Prevalence of Hypochondriasis Disorder among Iraqi Former Prisoners of Iraq-Iran War, 1980-1988 **Maan** Hameed **Ibrahim****

Abstract

Objective : To find out the prevalence of Hypochondriasis among Iraqi repatriated prisoners of Iraq-Iran war, and the relationship with some variables.

Methodology: A descriptive study was carried out from Jan. 2nd , 2006 through May 4th , 2006. A non-probability accidental sample of 400 repatriates who had visited; Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Defense. A questionnaire was constructed for this purpose, which consisted of 6 items for demographic data, and 14 items for measuring Hypochondriasis. Reliability and validity of the questionnaire had been determined through the pilot study (Test and retest) and the experts panel. Data were collected with using the constructed questionnaire and the process of the interview as means for data collection. Data were analyzed through the application of descriptive statistical analysis, which are; percentages, frequencies and inferential statistic analysis (Pearson correlation coefficient).

Results: The study revealed that the majority of repatriates are inflicted with moderate and severe levels of Hypochondriasis. The findings also indicated that there is a high significant relationship between Hypochondriasis relative to; duration of captivity, marital status, level of education, and date of repatriation.

Recommendations: The study recommends that it is very important to establish special mental health services centers within the primary health care centers deal with those repatriates for counseling and in order to diagnose and treat them and further studies in this field with follow-up studies for the Keyword: prevalence, hypochondriasis, Iraqi prisoners, war.

Introduction

War is as old as human societies. It causes the destruction of civilization and stirs up hatreds and resentments amongst people and passes psychological and social problems on to future generations, it also causes the fighters to become prisoners of war(i) The war imprisonment is a traumatic experience, which is generally considered to have a potential to cause various psychical difficulties^ Therefore, among the most stressful, persistent wartime experiences is to be captured as prisoner of war(3) Evidence of chronic psychiatric and psychosomatic morbidity was found in former prisoners of war Among returning POWs the effects of the psychological trauma they had suffered from, were often masked by the feeling of relief and jubilation that accompanied release from confmement(5) The war between Iraq and Iran had taken place on September 4th, 1980 and finished on August 8th , 1988<6) More than eighty

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thousand were captured from Iraqi troops[7] and were released between 1990 2003. This study aims to reveal the prevalence of Hypochondriasis disorder **ama** those repatriates and to know the relation between this disorder and so demographic characteristics

Methodology

A non-probability convenience sample of 400 repatriates who visit Ministry of Human Rights / POWs and Missing section, Ministry of Defense / PC I and Missing section, and Ministry of Health / Department of medical Committe The constructed questionnaire as an instrument for data collection consists of r parts (Appendix A). Firstly; the Demographic data sheet which consists of 6 itt which included; age at capture, duration of captivity, rank, marital status, lewl education, and date of repatriation, and secondly: 14 items which measure Hypochondriasis levels, these items were selected upon the criteria of DSM IV these items were measured, scored and rated of 3-level Likert rating scale indicates that the status was (persistent) as (always), "2" indicates (presence) of ***i*** status as (sometimes), and "1" indicates (absence) of the status as (never). The ra::. scale was implicated to rate the frequency and extension of the status[8]. Validity I reliability were determined by using pilot study (test and retest) and the expe. panel, which consisted of 12 academic and medical psychiatrists and psychologi Data were analyzed through the application of the descriptive data analy (frequency, and percentage), and inferential data analysis (correlation coefficient. quartiles)'

Results

Table 1: Distribution of **the** Sample regarding to Demographic Characteristic*.

Age(Years) **at capture**	F	%	Duration **Of Captivity**	F	%	**Military Rank**	F	%
14-21	103	25.8	**2-5**	32	8.0	**Officer**	30	—.-
22-29	181	45.3	6-9	114	28.5	**Sub-officer**	87	- –
30-37	70	17.5	10-13	56	14.0	**Reserved**	89	22
38-45	24	6.0	14-17	87	21.	**Recruit**	140	35
46-53	17	4.3	18-21	97	24.3	**Public army**	54	12
541	5	1.3	**221**	14	3.5			
Total	400	100	Total	400	100	Total	400	**lOt**
Marital Status	**f**	**%**	**Level Of Education**	**f**	**%**	**Date Of Repatriation**	**f**	0 1
Married	222	55.5	**Illiterate**	43	10.8		137	34
Single	176	44.0	Read and **write**	43	10.8	1993-1995	28	—
Divorcee	2	0.5	Primary school	112	28. 0	1996-1998	20	5
			Secondary school	134	33.5	1999-2001	68	17
			Diploma	20	5.0	20021	147	*3(*
			Bachelor and postgraduate	48	12.0			
Total	**400**	100	Total	400	**100**	Total	400	**101**

This table shows that 45.3% of the repatriates were 22 - 29 years old at capture and 28.5%, 24.3%, and 21.8% from them had spent 6-9 years, 18-21 years, and 14-17 years in captivity respectively, and 35.0% were recruits. Regarding to their marital status 55.5% was married and 44.0% were singles. Most of them 28.0%> and 33.5% were of primary school and secondary school respectively. Lastly, most of them 36.8% and 34.3% had being repatriated during 2002, and between 1990 and 1992 respectively.

