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## RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH ON LEGAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL ISSUES ENCOUNTERED BY VETERANS OF THE 44-DAY WAR

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**Abstract:** The Second Karabakh War, which occurred in the autumn of 2020 and became known in history as the “44-Day Patriotic War,” marked a significant turning point in the modern history of Azerbaijan. Although the country restored its territorial integrity as a result of the conflict, thousands of veterans who participated in the military operations were left with lasting physical and psychological scars. In the post-war period, the medical, psychological, and social problems faced by veterans, as well as the legal violations committed against them, have become a serious subject of contemporary research. Despite important steps taken by the state toward the rehabilitation, social protection, and legal safeguarding of veterans, there are still numerous cases where these individuals are deprived of adequate medical assistance, excluded from social support systems, and subjected to violations of their rights. Investigating and publicizing such cases is crucial both for improving the living conditions of veterans and for contributing to the improvement of relevant legislation. Another factor that increases the urgency of this issue is the impact of veterans’ psychological well-being on society and their limited social integration. A systematic, evidence-based analysis of the health problems and legal violations experienced by veterans of the 44-day war is of great scientific and social importance. The present article reflects the findings of a comprehensive study aimed at improving the quality of life of veterans and facilitating their integration into society.

**Keywords:** post-war veterans, mental health challenges, social reintegration, legal rights violations, psychosocial issues, armed conflict consequences

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### **Introduction:**

Wars are an inevitable reality of the modern era. When disputes in international relations cannot be resolved through diplomacy, the use of armed force between at least two parties to impose a solution is defined as war [21,22]. For soldiers returning from war, reintegrating into society can often be an extremely difficult process. After living under constant threat during war, many veterans struggle to reconnect with the slow, predictable pace of civilian life. Veterans often feel distant from their loved ones and struggle to express

emotions, leading to a sense of being disconnected from those around them. Many veterans hesitate to talk about their time at war because they feel most people wouldn’t truly understand what it was like. Combat experience tends to deeply influence a person’s thoughts, emotions, and overall outlook on life. Many veterans feel fundamentally different from others—like people from “another world.” They come to believe that they have lived through something that most cannot understand, which gradually leads them into deeper isolation. This, in turn, can result in depression, loss of

motivation, and a sense of hopelessness. The psychological state of war participants and the health, adaptation, and other problems they face have long been topics of public discussion. War veterans, especially those who have experienced serious psychological and physical trauma in combat, often face difficulties in adapting to social and legal frameworks [4,8,10,19].

After the war, many veterans struggle with pain that doesn't go away — both in their bodies and in their minds. For a lot of veterans, war leaves behind more than memories — it leaves them with pain, scars, damaged spines, and limbs they no longer have. War can leave lasting scars — lost limbs, broken bones, serious wounds, and damage to key organs are just a few of the injuries many veterans face. Many veterans say they still deal with constant body aches and physical discomfort long after returning from war. Conditions like arthritis or heart disease often show up much later, reminding us how deeply trauma can affect the body over time. Long after the war, many veterans still deal with the hidden effects of toxic exposure — whether from smoke, chemicals, or tobacco. Veterans facing these issues often find it difficult to stay employed, take care of themselves, or stick to a stable routine. For many veterans, regaining a sense of normal life depends on whether they can get proper medical care and support like prosthetics and rehabilitation [1,3,6,14,16,20].

War is an extraordinary event that affects not only the physical condition of individuals but also causes profound psychological trauma. The fear, death, loss, constant sense of danger, and witnessing the death of comrades on the battlefield significantly disrupt an individual's psychological balance. Consequently, mental health disorders are widely prevalent among veterans returning from war, often resulting in long-term or even lifelong consequences. Contemporary psychology and trauma research emphasize that war conditions function as acute and persistent stress factors that deeply affect the human psyche. Among war veterans, the most commonly observed psychological disorders include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety disorders, emotional instability, suicidal tendencies, social isolation,

