

A Survey of Gulf War II Veterans Using Social Media to Assess Barriers to the Completion of Registration and Enrollment at the Veterans Health Administration



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Background

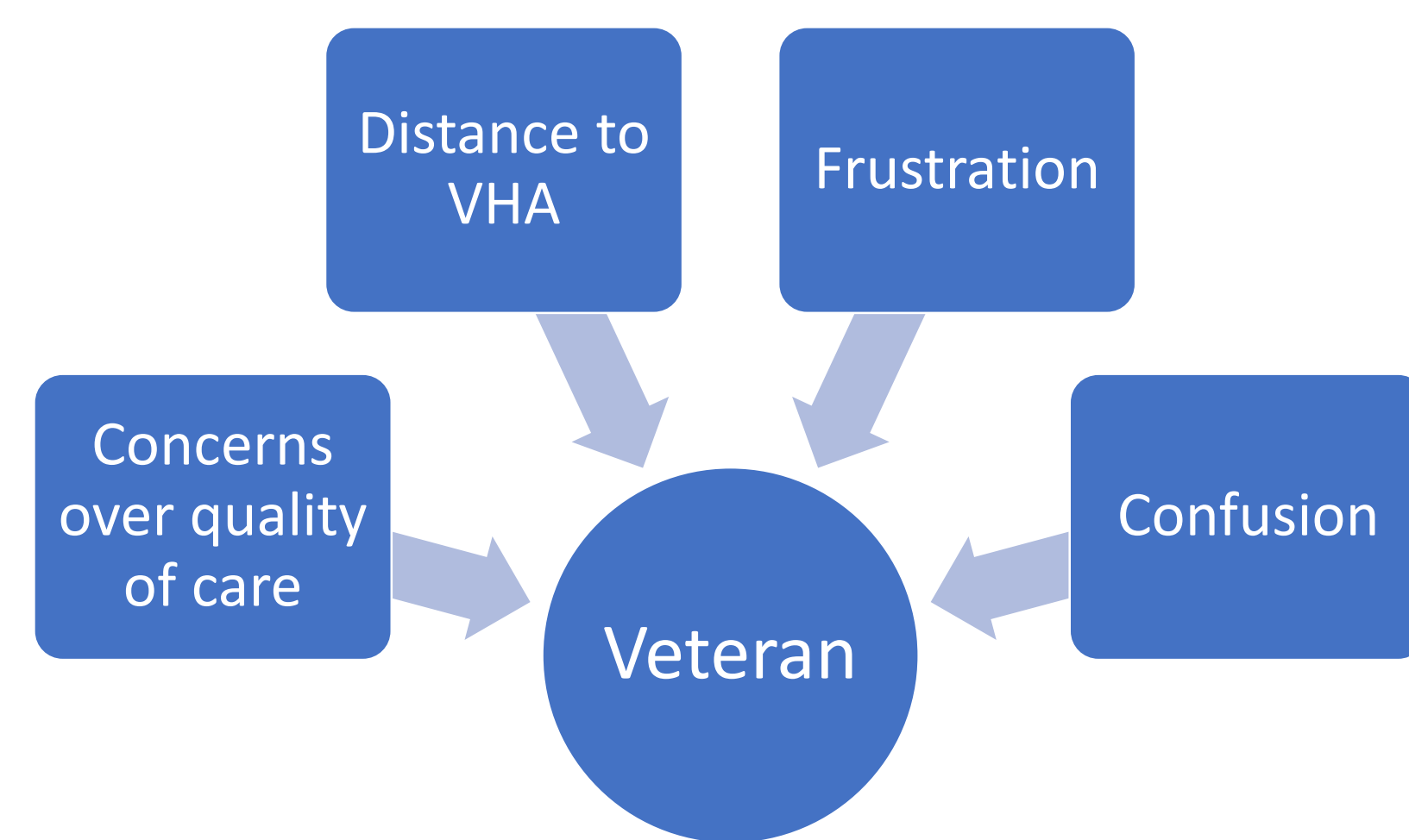
- ★ The Veterans Health Administration provides comprehensive health care for eligible veterans in the United States.
- ★ Gulf War II Veterans served in conflicts after September 11, 2001
 - Over 15 percent of disabled veterans.⁵
- ★ While younger, these veterans have complex mental and physical health needs.^{5,14}
- ★ Less than 18 percent of eligible Gulf War II veterans have completed the eligibility and registration process at the VHA.¹⁷

