

Students Transitioning from Reserve Military Service to Academic Studies: Insights from the Iron Swords War

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Background: The Iron Swords war (October 2023) led to a mass mobilization of Israeli reserve soldiers, including many university students. For student-soldiers, returning to academic life involved emotional strain, physiological disruption, and uncertainty. This study explored how ongoing uncertainty experience of the student-soldier affected their transition and functioning.

Methods: A qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews of eight sport therapy students who served in first-line combat missions. Data were analyzed thematically.

Findings: Five main themes emerged: (1) lingering traumatic memories affecting body and mind; (2) persistent uncertainty and loss of control; (3) identity rupture between combat and academic roles; (4) difficulties in re-adapting to academic routines; and (5) reframing combat experiences into a professional sense of mission.

Conclusions: The transition from extended combatant service to academic settings entails complex emotional and identity-related adjustments, and cannot be characterized as a purely logistical process. Consequently, tailored academic and psychological support programs are essential for helping reservist students reintegrate meaningfully into their academic atmosphere.

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