

# Adjustment in IDF Disabled Women: Equally Different

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# Adjustment to Disability – General

- Disabled people face physical, social, and institutional difficulties
- An integrative approach to disability relates both to personal and environmental factors, and examines adjustment in relative terms while emphasizing human differences
- Adjustment to disability is a complex and multidimensional process, which occurs over a period of time, throughout life.

# Disability in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)

- The IDF recognizes a person as “military disabled” if he/she was injured during service or other types of active duty in security organizations which serve the country
- Like men, women are also wounded in war, training and traffic accidents, terrorist attacks, and other duty-related injuries
- IDF disabled women consist of 6% (3000) out of the total IDF disabled veterans (51,000)

# Disabled Women: Comatose

- Research regarding female disabled veterans is scarce, but goes back to the Vietnam war (e.g., Brende & Parson, 1985)
- In Israel, the first research which examined attitudes towards this population, was conducted in 1995 (Koren, unpublished)
- Personal and social lack of awareness toward unique issues of disabled female IDF veterans is the result of a combination of traditional socialization and inadequate medical models for women rehabilitation

# The Research

- Hypothesis: IDF disabled men and women will differ in adjustment to disability.
  - *Adjustment was measured by physical health, mental health, and social functioning*
- Participants: 81 men and 95 women, all disabled during active duty. Of course, all became disabled after the age of 18.
- Method: A battery of self-report scales was administered

# Results

- *Self-Image*: Women tended to report a lower self-image in comparison with men, despite the fact that no significant differences were found
- Women try to **hide** their disability more than men
- *Social Stigma*: 70% of women report feeling a social stigma towards them, in contrast to 55% of men ( $p \approx 0.05$ )
- 82% of women feel **deprived** when compared to male peers, in contrast with only 10% of men who feel the same way ( $p < 0.001$ )

## Results (2)

- ***Social Support***: IDF disabled women receive significantly less social support in comparison with IDF men ( $p < 0.01$ )
- ***Economic Well-Being***: No significant differences were found, but women earn significantly less than their male peers ( $p < .05$ )
- Men were found to be in better physical and mental states, but results were not significant. However, women were able to function better than men

# Discussion

- An integrative approach which combines different factors and addresses the interaction between the individual and society can enhance our understanding of adjustment to disability
- Double Jeopardy: the disabled woman is discriminated against twice; once for being a woman, and again for being disabled.

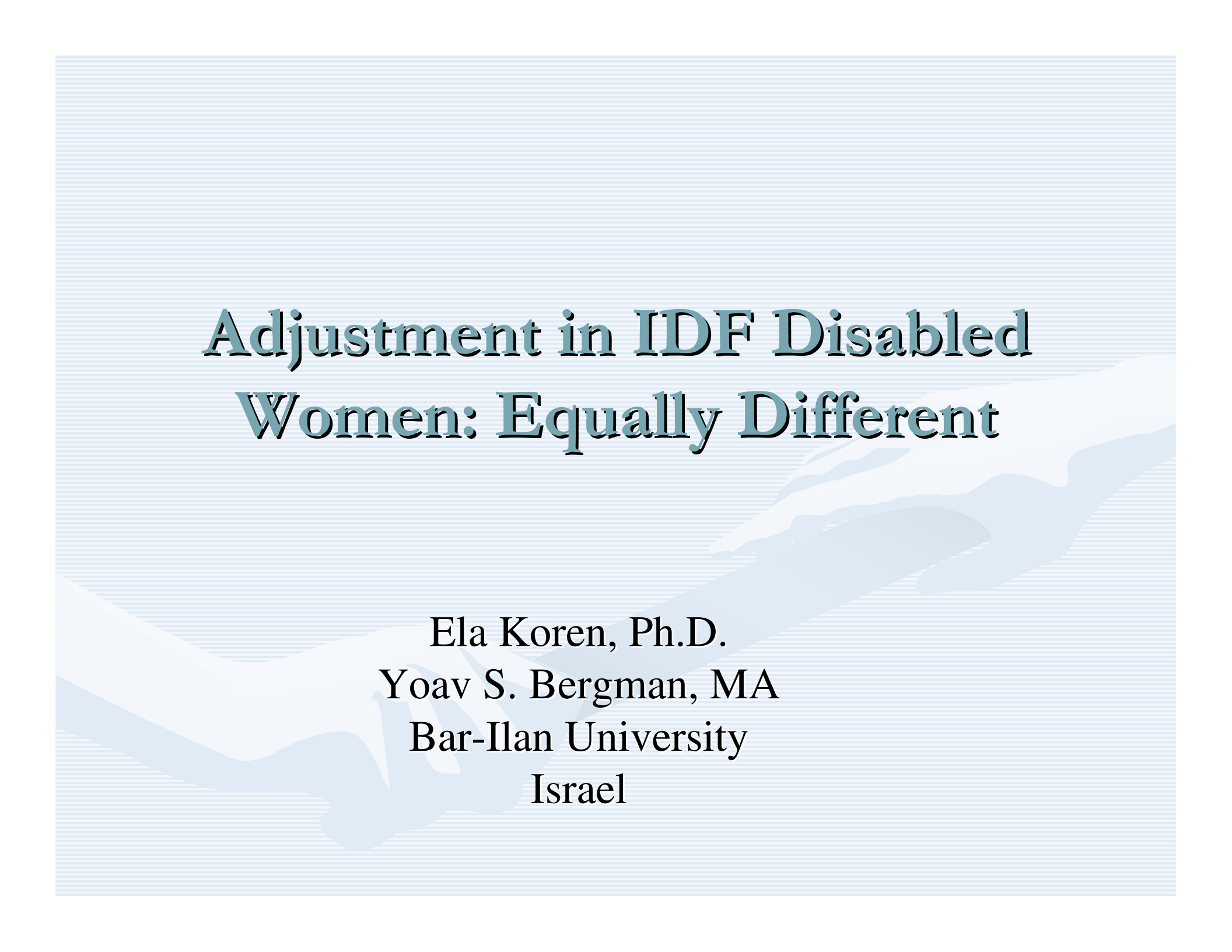
# Future Implications

- Due to the growing role of female soldiers in armies, understanding their unique needs is becoming increasingly important
- Disability among female soldiers: Different but equal
- A comprehensive approach is needed to achieve a new level of social justice
- More research is needed for strengthening our results and defining problems and solutions

# Conclusion

***Disability is not an obscene word!***



The background of the slide features a faint, light blue image of two hands shaking, symbolizing agreement or support. The hands are positioned diagonally across the frame, with one hand on the left and one on the right, their fingers interlaced.

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# Multi-Variate Model