Table (2) Relationship and distribution of Hypochondriasis levels regarding to Age at Capture

Age at capture (Years)			**lypochondriasis levels**					
	Mild		**Moderate**		**Severe**		**Total**	
	f	%	**f**	%	**f**	%	**f**	%
14-21	**36**	**9.0**	30	**7.5**	**37**	**9.3**	**103**	**25.8**
22-29	**69**	17.3	**59**	14.8	53	13.3	**181**	**45.3**
30-37	**29**	**7.3**	21	5.3	20	5.0	**70**	**17.5**
38-45	**5**	1.3	**8**	2.0	11	2.8	**24**	**6.0**
46-53	**2**	0.5	**7**	1.8	**8**	2.0	**17**	**4.3**
541	**0**	0.0	**3**	0.8	**2**	0.5	**5**	**1.3**
Total	**141**	**35.3**	**128**	**32**	**131**	**32.8**	**400**	**100.0**
r=-0.092			***sig=0.33***			***P<0.05***		

This table shows that the highest percentage of Hypo- chondriasis is 17.3% of total sample in group age 22-29 of mild level, and the lowest percentage is 0.5% in age groups 54|and 46-53 of mild and severe levels respective-ly . There is a significant rel-ation between age at capture and Hypochondriasis.

Table (3) Relationship and distribution of Hypochondriasis levels regarding to Duration of Captivity

Duration Of captivity			**lypochonc**	**riasis levels**				
	Mild		**Moderate**		**Severe**		**Total**	
	f	%	**f**	%	**f**	%	**f**	%
2-5	**6**	1.5	13	3.3	13	3.3	**32**	**8.0**
6-9	24	6.0	45	11.3	45	11.3	**114**	**28.5**
10-13	**19**	4.8	**17**	4.3	20	5.0	**56**	**14.0**
14-17	44	11.0	22	5.5	21	5.3	**87**	**21.8**
18-21	41	10.3	25	**6.3**	31	**7.8**	**97**	**24.3**
221	**7**	1.8	**6**	1.5	1	0.3	**14**	**3.5**
Total	**141**	**35.3**	**128**	**32**	**131**	**32.8**	**400**	**100.0**
r=-0.246				***sig= 0.000***				***P<0.01***

This table shows that the highest percentage of Hyp-ochondriasis is 11.3% of total sample in duration group 6-9 of moderate and severe level, and the lowest percentage is 0.3% in duration group 22j also of severe level. There is a high significant relation between duration of captivity and Hypochondriasis

Table (4) Relationship and distribution of Hypochondriasis levels regarding to Rank

Rank	Hypochondriasis levels							
	Mild		Moderate		Severe		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Officer	9	2.3	12	3.0	9	2.3	30	7.5
Sub-officer	35	8.8	33	8.3	19	4.8	87	21.8
Reserved	32	8.0	28	7.0	29	7.3	89	22.3
Recruit	47	11.8	36	9.0	57	14.3	140	35.0
Public army	18	4.5	19	4.8	17	4.3	54	13.5
Total	141	35.3	128	32	131	32.8	400	100.0
r=0.046		*sig= 0.181*				*P<0.05*		
C.s=NS								

This table shows that the highest percentage of Hyp-ochondriasis is 14.3° c total sample in rank group recruit of severe level, and the lowest percentage is 1 in rank group officer of mild and severe levels. There is no relation between rank **a** Hypochondriasis

Table (5) Relationship and distribution of Hypochondriasis le%d regarding to Marital Status

Marital status		lypochondriasis levels							
	Mild		Moderate		Severe		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Married	89	22.3	73	18.3	60	15.0	222	55.5
Single	50	12.5	55	13.8	71	17.8	176	44.0
Divorcee	2	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.5
Total	141	35.3	128	32	131	32.8	400	100.0
r= 0.157		*sig= 0.001*				*P<0.01*		
C.s=HS								

This table shows that the high-est percentage of Hypoch-ondriasis is 22. total sa-mple in marital group married of mild level, and the lowest percent 0.5% in divorcee of mild level. There is a high significant relation between status and Hypochond-riasis

Table (6) Relationship and distribution of Hypochondriasis regarding to Level of Education.