and substance or alcohol dependence [12,17,20]. Studies show that the psychological responses triggered by traumatic experiences negatively affect not only the individual's emotional well-being but also their family relationships, professional life, and ability to socially reintegrate. In some cases, psychological injuries among veterans result in more severe and longer-lasting consequences than physical wounds. Psychological trauma and emotional disturbances are widespread among veterans [5,7,9,11,15]. In particular, symptoms such as PTSD, depression, panic attacks, social isolation, and aggressive behavior are frequently reported [10,12,17,18]. According to statistics from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2022), approximately 32% of veterans have been diagnosed with PTSD [2]. These problems are also widely recognized at the international level. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 25–30% of individuals in the post-war period require psychosocial support [13,18].

Considering the aforementioned points, the topic of the present article is highly relevant and represents one of the most extensively studied scientific directions of the current era.

**Research object.** The object of the present article is the analysis of health problems and legal violations experienced by veterans of the 44-Day War. For this purpose, individual research was carried out on a voluntary basis among individuals who participated in the 44-Day Patriotic War in 2020 and were granted veteran status following the military operations. The study focuses on the physical and psychological health issues faced by these individuals in the post-war period, the availability of rehabilitation services, challenges related to social reintegration, and cases of violations of their rights guaranteed by the Constitution and other legislative acts.

**Research Methodology.** In accordance with the purpose of the study, both theoretical and empirical research methods were employed in this scientific work. The combination of various academic approaches and data collection techniques ensured the objectivity and scientific validity of the research.

## 1. Analytical Method

To thoroughly examine the health-related and legal issues faced by war veterans, existing legal documents, state programs, normative acts, international conventions, as well as medical and psychological research materials were reviewed and subjected to comparative analysis.

## 2. Sociological Survey Method

Surveys were conducted among veterans to collect empirical data. The aim of the surveys was to assess the veterans' health conditions, access to rehabilitation, level of social protection, and instances of rights violations. Both open- and close-ended questions were used in the surveys.

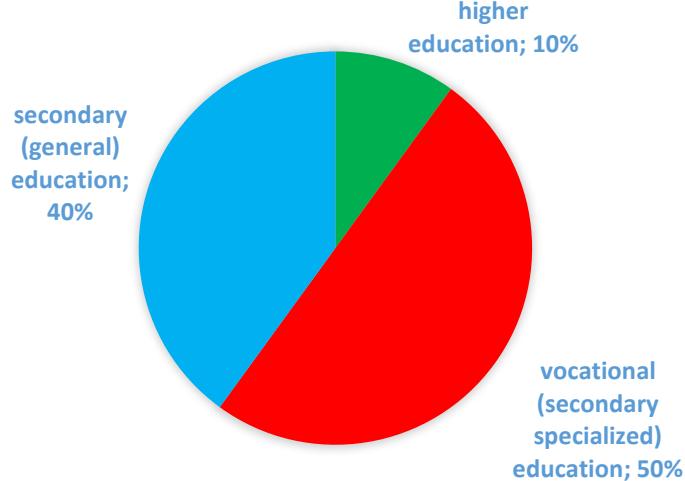
## 3. Statistical Analysis

The empirical data obtained were organized and analyzed using SPSS and Excel software. Statistical outcomes were evaluated primarily through percentages, averages, and correlation analysis.

## 4. Comparative Legal Analysis

The legislation of Azerbaijan was compared with international legal instruments to determine the extent to which veterans' rights are protected and to identify existing gaps in this area.

## 5. Document Analysis Method



*Figure 1. Distribution of Veterans by Educational Level (in %).*

## 2. Combat Experience

All participants stated that they were engaged in combat operations during the September–November 2020 period. Of them, 70% had combat experience in the directions of Jabrayil, Fuzuli, and Shusha, while 30% reported serving in the areas of Aghdam, Zangilan, and other

Reports, statistical data, legal acts, and other official documents published by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Health, and various NGOs were analyzed.

