

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Air Force

Unique Risk and Protective Factors for Partner Aggression in a Large Scale Air Force Survey

Smith Slep, A. M., Foran, H. M., Heyman, R. E., & Snarr, J. D. (2010). Unique risk and protective factors for partner aggression in a large scale Air Force survey. *Journal of Community Health, 35*(4), 375-383. doi:10.1007/s10900-010-9264-3

SUMMARY: Active Duty Air Force members participated in a study examining the risk factors of physical aggression against a partner. Relationship satisfaction, alcohol problems, financial stress, and number of years in the military were identified as predictors of men's and women's perpetration of violence against their partners.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Approximately 5% of women and 9% of men reported partner aggression.
- For men, partner aggression was inversely related to relationship satisfaction, alcohol problems, and parental support.
- For women, partner aggression was inversely related to relationship satisfaction and family coping, marital length, and spousal support for deployment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Incorporate information in their family education classes about risk factors for physical aggression, and how couples can manage conflict in a respectful, healthy manner
- Routinely assess Service members and family members who participate in their programming for physical, verbal, and sexual aggression
- Offer classes for Service members and their families about the dangers of alcohol abuse and how to set limits on alcohol consumption

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend periodic screening of Service members and their spouses or partners for family violence
- Target physical aggression indirectly by developing programs to strengthen workplace-related factors such as satisfaction with the military, work group cohesion, and work relations
- Continue to support family violence prevention efforts to reduce intimate partner violence in the military

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METHODS

- Active Duty members at 82 United States Air Force sites worldwide completed a biennial anonymous online survey in 2006.
- The survey assessed individual factors (e.g., depressive symptoms, financial stress), family factors (e.g., relationship satisfaction, physical aggression), organizational factors (e.g., satisfaction with the Air Force), and community variables (e.g., community unity).
- The survey was administered online between April and June 2006, and took 45 minutes to an hour to complete.

PARTICIPANTS

- Fifty-two thousand seven hundred eighty Air Force members participated.
- The majority of participants were Male (81% male) and White (74%); race/ethnicity data were not provided.
- Pay grade for participants included: 41% E5-E6, 19% E1-E4, 17% E7-E9, 12% O1-O3, and 12% O4 or higher.

LIMITATIONS

- No data from partners was collected which could change the findings in respect to physical aggression.
- All data are self-report and may be biased, especially regarding this sensitive topic of physical aggression.
- Only Air Force members were included in the sample; therefore, results may not generalize to other service branches.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Include partner reports of aggression for comparison to this data
- Evaluate reported incidents of physical aggression (such as military security or police reports) to validate these findings
- Assess rates of child abuse in families marked by couple violence

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