



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Psychology

IMPORTANCE OF MILITARY PSYCHOLOGY IN CURRENT SCENARIO

KEY WORDS: Military Psychology, Nature And Scope Of Military Psychology, Challenges For Military Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Military psychology is a special branch of psychology that focuses specifically on military personnel and their families. It is a broad, complex, and specialized field where knowledge gained from various other branches of psychology. The present paper attempts to take an overview of the developments in the field of Military Psychology and emphasizes the uniqueness of Military Psychology and highlights its prospects and challenges it presents in view of rapidly changing world scenario and modernization of warfare.

Weeks, months, and years of active military service can often lead to emotional and mental stress, for both soldiers and their loved ones. The war and turmoil witnessed by the soldiers is often enough to seriously affect their thoughts and actions. In fact, some studies have shown that the majority of enlisted men and women are affected by some type of mental or emotional disorder or illness. The soldiers themselves, however, aren't the only ones that suffer. Family members and loved ones are often affected by being separated from their soldiers for long periods of time. Thoughts of their soldiers being in harm's way day after day can also add to the mental anguish. Military psychology is a special branch of psychology that focuses specifically on military personnel and their families. This might involve performing psychiatric evaluations; assessing and treating mental and emotional disorders; and offering counseling services. Enlisting in the military has caused numerous emotional and mental health problems throughout the years, so the idea of military psychology is not necessarily a new one. It hasn't been until recent years that mental health professionals and military leaders have begun to realize just how important the mental health of enlisted men and women really was. This field saw massive expansion during World War II.

What is Military Psychology

Military Psychology is a unique sub-discipline of Psychology that determines its boundaries not by subject content or methods of conducting research, but by the requirements of the user. It is a broad, complex, and specialized field where knowledge gained from various other branches of psychology (for example, experimental, social, clinical, organizational, and personality) converges. Military Psychology has a vibrant bilateral relationship with the discipline of Psychology. The two grow together in tandem developments and advancements made in one being reflected beautifully in the other. The present paper attempts to take an overview of the developments in the field of Military Psychology. This paper emphasizes the uniqueness of Military Psychology and highlights its prospects and challenges it presents in view of rapidly changing world scenario and modernization of warfare.

Military psychology is the research, design and application of psychological theories and empirical data towards understanding, predicting, and countering behaviours either in friendly or enemy forces or civilian population that may be undesirable, threatening or potentially dangerous to the conduct of military operations. Military psychology transforms from sub-branch groups of different psychology disciplines into a tool used by the military, as will all tools of the military, to enable the troops to better survive the stresses of war while using psychological principles to unbalance the enemy forces for easier wins. All stresses and psychological illnesses that military psychology looks at are not specific only to the military. However, the military soldiers tend to face a specific combination of these otherwise generic stresses. Military psychology then specializes in looking at this unique combination of stresses that plagues the military and war settings. These stresses include posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), guilt, family difficulties with the veteran's spouse, nightmares and flashbacks, and many more. Military psychology is applied towards

counselling and treatment of stress and fatigue of military personnel or military families as well as treatment of psychological trauma. [1]

Role of Military Psychology

Military is a very big and complex organization characterized by a complex structure, several sub-units, diverse functions and activities, many job routes, and many employees. [2]

The military is a group of individuals who are usually trained and equipped to perform national security tasks in unique and often chaotic and trauma filled situations. These situations can include the front-lines of battle, national emergencies, allied assistance, or the disaster response scenes where they are providing relief-aid for the host populations of both friendly and enemy nations. Though many psychologists may have a general understanding with regards to a humans response to traumatic situations, military psychologists are uniquely trained and experienced specialists in applied science and practice among this special population. While the soldiers may be providing direct aid to the victims of events, the military psychologists are providing specialized aid to both soldiers, their families, and the victims of the events as they cope with the often "normal" response or reaction to uncommon and abnormal circumstances. Maintaining and enhancing the human capital is one of the major tasks performed by military psychologists.

In addition to the specialized roles previously mentioned, military psychologists often study the dynamics, train people in, and consult on hostage negotiations. In some cases the psychologists might not be the one directly handling the hostage situation, but hostage negotiators find value in resolving the hostage crisis using many of the scientific principles that are derived from the science of psychology. In addition, many of the principles of the scientific discipline of clinical psychology have their roots in the work of the early military psychologists of World War II.

