



Posttraumatic Growth among Gulf War I Veterans: The Predictive Role of Deployment-related Experiences and Background Characteristics

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61 Veterans who were on the registry of Gulf War I Veterans and who had obtained any type of care at the VA Boston Healthcare System completed a survey. Data was used to assess deployment-related and demographic predictors of posttraumatic growth. Posttraumatic growth (including the two subscales of “relating to others” and “personal strength”) was most strongly predicted by postdeployment social support.

Key Findings:

- Overall, demographic, deployment, and postdeployment variables were most predictive of various aspects of posttraumatic growth. Predeployment variables had little influence in the final model.
- The strongest predictor of the “appreciation of life” posttraumatic growth subscale was perceived threat.
- The posttraumatic growth subscales of “relating to others” and “personal strength” were most strongly predicted by postdeployment social support.
- The posttraumatic growth subscale of “new possibilities” was best predicted by minority status (ethnic minorities reported more growth).
- Exposure to warfare was not associated with any index of growth.

Implications for Programs:

- Programs could develop educational modules for Service members, Veterans and families about potential positive outcomes or posttraumatic growth that could emerge after deployment.
- Programs could develop family-based activities to bolster post-deployment social support for both families and Service members.

Implications for Policies:

- Policies could provide continued funding for programs which enhance postdeployment social support.
- Policies could recommend the inclusion of screening for posttraumatic growth as part of routine assessments for Service members after deployment.

Avenues for Future Research:

- Future studies could explore the relationship between PTSD and posttraumatic growth, particularly in regards to high and low level stressors.
- Additional research could use larger and more representative samples and examine posttraumatic growth among Veterans of other conflicts.

Background Information

Methodology:

- This study used a subsample from another study. Veterans were identified as those who were on a registry of Gulf War I Veterans who had obtained any type of care at the VA Boston Healthcare System.
- Demographic and military questions were asked, as well as assessments of predeployment, deployment and postdeployment stressors, perceived threat, deployment and postdeployment social support, and posttraumatic growth.
- Correlations assessed relationships between variables, and regression analyses tested the associations between deployment factors, demographics, and posttraumatic growth.




Participants:

- 61 Gulf War I Veterans participated (57% male).
- 85% Caucasian, 8% African American, 5% Latino, 53% married, 41% had some college education, 21% high school.
- 47% were deployed from Active Duty units.
- No information on military branch was presented.

Limitations:

- The sample was small and primarily Caucasian; these results may not generalize to other samples of Veterans.
- This study was cross-sectional and claims of causation are beyond its scope.
- Personality and other variables that may impact the results were not measured; the variables assessed for only accounted for approximately 25% of the variance.
- There was incomplete demographic and statistical reporting.

Assessing Research that Works

Research Design and Sample					Quality Rating:	
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)		
The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Research Methods					Quality Rating:	
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)		
The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Limitations					Quality Rating:	
	Excellent Minor Limitations (★★★★)	Appropriate Few Limitations (★★★)	Limited Several Limitations (★★)	Questionable Many/Severe Limitations (★)		
The limitations of this study are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Implications					Quality Rating:	N/A
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)		
The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications						
Overall Quality Rating						