

A Comparative Study of Difference in Spirituality & Optimism Level in Army Personnel Posted in Peace Areas and Field Areas

Seema Mandiwal¹, Prof. Cheena Puri²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur

²Professor, Department of English, Govt Girls College, Jaipur.

Abstract

The Armed Forces personnel need to have a hardy personality looking at the type of stresses they face. They should have an optimistic attitude to be able to cope with challenges. Spirituality helps a lot in developing inner power and resilient behavior. The aim of the study was to assess the difference between psychological variables such as spirituality and optimism between army personnel posted in field areas as compared to those who are posted in peace areas. The sample consisted of 100 Armed Forces personnel. The entire study was done with the help of The Spirituality Questionnaire: Core Dimensions of Spirituality (Jochen Hardt, 2012) and Life Orientation test–Revised (Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W., 1994)

Keywords: Spirituality, Optimism, Armed Forces.

Introduction

An **Armed Force** is a professional organization formally authorized by a sovereign state to use lethal or deadly force and weapons to support the interests of the state. It typically consists of branches such as an Army, Navy, Air Force and in certain countries the Marines and Coast Guard. The task of the military is usually defined as defense of the state, and its citizens, and the prosecution of war against another state.

Armed Forces Personnel are routinely exposed to a number of unique stressful life events. Stress is a normal part of human existence—a double-edged sword, which can help us mobilize and achieve, or physically and psychologically incapacitate us. Armed Forces Personnel those posted in field areas are more stressed because they are staying away from their family and have more pressurized work environment as compared to those posted in peace areas.

In India, soldiers are often posted in two distinct types of areas: **field areas and peace areas**. Field areas are regions characterized by active conflict or tense situations, where soldiers are deployed to maintain security and counter threats. These areas demand constant vigilance, combat readiness, and a high level of operational engagement. On the other hand, peace areas are locations where there is relatively less immediate threat or conflict. Soldiers in peace areas focus on community engagement, infrastructure development, and humanitarian assistance, while remaining prepared to swiftly respond to

any emergent security challenges. The contrast between field and peace areas highlights the diverse roles and responsibilities that soldiers undertake to ensure national security and stability.

Spirituality refers to certain kinds of activity through which a person seeks meaning, especially a "search for the sacred". It may also refer to personal growth, blissful experience, or an encounter with one's own "inner dimension". Spirituality is one of the most important sources of strength and direction in peoples' lives. Spiritual side of human nature remains important to Indian lives. (James,1902/1958) and (Allport,1967) have considered spirituality as a proper subject for scientific study. Spirituality is a human phenomenon, which exists in almost all persons (Husain, 2002). Spirituality is a grounding wire, a lens to look at life through, the roots that hold us firmly to the ground and the trunk that holds strong against inclement weather as branches continue to grow and change.

Optimism could be the most powerful predictor of behavior in leading people to persist in goal pursuits. Optimism contains an expectation of a favorable outcome even when unfavorable results could occur. People who might be optimistic engage in more focused coping in stressful situations (Chemers, Watson, & May, 2000; Gillham, 2000). An optimistic soldier may feel that her/his achievement will be worth staying in the Army in spite of negative aspects of his/her career choice. Thus, a more optimistic individual may overcome life stressors and make the best out of the organization.

Spirituality and Optimism appear to be different but still encompass common characteristics. Optimism, unlike spirituality can be defined as a generalized expectation that an individual will experience good things in life, rather than spirituality which refers more to trust or reliance and "desire accompanied with expectation of obtaining what is desired or belief that it is obtainable". Both Spirituality and optimism involve expectations and desires to meet goals (Bryant & Cvengros, 2004). Consequently, this could cause soldiers to demonstrate an emotional attachment rather than an obligation to an organization. In other words, soldiers who are optimistic may display a stronger affective commitment to their organization rather than a continuance commitment.

Therefore, affective but not continuance commitment relates with soldiers' spirituality and optimism (Karrasch, 2003). Gade et al., (2003) noted that commitment can be related with retention of soldiers and their positive mental well-being attributes (e.g., spirituality and optimism). McClure, P. & Broughton, W. (1988) indicated that soldiers in individual Army units sometimes do not demonstrate cohesion with each other due to professional and personal reasons. This problem intensifies when soldiers are deployed and/or separated from the unit and their families. Therefore, soldiers' personal and professional problems can negatively impact their level of spirituality and optimism which can cause stress. This problem sometimes causes difficulties in soldiers' to return to civilian life.

Methodology

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to assess difference in the levels of spirituality and optimism between Army Personnel posted in peace areas and field areas.

Hypothesis

There will be significant differences in levels of spirituality and optimism between Army Personnel posted in peace areas and field areas.

Sample

Purposive sampling technique was used and the size of sample was 100 Armed Forces Personnel selected from field areas and peace areas, in the age range of 21 to 45 years. They were selected from different army cantonments.

