

PEACE OF MIND AND LIFE ORIENTATION OF INDIAN AIR FORCE PERSONNEL

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ABSTRACT

Humankind is well versed with the stressors of Military Life and the effect of these stressors shows on the physical and mental well-being of the Indian Armed Forces. The role of Peace of Mind (PoM) on the overall well-being of people has also been studied. Similarly, research in the field of Life Orientation (LOT) has proven that there is a positive relationship between self-esteem, self-efficacy, hope, resilience, subjective well-being and Optimism. Optimism has been found to be negatively correlating with stress, negative affect and hopelessness. However, no research has been conducted to assess the relationship between these two variables in Indian Air Force personnel. The different levels of PoM and LOT among the three branches of Indian Air Force i.e. Flying Branch, Technical Branch and Ground Duty Branch were also assessed. "Peace of Mind Scale" and "Life Orientation Test- Revised" were conducted on a sample of 90 Indian Air Force Personnel (both male and female), 30 from each branch of the Air Force. Data was analyzed through t-test and Pearson's Correlation. Findings reflect that there is a Positive relationship between PoM and LOT among Indian Air Force personnel. Ground Duty Branch had the highest levels of Peace, Flying Branch had the highest levels of Life Orientation and Technical branch had the lowest levels of both PoM and LOT. Further research is suggested so that the reasons behind these findings can be examined.

KEYWORDS: Indian Air Force, Military Stressors, Life Orientation (LOT) & Peace of Mind (PoM)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian Armed Forces are inevitably one of the most important professional services of our country. A job that ensures that we safely and comfortably go about living definitely comes with its own set of virtues. A young adult experiences a great deal of pride when he gets selected to be a part of country's most valued profession. He then transforms into a soldier and starts living his life with a totally different set of virtues. He learns integrity, when he observes his supervisors leading an honorable life; learns sacrifice when he witnesses his fellow men die and most importantly, learns loyalty when he realizes that even he can give up his life in a heartbeat for his nation and his countrymen. All these virtues do not accompany him alone. They bring along with them a whole cluster of problems and issues for the Military Personnel.

As per the data made public by the Indian Government, a total number of 1,113 suspected suicide cases have been recorded in the Indian Armed forces in a period of 9 years during 2010-2019. The "Minister of State for Defense", Shripad Naik shared in Lok Sabha that out of these 1,113 cases, 891 cases have been recorded in the army, 182 in the Indian Air Force and subsequently, 40 in the Indian Navy. Another statistical report that provided the data for the period 2003 to 2007 reported that 620 soldiers committed suicide in the Indian Armed Forces, 15 soldiers attempted suicide and fratricide death cases were reported. Depression was attributed as the cause behind these deaths. It is clear that there is a surge in the number of unnatural deaths in Indian Armed Forces. Stress, Mental illness and low quality of mental health can be attributed as the cause behind this rise in numbers.

The primary and most predominant contributor to the emotional problems for military men are job related problems. (Manning et al). Sivasubramanian & Rajandran conducted a research to dwell deeper into the topic of stressors that cause disturbances in the Indian Air Force. They concluded that Family separation, tenure policies, poor leadership, prolonged commitment, shortage of workforce, reluctance to seek help, retirement and absence of mental health practitioners and professionals are the top 10 factors that cause stress (Sivasubramanian & Rajandran, 2017). Deployment is another major stressor for Military Personnel. Separation leads to feelings of isolation; worries regarding family safety, family health as well as worries regarding their own properties; poor quality of interpersonal as well as marital relationships and ultimately poor performance. This in turn leads to increased stress levels among the soldiers who are already in dynamic environments with severe challenges. (Sivasubramanian & Rajandran Professor, n.d.)

In addition to deployment, even work related factors can prove to be stressful for Armed Forces. (Brooks & Greenberg, 2018) tried to find out some non-deployment related stressors and concluded that interpersonal relationships at workplace, demands from assigned roles, work life balance, physical work environment as well as work overload also significantly affect the soldiers and officers. Psychological well being of military personnel is of utmost importance both for the armed forces as well as the country.

