



## Warrior's strain: An exploration of work stress in military life through explanatory mixed methods designs

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### Abstract

Human resources are one of the most valuable assets for any organization. In today's working environment, employee turnover issues have increased tremendously. Work stress tends to lead to increased employee turnover. Stress is common in many organizations but is particularly more pronounced in the military context. The military sector is characterized by complex situations and heightened experiences, constituting an organization with unique traditions and cultural norms. An explanatory sequential mixed methods technique was utilized in this study to explore military personnel's work stress inside the military organization. The first phase of this study employed a quantitative research design with a descriptive approach to investigate the level of work stress among military personnel. The second phase of this study employed a qualitative research approach using an explanatory multiple case study. The researcher explored the causes of the different work stress levels experienced by some of the military personnel and their coping mechanisms. Based on the findings, there is a concerning prevalence of work-related stress among military personnel, with a majority experiencing a moderate level of stress. While a notable portion reports fairly low or no stress at all, the alarming aspect emerges in the significant number of individuals experiencing severe and potentially dangerous stress. Hence, the well-being of military personnel should be a top priority to ensure not only their mental and emotional health but also the effectiveness and resilience of the military organization.

**Keywords:** Work stress, military organization, organizational stress, employee turnover, stress management

### Introduction

Human resources are one of the most valuable assets for any organization. Employees are regarded as the lifeblood of an organization, as the success and productivity of the organization rely on how the employees accomplish their jobs. Essentially, high employee performance is vital for organizations to achieve their goals. The success of an organization is because of its employees' performance, ensuring that their employees are highly satisfied with their jobs (Siddiqui, 2014) <sup>[15]</sup>.

In today's working environment, employee turnover issues have increased tremendously, causing a direct effect on the human resource practices of recruitment and maintaining the workforce (Crisp, 2021) <sup>[2]</sup>. Work stress tends to lead to increased employee turnover. Research studies found that job stress is a significant predictor of job outcomes, such as job satisfaction, commitment, job strain, alienation, and turnover intentions. In a meta-analysis study conducted by Griffeth *et al.* (2000) <sup>[7]</sup>, it was found that a direct relationship between work stress and job satisfaction was directly related to turnover intention.

In the military sector, the turnover intention is becoming a considerable challenge for the Department of Defense (Goheen, 2020). The Army's turnover is worse compared to the public and other services. In comparison to the Marines (18.6%) and the private sector (26%), the Army has the highest turnover rates. The remaining services are split between the Army and the Marines (Locke *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[10]</sup>.

Stress is common in many organizations but is particularly more pronounced in the military context. The military sector is characterized by complex situations and heightened experiences, constituting an organization with unique traditions and cultural norms. Specific behaviors, attitudes, and a unique mindset are cultivated within the Army. Military personnel undergo extended periods of separation

from society and their families, experiencing a different life from civilian employees (Rus, 2022) <sup>[12]</sup>.

The conformity encouraged by the military environment, sometimes seen as restricting due to its limited external interaction, can be considered a source of stress (Grigoriu, 2015). Moreover, military personnel exposed to diverse stressful events during operations exhibit numerous emotional, cognitive, and behavioral reactions. These exposures significantly impact the psychological, mental, and physical well-being of the personnel, leading to a range of negative reactions (Marineanu, 2015).

Also, it has been determined that shifts in activities impact stress within the military organization, the professional pressures within the organization, the handling of diverse situations, the level of professional and personal fulfillment experienced by military personnel, self-esteem, and cohesion within the group. Notably, the commander plays a significant role through their manner of interacting with subordinates (Suntion Filaret, 2014) <sup>[18]</sup>.

Moreover, stress is likely to be higher in military organizations, as they are based on higher levels of formalization, strict procedures, and routines that frequently consist of a negative-based reward system and a need to increase coordination among units to the highest possible level in order to perform effectively when needed. (Thompson & Gibbs, 2012) <sup>[20]</sup>

Like in any other organization, stress is an important factor that could result in personnel turnover in the military organization. This is evident in one of the Infantry Divisions in the Visayas, where it was observed that the Discipline Law and Order cases keep on increasing, particularly AWOL (Absence without official leave) of the military personnel.

Despite the extensive research conducted on factors influencing retention and turnover rates, there remains a

lack of scientific investigation into the causes of turnover behaviors, such as military personnel voluntarily leaving military organizations. Moreover, within the literature reviewed, there was no study conducted examining the potential factors influencing turnover rates, such as work stress experienced by military personnel in the military organization. Hence, this study will help strengthen the military organization's human resource management policies and programs to retain skilled and experienced military personnel, which is vital in maintaining an effective military workforce.

### Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to assess the level of work stress of military personnel to enhance the military organization's human resource management policies and programs. Specifically, it sought to answer the following:

1. To determine the work stress level of the respondents.
2. To find out the factors that contribute to stress among military personnel.
3. To identify the coping mechanisms of military personnel experiencing work stress.
4. To propose interventions from the findings of the study.