## Results and Discussion.

Within the framework of this study, surveys and interviews were conducted with 30 individuals who participated in the 44-Day Patriotic War and currently hold official "veteran" status. The surveys were carried out in a semi-structured format, incorporating both open-ended and close-ended questions.

The summarized results are presented below:

### 1. Demographic Indicators

The participants were all male and ranged in age from 23 to 38. Of them, 60% were single, and 40% were married. The distribution of their educational background was as follows (Figure 1):

- 10% – higher education,
- 50% – vocational (secondary specialized) education,
- 40% – secondary (general) education.

## regions.

### 3. Disability and Health Status

A total of 80% of participants reported sustaining physical injuries during the war. Among them:

- 3 individuals were granted second-degree disability status,

- 5 individuals received third-

degree disability status.

The remaining participants stated that they were unable to obtain official disability status, mainly due to documentation issues and bureaucratic obstacles.

#### 4. Psychological Condition and Rehabilitation

Among the 30 participants (Figure 2):

- 21 individuals (70%) reported experiencing post-traumatic stress, insomnia, and anxiety disorders
- 14 individuals mentioned receiving psychological support but emphasized that it was short-term and ineffective.
- 9 individuals stated that they had not received any psychological assistance.

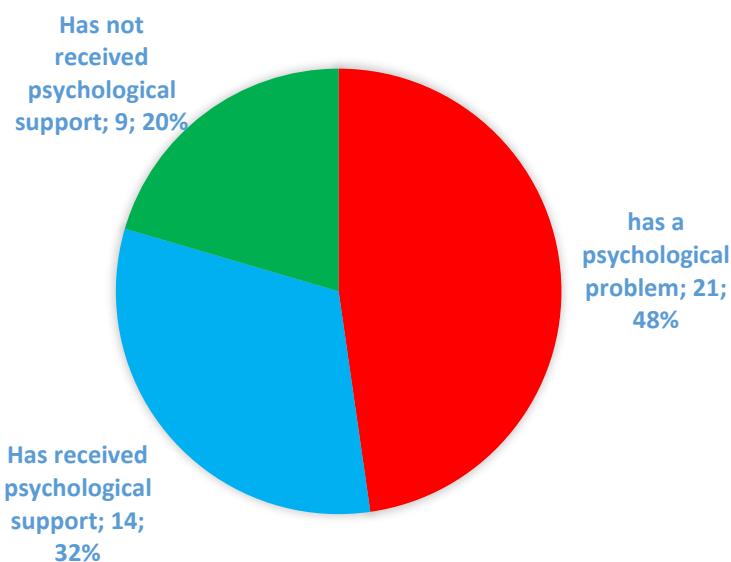


Figure 2. Psychological Condition and Access to Psychological Support among Veterans.

60% of those who applied to rehabilitation centers reported that they were not fully satisfied with the services provided.

#### 5. State Institutions and Social Support

Among the participants, 14 individuals reported having officially received "veteran" status. The remaining 16 stated that they were unable to obtain this status, citing documentation issues as

the primary reason.

Regarding the use of social assistance allocated for veterans (Figure 3):

- 30% of participants reported fully utilizing the available support,
- 25% benefited partially,
- 45% stated they had not been able to benefit it at all

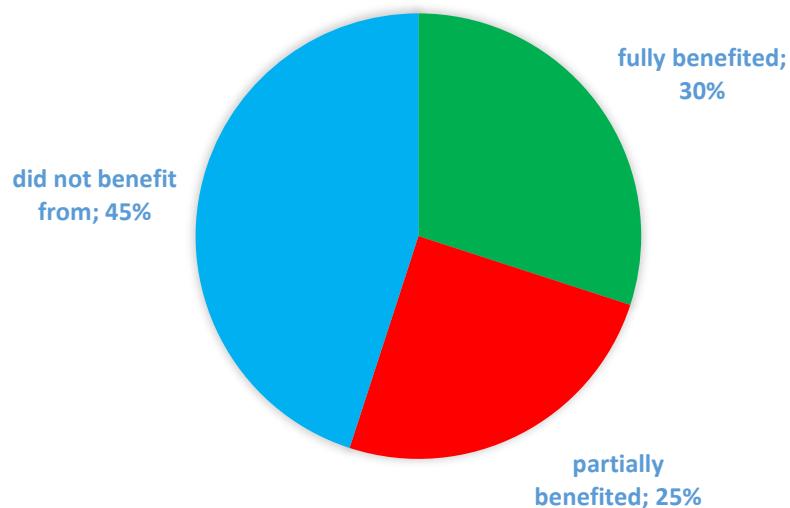


Figure 3. Utilization of Social Assistance among Veterans (in %).