Literature Review

Barriers

Interventions

- Care at the VHA lead to **better outcomes** in mental and women's health.^{6, 15, 16}
- There are **thousands of programs** that claim to help veterans during their transition period
 - Veteran's Service Organizations (i.e. Disabled Veterans of America.)⁸
- **No studies have been done to examine the effectiveness of these programs on increasing VHA registration**



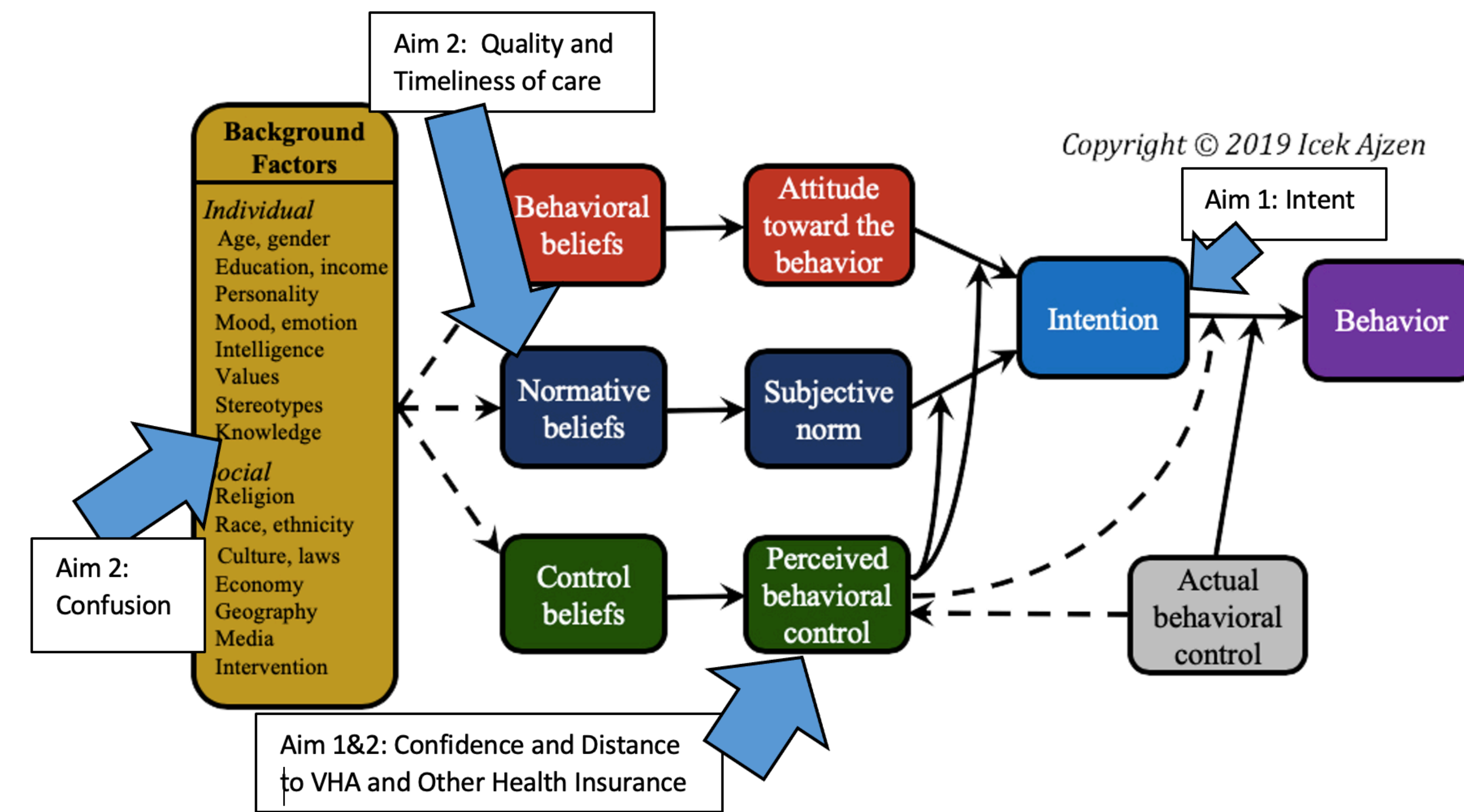
Purpose & Aims

Purpose: to ascertain intent, confidence, as well as specific barriers to the completion of the eligibility, registration and enrollment process at the Veterans Health Administration among Gulf War II veterans

Aim 1: Assess intent and confidence to complete the registration and enrollment process at the VHA among veterans using responses to questions regarding intent and confidence on a survey posted to a veterans Facebook group between October and December 2020.

Aim 2: Identify barriers and rationales to completing the registration and enrollment process at the VHA among veterans using responses to questions regarding barriers and rationales on a survey posted to a veterans Facebook group between October and December 2020.

Theory of Planned Behavior



The Theory of Planned Behavior by Azjen & Fishbein (1981) was used to inform, develop and interpret this project.

Methods

- Descriptive design using an anonymous fourteen-question Qualtrics survey
- Twelve questions were Likert-scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree)
- Two questions included a free text option
- Recruitment of participants used a weekly post of the survey link to a private Facebook veterans' group, DMV Veterans
- Demographic included sex, age, military branch, rank at separation and time elapsed since separation. No identifiable participant data was collected