Another common practice domain for military psychologists is in performing fitness for duty evaluations, especially in high risk and high reliability occupations. The set of unique challenges often faced by those in the military and the professions of arms such as: police, strategic security, and protective services personnel, the ability to perform reliable and accurate fitness for duty evaluations adds value and maximizes the human capital investment in the workplace by optimizing retention of the talents of active and prospective service men and women while minimizing risk in many areas including violence, mishap, and injury potential. Military psychologists can assess, diagnose, treat and recommend the duty status most suitable for the optimal well-being of the individual, group, and organization. Events that affect the mental state, resilience or psychological assets and vulnerabilities of the warrior and the command are where military psychologists are most equipped to meet the unique challenges and provide expert care and consultation to preserve the behavioral health of the fighting force. The fitness evaluations might lead to command directed administrative actions or provide the information necessary to make decisions by a medical board or other tribunal and must be thoroughly conducted by non-biased individuals with the

experience and training necessary to render a professional opinion that is critical to key decision makers. Military psychologists must be well versed in the art and science of psychology as specialized applied practice professionals. They must also be highly competent generalists in the military profession, and be able to understand both professions well enough to examine human behavior in the context of military operations. It takes the psychologist several years beyond the doctorate to develop the expertise necessary to understand how to integrate psychology with the complex needs of the military. [3]

Another very select and infrequent use of military psychology is in the interview of subjects, the interrogation of prisoners, and the vetting of those who may provide information of operational or intelligence value that would enhance outcomes of friendly military operations or reduce friendly and enemy casualties. Terrorism and counterterrorism, information management, and psychological warfare are value-added roles for the applied aspects of military psychology that are developing. Military Psychology ensures the safety and security of the nation, not only by aiding the combat efforts, but also in subtler ways. One such effort that continually goes on in war and peace times alike is formulation. Psychological warfare is a planned use of various psychological paradigms to influence the attitudes and actions of friendly, neutral and enemy populations important to national objectives. It is a communicative programme to affect others' perception, attitudes, and opinions and influence their behaviour patterns. The area of psychological operations include studying the need, goals, strength, and weaknesses of the target population in order to design appropriate propaganda strategies, and monitoring the media to eradicate enemy's influence and indoctrinate civil and military populations in favour of one's own nation. Processing the information received from the intelligence agencies, and suggesting appropriate operational methods of communication also forms an aspect of psy-ops [4].

Man power policy making and development of the human capital is one of the core areas which have received direct and significant influences and issues of leadership assessment and development of leadership qualities also have importance in Military Psychology. Military Psychology that studies the man-machine interface, and strives to achieve optimum equipment design. It aims to enhance the performance and effectiveness of the weapon and machine systems by optimizing human performance through system design. A specific area of cultural ergonomics within the realm of human factors engineering, deals with the influence of cultural factors on equipment effectiveness. Studies regarding artificial intelligence also form an important aspect of the domain. Areas like problem solving, planning and information fusion are the focus of recent researches. Issues of combat and non-combat stress among the military personnel also become a part of the domain of human engineering when the focus is on optimizing equipment design in order to reduce stress. Thus Military Psychology makes use of and benefits from developments in almost any and all sub-fields of psychology. [5]

Scope in Military Psychology

It was observed that negative behaviours among the troops harming self or colleagues, so more development emphasized on improving organizational communication, facilitating interpersonal interaction, improving provisions for basic facilities, improved preinduction screening and better training, and ensuring optimum organizational climate that would conserve mental health of the soldiers along with ensuring operational efficiency. The interrogation system used for gaining information from captured and surrendered insurgents has been evaluated and improvements based on psychological techniques have been suggested. Manuals detailing the techniques of interrogation have also been developed and the emergent paradigms emphasis on studying the interaction of personality traits, group structure and situational factors in assessing leadership. The efforts in the field are largely need based (applied) rather than idea-driven (basic), through which systems, tests, training and operational modules are delivered to the users. Military Psychology highlights this unique situation. Psychological assessment for personnel selection

