

# Role of PTSD and sexual identity of women veterans



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## **Abstract**

The exposure of women to stressors at the time of military deployment leads to higher risks of Veterans for the poor quality of life after-military. Stress-related issues may result in the decreased life of an individual within the family and work domain. However, very few studies have focused on the association of the matter. In this paper, focus was put on exploration of the mental health of veteran women compared to their male counterparts. The paper also examined trauma cases within the male and female veterans in the US. Also, women's proposition in the military was examined. Women constituted over 5% out of the entire veteran population. The paper also illustrates the population of women veterans in the U. S. In this case, it was observed that the population of women veterans will increase to 1.9 million by the end of 2020. Further, the paper illustrated the history of female veterans in U. S. This involved a clear explanation of women involved in military forces. The methods to be used in the study were also looked at whereby; sampling will be used to obtain the respondents. The timeline of the research was also considered in the study. In this case, the study was estimated to cover only one month. In summary, the limitations of the study were always addressed in the paper.

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### **Chapter one: Introduction**

As very many issues about female services concerning their mental health are increasing, the male veterans also face such issues, but the current generation of female veterans may face different and new mental health threats (Burns et al, 2014). In most cases, male in military service have always faced the problem of Posttraumatic stress disorder as a result of the war zone, women are also likely to face such issues due to their expansion to combat operations. This is both a challenge and an opportunity to involve in such conditions in that one can get used to the military services. Most clinicians explained that the responsive capacity of female patients to psychotherapy is not as that of male patients (Suris& Linda, 2008) . It is also understood that the treatment of PTSD is affected by sexual trauma. The female populations who have served in military forces have a unique military experience and pre-military histories that are made up of mental health care

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needs and post-military physical services. Therefore, a successful treatment of female veterans creates a clear understanding of the need to reduce sexual trauma (Jacobson, et al, 2015).

## **Background**

The percentage of women in the United States army force has greatly increased from four percent in 1983 as compared to twelve percent in 2000. By 2010, the percent of women veterans in the United States was five percent of the entire veteran population (Burns et al, 2014). In the next ten years, the percentage of women veterans is expected to increase compared to the current status. The higher increase in the percentage of active women in army started way back in the 1990s when a policy was implemented that allowed equal and full opportunity for women to also serve in the United States military (Burns et al, 2014). Despite the Veterans Administration provision of mental health and health care to all the army veterans, at least eighty three percent of United States female veterans decided to get health care services from different civilian health centers because they assume Veterans Administration is only for male veterans (Fetzer&Bjorklund, 2009). However, civilian health care centers always find it difficult to notify the special needs of women veterans leading to trauma while in service. Therefore, it is a matter of concern for both the Veterans Administration and civilian health care personals to understand various problems affecting the vulnerable population (Burns et al, 2014).

## **Problems statement**

Higher levels of sexual trauma are mostly found within the general public and the presence of sexual and duty-related stress in most veteran female  
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also indicate a higher potential for PTSD. In the military forces, women have all along been considered as the minority and also in all other occupations. As a result of women being the minority in most occupations, there is always a bigger risk of gender that women are like to face compared to the male that is to say “ military sexual trauma”. The research about female veterans increased by 1990, where “ military sexual trauma” and posttraumatic stress was highly identified. In this case, Posttraumatic stress disorder is a chronic disorder that is complicated with the various traumatic situations such as stress. Further, traumatic situations are always characterized by different symptoms such as intrusive, sleep disturbances, recurrent, social functioning and impaired occupation. In this case, military stressors are made up of living difficulties and threats in the working atmosphere ( Pencak, 2009).

### **Specific research question**

“ To what extent do posttraumatic stress disorder and sexual identity affect women’s veterans?”

### **Chapter two: Literature review**

As a result of the continuous growth of women veterans, there are various obstacles in identifying the veterans. Therefore, issues affecting veterans will be looked at. This literature review is aimed at presenting the history of female veterans who were involved in military forces. In addition, the literature will illustrate the population of veterans and the current initiative for veteran women. In brief, the literature review will also illustrate various problems faced by the female veteran such as PTSD (Haskell et al, 2010).

