DSPACE

https://dspace.org/

Posttraumatic stress disorder in antiapartheid war veterans in South Africa

Mokgatle, Boitumelo

2024
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/37823

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Abstract

Background

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in military veterans is well studied in several countries. In South Africa there is a specific group of military veterans who were involved in the fight against South Africa's apartheid regime. They were not only exposed to military combat trauma but had the additional challenge of fighting against the government and law enforcement at the time. Although apartheid ended thirty years ago, the enduring and intergenerational sequelae of trauma are well-described, and therefore exploring PTSD in this group is important and necessary.[14, 5]

Aim

To explore PTSD in veterans who participated in the fight against apartheid, and to assess their current functional level.

Setting

Gauteng, South Africa.

Methods

Military veterans were sourced from the Johannesburg area in the province of Gauteng. A simple random sampling technique was used. Military veterans who were part of apartheid-related conflicts between 1960 and 1991 were included. Each participant was provided with a 24-item questionnaire to complete. A total of 89 military veterans was included in the study.

Results

The mean PTSD score was 49.8 and the self-reported rate of PTSD was 91%. Although 57.6% of the sample reported military combat as their index trauma, 6.7% reported it as physical assault. Furthermore 11.3 % reported multiple traumatic indicators and had the highest mean, however this was found to be statistically insignificant ($p<0.05$). There was an impact on

interpersonal and social functioning, and the total rate of unemployment in the sample was over 80%.

Conclusion

There is a high rate of self-reported PTSD in military veterans who fought against apartheid. Furthermore, there is associated functional impact in relationships and occupational functioning.

Keywords: Military, combat, veteran, PTSD, trauma

Acknowledgements

The authors thank the department of Psychology at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital for their support. This manuscript is the research work of Dr B Mokgatle for Master of Medicine in psychiatry, under the supervision of Dr L Paruk.