

Peer Review

# Review of: "The Potential of Conversational AI for Mental Health Support in UK Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans: A Mixed-Methods Health Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study"

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This is a strong and important study that tackles a highly relevant issue: barriers to accessing mental health care among military personnel. The findings are undoubtedly valuable for the field.

## *Overall Strengths*

- The demographic characteristics and barriers are summarized in very clear tables, which significantly improves the readability and accessibility of the data for the reader.
- The integration of both quantitative and qualitative results is a major strength. This mixed-methods design provides a much more comprehensive and nuanced perspective on the issue.

## *Suggestions for Enhancement*

To further strengthen this excellent manuscript and enhance its clarity for readers, a few areas could be expanded upon:

- Adding a few more details about the methods would allow others to better understand your process and potentially replicate the study.
- Please consider specifying the software used for both the statistical analysis and the qualitative analysis. This is a standard and helpful piece of information for readers.
- The qualitative findings are interesting, and providing more detail on how they were developed would make them even more robust.

**Suggestions:**

1. It would be wonderful to include a brief description of how the final themes were refined. For example, did the research team discuss and merge initial codes? Were themes checked for consistency? A sentence or two on this process would add wonderful transparency.
2. A brief comment on the richness, detail, and length of the 145 free-text responses would be very helpful. For instance, stating that the responses were typically 2-3 sentences long and provided specific examples would help justify the use of thematic analysis and frame the findings appropriately.

**Declarations**

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.