



CHALLENGES OF IDENTIFICATION AND TREATMENT OF PTSD IN KOSOVO THIRTEEN YEARS AFTER THE WAR

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Introduction

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder caused by highly traumatic experiences (e.g., life-threatening accidents, rape, military combat, etc.). It is known that PTSD has a chronic course, especially in cases when related factors includes trauma of the situation. Chronic PTSD is linked to considerable comorbidity, mortality, and disability during daily activities.

Such cases are noticed in Kosovo 13 years after the war.

The aim of this study is to investigate levels of PTSD, estimating features and its relation with some socio-demographic factors and type of experienced trauma, focusing in the presence of PTSD, clinical and sub-clinical cases, among ex-soldiers and persons with relatives killed/missed in mental health services in Kosovo, 13 years after war.

Materials and methods

This is a retrospective study, in which cases with PTSD among ex-soldiers and persons with relatives killed/missed were analyzed, in the period from January to September, 2013. Data's were collected and analyzed in the Regional Hospitals, Mental Health Centers (MHC) and University Clinical Center of Kosova (UCCK) where we found 277 cases with PTSD.

Cases are clustered/classified by war situation into four groups (group of soldiers in frontline line, soldier with fewer risks, family members of killed persons, and families that has still missing family members or relatives).

Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2007.

Results

- Analyses showed that mostly cases are soldiers (N=128) or family who has suffered losses in the war (missing, killed, etc.). Dominates cases from the regions with more intensive fighting, mostly men between 40-50 years old, soldiers and relatives of missing persons.
- From the symptomatology more often was expressed: change of the mood, performance decline, traumatic memories, insisting for retirement, somatic / vegetative problems.
- According to the age, all the cases were between 30-60 years old.
- Based on regions, the highest number of missing people were from Gjakova, then Mitrovica, Peja, Prizren and others.

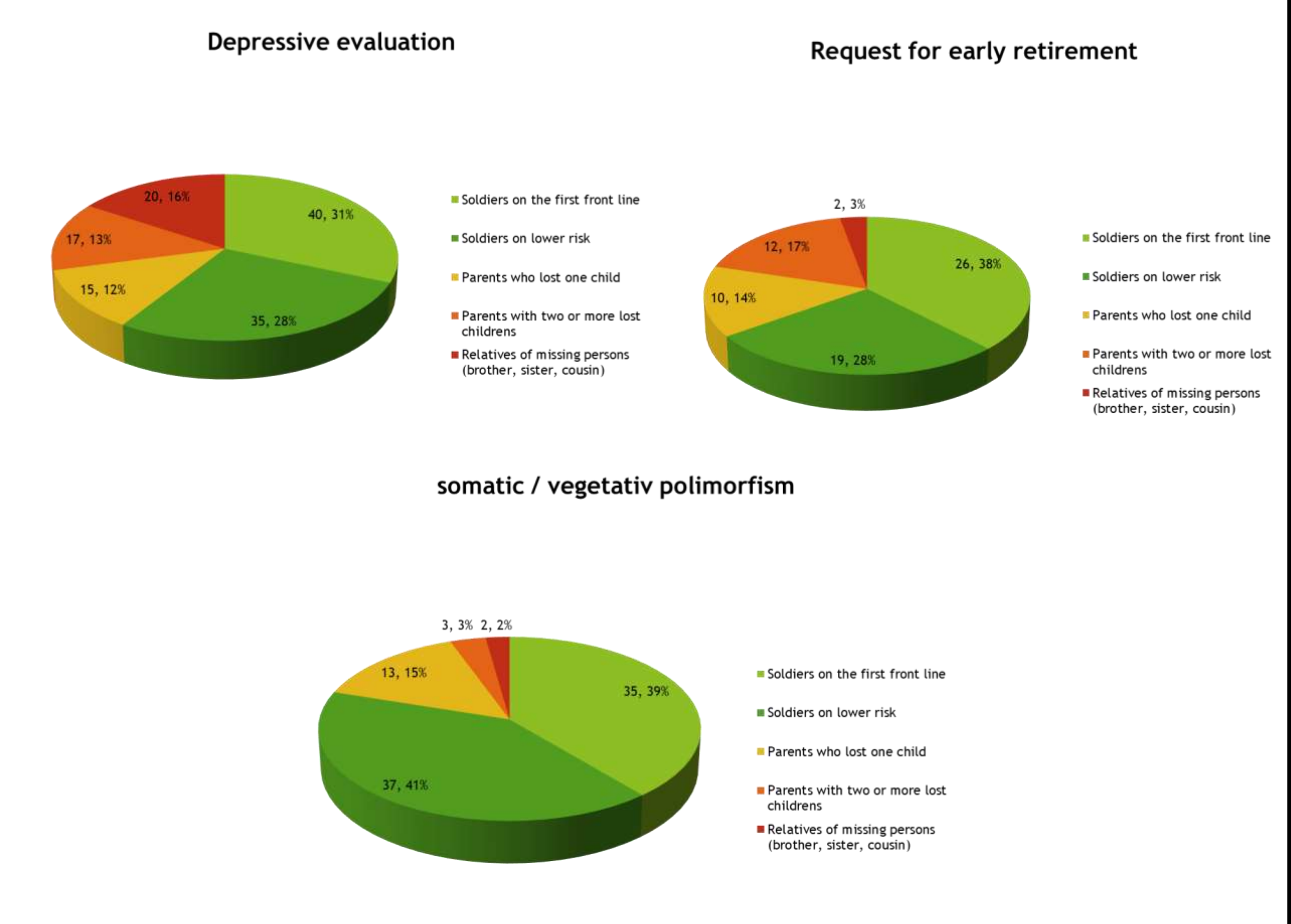
Tab. 1. PTSD cases in Kosova, 13 years after the War, based on region and gender.

| PTSD in Kosova for 13 years after the War among ex-soldiers and persons with relatives killed/missing | Total number | 277 | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|---------|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| | | Regions | Gjakova | Peja | Mitrovica | Prizren | Prishtina |
| | | 65 | 60 | 53 | 47 | 40 | 12 |
| | Age group | 30 - 40 y | | 41 - 50 y | | > 50 y | |
| | | 60 | | 118 | | 99 | |

Tab. 2. Total number of PTSD among affected groups based on reasons for referral

| Groups / Adversity | Total Number | Request for early retirement | Evaluation for depression | Somatic / vegetative polymorphisms | People who abuse alcohol and drugs | Personality disorders |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Soldiers on the first front line | 53 | 26 | 40 | 35 | 5 | 6 |
| Soldiers on lower risk | 75 | 19 | 35 | 37 | 2 | 3 |
| Parents who lost one child | 99 | 10 | 15 | 13 | 1 | 0 |
| Parents with two or more lost children's | 13 | 12 | 17 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Relatives of missing persons (brother, sister, cousin) | 37 | 2 | 20 | 2 | 3 | 3 |

- Symptoms found in soldiers were: change of the mood, decreased of performance, increased requirements for earlier retirement, somatic problems, vegetative problems, problems with concentration.
- Symptomatology in the other key groups were: mood changes (depression), anniversary reactions, neuroasthenia problems, neurotic poly-symptomatology.
- Some people in the both groups were with permanent personality changes.



Conclusion

Despite that many years passed from the war, the efforts for social consolidation, the organizing and enhance the quality of psychiatric services, family support that is traditionally present in Kosovo, there is still a considering number of people with PTSD among ex-soldiers and persons with relatives killed/missing and this is a challenge for the society, because they require a greater sensitivity in the identification, treatment and rehabilitation.

References:

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