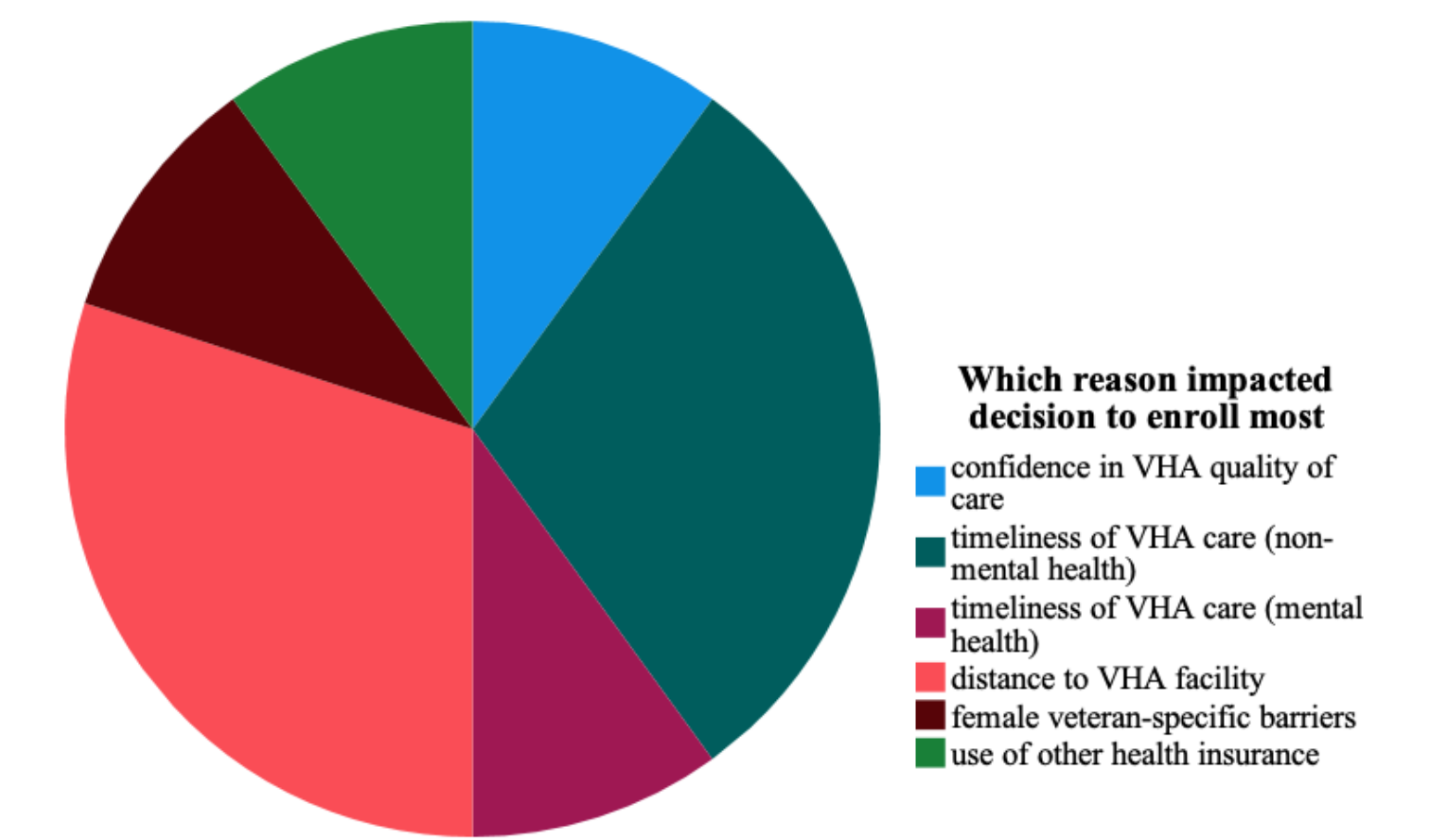
