

# The Comparison of Social Support Against the Life Quality of the Spinal Cord Injury Under Stress

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The stress of war has caused severe problems for the individual and family. Spouses of veterans are gradually involved in family erosion. Lack of social protection and social dysfunction decreased life satisfaction and reduce intimacy between partners.

**Purpose:** This study has been done in the purpose of comparing social support against the veteran's life who are under stress.

**Method:** This cross-sectional study was done on 79 posttraumatic stress disorder veteran wives and it was also done on 79 ordinary wives through convenience sampling. The instrument to collect the required information was the quality of life questionnaire which contained 36 SF questions and Medical Outcomes Study Social Support Survey (MOS-SS).and the needed information was collected by self-reported method.

**Results:** Veteran wives social support with the mean and the standard deviation was  $19.3 \pm 5.1$  while it was  $31.1 \pm 3.7$  versus the ordinary wives and this difference was significant (Pless than 0.01).It showed the veteran wives quality of life with the mean and standard deviation of  $46.3 \pm 0.088$  while it showed  $66.9 \pm 8.5$  the mean and standard deviation for the ordinary wives and it showed the significant difference (Pless than 0.01).

**Conclusions:** the obtained result showed that the quality of life related to the health and social support in veteran wives is lower in compare with the ordinary wives with the same situation, therefore educational, treatment and supporting and promoting plans for this group is necessary.

**Key word:** social support; life quality; veterans; PTSD

## Introduction

Trauma has many devastating effects on the patient<sup>(1, 2)</sup>. These effects include spinal cord injury. Social support, PTSD veteran wives, life quality. Posttraumatic stress disorder is a serious reaction and perpetual response which appears because of being exposed to serious stresses<sup>(3)</sup>. Posttraumatic stress disorder was

identified and recognized during the civil war in the United States<sup>(4)</sup>. The prevalence of this disorder in the public population is 4-8 percent<sup>(5)</sup>. But this percentage is between 9 to 25 percent among the war injured ones during the first two years<sup>(6)</sup> The prevalence of that among the Vietnamese war soldiers has been reported as much as 30.1% to 14.7%<sup>(7)</sup>. It has also been reported 17.1% to 15.6% for the solders coming back from Iraq war<sup>(8, 9)</sup> According to the present documents more of the Iranian veterans have posttraumatic stress disorder and this disorder which is always with the veterans has a very bad effect on they themselves, their lives and their family lives<sup>(10, 11)</sup> Living with a person who suffers PTSD can transfer some of the symptoms to their wives<sup>(12)</sup>.

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so one of the war victims is the veteran wives who are exposed to the PTSD so the veteran wives encounter lots of problems in their lives and these problems become more and more by passing the time and cause them to have mental<sup>(13, 14)</sup> and this continual disorder can bring trauma to the wives and can cause anxiety, depression, isolation in the veteran wives<sup>(15, 16)</sup>. The veteran wives will have family erosion little by little and because of the lack of social support they lose their satisfaction with the family members especially with their husbands<sup>(17)</sup>. One of the anxiety of the family suffering from PTSD is mental relationship, matrimony compatibility and sexuality satisfaction which can affect their life quality<sup>(10)</sup>. Most PTSD veteran wives sometimes face challenges that force them to be compatible to life because of their children and loving their husbands and some wives who cannot tolerate this hard situation decide to divorce<sup>(18)</sup>. Studies have shown that most veteran wives have lack of social communications and they cannot express themselves well and they hesitate whether to continue that life or separate their husbands and in most cases the presence of their children cause them not to do so and this causes them to accept the problems and become compatible<sup>(19)</sup>. An eight-year war with Iraq and its follow-ups have made many Iranian warfare Died and veterans suffer from war-related Mental disorders<sup>(20)</sup>. In addition to medical and Mental disorders, this disorder decreases the sufferers' quality of life<sup>(14)</sup>. So, this study that has been based on the purpose of comparing the social support and life quality of PTSD veteran wives has been done.

### **Material and Method**

This cross-sectional study was done on two wife groups; the first group were the veteran wives and this group contained 158 PTSD veteran wives and the second group consists of 79 ordinary wives. This study was done in the year 2016. The study setting was Aliabad city, the population of the city is 150,000 people and according to the announcement of The Foundation of Martyrs and Veteran Affairs, there are 96 PTSD veterans there. The method of sampling was done by census method among the ones who had inclusion criteria which was certified by a psychologist, and those samples were the veterans with documents that proved they are veterans, and not addicted to any drug and abuse substances were chosen. All participants provided informed consent after the study purpose was explained, and assurances were made of anonymity and privacy. At most, 79 people were qualified for the study. The control group was elected

among the veteran wife relatives and their close friends and they had no PTSD disorder and no chronic mental disorder and they were not addicted to any drugs.

This study information was collected by Demographic questionnaire, Medical Outcome Study Social and supportive Survey (MOS-SS).

**Demographic questionnaire:** This questionnaire contains information such as age, education, number of children, the length of time living with his wife, drug using, and the chronic mental illnesses.