Furthermore, 60% of participants indicated they experienced difficulties communicating with state institutions.

#### 6. Legal Rights and Attitudes

Only 30% of participants stated that their rights had not been violated.

40% reported experiencing violations of their rights,

30% indicated being subjected to unfair

treatment (Figure 4).

The main areas of dissatisfaction included:

- Challenges in obtaining veteran status
- Barriers to accessing social assistance and services
- Delays in medical documentation

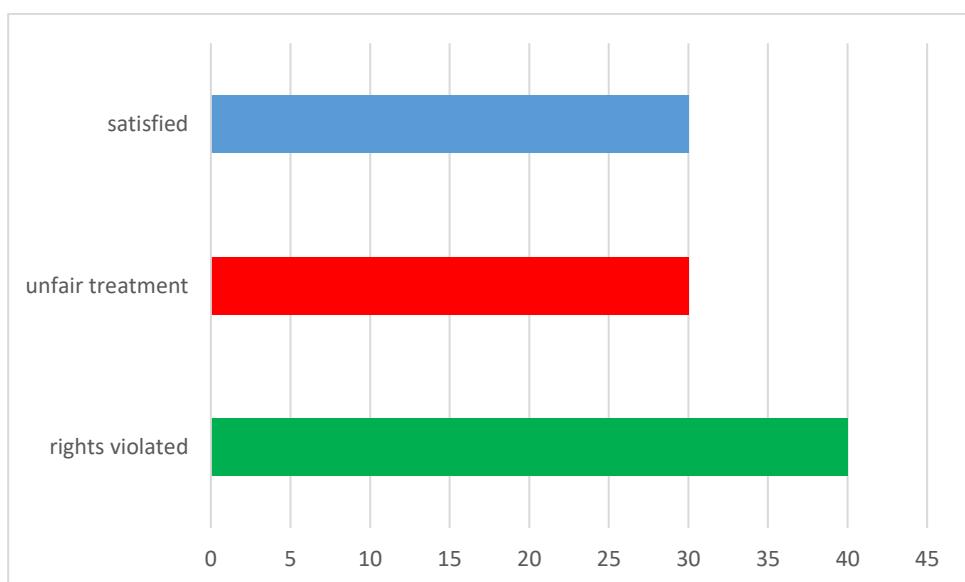


Figure 4. Percentage of Veterans Experiencing Legal Violations.

#### 7. Employment and Education

- 70% of participants reported difficulties in finding employment,
- 30% stated that they were currently unemployed.

- 8 participants mentioned facing challenges in pursuing education, citing psychological and financial difficulties as the main reasons (Figure 5).