Life Orientation

Life Orientation, as a concept, means how one perceives the events, situations and experiences that one goes through in his or her life. Life orientation has two domains, Optimism and Pessimism. Optimism is a set of beliefs that make you feel like you are responsible as well as capable for your happiness and that more good things are to happen to you than bad. People who are optimistic have high levels of self-esteem as well as extraversion and low levels of stress, anxiety, hopelessness, alienation and neuroticism. Optimism is also associated with improved immune system, lower depression, and lesser mood disturbances and less instances of negative interactions within relationships. Research shows that optimistic people have higher chances of being liked by other people. They are not socially rejected as often, their friendships last longer; their social interactions are not as negative. Even when optimisms are in relationships that are romantic in nature, optimists as well as their partners experience a much greater satisfaction and are also at a lower risk in terms of break ups.

Quite the contrary to Optimism, Pessimism is the tendency to expect non-favorable outcomes. Pessimism is more of a negative prediction of the experiences and situations to come. It makes the person expect that worst things will happen. Pessimism has been associated with depressive symptoms (Chang et al 1997) and also similar to neuroticism. (Smith, Pope, Rhodewalt, &Poulton, 1989).

Optimism and Pessimism

There are two parts for understanding the development process of Optimism and Pessimism. First is the controversial debate of Nature and Nurture which describes how both genetics and environment play a role in development of Optimism and Pessimism. And the second is the “Learned Deficit Theory” which explains how interpretation helps in the development of the two variables. Scholars and researchers generally estimate that approximately 0.25 of Optimism and Pessimism can be explained by heredity. Environmental experiences also exert a lot of influence on the developmental patterns of both optimism and pessimism in more than one way. Through past experiences of success as well as failure, children learn what to expect from the future in terms of successes and failures.

The “Learned Deficit Theory” focuses on “Optimistic interpretative method and Pessimistic interpretative

method” (Seligman, 1991). The theory states that the mechanisms which are responsible for optimism or pessimism are deeply embedded in different thinking styles of different individuals while they face uncomfortable or pleasing situations. People who are optimistic believe that their failure is due to some temporary thing which can be changed next time. On the contrary, pessimists burden their minds with blame. Through this pattern of interpreting their success and failure, the negative perceptions of people’s past events and experiences influence the amount of control they “think” they have on their future and then eventually this thinking influences their feelings as well as action. (Maruta,2000).

Optimism and Learned Helplessness

Learned helplessness is the process of giving up because you believe no matter what you do, it won’t make a difference. So, eventually you stop trying. Explanatory styles have a role to play here. Research suggests that although optimism can be partially hereditary, the childhood experiences, financial situations as well as parental warmth can also affect a person’s optimism levels. Seligman suggests that even if a person was pessimistic initially, he can learn how to be more optimistic through some skills. Just like helplessness can be learnt, so can Optimism.

Many researches in the field of Optimism have, time and again, proven how Optimism has a great role to play in the subjective well being and mental health of individuals at large. Optimism is positively related to healthy aging (Kim et al., 2019). Optimism and Health Related Quality of Life have a positive relationship. On the other hand, older age as well as lower levels of education have an association with pessimism (Cohen et al.,2017). (Öcal, Demirtas, et al., 2017) conducted a study to examine the relationship that exists between “Mental disorders and The Life Orientation Test”. They concluded that by adopting a more optimistic lifestyle and behavior one can reduce the risk of mental and disorders. Researchers have also demonstrated that a significant positive relationship exists between Spiritual Well-being and Quality of Life and Optimism (Jafari Poor et al., 2016). Optimism and suicide ideation are also negatively correlated (Huffman et al., 2016), which makes studying optimism even more important in the military context.

Peace of Mind

Peace of Mind (PoM) is a relaxed, calm and content state of mind. In other words, when you have the freedom and space from worries, anxiety as well as your thoughts, in those fleeting moments, you feel peaceful. Being an abstract concept, peace can mean different things to different people. A government would consider Peace to be a balance of powers, justice or harmonious relationship between two countries or two communities; for the child who misses his mother, it could be sleeping next to her after a long tiring day and Buddhist monks, on the other hand, would consider enlightenment as peace. It is so abstract that even religions perceive it differently.

It has already been established that Peace of Mind is an integral part of well-being. (Wood et al., 2018) aimed to study how Spiritual well-being as well as PTSD symptoms are associated with each other. The results reflect that there is a negative relationship between Spiritual Well-Being and PTSD symptoms. Datu et al., (2018) concluded that there is a positive correlation between Peace of Mind and academic engagement as well as Peace of Mind and autonomous motivation, controlled motivation and academic achievement (Datu, 2017). Sikka et al., (2018) also found out that there is a positive relationship between Peace of Mind and positive dreams while there is a positive relationship between anxiety and negative dreams.