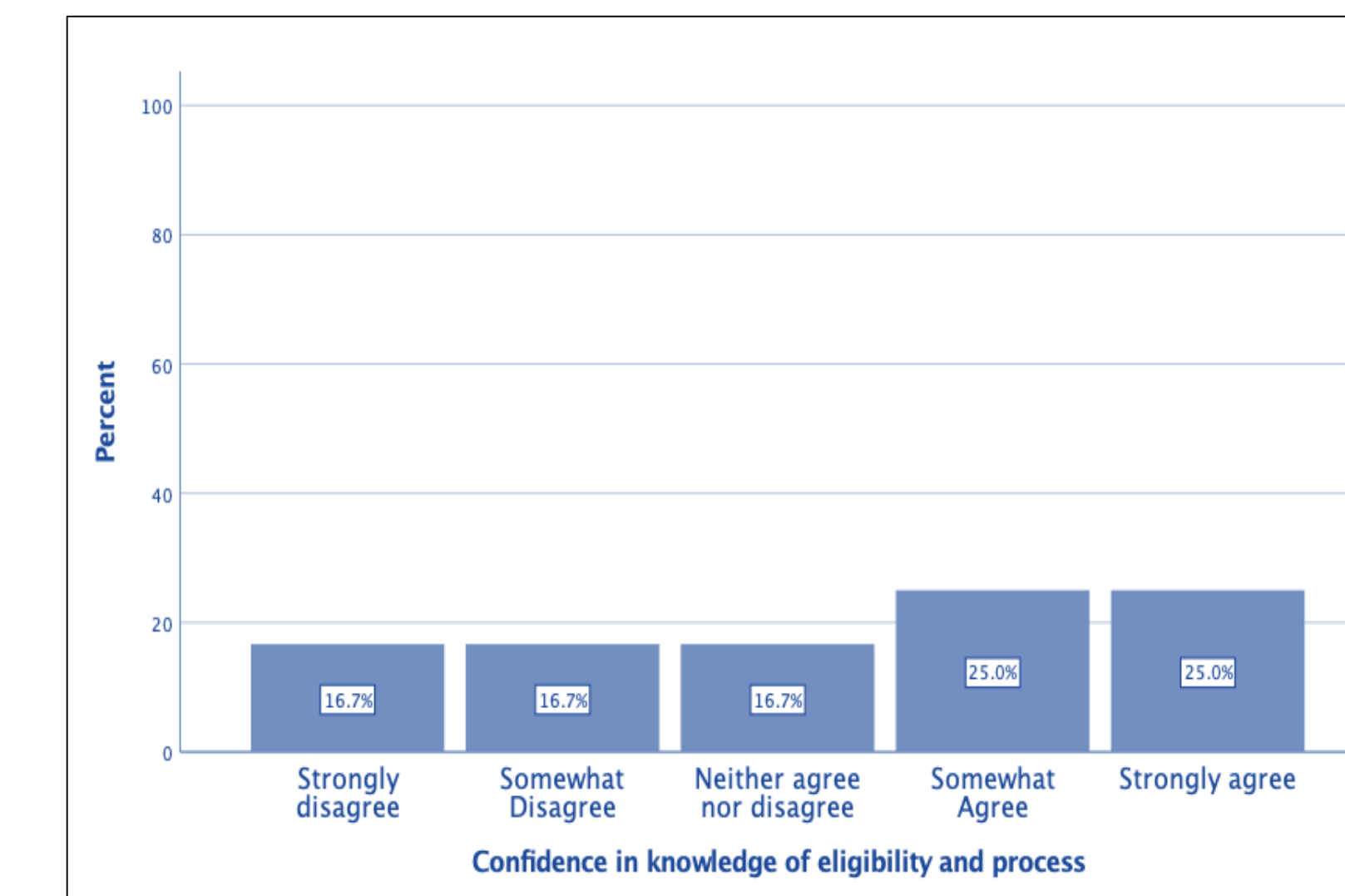
Demographic Results