The history of female veterans in the U. S

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The documented information of women who served in the military services started well back in the 18th century during the American Revolution. In America, the “ Women in Military Service for America (WIMSA) Memorial” is the main national memorial that honors women veterans through the military history of US (Haskell et al, 2010). In addition, the Veterans bravery and patriotism is part of the United States collective effort which recognizes all the veterans by filming, exhibiting and registering the memory of women veterans. To note, over three million women in the United States have ever served in the military for over two hundred fifty years ago. Over 258, 000 women veterans are recorded in the memorial register. Also, U. S women veterans are known as “ invisible Veterans” because their military service was never recognized until the early 1970s (Haskell et al, 2010).

Politicians, academia, the general public, and media never recognized the services of the women in the military before the 1970s. Because of their patriotism, women volunteered to serve in US military by taking risk of their lives and also working according to the rules of military forces (Suris and Lind, 2008).

The women in the army did all that without any protection or benefit. Despite women service in the U. S army for a long period of time, their services have never been considered by the Veteran Affairs department when it comes to providing various veteran benefits. Even if women veterans were granted their status, they still face a problem of improper health care services, exclusion and limited access to various veteran services (Foster & Vince, 2009).

## The population of women veterans

The percentage of women serving in U. S military forces greatly affects the percentage of the nation's women veterans. The number of veterans depends on the size of people moving out of the military forces at that time (Zinzow et al, 2007). Over the last previous decade, the female veterans have increased compared to male due to the high number of women joining the military forces. In addition, a more conducive rate of military women survival compared to men gives the chance for women to join the army. To note, women veterans are relatively younger as compared to male. Considering the census of 1990 that was carried out in the U. S, there were around twelve million women veterans. By 2000, the number of women veterans had already increased to sixteen million. Therefore, the trend indicates that the number of women veterans is continuously increasing and by 2020 it may be around nineteen million (Zinzow et al, 2007).

## Problems faced by female veterans

As a result of the growing number of women veterans in the U. S, there has been an increase in the number of issues faced by such a population. To note, most of the problems affecting female veterans are as a result of the negligence of the Veteran Administration to address such issues (Zinzow et al, 2007). Therefore, the problems faced by Veteran women in the U. S include the following; first, Military sexual trauma; this is a sexual harassment or sexual assault that is experienced in the time of military services. Most of the studies have indicated that “ military sexual Trauma” is a major issue faced by both female soldiers in service and veterans. To note,

sexual harassment and assault create a stressful environment for soldiers. In the military, women are always considered as the minority over the male population whom they are responsible for reporting military sexual trauma too. Therefore, female veterans and soldiers have all along faced MST problem (Zinzow et al, 2007).

Second, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); this is not a new problem in the U. S military as it has affected most women. Among 94 U. S female veterans, 25% of them have ever experienced PTSD. To note, most female veterans are at a higher risk of developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder depending on the people they work with not the work they do. Therefore, veteran women are at higher risks of PTSD compared to their exposure to combat or war (Haskell et al, 2010).

Third, High risks of committing suicide; in this case, suicide is always common among women veterans. This is always due to greater issues of poor health and risky behaviors. The percentage of women who committed suicide is estimated at 35% between 2006 and 2013. In addition, most women veterans find difficulties in changing to the civilian life hence forcing them to commit suicide (Haskell et al, 2010).

Last, homelessness; most of the U. S female veterans face a problem of homelessness. This has for long been a priority despite the VA considering the efforts of women so as to support them. In addition, women veterans are always excluded from various studies aimed at addressing the issue of homelessness (American Civil Liberties Union, 2013). This is because of the differences between female and male veterans. The rate of U. S women



veterans who face the problem of homelessness is four times as compared to the civilians. The issue of homelessness for women veterans needs an immediate attention because the population of female veterans is increased day by day. The high rate of homelessness among U. S women veterans is considered to be as a result of, limited information concerning the availability of different services (American Civil Liberties Union, 2013).

### Current women veteran initiatives

The VA has continued to make sure that women veterans are a priority in the U. S army by increasing their accessibility and quality of services by implementing various education campaigns that majorly target veteran women. With the help of various surveys, the VA has focused on addressing the needs of women Veterans (Pencak, 2009). To note, the population of women has continuously increased thereby creating more attention for veteran women who need assistance. In addition, VA has implemented various initiatives in different areas so as to make sure that women veterans achieve high-quality care and services. Further, all the VA medical facilities have different programs for female veterans with an aim of assisting, and advising women veterans so as to attain good health care services. Further, VA announced its plan of preventing and ending homelessness among women veterans. The aim of this implementation was to improve the wellbeing of women veterans (Pencak, 2009).

