

Higher Education Success of Combat Student Veterans with mTBI

Approach: Qualitative Study
Design: Single case study with multiple embedded units of analysis

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Purpose/Hypothesis

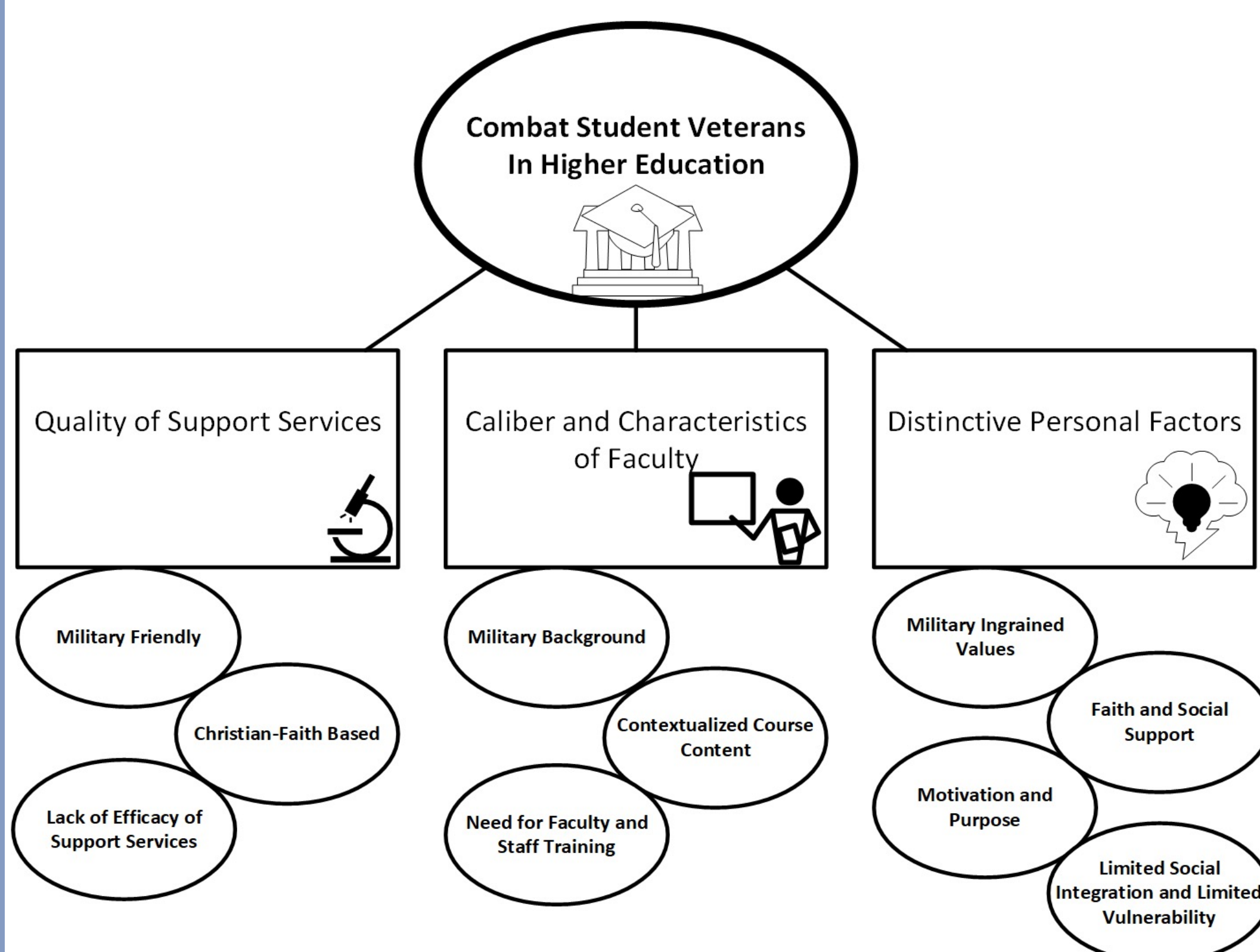
- The purpose of this case study was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that support the success of combat student veterans in higher education. Astin's developmental theory of student involvement for higher education and Vacchi's conceptual model of student veteran support provided the guiding theory and conceptual framework for this study.

Methods

- Combat student veterans (8), staff and faculty (8), at Atlantic State University
- Interviews, focus groups, document analysis.
- Within-case analysis, extracted themes and subthemes.
- Data analysis, triangulation of findings
- Voices of Combat student veterans as primary sources of data.

