Intimate Partner Aggression Perpetrated and Sustained by Male Afghanistan, Iraq, and Vietnam Veterans with and without Posttraumatic Stress Disorder


Researchers examined self-reported intimate partner aggression perpetrated by male veterans. Three groups of veterans were recruited from a VA outpatient posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) program: Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) veterans with PTSD, OEF/OIF veterans without PTSD, and Vietnam veterans with PTSD. OEF/OIF veterans with PTSD were significantly more likely to perpetrate aggression toward female partners, and were also more likely to report sustaining aggression by their female partners than the other two groups. Results suggest that many male veterans may have been in mutually violent relationships.

Key Findings:

- OEF/OIF veterans with PTSD reported perpetrating significantly more frequent psychological aggression toward their partners than OEF/OIF veterans without PTSD.
- OEF/OIF veterans with PTSD were 6 times more likely to report sustaining injury from their female partners than OEF/OIF veterans without PTSD.
- No significant differences on aggression measures emerged between OEF/OIF veterans with PTSD and Vietnam Veterans with PTSD.

Implications for Programs:

- Programs serving veterans with PTSD may want to routinely include assessment and treatment of intimate partner violence.
- Intimate partner violence among veterans with PTSD could receive focused attention for both prevention and treatment efforts.
- Given the nature and pattern of aggression between OEF/OIF veterans and their intimate partners, treatment approaches may need to be developed to fit the specific patterns of aggression in these couples. Clinicians need to assess violence perpetration by both the veteran AND the partner.

Implications for Policies:

- Program support and expansion may be warranted to ensure veterans who seek VA services, particularly in connection to PTSD, receive screenings for aggression.
- It is important to consider ways to raise military families’ awareness about existing programs and resources targeting intimate partner violence as research shows that children who are exposed to parent violence are more at-risk for subsequent dating violence.
- These programs merit high priority in terms of support and funding.

Avenues for Future Research:

- Research that investigates for interpersonal violence among non-VA users would be important.
- Future studies could also investigates the relationship between PTSD symptoms and relationship violence with both the veteran and the spouse due to the increased risk of violence for both people.
- An examination of the effectiveness of intimate partner violence treatment programs for veterans and their partners is needed.
### Methodology:
- This quantitative study used correlations to examine self-reported intimate partner violence among OEF/OIF veterans with and without PTSD and Vietnam veterans with PTSD.
- Scales were used to assess both the veteran’s willingness to answer honestly and the frequency and nature of aggression that was experienced by that veteran.
- Participants were recruited from VA PTSD treatment programs.
- The sample was specific to OEF/OIF and Vietnam veterans with the following branch/component affiliations: 57% Army, 23.3% Marines, 8.1% Navy, 2.3% Air Force, 3.5% National Guard, and 5.8% served in multiple branches.

### Participants:
- Participants (N = 86) included OEF/OIF and Vietnam veterans: 27 OEF/OIF veterans with PTSD; 31 OEF/OIF veterans without PTSD; and 28 Vietnam veterans with PTSD.
- Participants were 100% male. Race/ethnicity was reported as: 40.7% White, 33.7% African American, 24.4% Hispanic, and 1.2% Asian American.

### Limitations:
- Study participants may differ from non-participants in a way that is not measured, but affected the outcome variables. For example, all participants were recruited from a VA medical center outpatient PTSD clinic and may differ in some meaningful way from those who were not accessing VA services or not enrolled in a PTSD program.
- Replication studies are needed that include a larger more inclusive sample so as to be able to investigate more comparisons.

### Assessing Research that Works

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