

Latent Class Analysis of Northern Irish veterans in the context of mental health and alcohol difficulties

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Background

- NI veterans are unique. They may have been exposed to more trauma than other sub-groups of veterans (Troubles/legacy)
- NI (GP/veterans) have higher rates of mental health issues
- The drinking culture, as a coping tool, in the military is deeply embedded
- Mental health and alcohol in response to trauma are often comorbid.



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How do we assess co-morbidity for NI veterans?



- We can perform latent class analysis to see what sub-groups exist within this population
- Those that endorse similar responses to questions within a survey will become 'class members' of specific groups
- We conducted LCA on the seminal study (NIVHWS) data using Mplus.

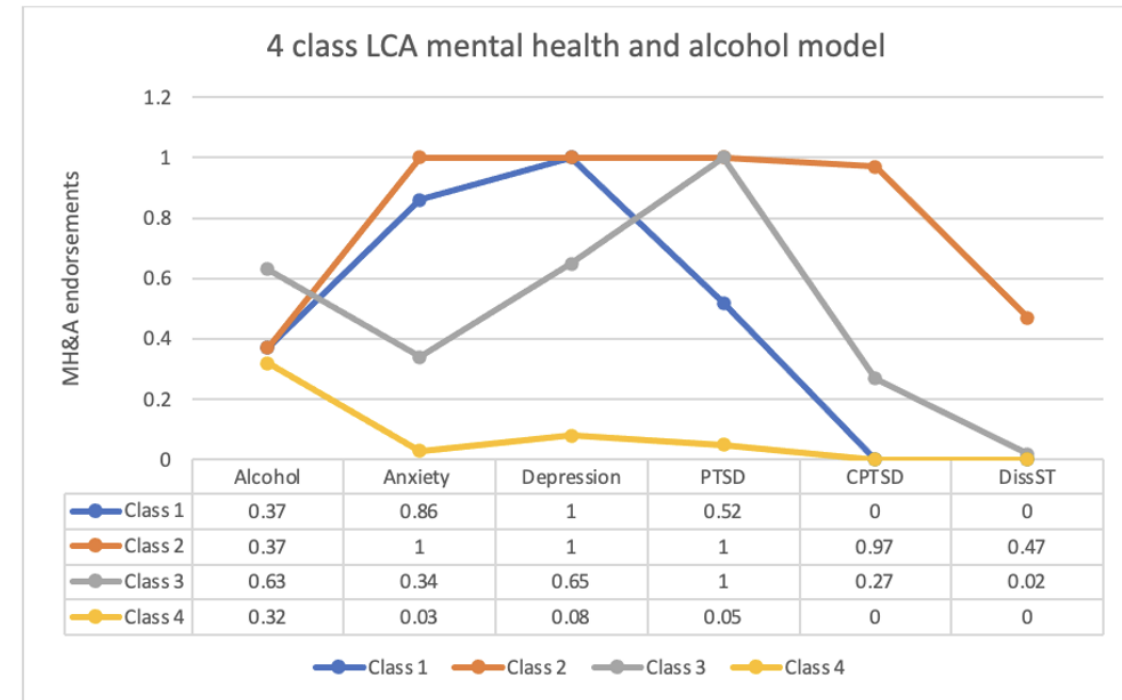


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Our LCA using mental health and alcohol measures

(Audit, GAD, PHQ, PCL, ITQ, DSS)

- 609 participants - 89.66% male, age *M* 55.26 (*SD* 10.61), most were 45+, 73.81% married/cohabiting, 61.02% protestant, 45.81% employed full time, 31.52% retired/medically retired, 86.54% Army, 45.48% UDR, 86.17% depl inside NI
- The veterans fell into one of four classes: (1) 62 (10.81%); (2) 120 (19.70%); (3) 61(10.02%); (4) 366 (60.10%).



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Findings

60.10%
low/no MH
comorbidity

19.70%
moderate/
high
comorbid
across six
measure

Depression
most
commonly
endorsed
issue



39.90% comorbid
but nuanced –
different MH&A
difficulties (at least
two conditions;
mainly PTSD,
anxiety, depression)

EVERY class
endorsed risky
drinking at
moderate to high
levels, regardless
of other MH
scores



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Discussion/future directions

- Rates of poor MH were comparable with clinical, help-seeking samples of veterans
- Elevated rates of trauma exposure is likely linked to poorer MH outcomes
- Many with poor MH were 'homeserve', UDR soldiers
- If veterans wish to remain self-marginalized in NI, especially the ex-UDR, this may perpetuate the poor MH cycle
- Alcohol use may be unrelated to poor MH but is driven by local NI as well as military culture
- How do you help a 'hidden' population?



**Thanks for listening.
Any questions?**

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