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Contrasting Gender and Combat Versus Military Sexual Traumas: Psychiatric Symptom Severity and Morbidities in Treatment-Seeking Veterans.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

Military sexual trauma (MST) and military combat trauma (MCT) are significant risk factors for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). However, no studies have directly contrasted the clinical profiles of Veterans between military-related traumas. Moreover, a notable gender difference in the likelihood of trauma exposure limits our ability to disentangle gender and trauma type.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

To address these gaps, we aimed at (1) contrasting psychiatric complaints in Veterans with MST versus MCT exposure and (2) investigating gender differences in Veterans with MST histories. Treatment-seeking Veterans (N = 563) completed semi-structured diagnostic interviews and self-report assessments of PTSD, depressive, and dissociative symptoms.

RESULTS:

Psychiatric complaints and morbidity were notable after all military-associated traumas, although those seeking care for MST-related events demonstrated more severe PTSD, depressive, and dissociative symptoms and were more likely to meet criteria for non-PTSD anxiety and psychotic disorders. In contrast, few gender-related differences were noted between male and female Veterans with histories of MST.

CONCLUSIONS:

The experience of MST may reduce typically observed gender-related buffering effects for certain conditions.