**Short form of quality of life (QOL-SF36):** This questionnaire which contains 36 questions measures and evaluates the physical, mental and eight domains of life. The physical life quality consists of physical function, limitation in having a role because of the physical lack in efficiency, physical pain and general health.; and domain of psychological, life quality, contains limitation in role because of having emotional problems, social function, happiness and vividness and healthy mental. The method of giving score to them was between zero for the worst to 100 according to the questionnaire instruction SF36, and the score obtained by the samples is between 0 and 100 and the reliability of this study has strongly been confirmed and the reliability of the native form of this questionnaire by Shahgholian(2014) in all aspects has firmly been confirmed and is 0.95 – 0.91<sup>(21)</sup>.

**Medical Outcomes Study Social Supports Survey (MOS-SS):** This questionnaire was made by Sherbourne and Stewart. These supportive social tools have 19 questions and 5 sub scales. These subscales are tangible support (4 questions), which measures the financial and behavioral, exciting support (4 questions) which evaluates the positive emotion, sympathy, encouragement to express the feelings. Informing (4 questions) which evaluates guidance, informing, kindness (3 questions) which evaluate the amount of love, and positive social compatibility (4 questions) which evaluates the people who do the amusement and fun activities. This scale is a self-report tool which is used to measure the amount of agreement or disagreement of someone to any of them in five-point Likert scale (never = 1 point, seldom = 2 points, sometimes = 3 points, often = 4 points, always = 5 points). The lowest score in this is 19 and the highest score is 95. The high point in this test shows that the test is supported by the society a lot<sup>(22)</sup> The reliability of sub domain of this test was reported by Cronbach's alpha 0.91<sup>(23)</sup>. All statistical procedures were performed with

SPSS 16 statistical software. Using descriptive statistics independent t-test.

### Findings

The mean age of the PTSD veteran wives were 39 individuals (49%), high school and guidance school education was 24 individuals (31%) primary school education 13 individuals (6%) and three of them had university degree, among the ordinary people wife, 48 (61%) had high school and guidance school education, (31%), 5 individuals were uneducated, 5 individuals

(6%) had diploma and two of them (3%) had university degree.

The amount of life quality of the veteran wives with means and standard deviation was  $46.3 \pm 0.88$  ( $P < 0.01$ ). There also was seen a significant difference between the veteran wives versus the ordinary people (Table 1).

The amount of veteran wife's social support by mean and standard deviation was  $19.3 \pm 5.1$  and in the ordinary people it was  $31.1 \pm 3.7$  ( $P < 0.1$ ).

**Table (1): comparing the PTSD veteran wife's life quality**

Dimension of the group	Life quality		P_value
	Veteran wives	Ordinary people wives	
Physical dimension	$24.1 \pm 4.9$	$31.4 \pm 4$	$p < 0.01$
Mental dimension	$22.2 \pm 5.5$	$35.5 \pm 4$	$p < 0.01$
Life quality general score	$46.3 \pm 8.8$	$66.9 \pm 8.5$	$p < 0.01$

### Discussion

Spinal cord injury affects the mental health of patients, with a prevalence of mild depression of 22.6% in the Hatefi et al<sup>(24)</sup>. The result of the study shows that the PTSD veteran wives have a lower quality of life. In both the physical and mental dimensions, the veteran wives had lower quality of life in compare with the ordinary people wives. Studies have shown that the veteran wives have more excitement and it has caused them to have a lower quality of life. The results of the present study were same as Bares (2011), Brow (2010) and in all these studies the PTSD veteran wife's life quality was low<sup>(7, 25)</sup>.

Clinical experiences have shown that the veteran family, particularly their wives, suffer mental problems such as seclusion feeling, loneliness, inability, sin feeling, and depression<sup>(26)</sup>. because the PTSD veteran wives are exposed to stresses and have lots of turmoil in their marriage lives<sup>(13)</sup>. Lots of studies show that the PTSD veteran wives suffer a lot from mental disorder in compare with the ordinary people or the wives of the veteran who have no stress<sup>(14, 27, 28)</sup>. shows the surveys

of this toll in the form of depression, anxiety and mental disorder and also as the physical problems and it is known as the prevalent headache and physical complaint among the veteran wives.<sup>27</sup> because living for a long time with someone who suffers post-traumatic stress disorder has a deep and serious influence on their family and can be a chronic stress factor for their wives and can be the source of big and serious problems their families<sup>(29)</sup>.

This study showed that the social support for the veteran wives is lower than ordinary people wives. Communication disorder, physical problems and its consequence, lack of understanding the veterans by some people in the society is one of the most important things that the veterans suffer from<sup>(13)</sup>. Social supports may have a very important effect on developing care health and also on mental pathology in reaction to the stressful life events<sup>(30)</sup>. Social supports from the authorities and the social organizations can increase respect, can reduce blame and label and it can also form a better self-compatibility in veteran wives and it also can reduce stress in their lives<sup>(14)</sup>.

## Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the martyr and veteran families are special families with special stresses and the amount of their stress increases day by day. Women are the center of these stresses, and they themselves and their children are at the risk of danger therefore the society is at danger. Therefore, in order to reduce the amount of stress and the factors that causes stress and anxiety in this group, presenting more and more suitable services and economical is an evitable necessity. Besides, in order to reduce the damage of stresses, teaching educational services, that is teaching life skills are among the communicative skills and stress management and doing actions on beliefs and their attitude towards the incidents and life meaning will be useful. It is also suggested that the veteran wife's life compatibility is to be investigated through a quantitative research.

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