

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Navy

Risk for Intimate Partner Violence and Child Physical Abuse: Psychosocial Characteristics of Multirisk Male and Female Navy Recruits

Merrill, L. L., Croush, J. J., Thomsen, C. M., & Guimond, J. (2004). Risk for intimate partner violence and child physical abuse: Psychosocial characteristics of multirisk male and female Navy recruits. *Child Maltreatment*, 9(1), 18-29. doi:10.1177/1077559503260852

SUMMARY: Survey data of 1,367 Navy recruits were utilized to explore the demographic and psychosocial variables associated with those who are at risk for engaging in intimate partner violence (IPV) and child physical abuse (CPA). Difference in demographic and psychosocial variables were found between those who were identified as being at risk for IPV only, CPA only, and both types of abuse (multirisk).

KEY FINDINGS:

- About 22% of participants were classified as being at risk for IPV only, 31% for CPA only, and 9% for both IPV and CPA.
- Being female and having alcohol issues were associated with an increased risk of IPV only; elevated symptoms of dysphoria, self-dysfunction, and posttraumatic stress predicted membership in the CPA only group.
- Socioeconomic status, being female, having alcohol issues, and having elevated symptoms of dysphoria, self-dysfunction, and posttraumatic stress predicted membership in the multirisk group.
- Nearly half (47%) of multirisk respondents had clinically significant scores on multiple psychosocial variables compared to the CPA only group (36%) and the IPV only group (16%).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide education to Service members and their spouses about the influence alcohol and drug use has on rates of child maltreatment and IPV
- Offer workshops to Service members and their spouses regarding the importance of utilizing healthy coping skills when dealing with couple and family related stressors
- Disseminate information about the risk factors related to IPV and child maltreatment among military families

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage the development of programs that focus on preventing multiple types of abuse within military families
- Continue to provide support for programs that address drug and alcohol use and abuse among Service members
- Continue to support prevention and intervention programs for child maltreatment and IPV in military families

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METHODS

- Participants were selected from a larger sample of Navy recruits who were administered a battery of self-report assessments during their first week of basic training.
- Data were collected between January and April 1994.
- Measures utilized for this study pertained to IPV and CPA risk, psychosocial symptoms (dysphoria, posttraumatic stress, alcohol issues, and drug use), and demographic variables.

PARTICIPANTS

- The sample consisted of 775 female and 592 male ($n = 1,367$) Navy recruits.
- The majority of the participants identified as White (75%), single (88%), and were between 17-34 years ($M = 20.14$, $SD = 2.36$).
- About 21% of participants reported they had one or more children.

LIMITATIONS

- Only CPA risk was examined so the results may not be applicable to other types of abuse risk (e.g., emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect).
- Only risk was explored in this study, not actual rates of perpetration, therefore results may not be applicable to those who are actual perpetrators of CPA or IPV.
- Only Navy recruits were included in the study, limiting the generalizability of results to other branches of the military.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Continue to explore the risk factors associated with different types of violence and the risk factors associated with perpetrating multiple forms of violence
- Investigate the combined influence of alcohol use and psychosocial symptoms on the rate of family violence
- Explore the effectiveness of prevention programs at addressing perpetrators who engage in multiple forms of violence

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