Living in peace should include both social as well as subjective well being and personal fulfillment. The

psychological or spiritual “Quality of Life” and the living conditions should also be included. Herein, we observed that Peace as well as Optimism is a function of both Environment and One’s inner dynamic. Both inner and outer peace can only be achieved when the materialistic, environmental needs of an individual are fulfilled in collaboration when his mind is at ease, he feels calm and content, in short, when he feels inner peace from within. Striking the right balance between the two is very important. It has been established that environment plays a major role in both Peace of mind and Life Orientation levels of an individual. A stress inducing environment can be very harmful for a person’s peace of mind and such prolonged states of stress can eventually affect explanatory styles.

The stress levels at the armed forces is increasing at an alarming rate and thus studying positive variables and their roles in alleviating this stress is very important. Therefore, this study aims to assess the levels of Peace and Life orientation, Indian Air Force personnel is currently at, what the relationship between these two variables is and then also examine if there is any significant difference between the Peace and Life Orientation levels of the three branches of Indian Air Force.

2. METHODS

The aim of the study was to assess the relationship between Peace of Mind and Life Orientation among Indian Air Force personnel with the following objectives.

Objectives

- To evaluate the levels of Peace of mind in Indian Air Force Personnel (Flying Branch, Technical Branch and Ground Duty Branch).
- To evaluate the levels of Life Orientation in Indian Air Force Personnel (Flying Branch, Technical Branch and Ground Duty Branch).
- To evaluate the relationship between Peace of Mind and Life Orientation among Indian Air Force Personnel. (Flying Branch, Technical Branch and Ground Duty Branch).

Sample

The sample for this study consists of 90 Indian Air Force Personnel (both male and female), 30 from Flying Branch, 30 from Technical Branch and 30 from Ground Duty Branch between the age group 20-35 years. Purposive sampling was used for Data Collection.

Tools Used

- Peace of Mind Scale – the peace of mind scale is a self report 5-point Likert Scale. It is used to assess the level of Peace of Mind in an individual. Peace of Mind is defined as a harmonious and calm internal state of being. There are 7 items in the test, out of which, two are negative. The test has good construct validity and is reliable for measurement of “affective well-being.” Overall, Peace of Mind is measured through the average of item scores. The scores are interpreted as such that higher the scores, higher the peace of mind. Scoring - Score negative items (-) in reverse order. Overall Peace of Mind is measured through the average of the scores of item and higher the scores, higher the peace of mind.
- Life Orientation Test (Revised) –LOT-R is used to examine the individual differences in optimism and

pessimism. This test has been put to use in many researches that aim to understand how Optimism or Pessimism leaves an impact

- On health, behavior or affect. Lot-R has 10 items, out of which, 4 are fillers. With 3 positive and 3 negative items, LOT-R is a brief and easy to use tool. Scoring - 3rd, 7th and 9th items are to be scored in reverse. 2nd, 5th, 6th & 8th are mere fillers and have to be ignored while scoring. The benchmark for optimism or pessimism hasn't been set 2.

Procedure

To conduct this study, the Peace of Mind scale and the Life Orientation Test- Revised were administered on a sample of 90 Indian Air Force Personnel, 30 out of which belonged to Flying Branch, 30 to Technical Branch and 30 to Ground Duty Branch. Data was collected from both males and females belonging to the age group of 20-35 years. Their informed consent was acquired in writing and they were briefed about the study, if they asked. It was informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and that their responses would be kept strictly confidential. They were given detailed instructions and the doubts, if they had any, were cleared effectively. Ultimately, the scores were examined and analyzed by comparing them with the percentile norms. That's how the assessment was done. The data then collected was entered into the excel sheets.

2.5 Statistical Analysis

Using SPSS, t-test was applied for the descriptive analysis and also to study the mean difference between Peace of Mind levels and Life orientation levels of Flying, Technical and Ground Duty Branch. Pearson Correlation was applied to assess the relationship between Peace of Mind and Life Orientation among Indian Air Force Personnel.

3. RESULTS

Table 1: Level of Peace of Mind in Flying, Technical and Ground Duty Branch

Branch	N	Average Peace of Mind
Flying	30	3.46
Technical	30	3.31
Ground Duty	30	3.76

Table 1 showed the levels of Peace of Mind in Indian Air Force personnel in three branches. The Peace of mind level of Flying Branch was (3.46), for Technical Branch it was (3.31) and for Ground Duty Branch, it was (3.76). Ground Duty Branch had the highest Peace of Mind levels among the three branches, followed by Flying Branch and the Technical Branch had the lowest level of Peace of Mind.