in the military, for example, has certain specific requirements, and calls for customized test development for measuring non-traditional constructs. The tests developed in such manner have to be validated in simulated conditions in many instances. Certain special recruiting situations need single use non-standardized tests to be developed. Profile based selection is needed for certain other personnel. Traditional tests and rule bound scoring systems might not serve the specific needs of the military, and hence scoring based on non-specific rules based on the unique requirements of the situation is developed. Similarly, the area of strategic behaviour and psychological operations has to deal with critical issues in propaganda and counter propaganda, conflict resolution in low intensity operations, social engineering for attitude change in insurgency affected areas, strategic negotiation and interrogation strategies, attribute specificity in military leadership, factors affecting alienation in youth, rumor formation and mass hysteria, social triggers to fratricide/ sibicide, critical factors in military morale. The exploration of cognitive processes involves establishing threshold of mental workload, loss of situational awareness, multitasking and emotional regulation, task-specific cognitive profiling, camouflage detection, cognitive restructuring in high altitude, cognitive engineering for high-tech weapon systems, and cognitive failure in suboptimal conditions [6].

There is a need to enhance the capabilities for proactive preparedness by developing threat detection systems, prediction and forecast models. Expertise needs to be developed for managing and reducing the ill-effects of various stressors faced by the military personnel. Ways of evolving and training effective leaders who are adept at handling such crises is also a challenge. The expertise developed by Military Psychology in dealing with and managing the psychological after effects of disaster and trauma needs to be broadened. The benefits of such expertise has to percolate to the civil populations, not only for managing the disaster post-event, but with the aim of enhancing the resilience, to better face the stress and minimize the trauma. Creating an interface with other sciences like bio-engineering and computer sciences, developing a research environment to foster idea-driven concepts and search for their applicability to find solution to ground level problems, and going beyond pre-fabricated research designs to address new problems further add to the challenges. Also, growth of the discipline is possible only in interaction with the overall happenings in the field of psychology [5,6].

It is very disheartening to know that there is not a single University Department in India that offers a course in Military Psychology. Military Psychology, though rarely visible to the common person in India, is continuously striving to enhance its capabilities in an effort to do the best in the service of the nation. It is a challenge for the military psychologists to find further avenues where there can be fruitful interaction with the academia and researchers working in the field of psychology.

Suggestions for further development in Military Psychology

Military Psychology has unlimited avenues to grow in this country. The special geo-political location of and socio-cultural circumstances in India

The goals and missions of current military psychologists have been retained over the years, varying with the focus and strength of intensity of research put forth into each sector. The need for mental health care is now an expected part of high-stress military environments. Women in military roles is an area of study receiving an increasing amount of attention. Currently women make up 10%-15% of the armed forces. As women tended to move to away from nursing and helping roles, increasing attention is given to how the brutal realities of combat would affect the women psychologically. People with precise interest in working with active duty soldiers will gain valuable experience by serving in a branch of the military. It should be focused to establish Department of Military Psychology in various Universities. The coursework required by these majors allows service members to build on their experience and get a jump on a great career. Physical training is a vital part of any military career, and service members often pursue hobbies in the same area. A major in kinesiology combines

coursework in psychology, anatomy and physiology, and exercise science. Service members who enjoyed the physical nature of military service can transition those experiences into a fulfilling career. Perfect for infantry soldiers, this major combines military and team-building skills with a love of the outdoors. Coursework is focused in areas such as physical education, leadership, and natural sciences. Students can often pursue internships as well.

As our nation changes the way it delivers health care, health educators will play an integral role in keeping person healthy. Service members whose jobs focused on medical or medical support fields should investigate a major in health education or health promotion. Course topics include kinesiology, health sciences, education, epidemiology, and research methods. Recent history has sparked interest in the way we protect our nation from both domestic and international terrorist activity. Students with military experience have a specialized background in and experience with the theory and practice of national security. A major in national security/homeland security involves coursework in military history, leadership, psychology, sociology, and intelligence. Our nation's military has been an active part of every stage of our history. Military history as a discipline is growing in popularity, and new programs are being developed at several schools. A military history degree involves critical analysis of past military action and traditions. In the military, the signal corps is responsible for creating and maintaining the networks through which service members communicate in remote zones. If your military experience lies in that area, a degree in computer engineering might be a worthwhile pursuit. Computer engineering students study computer systems, mechanics, networking, and advanced mathematics. Creating an interface with other sciences like bio-engineering and computer sciences, developing a research environment to foster idea-driven concepts and search for their applicability to find solution to ground level problems, and going beyond pre-fabricated research designs to address new problems further add to the challenges. Also, growth of the discipline is possible only in interaction with the overall happenings in the field of psychology. It is a challenge for the military psychologists to find further avenues where there can be fruitful interaction with the academia and researchers working in the field of psychology.

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