Demographic characteristics	(N=12)
Age, mean (SD)	41 (7.8)
Gender at time of separation, n (%)	
Male	9 (75)
Female	3 (25)
Time since separation in years, n (%)	
0-1	3 (25)
1-2	1 (8.3)
3-5	1 (8.3)
5+	7 (58.3)
Rank at separation, n (%)	
Enlisted	9 (75)
Officer	3 (25)
Branch of the Military, n (%)	
Army	9 (75)
Navy	1 (8.3)
Air Force	2 (16.7)
Location by State, n (%)	
Virginia	4 (33.3)
Maryland	6 (50)
North Carolina	1 (8.3)
Colorado	1 (8.3)

Results

Results by aim

- ★ **Aim 1:** Assess changes in intent and confidence to complete the registration and enrollment process at the VHA among veterans
 - Most of the respondents had completed the process already, those that had not yet registered or enrolled, all intended to register in the next year (somewhat agree 8.3%, strongly agree 16.7%)
 - Half of the responses expressed confidence in the process
- ★ **Aim 2:** Identify barriers and rationales to completing the registration and enrollment process at the VHA among veterans
 - Two-thirds of the veterans felt the VHA was too far away.
 - None of the female veterans felt the VHA provided high-quality women's health care.
 - Over ninety percent of veterans agreed or strongly agreed that they had concerns with the timeliness of non-mental health care.
 - Twenty-five percent agreed that the VHA provided high quality care.
 - However, seventy-five percent agreed that receiving care at the VHA would benefit their life.



Free text responses to survey questions

Survey Question	Responses
If none of the previous answers most impacts your decision to complete the registration and enrollment process at the VHA, tell us in your own words or just type N/A.	I need convenience of scheduling and to work my med appointments around my job
If none of the previous answers would help you most, tell us in your own words or just type N/A.	I attempted to obtain a follow-up GYN for concerning symptoms, and the clinic at the [sic] DC VA refused to schedule an appointment for me despite the doctor telling them to.
	I've been enrolled for almost a year and I have yet to get an appointment. I can't even get the clinic to pick up a phone to make an appointment.
	Just having a facility nearby would be the most beneficial. Loudoun county, VA is the fastest growing in the state with a high percentage of veterans. The closest facilities are well over a one hour drive and for many, two hours.
	Staff that actually works

Conclusions, Limitations & Next Steps

Limitations:

- Small sample size
 - difficulty with generalization
 - expansion of the inclusion criteria to include veterans that had already completed the registration and enrollment process.
- Question clarity:
 - One question that had the potential to be interpreted in two different ways.
 - Unlikely when taken in context of the survey
- Facebook
 - Both strength and weakness

