

Criminal Psychology: The Relationship Between Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Criminal Justice Involvement in Vietnam War Veterans

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Abstract : Foregoing studies, statistics, and medical evaluations have established a relationship between Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and criminal justice involvement in Vietnam veterans. War is highly trauma inducing and can leave combat veterans with mental disorders ranging from psychopathic thoughts to suicidal ideation. The majority of those suffering are unaware that they have PTSD, and as a coping mechanism, they often turn to self isolation. Beyond isolation, many veterans with symptomatic PTSD turn to aggression and substance abuse to cope with their internal agony. The most common crimes committed by veterans with PTSD fall into the assault and drug/alcohol abuse categories. Thus, a relationship is established between veteran populations and the criminal justice system. This research aims to define the relationship between PTSD and criminal justice involvement in veterans, explore the mediating factors in this relationship, and analyze numerous court cases in this subject area. Further, it will examine the ways in which crime rates can be reduced for veterans with symptoms of PTSD. This ranges from the improvement of healthcare systems to the implementation of special courts to handle veteran cases. The contribution of this work to the field of forensic psychology will be significant, as it will analyze preexisting case studies and experimental data in an effort to improve the ways in which veteran cases are handled in the criminal justice system. Military personnel involved in the criminal justice system are a vulnerable population in need of healthcare and legislative attention, and this work will bring us one step closer to providing them with just that.

Keywords : forensic psychology, psychotraumatology, PTSD, veterans

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