

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Consequences of PTSD for the Work and Family Quality of Life of Female and Male U.S. Afghanistan and Iraq War Veterans

Vogt, D., Smith, B. N., Fox, A. B., Amoroso, T., Taverna, E., & Schnurr, P. P. (2017). Consequences of PTSD for the work and family quality of life of female and male U.S. Afghanistan and Iraq War Veterans. *Social Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 52(3), 341-352. doi:10.1007/s00127-016-1321-5

SUMMARY: The work and family quality of life of post-9/11 Veterans as well as the gender-specific impact of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) on Veterans' work and family outcomes was analyzed. There were 524 post-9/11 Veterans recruited through the Department of Defense who participated in both time points of the longitudinal study. Several gender differences were found among Veterans with PTSD compared to those without PTSD.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The employment and relationship status of Veterans with PTSD at Time 2 did not differ significantly compared to Veterans without PTSD.
- Male and female Veterans with PTSD were more likely to report less satisfaction with intimate relationships and parenting experiences.
- Probable PTSD in female Veterans was associated with unemployment but not in male Veterans with probable PTSD.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Engage Veterans and their partners in support groups that will help them adjust to life after deployment and become more aware of PTSD symptoms
- Build awareness among professionals working with returning Service members and their families on the importance of fostering healthy relationships and effective communication
- Develop workshops for professionals working with Service members and their partners around topics related to PTSD and intimate relationships

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend collaboration between DoD programs and local community organizations to support programs that build on positive coping strategies and promote family resilience
- Support campaigns that bring attention to the needs of Service members and their post-deployment well-being
- Continue efforts with each military branch to provide programs for Service member's post-deployment mental health and well-being needs

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METHODS

- A random stratified sample of Veterans who had separated from service and returned from deployment during 2008–2010 were invited to complete the Time 1 survey and agree to be contacted 3 ½ years later for Time 2.
- Participants were mailed the survey, a cover letter detailing the study purpose, an opt-out form, and a \$25.00 Visa gift card incentive.
- In Time 1 the PTSD Checklist, Beck Depression Inventory-Primary Care, and the Alcohol Use Identification Test-Consumption measures were used and in Time 2 work and family quality of life were measured.
- Analyses were conducted to assess the relationships between gender, PTSD, and work and family outcomes.

PARTICIPANTS

- There were 817 participants who completed the Time 1 survey and of these, 524 participants (282 females, 240 males) completed the Time 2 survey.
- Male participants identified as 76% White, 10% Multiracial, 8% Black, 5% Latino, and 1% Other, while female participants identified as 64% White, 15% Multiracial, 14% Black, 2% Latino, and 5% Other.
- Male participants comprised 12% Marines, 11% Air Force, 66% Army, and 11% Navy, and female participants comprised 2% Marines, 18% Air Force, 65% Army, and 15 % Navy.
- The majority of male and female participants had some college, 4-year college, or graduate degree.

LIMITATIONS

- Participants with occupational impairments may not fully appreciate their own limitations and may underreport functional impairments, which could lead to the underestimation of relationships with PTSD.
- Incentives could have biased those who chose to complete the survey vs. those who did not.
- Participants were Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq War; therefore, results may not be applicable to other Veteran groups.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Investigate what kinds of programs best mitigate the negative impacts of PTSD on Service members' work and family functioning
- Explore among post-combat Service members the association between PTSD and relationship quality
- Utilize qualitative methods to gain an in-depth understanding of the associations between PTSD, female Veterans, and work quality of life

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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