



MANAGEMENT OF STRESS IN ARMY PERSONNEL THROUGH POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY

Social Science

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research is to assess and manage the level of stress in army personnel through Positive behaviour therapy. One hundred and fifty army personnel constituted the sample for this research. The entire sample (75 seniors and 75 juniors' male army personnel) was screened using Case Study Schedule (Hemalatha Natesan, 2016) and S.I. (Stress Inventory) (HemalathaNatesan and NandiniMenon, 2002). The Psychological intervention called Positive Behaviour Therapy (Hemalatha Natesan,2004) was given to all the subjects. All the four strategies of Positive Behaviour Therapy namely, Relaxation Therapy, Counselling, Exercises and behavioural Assignments were applied. The therapy was given for one hour for thrice a week on alternate days for eight weeks. The results showed that the major cause of stress reported by the entire sample was too much to do in a short period and inability to be with the family when required. Initially, the entire sample had very High/High stress but after administration of the therapy there was a significant reduction in the mean stress from very high to low level of stress proving the efficacy of Positive Behaviour Therapy in army personnel.

KEYWORDS

Stress, Positive Behavior therapy

INTRODUCTION

Stress is often described as a feeling of being overwhelmed, worried or run-down. Stress can affect people of all ages, genders and circumstances and can lead to both physical and psychological health issues. By definition, stress is any uncomfortable "emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological and behavioral changes" (Anderson, N.B. 1998). Some stress can be beneficial at times, producing a boost that provides the drive and energy to help people get through situations like exams or work deadlines. However, an extreme amount of stress can have health consequences and adversely affect the immune, cardiovascular, neuro endocrine and central nervous systems.

Method:

OBJECTIVES

- To identify the causes of stress in the sample.
- To assess the level of stress of the sample.
- To find the effect of Positive Behaviour Therapy in the management of stress.

SAMPLE

One hundred and fifty male army personnel constituted the sample for this research. They were selected through Purposive sampling method. They were matched for the age, marital status, type of family, education and level of stress. They were in the age range of 25 to 45 years divided into two groups: younger age group from 25 to 35 years and older group from 36 to 45 years.

TOOLS

The tools used to collect the data were Case Study Schedule by Hemalatha Natesan (2014), and Stress Inventory by Hemalatha Natesan and Nandini Menon (2002). The validity of S.I. is 0.80 and the reliability by test retest method is 0.95. Hemalatha Natesan's Positive Therapy - Handbook for healthy, happy and successful living and Audio C.D. on Relaxation Therapy were used for intervention.

PROCEDURE

The entire sample (75 senior and 75 junior male personnel) was screened using Case Study Schedule (HemalathaNatesan, 2014) and S.I. (Stress Inventory) (HemalathaNatesan and NandiniMenon, 2002). The sample were from the age group of 25 to 45 years which was further divided into two groups of younger group from 25 to 34 years of age and older group with age from 35 to 45 years. The stress management-training programme called Positive Behaviour Therapy was given to the entire sample. Positive Behaviour therapy is a package evolved by Hemalatha natesan in 1998.It combines the eastern techniques of yoga with western techniques of cognitive behavior therapy. It has four strategies and behavioural assignments. The therapy was administered to the sample in smaller groups of five

members for ten sessions over a period of 8 weeks. Each session lasted for one hour. After 8weeks all the subjects were reassessed using case study schedule and stress questionnaire. And the results were statistically analyzed using t-test. The experimental design used in this research is 'Assessment before and after treatment without control group'. The data collected were statistically analyzed for mean, standard deviation and t-test using SPSS Package.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

TABLE I, AGE AND MARITAL STATUS OF THE SAMPLE (N=150)

Age (years)	Number	Percentage	Marital status	Number	Percentage
Below 35	75	50	Unmarried	15	10
Above	75	50	Married	135	90

Table I shows the age group and marital status of the sample. Only 10% of the sample was unmarried as whereas majority (90%) of them are in the status of being married.

TABLE II, CAUSES OF STRESS OF THE OLDER SAMPLE BEFORE AND AFTER TREATMENT

Causes of stress	Before Treatment		After Treatment			
	Assessment I		Assessment II		Assessment III	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Too much to do at a short period	75	100	56	75	25	33
Inability to be with family when required	75	100	56	75	25	33
Sense of isolation	72	96	53	70	23	30
Uncertainty of future	71	95	53	70	23	30
Lack of job satisfaction	71	95	51	68	21	28
Prices sky rocketing	70	93	51	68	21	28

(Percentages are rounded off)

Table III shows the causes of stress as reported by the older sample before and after treatment as Assessment I, Assessment II and Assessment III respectively. Too much to do at a short period and inability to be with family when required were the two main causes of stress as reported by 100% of the sample. Since, in the army, time is always at a premium, the first reason is well understood. This also explains the unforeseen/unpredictable nature of jobs assigned to army personnel to be completed within a short stipulated time frame sine during war, the situation remains unpredictable and fluid all the time.

