

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

Spousal Aggression by US Army Female Soldiers Toward Employed and Unemployed Civilian Husbands

Newby, J. H., Ursano, R. J., McCarroll, J. E., Martin, L. T., Norwood, A. E., & Fullerton, C. S. (2003). Spousal aggression by US Army female soldiers toward employed and unemployed civilian husbands. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 73 (3), 288-293. doi:10.1037/0002-9432.73.3.288

SUMMARY: Rates of intimate partner violence were examined in female Active Duty Soldiers with employed and unemployed civilian husbands. Results indicate that Soldiers with unemployed husbands are more likely to both perpetrate and experience severe intimate partner violence.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Almost a quarter of female Active Duty Soldiers reported inflicting moderately severe violence on their partners, and between 5% and 8% reported engaging in severe violence.
- Female Soldiers with unemployed husbands are 60% more likely to commit severe acts of intimate partner violence than women with employed husbands, after controlling for demographic characteristics.
- Female Soldiers with unemployed husbands are also 10% more likely to receive intimate partner violence than those with employed husbands.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide opportunities for male partners of Soldiers to develop connections and receive social support from one another
- Develop educational programs that highlight the risk for intimate partner violence in male partners who are unemployed
- Provide vocational training for unemployed male partners

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage military family advocates to be aware of the employment status of the civilian husbands of female Soldiers
- Recommend routine screening for intimate partner violence in couples with an Active Duty Soldier
- Continue to invest in marriage enrichment programs that aim to bolster couples' relationship satisfaction

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METHODS

- Surveys were administered to female Active Duty Soldiers at 38 Army installations across the United States.
- The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) was used to measure both perpetrated and experience intimate partner violence.
- Responses on the CTS were used to categorize women into three groups based on their reported violence against their husbands: none, moderate, or severe.

PARTICIPANTS

- Women serving on Active Duty in the Army and were married to civilian husbands (N = 1,185) participated in the study.
- On average women were 30 years old, more than half were White, and most were enlisted rank.
- Twenty-nine percent of the participants had husbands who were unemployed.

LIMITATIONS

- The study was unable to control for household income, which has been shown to be associated with a higher prevalence of intimate partner violence.
- The sample consisted only of White and Black participants, so findings might not generalize to other ethnic groups or races.
- The study did not measure stressful military experiences such as relocation and deployment, so it is unclear whether these aspects of military life might affect intimate partner violence among female Active Duty Soldiers.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore whether unemployed civilian husbands of Active Duty Soldiers exhibit other known risk factors for intimate partner violence, such as depression, substance abuse, or behavioral problems
- Replicate this study in other branches of the military in order to understand whether similar risks exist
- Examine how family income, which is often lower in families where one partner is unemployed, is related to intimate partner violence committed by women in military

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