Level of Education	Hypochondriasis levels							
	Mild		Moderate		Severe		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Illiterate	2	0.5	15	3.8	26	6.5	43	10.8
Read and. write	14	3.5	13	3.3	16	4.0	43	10.8
Primary school	39	9.8	30	7.5	43	10.8	112	28.0
Secondary school	59	14.8	43	10.8	32	8.0	134	33.5
Diploma	7	1.8	9	2.3	4	1.0	20	5.0

Table (6) Continued

Bachelor and postgraduate	20	5.0	**18**	**4.5**	10	2.5	**48**	**12.0**
Total	**141**	**35.**	**128**	**32**	**131**	**32.8**	**400**	**100.0**
r=-0.224			***sig= 0. 000***			***P<0.01***		
			C.s=HS					

This table shows that the highest percentage of Hyp-ochondriasis is 14.8% of total sample in level of education group secondary of mild level, and the lowest percentage is 0.5% in illiterate group of mild level. There is a high significant relation between level of education and Hypochondriasis

Table (7) Relationship and distribution of Hypochondriasis levels regarding to Date of Repatriation

Date of **repatriation**	*E*		**ypochont**		**riasis**		**s**	
	Mi	**d**	**Moderat**		**Severe**		**Total**	
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**
1990-1992	**31**	**7.8**	50	12.5	**56**	14.0	**137**	**34.3**
1993-1995	**4**	1.0	11	2.5	**13**	3.3	**28**	**7.0**
1996-1998	**9**	**2.3**	6	1.5	**5**	1.3	**20**	**5.0**
1999-2001	**35**	**8.8**	15	**3.8**	**18**	4.5	**68**	**17.0**
2002T	**62**	15.5	46	11.5	**39**	9.8	**147**	**36.8**
Total	**141**	**35. 3**	**128**	**32**	**131**	**131**	**400**	**100.0**
r=-0.258			*sig= 0.000*			*P<0.01*		
			C.s=HS					

This table shows that the highest percentage of Hypo-chondriasis is 14.0% of total sample in repatriation group 1990-1992 of severe level, and the lowest percentage is 1.0% in group 1993-1995 of mild level. There is a high significant relation between date of repatriation and Hypochondriasis **Discussion 1- Discussion of demographic characteristics**

The results of this study indicate that the age of sample at capture ranged between 14 and 37 (88.6%) (Table 2), this means that the age of the most members of the army is from the youth for the military service is compulsory in Iraq and it begins with 18 years of age and those had spent many years during the wartime which had continued for 8 years, and also this age is the age of military personnel. This result was supported by; Al-Samarai who presented that the age of his sample was ranged between (27-45)°[0)]' Hassan and Hassan who said that the age was ranged between (20-50)°[1}] The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between the age of the repatriate at capture with the infliction by Hypochondriasis, this means that the more age at capture is the more infliction by hypochondriasis is for the higher ages mean the higher percentage of level of education and married and those are more aware of and sensitive to the health situation than others.

This study revealed that the durations of captivity for the sample obtained are (28.5%) for the repatriates who stayed for 6 to 9 years, (24.3%) for 18 to 21 years, (21.8%o) for 14 to 17 years, and so on for the rest of the sample (Table 3). This constitution of the numbers exchanged between 6 to 9 year and 18 to 21 for the half of the exchanged Iraqi prisoners of war happened in 1990 and the most of them were captured in 1982 so most of them spent about 8 years in captivity for about half of

Iraqi prisoners of war was captured during 1982 that because the wide campaigns and battle took place in this year, and this js applied to the repatriates who spent about 17 years. The study indicated also that there is a high significant relationship between the period which the captive had spent with the infliction by hypochondriasis for the long period means the more sufferings and more accumulation of bad and unhealthy situations which brought more doubts, suspicions and fears from inflicting with certain and untreated diseases.