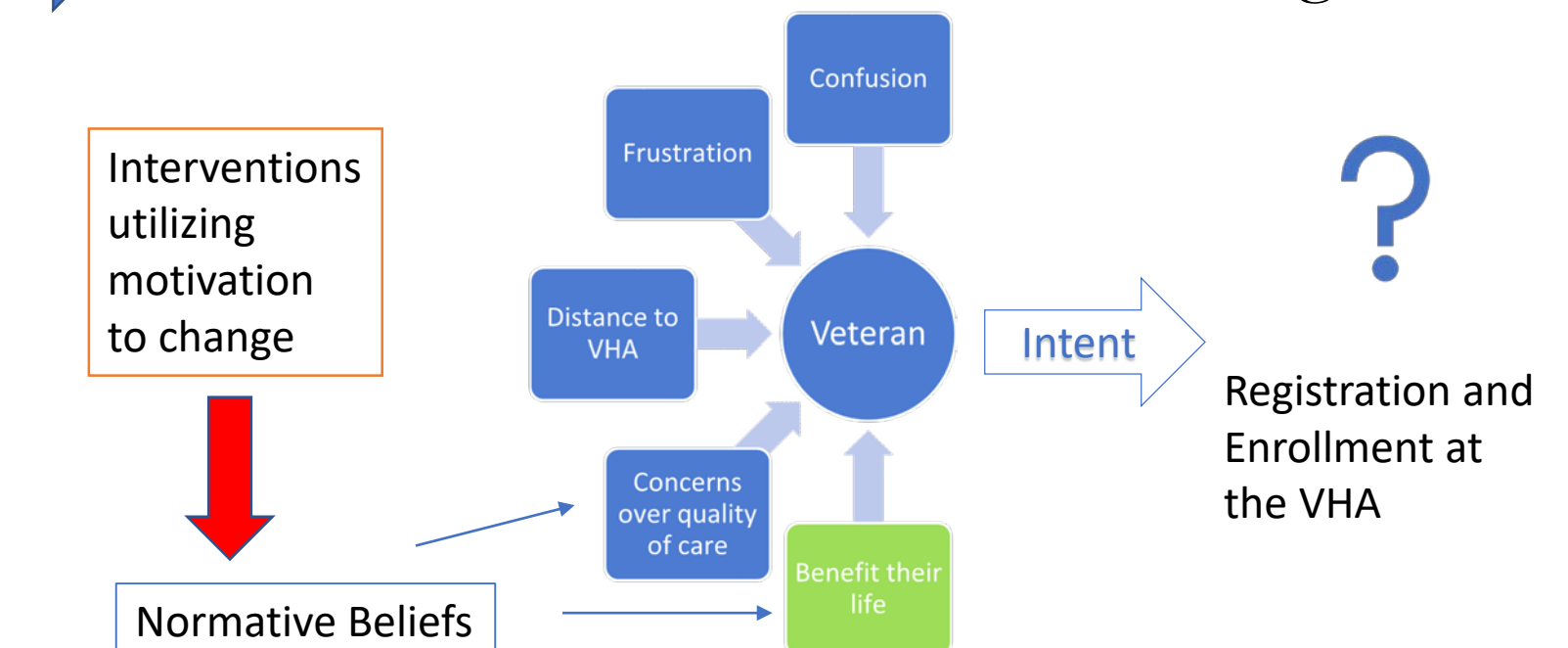
Next Steps

- The final question of the survey asked veterans to state what they felt would help them most. The most common answers were
 - "A case manager/VHA person that will contact you to explain/clarify the process"
 - "Website/online resource with all the information in one place"
 - "Veteran contact that can explain/clarify the process."

Conclusions

- The findings of this study shed a light on the perceptions of veterans and seeking health care at the VHA.
- The findings were consistent with the literature.
- Veterans felt confident in the process and their ability to get help & many veterans reported barriers to seeking their care at the VHA.

Areas for Future Interventions Using TPB





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