Education and outreach; in this case, VA is making sure that it improves the outreach of all female veterans by publishing them in different VA brochures, posters, marketing materials, and messages. In addition, the VA organization

created a platform for all the women veterans with an intention of improving their outreach (Brown, 2013). In addition, women veterans have been involved in various educational services so as to teach them about their services and benefits for which they are eligible. In addition, monthly campaigns have been done so as to create the awareness of women veterans about their healthcare rights. The major aim of education and outreach is to reduce the barriers that are between VA and women veterans. To note, most of the U. S veterans do not consider themselves as veterans hence affecting their ability to demand their VA resources and benefits (Bell et al, 2014).

### **Chapter three: Methodology**

For this study, veteran women who have served in the military for a number of decades and involved in various wars will be sampled for the study. The case study will help in obtaining more knowledge about the topic under investigation by making it more imaginable (Grubaugh et al, 2009). In addition, the case study will involve real-life examples so as to obtain a clear understanding of the women veterans to apply the necessary skills and knowledge about the problems. In order to investigate a given problem, the use of case studies is mostly recommended so as to obtain the answer to the research question. Therefore, the detailed information about the research question will be illustrated clearly in the chapter.

#### Data collection methods

Research data will be gathered by using questionnaire and interviews data collection methods. In this case, questionnaires will be provided to different

research participants containing various questions about the topic under investigation. Also, various U. S women veterans will also be interviewed so as to obtain the necessary research information. However, different literature may also be reviewed so as to obtain accurate information about the research question.

### Participants

The research will involve around 20 female U. S veteran participants who will be required to provide information about Posttraumatic stress disorder and sexual identity among women veterans. The participants will be randomly sampled from the VA register. In this case, the sampled participants will be given questionnaires containing various information about Posttraumatic stress disorder among female veterans. In addition, the participants will also be interviewed about their response/experience with military sexual trauma.

### Data analysis

The research data will be analyzed using multiple regression analysis and other computer software programs like SPSS, Excel, and strata to determine the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variables.

### **Social Impact of Study:**

Considering the past decade, various race stereotypes and genders have been identified but the veterans issues have never been noticed up to now. Most people image that men wearing Marine army T-shirts or observe male corps marching in parades with the veteran flag of America. In most cases, men who fought in the army or served in the army are always considered

compared to female as little knowledge is known about them (Kaplan et al, 2009). Therefore, it is observed that the percentage of women in the military is smaller compared to that of men. This leads to less consideration of women in the military as compared to men. Therefore, women in the army are the minority and men are the majority. However, this myth has changed as women are also included in military brochures and commercials. Even though women in military forces are included in various services, their representation is still limited (Carlson et al, 2013).

## **Timeline**

The research will only take one month so as to obtain all the required information. In this case, the first week will involve looking for various organizations with the required information. In addition, the second week will involve finding the best literature about the topic (Candice et al, 2009). This will also involve the identification of the problem, carrying out the feasibility study and specific requirements. The remaining two weeks will involve compiling all the required or obtained information about the topic under study (Kintzle et al, 2015).

## **Limitation**

The issue of PTSD among female veterans is not an old phenomenon. It is important to note that very little is known concerning unique issues and needs of the female veterans plus the overall needs of other women in military service. In addition, difficulties may be met in trying to get the right respondents (Kaiser et al, 2012). In this case, most respondents may fear to provide the required information as they may not be willing to be

interviewed and recorded. Also, some respondents may find it difficult to  
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provide their life experience and family situation. Further, most of the respondents may find it hard to talk about their experience in the war and trauma (Guerra et al, 2010).

Also, it may be difficult to get the veteran with the required information as people have various information about trauma (Gallegos et al, 2015). It may also be complicated to develop the best questionnaires to be used so as to get the required information from respondents. As a result of the limited resources, less information will be obtained (Jakupcak et al, 2011). In addition, most approaches may not be used as they require much time which may not be available. In addition, some literature review may not be obtained because they contain many details which are less relevant to the research question. Also, the advancement of specific research fields may not be attained because they require huge information in order to obtain quality information (Burns et al, 2014).

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