Since most often than not, army personnel are posted far away from

their home town and in case of any emergency/unforeseen event at home, he has to first seek permission to go home as also arrange for the travel back home which may involve more than two modes of transportation including long walks to road/rail head with his personal baggage. At times, due to natural calamities, adverse weather/climatic conditions or short time available, he may have to postpone the journey which may lead to some other problems/difficulties back home. Army and Navy personnel are more prone to this kind of acute stress while posted at remote areas of Siachen Glacier, Leh/Laddakh region, North-eastern parts, At sea or sailing etc.

Sense of isolation has been reported as a cause of stress by 96% of the sample due to the location of their work-place as road/rail/air communication to these places may not be reliable. At the same time, despite being in advance technological time, due to either natural barriers of security reasons, voice or data communication may not be through all the time giving rise to frustration among the individuals.

Uncertainty of coming days and Lack of job satisfaction have been reported as the causes of stress by 95% of the sample which is higher than among the younger group. As a person grows in age and service, he tend to be more methodical in planning but due to uncertainty of communication and nature of job assigned, he tend to get disturbed as nothing can be planned for a smoother life, neither for self nor for the family members. As regards Lack of job satisfaction among the older group, it may be because of the service conditions, monotonous nature of job of poor leadership. In the present situation, one tends to, and rightly so, starts comparing his life with that of other services like police, IT personnel, private sector etc without realizing their miseries. As a bread earning member of the family, one needs to be abreast with the latest economic situation so as to match his/expenses with his earnings. But inflation, rising cost and his liabilities do tend to give rise to the stress which ultimately affects his performance at work.

However, all these symptoms among the older sample of army personnel did get reduced significantly when the subjects were addressed with psychological intervention and were given sessions of treatment. However Rational Emotive Therapy and cognitive behaviour therapy changed their perception to be more optimistic. In general, the causes of stress reported by 100% to 73% of the sample were reduced to 33% to 21 % after treatment which proves the efficacy of the management of stress.

TABLE III, CAUSES OF STRESS AMONG THE YOUNGER SAMPLE BEFORE AND AFTER TREATMENT (N=75)

Causes Of Stress	Before Treatment		After Treatment			
	Assessment I		Assessment II		Assessment III	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Too much to do at a short period	75	100	60	80	25	40
Prices sky rocketing	70	93	65	87	56	75
Inability to be with family when required	65	87	56	75	25	33
Sense of isolation	64	85	53	75	23	35
Uncertainty of future	62	83	49	65	23	30
Lack of job satisfaction	55	73	49	65	23	30

(Percentages are rounded off)

Table IV exhibits the causes of stress reported by Younger sample. As against Older sample, this younger sample too had 'Too much to do in a short period' as the leading cause of stress with 100. 87% of the younger group has shown inability to be with family when required as a source of stress. It is understood as the younger generation may not have much of liabilities at home but the sense of responsibility does play an important role to remain in close touch with the family and they too want to be with them when required most. However, the work place and other factors may not permit them to be with their families at the time of requirement putting them under undue pressure.

Lack of married accommodation and Prices sky rocketing has been reported by 93% of the younger sample respectively as the causes of stress. Understandably, both the causes do have their individual merit as even younger generation likes to stay with their spouse and parents

as much as possible. This problem of lack of married accommodation gets aggravated more at places where good medical facilities are available and army personnel want to avail these for themselves and their family members as the same quality of services may not be available back at their home towns.

Continuously increasing prices of all commodities is and has been a stressor among all and army personnel are no exceptions. Since younger generation tend to spend more, they are more concern about the increasing prices and remain under pressure to spend as well as send some money back home to their spouses or parents.

Sense of isolation and Uncertainty of future and has reported 85% and 83% and 80% of response from the younger group of sample. In case of older group of sample, it was 96%, 95% and 93% which shows the sensitivity of the later group towards these factors.

73% of the younger group reported lack of job satisfaction as causes of stress. Since most of the army personnel below officers rank hail from rural background and they do have so many family issues like landed property, splitting of family, inter-family conflicts etc and they being earning member of the family, have a say in these matters. Although, they may not have direct responsibilities in their families, however, being a earning member and image of army in rural areas, make them a unavoidable person and hence their cause of stress.