Table 2: Level of Life Orientation in Flying, Technical and Ground Duty Branch

Branch	N	Average Life Orientation
Flying	30	15.47
Technical	30	14.5
Ground Duty	30	15.3

Table 2 showed the levels of Life Orientation in Indian Air Force personnel in the three branches. The Life Orientation level of Flying Branch was (15.47), for Technical Branch it was (14.5) and for Ground Duty Branch, it was (15.3). Flying Branch had the highest Life Orientation levels among the three branches, followed by Ground Duty Branch

and the Technical Branch had the lowest level of Life Orientation.

Table 3: Relationship between Peace of Mind and Life Orientation

Variable		Peace of Mind	Life Orientation
Peace of Mind	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1 -	.619** .000
Life Orientation	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.619** .000	1 -
N		90	90

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3 showed that the correlation coefficient of Peace of Mind and Life Orientation in Indian Air Force Personnel is $r(99,99) = 0.619$ ($p > .01$) which is significant. There was a highly significant positive relationship between the Peace of Mind and Life Orientation among Indian Air Force Personnel. The table indicated that both Peace of Mind and Life Orientation increase and decrease in the same direction.

Table 4: Level of Peace of Mind among Technical and Ground Duty Branch of Indian Air Force

Variable	T	SIG. (2-TAILED)
Peace of Mind	-2.648	.010**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4 depicted mean values and level of significance in the peace of mind levels of Technical Branch and Ground Duty Branch of Indian Air Force. The t value for Peace of mind was -2.648. The value of t was significant at 0.01 levels which mean there was a significant difference in the levels of Peace of Mind between the Technical Branch and Ground Duty Branch of Indian Air Force.

Table 5: Level of Peace of Mind among Flying and Ground Duty Branch of Indian Air Force

Variable	T	SIG. (2-TAILED)
Peace of Mind	-1.924	.05*

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 5 depicted mean values and level of significance in the peace of mind levels of Flying Branch and Ground Duty Branch of Indian Air Force. The t value for Peace of mind was -1.924. The value of t was significant at 0.05 levels for Peace of mind which means there is significant difference in the levels of Peace of Mind between the Flying Branch and Ground Duty Branch of Indian Air Force.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Every individual, no matter what he is aiming for, as an end result seeks peace. Peace of mind has a positive relationship with many positive outcomes. Research has proven that there is a strong association between Subjective Well Being and Peace of Mind (Xu et al., 2015). Life Orientation also has a role to play in the Indian Air Force. Life Orientation typically means how one chooses to perceive the world around him, whether he is an optimist or a pessimist. Expecting that more good than bad things are in store for an individual is Optimism. On the contrary, expecting that things will not work out in one's favor in the future is Pessimism. Pessimism is associated with poor Health Related Quality of Life (Van Dyk & Nelson, 2014). In terms of physical health, optimism is associated with better immune system, better relationships and reduced negative affect and low levels of stress (Angelo & Srivastava, 2009). Optimism is positively correlated with

optimism, self-efficacy, subjective well-being, resilience, hope (Goel & Vohra, 2009) and healthy ageing (Kim et al., 2019).

The present study focuses on the relationship between Peace of Mind and Life Orientation among Indian Air Force personnel. The Indian Air Force, being a high-risk job, has many stress inducing situations attached to it. They have to go through a period of rigorous, painful and gut wrenching training before the commencement of their journey as a soldier. And the stress just gets worse, as they proceed. Therefore, the study has also taken into consideration how interventions designed around these two positive states of being (Peace of mind and Life orientation) can help improve the subjective well being as well as overall mental health of Indian Air Force personnel. After thoroughly analyzing the review of literature, it can be safely said that these two variables (PoM and LOT) have not been assessed together, especially in the military context. Thus, this topic would help in evaluating Peace of mind and Life Orientation levels of each branch of the Indian Air Force so that which branch needs more attention in regard to their mental health can be understood.

For the purpose of this study, a sample of 90 Indian Air Force Personnel (30 Flying Branch, 30 Technical Branch and 30 Ground Duty Branch) was collected using the "Peace of Mind Questionnaire" and "The Life Orientation Test-Revised".

