

Book Review of *Aging Veteran With Disabilities: A Cross-National Study of Policies and Challenges*

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Aging Veterans with Disabilities: A Cross-National Study of Policies and Challenges

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'I can't stand it to think my life is going so fast and I'm not really living it.'

Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*

In military and veteran health studies, much has been written about general health issues and policy measures to support veterans who encounter life-challenging physical conditions. However, a review of existing literature reveals three main gaps: (1) the aging experiences of veterans with disabilities; (2) the physical health, psychological wellbeing and cognitive wellness of veterans, particularly those challenged by spinal cord injuries (SCI) and PTSD; and (3) institutional and social policy measures to support older veterans across different demographic locations.

With an overall aim to bridge the existing gaps in knowledge, *Aging Veterans with Disabilities: A Cross-National Study of Policies and Challenges* focuses on veterans who were wounded in World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, as well as current health and social policy measures, legislations and institutional framework in three countries, the United States, the United Kingdom and Israel.

Aging with a disability refers to 'individuals who age with a physical, mental, or cognitive disability acquired in early or mid-life' (p. 33). Built on this central conception, this monograph discusses specific policy considerations supporting veterans with disabilities. Chapter 1 introduces the past and present policy schemes for veterans with disabilities, policy concerns and future directions. In particular, this chapter provides an overview of the compensation and benefits in recognition of the

unique contributions made by war veterans. Chapter 2 provides the conceptual models, propositions and evidence for successful and accelerated aging exemplified by SCI and PTSD. These theory bases include lifespan theories and activity, disengagement and continuity theories. Chapter 3 concentrates on the unmet needs of aging veterans with disabilities, particularly their health and psychosocial needs. Chapter 4 examines government policies from a multi-stakeholder perspective. The policy areas discussed in this chapter include priority health and social care services, personalised and dedicated care services, retirement, pension and social security provisions, and geriatric and extended care options in institutional and non-institutional settings. Chapters 5 and 6 provide policy recommendations and insights for policymakers.

Overall, the monograph contributes to the existing literature on three fronts: (1) a holistic and systematic understanding of the physical, cognitive and psychosocial wellbeing of veterans with disabilities acquired in later life stages; (2) a rich evidence-based approach in the analysis and evaluation of veteran health in the nexus of welfare and warfare; and (3) mutual learning of institutional policies and practices, such as nation-specific compensation, pension and medical benefits in support of ageing veteran with disabilities.

Regardless of all perceived political, ideological, institutional, geographical or sociocultural differences, veterans deserve our respect for their services and contributions to their country. Veterans embody many cherished human qualities—deep loyalty, discipline and resilience. Veterans' spirit profoundly influences how their descendants navigate the world and will always be a source of strength and inspiration for future generations. As a proud granddaughter of a commander and a personnel officer, I inherited these highly-regarded human qualities through my upbringing. Most importantly, I sense the profound calling to strive for a world of peace in which human beings are treated fairly and have the opportunity to take proper care of

their family, community and society. This monograph gives due respect and much-needed attention to the unmet needs of veterans with disabilities. However, more lessons can be drawn from policy measures and cases from other countries in the Global South. This monograph can help address current issues in veteran health policies.

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