Factors Predicting High Risk Sex Practices and Incidence of STIs among Female Veterans in Florida

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**Background**

- Risky sexual behaviors lead to increased rates of STIs with life-threatening health consequences (CDC, 2013, 2016).
- High-risk sexual encounters among military personnel have resulted in STI rates of up to seven times higher in the military than in the general population (Bolan, 2013; Goya et al., 2012).
- Among military personnel, there is limited data on gender-specific STI risk factors (Korzeniewski, 2012; LeHavot, et al., 2014; Stahlman, et al., 2014).

The purpose of this study is to explore factors that predict high risk sex practices and describe the incidence of STIs among female Veterans in Florida.

**Theoretical Framework**

Adapted with permission from Niederle, B. & Pinto, J.

**Purpose**

To explore factors that predict high risk sex practices and describe the incidence of STIs among female Veterans in Florida.

**Research Design:** Descriptive, correlational, cross-sectional, non-experimental

**Setting:** The State of Florida, predominantly southern Florida, Metro Miami area.

**Data Collection:** The Florida International University (FIU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study. IRB Protocol #IRB-18-0346, 9/27/2018. Data collection from the general community began in Nov. 2018 and continues; IRB approval from the VA is pending; 49 participants, to date.

**Methods**

- **Procedures:**
  - Electronic surveys via Qualtrics or on paper.
  - PI worked with Qualtrics to safeguard privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity, e.g., no way to trace responses.
  - Unique code to track number of participants and remunerate participants via PayPal.

- **Major Variables:**
  - Demographics (age, SES, education, nationality, HIV status, culture, religious engagement), Safer Sex Practices, Social Dominance Orientation, STD Knowledge, Abuse in relationships

- **Data Analysis:**
  - SPSS 22 was used to analyze the data collected between Nov. 2018 and April 23, 2019
  - Descriptive statistics and Pearson’s correlations were utilized to determine relationships among variables

- **PRELIMINARY RESULTS**

**Instruments**

**Correlations - Sexual Risk Behaviors**

- Negative relationship between income per year and condom use (r = -.50; p<.05) and exposure to body fluids (r = .411; p<.05)
- Statistically significant relationship Sexual Risk Behaviors between employment status and condom use (r = .42; p<.05)
- Receiving care from the VA was negatively correlated with unprotected anal sex (r = -.35; p<.05) and sexual risk behaviors
- Negative relationship between ever being tested for HIV and condom use (r = .30; p<.05)

**Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)**

- Being treated for STD/STI at this time was negatively correlated to total SSOQ scores (r = -.40; p<.05)
- Having dependent children was negatively correlated with SDO dominance factor (r = -.33; p<.05)
- Level of religious commitment was correlated to the dominance trait in SDO (r = .31; p<.05)

**Implications**

- Strength of the relationships among variables is small yet significant, indicating the need for further analysis with a larger sample.
- Interesting finding was that receiving care from the VA was negatively correlated with sexual risk behaviors, requiring more exploration.
- Social dominance does not appear to be an influential factor in sexual behaviors.
- Religion featured significantly in social dominance but not in relation to age at first sex.

**Conclusions**

Though preliminary, these results provide a snapshot into some of the factors that influence sexual behaviors in this small sample. Analysis of the larger sample data is necessary. It is also necessary to explore if STD knowledge influences these results.

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