Data from January 1, 2000 through December 31, 2004 were utilized and may not reflect current rates of spouse and child maltreatment.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine the similarity and difference between single and dual offenders within other military branches
- Examine rates of maltreatment among other family types (e.g. unmarried couples or same sex couples)
- Explore possible interventions to reduce the risk of repeat offenders

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