Results

- Themes and Subthemes:

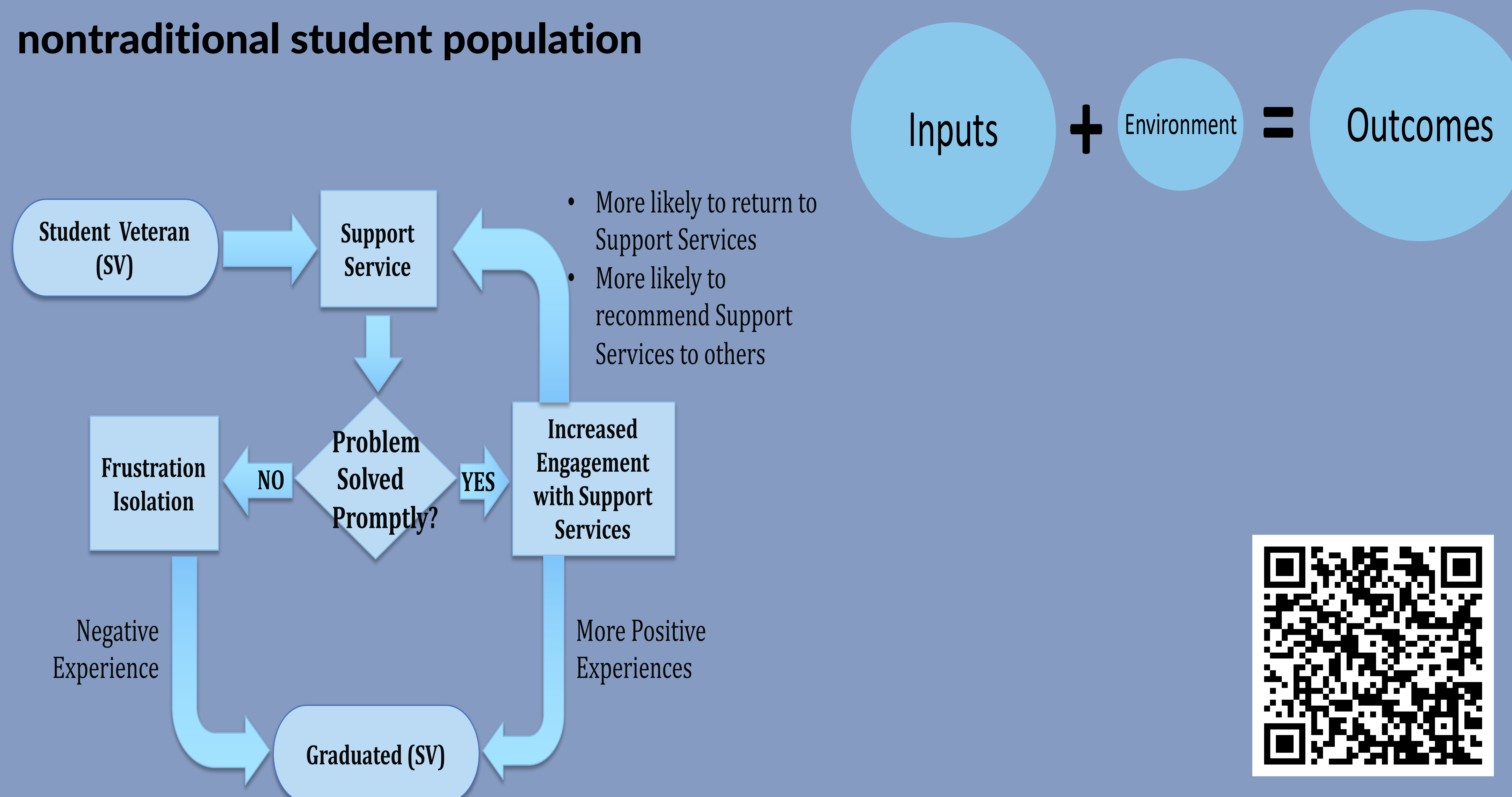


Conclusion

- Neutral and detracting factors were related to processes and intentions, rather than methods and strategies.
- Using a strengths' perspective rather than a deficit model of the understanding of the college student's experience helped reveal the strengths and weaknesses in a military friendly higher education institution.

In this study:

- Combat student veterans did not identify themselves as disabled. Injuries sustained in combat took a firm backseat to their primary goal of securing a college degree and preparing for employment.
- The premise that student veterans in higher education have difficulty with transitioning from the military college, or that they have problems with persistence, was unfounded.
- The transition of student veterans through higher education is facilitated to the extent that universities adapt strategies specifically for this nontraditional student population



- The link between non-college reference groups and veteran success in college is doubly significant because military socialization extends into their post-military college lives.
- Participants exposed to blast waves and blast-induced concussions had considered this inconsequential and unimpactful to their daily functioning.
- Many combat student veterans are not using healthcare and some with PTSD are not engaged in VHA care (Friedman, 2004; Kim et al., 2010; Sharp et al., 2015).
- Vestibular rehabilitation was largely underutilized in combat student veterans.

Bottom Line

- Support services must be prompt and thorough in resolving issues, particularly for non-traditional students.
- Faculty and staff need training to work effectively with nontraditional students.
- The Inputs in Astin's I-E-O model are weighted heavily for combat student veterans, and this creates opportunities for faculty to enhance the education Environment