Tools Used

1. **The Spirituality Questionnaire:** Core Dimensions of Spirituality (Jochen Hardt et al., 2012) This questionnaire contains four dimensions: Belief in god, Search for meaning, Mindfulness, and Feeling of security. All scales were to be answered on a five point Likert Scale with the categories “not true at all, hardly true, don’t know, rather true and absolutely true”. The items of the spirituality questionnaire were coded from zero to four. Sub score scales of the spirituality questionnaire were calculated as the mean of their respective items.
2. **Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R):** This questionnaire (Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W, 1994) consisting of 10-item measure of optimism versus pessimism. Of the 10 items, 3 items measure optimism, 3 items measure pessimism, and four items serve as fillers. LOT-R is a revised version of the original LOT. The original LOT had 12 items: 4 worded positively, 4 worded negatively, and 4 fillers. Dispositional optimism was originally constructed as uni-dimensional. However, LOT-R data generally appeared bi-dimensional as a number of studies suggest a two correlated –factor model representing optimism and pessimism. Attempts at corroborating one factor models suggest that correlated errors between positively worded items are required for an adequate account of the data.

Statistics Used

Independent samples t-test was used to examine differences among Armed Forces Personnel posted in field and peace areas in the two variables.

Results and Discussion

Mean and t-value for Spirituality and Optimism between Army Personnel posted in Peace areas and Field areas.

Variable	Category	N	Mean	t-value	Significance level
Spirituality	Field area	50	54.2	1.18	0.05
	Peace area	50	56.04		
LOT-R	Field area	50	17.32	1.02	0.05
	Peace area	50	18.32		

The study reveals that there are significant differences in spirituality and optimism between Army Personnel posted in peace areas and field areas. The findings of the investigation indicate that in

field areas, Armed Forces Personnel have less optimism as compared to peace areas. Soldiers in peace are more spiritual and optimistic and may display a stronger affective commitment to their organization rather than in field areas. This is supported by the study done by McClure and Broughton (1988) which indicated that soldiers in peace do not demonstrate cohesion with each other due to professional and personal reasons. This problem intensifies when soldiers are deployed in field areas.

Therefore, soldiers' personal and professional problems can negatively impact their spirituality and optimism. However, soldiers in peace area can overcome these obstacles with high spirituality and optimism as they are residing with their family members and in better conditions. Thus the hypothesis – “There will be significant differences in spirituality and optimism between Army Personnel posted in peace areas and field areas” is accepted.

Conclusions

From the result of the present study, it can be concluded that there is significant difference in spirituality and optimism levels between Army Personnel posted in peace areas and field areas.

Implications

From this research it is evident that Army Personnel posted in field areas scored low in spirituality and optimism levels as compared to those who were posted in peace areas. Hence army personnel posted in field areas can be given some kind of counseling and some form of psycho-social intervention to increase optimism and spirituality. Whereas counseling and intervention should also be given to Army Personnel in peace areas so that they prepare themselves for field areas.

Limitations

The most fundamental limitation of the present study was the small sample size, consisting of only 100 Army Personnel, and the restrictions of privacy legislation and policies which necessitated reliance on volunteer participants and opportunity to sampling of the respondents.

Suggestions for Further Research

Inclusion of subjects from a wider age range and a larger sample will be more reliable.

References

1. Allport, G. W., & Ross, J. M. (1967). Personal religious orientation and prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 5(4), 432-443.
2. Bryant, F. B., & Cvigengros, J. A. (2004). Distinguishing hope and optimism: Two sides of a coin, or two separate coins? *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23, 273-302.
3. Chemers, M. M., Watson, C. B., & May, S. T. (2000). Dispositional affect and leadership effectiveness: A comparison of self-esteem, optimism, and efficacy. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26, 267-277.
4. Gade, Paul & Tiggel, Ronald & Schumm, Walter. (2003). The Measurement and Consequences of Military Organizational Commitment in Soldiers and Spouses. *Military Psychology - MIL PSYCHOL.* 15. 191-207. 10.1207/S15327876MP1503_03.
5. Gillham, J. (2000). *The science of optimism and hope*. Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press.

6. James, W. (1958). *The varieties of religious experience: A study in human nature*. Penguin.
7. Jochen Hardt., Schultz, S., Xander, C., Becker, G. & Dragan, M. (2012). The Spirituality Questionnaire: Core Dimensions of Spirituality. *Psychology*, 3, 116-122. doi: 10.4236/psych.2012.31017.
8. Karrasch, A. I. (2003). Antecedents and consequences of organizational commitment. *Military Psychology*, 15(3), 225-236. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327876mp1503_05.
9. McClure, P. & Broughton, W. (1988). Military community cohesion. 98-4.
10. Scheier, M. F, Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W, (1994). Optimism. In C. R. Snyder, & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 231-243). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.