

**Effective Ways of Establishing
&
Providing Support Groups
for Veteran Students
at Educational Institutions**

Capstone Project
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Outline

- My Story
- Statement of Central Research Questions
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Data Analysis
- Recommendations and Avenues

April 2, 2016

The Four-Day War

- ❖ Military Occupation- Tank Crew
- ❖ Served from 2014-2016
- ❖ Education-BA in English & Communications
- ❖ Became enlightened about raising awareness of Men's Mental Health
- ❖ Initiated a Campaign along with AUA to fundraise and support veterans' education
- ❖ Aim to establish Veterans' Affairs Office



Background

- ❖ Armenian men join the military at the age of 18
- ❖ Military Service - 2 years
- ❖ Constant escalated tensions between Armenian and Azerbaijani borders
- ❖ Nakhchivan is the main target for the other side



Statement of Central Research Questions

- ❖ Due to the absence of research on men's mental health and support for veteran students' population at educational institutions in Armenia, **three** main central **questions** arise:
- ❖ 1. How to reach out to these veterans without making them feeling as if they have a mental "disability?"
- ❖ 2. What are some of the effective ways of integrating them into one place in order to assess data and establish support groups?
- ❖ 3. How to make these veterans' support groups sustainable?

Literature Review

- ❖ “The perceived **stigma** and barriers to mental health cause veterans to have lower perceptions and negative beliefs about themselves.” Robert H. Albers (2009).
Perceived Stigma and Barriers to Mental Health Care Utilization Among OEF-OIF Veterans
- ❖ “The importance of safeguarding the **mental health** of these service members and veterans is an important part of ensuring the future readiness of our military force and compensating and honoring those who served our nation. “ Terry Tanelian (2008) *Invisible Wound*
- ❖ “It is life saving to have the **professor** pay special attention and provide care for the **veteran** both in class and outside of class (office hours).” Alisa Roost (2009)
Supporting Veterans in Class
- ❖ “Many times these veterans are caught in between military and civilian cultures, and have a tough time readjusting themselves according to the environment. This causes them to feel alienated from family and friends, and most importantly, they experience a crisis of identity.” Anna Demars (2011)
When Veterans Return: The Role of Community in Reintegration

- ❖ “Study shows that veterans have an extremely difficult experience **rediscovering** their role in the family or renegotiating with their family members.” Sayers L. Steven (2009)
Family Problems among Recently Returned Military Veterans Referred for a Mental Health Evaluation
- ❖ “It is extremely crucial to provide care for the attributes of mental, physical, and social health of the veterans since these are related to the rate of mortality. Nearly **70%** of the veterans felt that the general community **misunderstood** their experience.” Candice Oster (2017)
The health and wellbeing needs of veterans: a rapid review
- ❖ “There should be that solid platform of services available to veterans, and then they can be aware of that, seek support, and get help from there.”
Thomas E. Church (2009)
Returning Veterans on Campus with War-Related Injuries and the Long Road Back Home conducted
- ❖ “What’s better than a **group of veterans** coming together, having a transparent meeting, and understanding each other’s needs?” Sam Delaney (2019)
Our goal is to halve the male suicide rate’: why no-frills therapy works for men

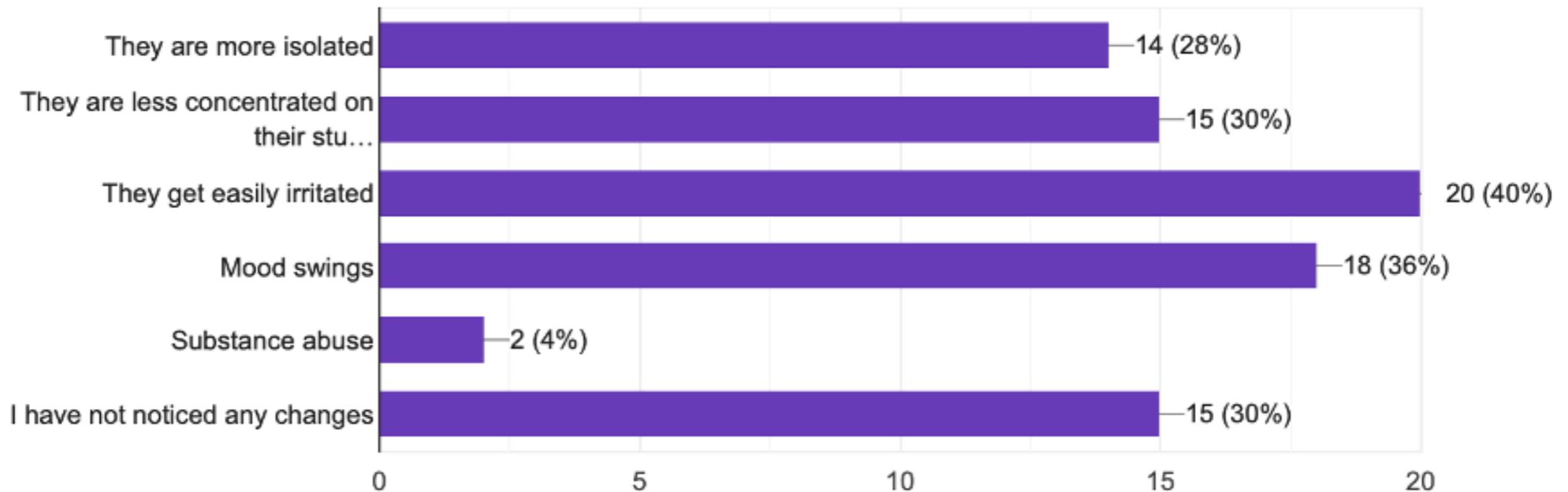
Methodology

- ❖ Qualitative & Quantitative Data
- ❖ **Online Survey**- Consisted of questions asking the public to identify behavioral changes they noticed in veterans they came into contact with.
- ❖ **Individual Interviews** with non-military students focused on their communication with veterans and certain behavioral changes they noticed.
- ❖ **Individual Interviews** with **three veterans** provided deeper insights and facts on their personal experiences.
- ❖ **Focus Groups** consisted of 5 veterans (4 from April War). Questions started with jogging their memory from the military, what perceptions they had before joining, their experiences on the battlefield, and afterwards.

