Women fight back: Resistance violence in relationships with veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder

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The Relationships and PTSD Study: Detection of Intimate Partner Violence (NRI-04-040)

Research Study Team:

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The Goals of the Study

Phase II

• There were several goals for three separate study foci. (for results from phase 1 go to: www.ajnonline.com Nov. 2011)

• Phase II:
  – Describe the study sample in respect to substance use, exposure to IPV as children, PTSD severity, IPV severity, relationship mutuality/partnership, & demographic variables.
  – Discriminate between the IPV YES and NO groups.
  – Determine which variables reliably predict accurate detection by treatment providers of psychological and physical abuse.
Three Contexts of violence

- Violence in exercise of coercive control (battering)
  - Patterned set of behaviors.
  - Coercion and intimidation distinguish it from non-battering.
  - Entrapment essential goal.
- Violent resistance
  - Part of a broader strategy to stop or contain the abuse, including violence directed at the abuser.
- Non-battering use of violence
  - NOT part of an attempt to establish an ongoing position of dominance in a relationship or in response to being battered (common couple, situational).
IPV Defined

• For purposes of this study IPV was defined as: The use of physical and/or sexual violence, or credible threat at any time during the current or past relationship; AND a current (within the past year) pattern of psychologically abusive and coercive behavior.
  • IPV was NOT a stand alone physical assault that occurred as part of a PTSD symptom.
  • IPV was NOT general psychological abusive behavior UNLESS there was also a physical and/or sexual assault (or credible threat).
The Sample

- Random selection of male Veterans actively in treatment in PTSD programs at VA Puget Sound Health Care System, and the Tacoma Vet Center.
  - Selected from ≈ 5600 male veterans in PTSD treatment.
  - Veteran either married or in a committed intimate relationship for at least one year.
  - Veteran’s partner also willing to participate in the study.
The Sample

• Couples were interviewed separately.
• Focus on Veteran’s level of relationship mutuality, war zone deployments, substance use, early life, PTSD, and IPV perpetration.
• Both Veteran and Partner:
  • Completed a semi-structured Relationship Behavior Interview (RBI).
  • Rated the Veteran’s IPV severity (ABI).
  • Rated their own and their Partner’s level of mutuality (MPDQ).
The Sample

- Sample size: 441 couples
  - Yes IPV 190 (44%)  No IPV 251 (56%)
    - Within IPV NO group: 3 women primary aggressors;
    - Within IPV YES group: 2 mutual violence couples

- Male Veteran’s age range (mean age 56)
  - 22 y.o. - 88 y.o.

- Partner’s age range (mean age 52)
  - 20 y.o. – 85 y.o.

- Served in war zone:
  - 423 (96%) Yes  17 (4%) No
IPV Perpetration Across the Lifespan

Veteran’s and Partner’s Reports
n = 441 couples (882 total sample)
Veteran currently violent in intimate relationship?

Veteran Report

Yes(117) No(323)

Partner Report

Yes(119) No(321)
Veteran previously violent in this relationship?

**Veteran Report**

- Yes: 181
- No: 259

**Partner Report**

- Yes: 205
- No: 235
Veteran physically violent in past relationship?

**Veteran Report**

- Yes (191)
- No (239)

**Partner Report**

- Yes (85)
- No (218)
- DK (132)
Partner’s Use of Physical Force (Discussion)

Women’s use of physical force is significantly related to the Veteran’s current* and past* physical violence (or credible threat) in this relationship.

* $[r=0.465, p = .000]$
* $[r=0.500, p = .000]$
Partner’s use of physical force

Veteran report

No (284)  
Yes (157)

Partner report

No (290)  
Yes (151)
IPV YES Group

- Both the Veteran and Partner agreed that there was abuse (ABI):
  - \([n = 190, \rho = .173, p = .017]\)
- However, the Partner rated the psychological and physical abuse as worse than the Veteran’s report (matched pairs):
  - Psychological: \([n = 190, t = -4.143, p = .000]\)
  - Physical: \([n = 190, t = -4.324, p = .000]\)
IPV No Group

- Both the Veteran and Partner agreed that there was abuse based on the Veteran’s self-rating of his abuse (ABI) and the Partner’s rating of his abuse (ABI):
  - \([n = 251, \rho = .333, p = .000]\)
- However, they did not differ on their report of current physical violence in a matched pair analysis, but did differ in their reports of psychological abuse. Partner’s rated psychological abuse as higher:
  - \([n = 251, t = -2.278, p = .024]\)
PTSD Severity and IPV Perpetration

- Veteran’s and Partner’s Reports
- n = 441 couples (882 total sample)
PTSD Severity and IPV Perpetration (Whole Sample)

• There is a significant relationship between both the Veteran’s self rating of his PTSD (CAPS) and abuse (ABI)
  ○ [n = 441 Veterans, rho = .168, p = .000]
• And, his self rating of PTSD severity (CAPS) and his Partner’s rating of his abuse (ABI):
  ○ [n = 441 couples, rho = .102, p = .031]
Deployments & IPV Severity

![Histogram showing IPV severity timeline with frequency on the y-axis and IPV severity timeline on the x-axis. The mean is 128.79, the standard deviation is 136.598, and the sample size is 177.]
Take Home Points

• Research on IPV should include data from both parties and CONTEXT of the violence should be considered.

• Veterans report that IPV severity is worse within the first few years after a war zone deployment. However, according to both Veterans and Partners, the IPV behaviors may persist across the Veteran’s lifespan.

• Standard PTSD treatment (which usually includes both anger management and couple’s work) does not correlate with a reduction in either physical or psychological violence.
Thank you!

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