

25th World Summit on

PSYCHOLOGY, PSYCHIATRY & PSYCHOTHERAPY

October 19-20, 2017 | San Francisco, USA

Veteran reintegration stressors: Gender differences and evolution

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Female veterans are an understudied population that require similar attention that has been paid to male veterans, since it is believed that the findings regarding males cannot be generalized to females. Previous research, using mixed sex samples, have found that after reintegration, both male and female veterans are still at a high risk for mental health disorders (depression, anxiety, PTSD), suicidal ideation, high risk behaviors (binge drinking and illegal drug use), relational difficulties (divorce, detachment), and interaction with the criminal justice system. Given the gap in the research, and questions posed regarding the generalizability of current research findings for male veterans to female veterans, the current study was designed to better understand the reintegration stressors female veterans faced and their outcomes. Specifically, this study examined relationship difficulties, arrests, binge drinking, illegal drug use, mental health, suicidal ideation and sleeping problems. To assess this question, the current study uses latent class analysis to examine whether reintegration problems develop along a single or multiple profiles for female veterans. Following this, using archival data from the Veterans Affairs, similar analysis were run to determine if similar findings were prevalent across samples. Preliminary results show that there is a significant difference between male and female veterans on several stressors. In our study, female veterans were significantly more likely than male veterans to experience problems with staying asleep, be diagnosed with depression, be diagnosed with a panic disorder or anxiety, have difficulties with work, have suicidal ideations, and become violent towards their partner. Male veterans were significantly more likely than female veterans to have been arrested, endorse the use of drugs and binge drink.

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