The majority of the sample (35.0%) was from Recruits, (22.3%) reserved, and (21.8%) sub-officer (Table 4). The author thinks that Iraqi army, which had compulsory military services depended on two kinds; recruits and reserved soldiers and the rest were from the voluntary personnel, and most of sub-officers were from reserved men. This is supported by; Ammash and Sarmak who found that (67%) of the sample were from soldiers and sub-officers(12); Al-Samarai who indicated that the majority (51.9%) were from Reserved and (31.11%) recruits(10); and Hassan and Hassan found that about (66%) of the sample were from recruit and Reserved00'

This study revealed that before capture (55.5%) of the sample were married. (44.0%) were single, (0.5%) were divorcees (Table 5). From the author's point of view this high percentage of married group is due to early marriage for the tradition of Iraqi society, and most of Iraqi families began during the wartime to marry their sons lest they might martyr in the fronts and left without any sons, in other hand, some young soldiers refused to marry for they did not know what the fate had hidden for them. Hamzah said that (52%) were single, (40%) were married, and (3.0%) were divorced°3) but this disagreed with the study of; Al-Samarai which indicated that (60%o) were married, and (40%) were single00)' and Hassan and Hassan who indicated that (59.6%o) were married, (39%) single, (1.1%) divorcee, and (0.2%) widower00

The study revealed that before capture the level of the education of the Iraq prisoners of war; (33.5%) were secondary school, (28.0%) were primary school. (12.0%) were bachelor and postgraduate, (10%) were illiterate the same percentage could read and write, and (5.0%) had diploma (Table 6). The author thinks that the Iraqi army consisted of different levels of education for the military service wJ compulsory for all these levels, so it was not strange to find these levels in captivit} Hamzah said that (68%) of the sample were from intermediate and secondary school graduates03' This disagreed with the study sample percentage taken by Ammash ar._ Sarmak who revealed that (25%) were illiterates, (46%) were primary, (12%) were secondary school graduates, and (17%) had bachelor°2)- The study found that there a high significant relationship between level of education and the infliction ': Hypochondriasis for the more level of education has the repatriate the **mon** knowledge awareness has, so they were aware of what the results of bi circumstances unhealthy situations are.

The majority of the sample (36.48%) had been repatriated between 1990 and 1992 and (36.29%) after 2002 (Table 7). International Committee of Red CnJ (1992) declared that about 41 thousand of Iraqi repatriated prisoners of war had bed released until 1992(7) This long period between the first release in 1990 and aftc 2002 for Iran was used to refusing to repatriate the Iraqi captives after ever> agreement with Iraqi government, so they stayed more than 10 years after the fir repatriation. The study revealed that there is a high significant relationship betwed date repatriation and the infliction by Hypochondriasis for most of captives who wel repatriated recently had spent the longest periods in captivity, so the more recent **thl** date of repatriation is the more periods had the captives spent, that means the **mod**

sufferings and the worst unhealthy circumstances had faced. 2-
Discussion of Hypochondriasis as a Psychiatric Disorder

This study revealed that 141 repatriates (35.3%) of the sample obtained was inflicted with mild level of Hypochondriasis, 128 repatriates (32.0%) of moderate level, and 131 repatriates (32.8%) of severe level, this result is supported by; Sutker and Allain who said that Hypochondriasis was characteristically elevated among former prisoners of war [20]

Al-Samarai when he revealed in his study that (46.2%) of Iraqi repatriated prisoners of war were inflicted with psychiatric disorder[110] Ursano and Rundell said that following repatriation some former prisoners of war in Korean conflict developed psychiatric disorder due to different causes[14] Sutker et al revealed in their study extraordinary long-term cognitive, emotional and behavioral sequelae with high prevalence of co-morbidity, specially mood, anxiety, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and alcohol abuse[0 5); Eitinger said that prisoners of war of WWII (The second World War) suffered from serious somatic and psychological damage[0 6): Ohry et al said that former POWs reported more severe psychiatric symptomatology and more functioning than the other combatants'[17] Tennant et al revealed that chronic psychiatric and psychosomatic morbidity was found in former prisoners of war[18] Ursano et al revealed an increased risk of post-repatriation psychiatric morbidity[19]' From the author's point of view, the prevalence of Hypochondriasis among Iraqi prisoners of war was due to a number of causes; the long periods of captivity which those captives had spent in places that did not consider healthy or even suitable for human being to live in with bad treatment especially the nutrition, ventilation, medication, and the psychological stress due to the process of the captor intelligence to change their beliefs by "brain wash" operations; also the prevalence of different diseases among a large numbers of captives in the same place without enough medication made the rest of captives feel that they are going to face the same fate of those who had inflicted with some untreated diseases and might die, this situation made most of captives feel that they were inflicted with some dangerous diseases when they feel some simple symptoms.

Recommendations

1. To help Iraqi repatriated prisoners of war the government must provide the psychiatric, psychological, and social services for them and must be existed whether in the army or in the ministry of Health.
2. Rehabilitation programs constructed by specialists must be held for those repatriates to help them psychologically and socially.
3. Psychiatric and mental health services must be provided in primary health care and with follow-up studies to discover and treat any psychiatric disorders or physical diseases.

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