Online Survey Provided the Following Responses

What behavioral changes have you noticed in returning veterans?

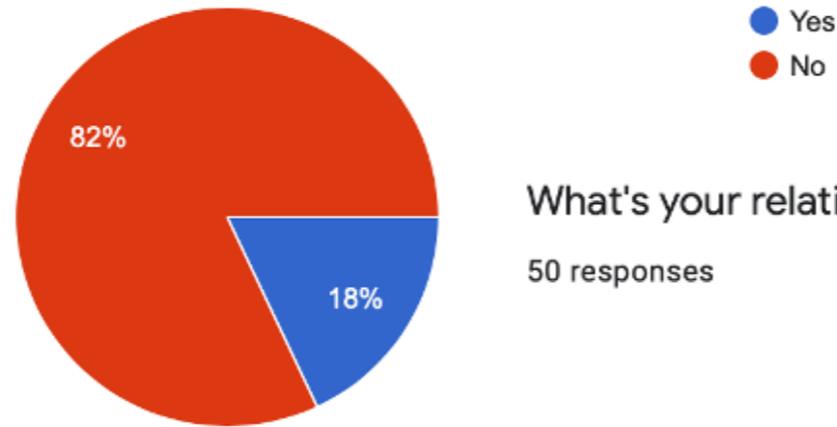
50 responses



Participants also added, “**Sad** and less motivated”, “Less talkative”, “Sensibility to loud voices”, “Totally a **different person** after the military.” “Sad and **uncomfortable** in the new environment”

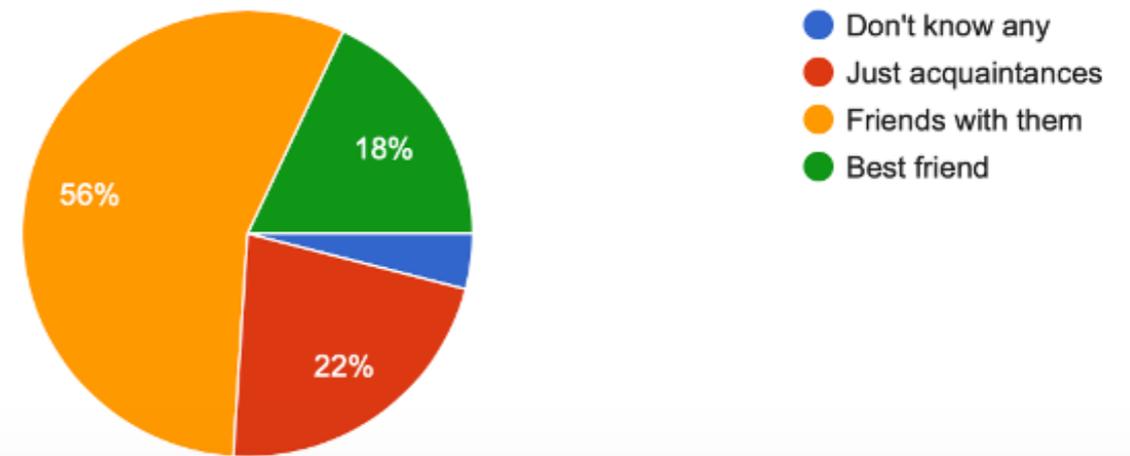
Have you served in the military?

50 responses



What's your relationship with AUA Veterans?

50 responses



A takeaway from this survey showed how observant the public is towards veterans. Some participants also asked if it is every soldier who returns from the military is considered as a veteran. This fact indicated that there is not enough awareness about veterans, as people assume a veteran is an honorably aged man wearing ten medals.

Recommendations & Avenues

❖ 1. Develop a strong and **sustainable** veteran-specific data and use it to establish policies, services, and programs.

❖ 2. Organize and **Introduce** the Campus to Veterans.

“I came back in the winter and right after one week I started classes at AUA. This was a really tough transition for me. It is a completely big change of an environment.” - Sevak

❖ 3. Instructor-Veteran **Connection** and Communication.

“It will be great if there could be a committee at AUA who will organize a thorough meeting for veterans and professors in order to help both sides understand the upcoming challenges.”
- Shavarsh

❖ 4. Conduct Veterans’ Academic **Focus Groups** to Identify Their Needs.

❖ 7. Designate a Portion of Housing for Veterans
from Regions.

❖ 8. Give **Recognition** to Veterans during
Graduation Ceremonies and Other Major
Events.

❖ 9. Communicate with Local Business Companies to Create **Job Pipelines** for Graduating Veterans.

“I would really want to have a job opportunity upon my return, so I would not feel that big gap due to the military service.”-David

❖ This Research has provided the importance of **veterans' mental health** and that we owe our veterans and should provide them with support and genuine care.

We carry the ability to empower our veterans helping them to imagine themselves in new ways, **reintegrate** into civilian and academic life, and make our country prosperous.

Thank You