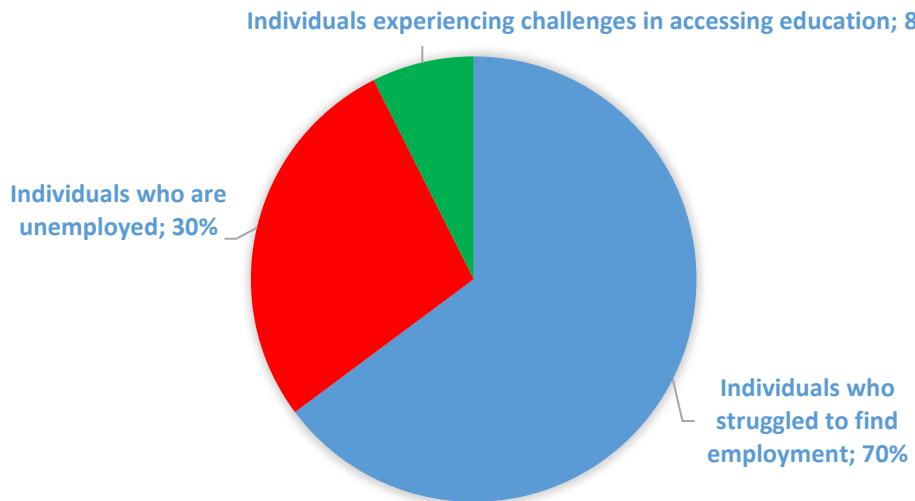


Figure 5. Challenges Faced by Veterans in Employment and Education (in %).

#### 8. Societal and Media Attitudes

60% of participants believed that society treats veterans with respect. However, 40% felt that the media and the public do not pay sufficient attention to the real problems faced by veterans.

#### 9. Perceptions of the War

- 16 participants stated that they voluntarily enlisted in the war,
  - Of these, 3 individuals expressed partial regret about this decision, primarily due to the difficulties encountered afterwards.
  - 14 participants were conscripted (Figure6)

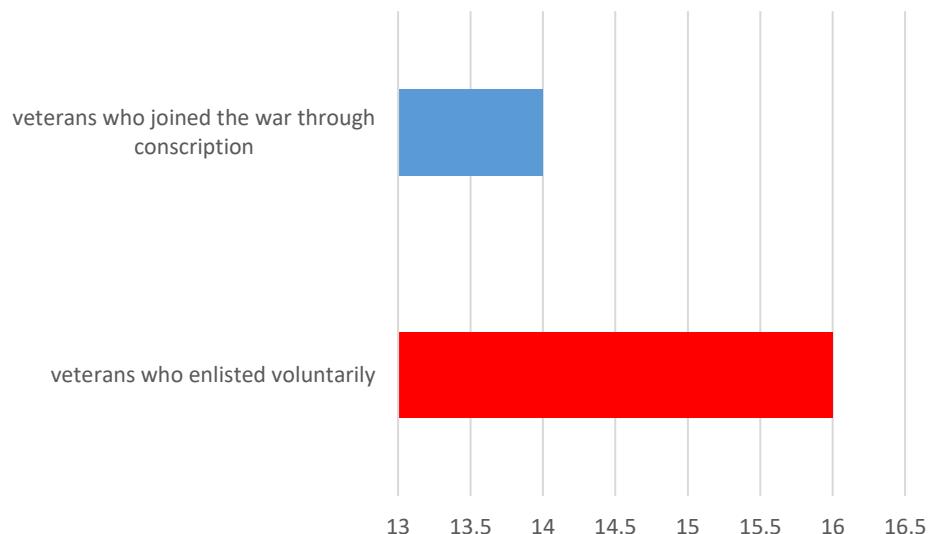


Figure 6. Reasons for Veterans' Participation in the War.



#### **10. Recommendations and Expectations**

In the final question of the study, all participants provided various suggestions related to the protection of veterans' health and legal rights. The most frequently repeated recommendations were as follows:

- Expansion of psychological support and rehabilitation services
- Simplification of procedures for obtaining veteran status
- Improved accessibility to medical and legal assistance
- Enhanced support for veterans in the labor market
- Increased activity and transparency in the work of social workers

The discussion of the results revealed several important insights. In this section, the empirical findings are interpreted within relevant scientific and social contexts. The study highlights significant trends and challenges concerning the psychological, social, and legal conditions of veterans who participated in the 44-Day Patriotic War..

#### **1. Psychological Well-being and Rehabilitation Services**

It was found that the majority of participants (70%) exhibited psychological symptoms such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, insomnia, and emotional distress. This finding aligns with international research, where similar post-war psychological disorders have been observed in 50–80% of veterans in countries like the United States, Germany, and others [7,8,18,20].

