Veteran Status and Likelihood of Having Poor Mental Health

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Research Questions
- Do military veterans have higher rates of poor mental health compared with those who have no military experience?
- Are there age differences in this potential association?

Significance
- There are 2.2 million veterans who have given the ultimate sacrifice to serve our country (Reynolds & Shendunk, 2018).
- Because of mental health stigma, most people do not seek out mental health services, especially men who are told not to show their emotions (Vogel et al., 2014).

Background
- Hankin et al, (1999) found that over 1/3 of the veteran respondents in the study met criteria for a mental illness diagnosis, and 85% had experienced a traumatic event during their service.
- There are high rates of mental health disorders among active duty military members and veterans, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and alcohol use disorders (Seal et al., 2007).
- Pemberton et al. (2016) found that veterans had a higher prevalence of mental illness than nonveterans among adults aged 54 or younger, using the 2002-12 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

Hypotheses
- Those who are of veteran status will have higher rates of mental health disorders than those who are of non-veteran status.
- This difference will be greater in the younger population.

Data and Sample
- General Social Survey (GSS)
- English or Spanish speaking American adults who are at least 18 years of age or older, in the continental United States
- 2014, 2016, & 2018 data (N= 7,753)

Dependent Variable
- Mental health status
  - “For how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good?”

Independent Variable
- Veteran Status
  - “Have you ever been on active duty for military training or service for two consecutive months or more?”

Control Variable
- Age
  - 18-45 years: 44.9%
  - 46-89 years: 55.1%

Analysis
- Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

Results
- Figure 3. % Distribution for Days Having Poor Mental Health by Veteran Status: 18-45 Years Old
- Figure 4. % Distribution for Days Having Poor Mental Health by Veteran Status: 46-89 Years Old

Summary of Findings
- Veterans were less likely to report 6+ days of poor mental health than those who were of non-veteran status.
- Controlling for age, the difference in mental health by veteran status was significant only among the older group (aged 46 or older).

Discussion
- It is possible that many veterans may not see that they have mental health issues (Veterans Affairs, 2018).
- The current do not include active military member, which could include a big percentage of individuals with poor mental health.

References