



Supporting  
Military Families  
Through Research  
and Outreach

# PUTTING RESEARCH TO WORK FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

## Spiritual Experiences of War Veterans Who Suffer From Combat-Related Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: A Qualitative Study

Nir, M.S., Ebadi, A., Khoshknab, M.F. & Travallae, A. (2013). Spiritual experiences of war Veterans who suffer from combat-related Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: A qualitative study. *Journal of Religious Health*, 52, 719-729. doi:10.1007/s10943-012-2.



*22 Muslim Iranian soldiers with PTSD and depression were interviewed to examine their religious experiences. Interview themes regarding spiritual experiences were categorized in two main groups: 1) religious attitudes and 2) sense of dedication to their country.*

### Key Findings:

- Participants did not complain about the challenges they encountered on the battlefield or during captivity; rather, many were proud of themselves and their families.
- Participants who trusted in God felt that these difficulties were a way of being tested.
- Several participants described their adjustment problems as “divine destiny.”
- Participants considered national sensibility (defined as sacrifice and dedication to Iran) as a primary motivation for joining the service.
- Religion played an important role in coping with mental health symptoms.

### Implications for Programs:

- Programs could encourage Service members or families struggling with mental health concerns to consider connecting with their faith or religious leaders.
- Programs could partner with local spiritual leaders to help get families connected to the appropriate communities of faith.
- Programs could create a flyer with local religious centers for distribution.

### Implications for Policies:

- Policies could continue to fund chaplaincy programs in the military.
- Policies could afford Service members flexibility in their schedules, permitting them to observe important rituals of their faith while deployed.
- Policies could recommend professional development for military leadership on how to create a welcoming environment for people of all religions.

### Avenues for Future Research:

- Future research could conduct a similar study with U.S. Service members.
- Additional studies could study the impact of religious observance on mental health functioning over time.
- Future research could study the openness of military leadership to spiritual practice and its impact on Service members' mental health.

Prepared by the Military REACH Team.

For additional information, please visit [reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu](http://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu)

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## Background Information

### Methodology:

- Iranian Muslim war victims with PTSD and depression who had been admitted to a psychiatry ward were invited.
- Participants completed a semi-structured interview.
- Content analysis was conducted by generating initial codes of the data which were then classified with major and minor themes.

### Participants:

- 22 male Iranians participated.
- Average age = 45.00 years (SD = 5.10 years).
- Average time spent in war zone = 24.00 months (SD=3.9 months).
- No additional demographic information was presented.

### Limitations:

- The qualitative coding procedure was not well described.
- The demographic data was incomplete.
- The sample size was small and drawn from veterans in a psychiatric ward; the extent to which these findings apply to other veterans is unknown.

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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:
	Excellent (★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★★)	Questionable (★★★)	★★★☆☆
The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications					
Overall Quality Rating					★★★☆☆