Although some veterans reported receiving psychological support, most noted that such support was neither systematic nor long-term. This points to inadequacies in the organization of psychosocial rehabilitation services in the country. Psychological recovery should not be limited to clinical assistance but must also be seen as a broader process involving the social environment and family support.

#### **2. Health and Disability Issues**

Many participants stated that they had suffered various physical injuries as a result of the war, and some were granted official disability status. However, others faced significant obstacles in obtaining disability recognition,

often due to documentation issues, medical examination delays, or administrative negligence. These findings suggest the need for serious reforms in the state's medical and legal service provision to veterans. Participants frequently mentioned inadequate healthcare and the negative impact of long-term health problems on their daily lives.

#### **3. Social Protection and Relations with State Institutions**

A significant portion of the participants (approximately 60%) reported difficulties in communication with state agencies and noted limited or no access to social benefits and allowances. Some also faced challenges in obtaining official veteran status. These issues point to a need for increased transparency and efficiency in state institutions working with this social group.

#### **4. Societal and Media Attitudes**

According to participants, society's general attitude toward veterans is positive; however, they noted that this support is not adequately reflected in media coverage or public discourse. Veterans expressed that their daily struggles are often misunderstood or overlooked by the wider public, and in some cases, they face indifference.

#### **5. Employment and Educational Opportunities**

Several participants indicated that they were unable to find employment after the war, while others experienced physical or psychological challenges in their current jobs. The reintegration process was particularly difficult for those with disabilities. This highlights that state and private sector mechanisms for supporting veteran employment remain underdeveloped and insufficiently responsive.

#### **6. Legal Issues and Fair Treatment**

Many participants reported that their legal rights had been violated or that they had encountered unfair treatment. The most commonly cited issues included:

- Delays in obtaining veteran status
- Delays or denial of social benefits
- Inaccuracies and complications

in medical documentation. These findings underline the need for

**Conclusion:**

1. The conducted research demonstrated that individuals who participated in the 44-Day Patriotic War—veterans—face multifaceted and deeply rooted problems in the post-war period. These challenges are not limited to medical and psychological dimensions but also manifest in social, legal, and institutional contexts. The findings reaffirm that the rehabilitation of veterans requires a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach.

2. The severe traumas inflicted by the war—particularly battlefield losses, physical injuries, and emotional shocks—have led to significant disruptions in veterans' health. Many continue to live with persistent physical and psychological pain. The loss of limbs, restricted mobility, and chronic pain negatively affect their daily functioning. Additionally, psychological conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety disorders, and emotional numbness further complicate their reintegration into society.

3. Although there have been some improvements in rehabilitation and medical and a lack of adequate legal protection. Tendencies toward unlawful behavior can often be attributed to exclusion from rehabilitation, psychological distress, and the absence of social support.

6. This research has proven that issues related to veterans' social protection, healthcare needs, and legal rights cannot be addressed through fragmented reforms alone—they require a comprehensive and strategic approach. The state's social policy, healthcare and legal systems, as well as civil society and non-governmental organizations, must act in coordinated collaboration. Policy toward veterans must not be short-term or symbolic but should be based on long-term, sustainable support, ensuring not only survival but also a life of dignity.

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improvements in the legal framework to strengthen the protection of veterans' rights.

services, disparities in access, delays in medical oversight, and instances of negligence remain prevalent among veterans. Psychological support, in particular, requires focused attention, as some veterans are either reluctant to seek help or express distrust in the existing system. This leads to worsening of trauma, intra-family tensions, and social isolation.

4. The difficulties veterans face do not remain confined to individual experiences—their families are also significantly affected. Psychological strain in family relationships, economic hardship, and concerns about future security draw family members into the veterans' struggle. Existing mechanisms for labor market integration, social adaptation, and legal protection often appear formalistic and fail to address the real needs of veterans.

5. Legal violations are not solely the result of institutional inefficiency or inactivity, but are also linked to societal stereotypes and stigmatization directed at veterans. In some cases, veterans face discrimination, social withdrawal,

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