The first objective of the study was to evaluate the levels of Peace of mind in Indian Air Force Personnel for all the three branches i.e. Flying Branch, Technical Branch and Ground Duty Branch and to find out the significant difference in Peace of Mind between the three branches, if any. The first hypothesis was accepted. The findings suggest that personnel belonging to Ground Duty Branch scored the highest in Peace of Mind levels. The peace of mind levels of Flying Branch and Technical Branch are very close to one another and hence there is no significant difference between the two. There is a significant difference between Peace of Mind levels of Ground Duty Branch and Flying Branch. There is also a significant difference between Peace of Mind levels of Ground Duty Branch and Technical Branch. Technical Branch scored lowest in Peace of Mind levels.

The second objective of the study was to evaluate the levels of Life Orientation in Indian Air Force Personnel of all the three branches and to find out the significant difference in Life Orientation between the three branches, if any. The second hypothesis was accepted. Findings reflect that there is no significant difference in the Life Orientation Levels of all the three branches. It was also reported that Flying Branch has the highest levels of Life Orientation and Technical Branch has the lowest levels of Life Orientation.

The third objective of the study was to evaluate if there will be a significant relationship between Peace of Mind and Life Orientation among Indian Air Force Personnel for all the three branches. The third hypothesis was accepted. The correlation coefficient is $r(99, 99) = 0.619$ ($p > .01$) which is significant. This implies that both Peace of Mind and Life Orientation increase and decrease in the same direction. Table 1 and table 2 clearly indicate that Technical Branch has low levels of both Peace of Mind as well as Life Orientation in comparison to Flying Branch and Ground Duty Branch. These findings also point towards a positive correlation between Peace of Mind and Life Orientation.

There is a difference between the numbers of flying branch officers and the number of technical branch officers and due to this shortage of manpower, there is a lot operational workload on the technical branch. Their day to day working includes being present before the flying process for Pre-flying duties, during the flying process to ensure safety and also for the post flying duties to ensure the maintenance and recovery. They have difficulties in getting leaves

sanctioned and have to manage the manpower available with them which causes a lot of conflict.

With the advancement of technology, globalised economy, high rise competition, scarce resources, high stress work environment and work overload, the Armed Forces are at high risk and more vulnerable to stress and its effects, now more than ever. The increasing number of suicide cases is a clear indicator as to how stress is taking a heavy toll on our soldiers and officers. Add to that the stigma attached to seeking help in the forces. The fact that soldiers are supposed to be tough and resilient under all circumstances makes it even more difficult for them to accept that they need help. This eventually leads to a lot of burnout and breakdowns in the Indian Air Force.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study conducted on a sample of 100 Indian Air Force Personnel, 30 from each branch, found out that there is a significant relationship between Peace of Mind and Life Orientation in the Indian Air Force personnel. Findings report a positive correlation between Peace of Mind and Life Orientation among Indian Air Force Personnel. Peace of mind was found to be the highest in Flying Branch, second highest in Ground Duty Branch and the lowest level in the Technical Branch. Life Orientation was highest in Ground Duty Branch, second highest in Flying Branch and again lowest in Technical branch. Technical Branch, due to high workload and operational stressors scored lowest in both the domains which again proved the positive correlation between peace of mind and life orientation. The Research findings along with the review of literature suggest that interventions designed around Peace of Mind and Optimism can help elevate stress in the Indian Air Force Personnel. Remedial and preventive measures to promote a more stress free environment are also suggested.

Limitations

The study concluded that there is no significant difference in Life Orientation levels among the three branches of Indian Air Force. This could be very well due to the result of small sample size. Deep and thorough examination of factors that cause differences in Peace of Mind levels seems to be missing.

Future Recommendation and Implications

Further research is recommended with a larger sample size. Thorough examination as to why the three branches differ in their Peace of Mind and Life Orientation levels is suggested. Preventive measures to tackle their day to day operations should also be included.

By integrating optimism and pessimism in counseling, the psychologist can modify the explanatory styles of an individual which will eventually change his or her negative thinking patterns. Hardiness, when collaborated with Optimism, can be of great help while planning out treatment and intervention plans to improve coping strategies. (Bahrami et al., 2018) Peace of Mind has a direct relationship with mindfulness, (Xu et al., 2015) yoga and spiritual practices (Rana & Jrf, 2017). Findings reflect that spirituality and mindfulness has a positive effect on a person's well being (African Educational Research Network., 2001). By incorporating mindfulness and Yoga in the lifestyle of Military Personnel, they can become a lot more peaceful and lead a more stress free life.

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