TABLE IV, LEVEL OF STRESS OF THE ENTIRE SAMPLE BEFORE AND AFTER TREATMENT (N=150)

Level of Stress	Before Treatment		After Treatment			
	Assessment I		Assessment II		Assessment III	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very High	142	95	0	0	0	0
High	8	5	130	87	0	0
Moderate	0	0	20	13	0	0
Low	0	0	0	0	150	100

(Percentages are rounded off)

It is alarming to note from Table IV that initially, 95% of the sample, had 'Very High' stress and the remaining 5% had 'High' stress. Hence the null hypothesis, 'The level of stress in army personnel is not high' is rejected. As discussed under Tables III & IV, various factors had led to high or very high stress in the sample. It is amazing to find that as a result of Psychological Intervention, the stress level of the sample had reduced from 'High' to 'moderate' in most of the subjects in Assessment II and to 'Low' in Assessment III, in all the subjects. Hence the null hypothesis, 'Psychological Intervention has no effect in the management of stress among the army personnel' is rejected.

According to Psychological Intervention, stress is due to one's perception of the situation rather than the situation per se. Thus by helping the subjects develop a positive and realistic perception towards issues such as Too much to do in a short period, sense of isolation, work pressure, rules & regulations, uncertainty, career pressure and family problems, it was possible to modify their negative perception, thereby removing their negative thoughts, beliefs, emotions and behaviour.

Fok and Wung (2006) conducted a study to enhance positive behaviour in adults to help them cope with stress. A school-based project was implemented using focus group interviews, an open forum and follow up interviews and journals. The objectives were to identify the stressors encountered by the students and their ability to cope, to develop and implement an educational activity to promote positive coping. The findings support the view that an early prevention programme for promoting positive coping behaviour to adults is useful.

TABLE V: SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEAN STRESS BEFORE TREATMENT (ASSESSMENT I) AND AFTER TREATMENT (ASSESSMENTS II & III)

Older Sample (75)	Assessment	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	CR
	I	37.55	5.97	14.25	18.77**
	II	23.29	3.94		
	III	5.61	2.27	31.93	41.32**
	I	37.55	5.97		
	III	5.61	2.27		

Younger Sample (75)	I	39.76	6.29	15.60	25.06**
	II	24.16	4.77		
	II	24.16	4.77	17.17	34.23**
	III	6.99	1.86		
	I	39.76	6.29	32.77	47.95**
	III	6.99	1.86		
Entire Sample (150)	I	38.65	6.21	14.92	30.31**
	II	23.72	4.38		
	II	23.72	4.38	17.42	47.92**
	III	6.30	2.18		
	I	38.65	6.21	32.35	62.78**
	III	6.30	2.18		

** Significant at 0.1 level

It is alarming to note from Table XII that the mean stress for older sample, younger sample and the entire sample was high before treatment (Assessment I). But after the administration of Psychological Intervention, the mean stress came down to some extent in Assessment II and to a great extent in Assessment III. The mean differences between the different assessments are statistically significant at 0.01 level for all the three groups namely older group, younger group and the entire sample.

These results clearly prove the efficacy of Psychological Intervention in the management of stress in the sample. Hence the null hypothesis, 'Psychological Intervention has no effect in the management of stress among the army personnel' is rejected. Relaxation Therapy helped the sample to relax their body from head to foot. Rational Emotive Therapy and Cognitive Restructuring helped to change their negative cognitions. Tension releasing exercise helped to remove their tension, fear, anger, anxiety and worries. Smile and Laugh Therapy facilitated a cheerful state. The entire sample enjoyed practicing 'Laugh Therapy' and reported that they felt very cheerful and happy after practicing it.

It is interesting to note that after the subjects underwent Psychological Intervention for 4 weeks, there was a reduction in the percentage of subjects reporting stress due to the same causes. The percentage reduced further to a great extent, after 8 weeks of the therapy. All these clearly indicate the beneficial effects of Psychological Intervention. In fact, all these factors continued to remain the same but the perception of the subjects towards these factors was modified through Positive Therapy. Hence, many of them did not perceive these factors as causing stress after undergoing Positive Therapy for 8 weeks. Probably if the Therapy were given for a longer period, it would have benefited the entire sample.

CONCLUSION

In the midst of the hoopla and ballyhoo that have surround the burgeoning public concern with stress and its deleterious consequences, meticulous scientists have systematically investigated the efficacy of numerous stress reduction techniques. Similar studies to be conducted over a wide area of army stations including field/difficult areas. To conclude trained counsellors may be posted to address the army personnel from time to time.

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