### Materials and Methods

#### Research Design

An explanatory sequential mixed methods technique was utilized in this study to explore military personnel's work stress inside the military organization. In this design, the quantitative or numeric data is collected and analyzed first, while the qualitative or text data is collected and analyzed second in sequence, which helps explain, elaborate on, or extend the quantitative results obtained in the first phase. In the second qualitative phase, the researcher used quantitative information to identify and purposely select participants for follow-up. The in-depth interviews go "beyond the numbers" recorded in the quantitative analysis to see the richness of real social experience. (Creswell, 2003).

The first phase of this study employed a quantitative research design with a descriptive approach to investigate the level of work stress among military personnel. According to Leedy & Ormrod (2010) [9], the goal of correlational research is to find associations between two or more variables.

The second phase of this study employed a qualitative research approach using an explanatory multiple case study. In this study, the researcher explored on the causes of the different work stress levels experienced by some of the military personnel and their coping mechanisms.

#### Research Environment

The study was conducted in one of the Infantry Divisions in a military organization. This was conducted in two (2) Infantry Battalions under an Infantry Division.

#### Research Instrument

For phase 1, the researcher adopted standardized questionnaires - Workplace Stress Scale. The American Institute of Stress in Yonkers, New York, and the Marlin Company in North Haven, Connecticut, USA, developed this instrument (2001). The questionnaires underwent pilot testing to ensure the instruments' internal consistency in the military context. By utilizing Cronbach's alpha coefficient,

the surveys' reliability were assessed which was found to be 0.87 for the Job Satisfaction questionnaire and .80 for the Workplace Stress questionnaire, indicating good reliability for the two questionnaires.

Moreover, the semi-structured questionnaire for the qualitative phase was validated by three experts: (1) A licensed Psychologist and also a Registered Guidance Counselor, (2) A Research Methodologist who is an expert in qualitative research, and (3) A lay expert.

### Sampling Procedure

For the quantitative part, the sampling frame covers all male enlisted military personnel of two (2) Infantry Battalions under an Infantry Division. Total enumeration was used in this study, all enlisted male personnel were the respondents in this study. There was a total of 254 military personnel serving the organization for 3-10 years. This military personnel was in the organization's combat operations, civil-military operations, and intelligence operations. However, there were only 231 military personnel who voluntarily participated in the survey conducted, that is, 91% of the total enumeration.

For the qualitative part, participants who were part of the in-depth interview were purposively selected based on the result of the work stress test. Respondents who were experiencing moderate, severe, and potentially dangerous levels of work stress were

considered as participants in the interview to examine further and investigate the causes of their stress and their coping mechanisms.

### Statistical Treatment

Descriptive statistical tools were used by the researchers to analyze the collected quantitative data such as mean. For the qualitative part, analysis was done using a thematic approach of Clarke and Braun (2006) [1]. The questionnaires underwent pilot testing to ensure the instruments' internal consistency in the military context. By utilizing Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the survey's reliability was assessed, which was found to be .80. For the qualitative part, analysis was done using a thematic approach of Clarke and Braun (2006) [1]. The process of finding and examining various patterns in the data is known as thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) [1], the procedure is straightforward, adaptable, and durable.

### Results and Discussions

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative data gathered. The presentation of the findings is based on the sequence of the research questions.

#### Level of Work Stress among Military Personnel

Table 1 presents the level of Work Stress among Military personnel. Stress levels are categorized into no stress, fairly low, moderate, severe, and potentially dangerous.

**Table 1:** Level of work stress of respondents (n = 231)

Stress level	No. of personnel	Percent
No stress (chill/calm)	7	3.0
Fairly low	25	10.8
Moderate	119	51.5
Severe	73	31.6
Potentially dangerous	7	3.0

Table 3 shows that majority (51.5%) of the military personnel have moderate level of work-related stress. 10.8% and 3% have fairly low and no stress at all, respectively. It is, however, alarming to note that a substantial number of personnel are suffering from severe (31.6%) and potentially dangerous stress levels ((3%).

This claim is supported by the study of Fajarito (2017) <sup>[4]</sup> on "Risk Factors for Combat-related PTSD: Case Studies of Filipino Active Duty Soldiers," found out in her assessment of combat stress load of the 10th Infantry Division (10ID) that around one out of every four soldiers had high levels of combat-related stress. 10ID, the most engaged division of the Military, is a high-stress environment. The highest means of stress were also registered by the two battalions (66IB and 28IB), where attacks and ambushes happen and remain to be higher than elsewhere in the country.

The distribution of work-related stress levels among military personnel, with a majority experiencing moderate stress and a concerning percentage facing severe or potentially dangerous stress, highlights a critical issue that demands attention. While moderate stress is an expected aspect of military service, the prevalence of severe stress among a significant portion of personnel poses serious implications for their mental health, job performance, and overall well-being. Addressing this issue is imperative to ensure the resilience and effectiveness of the military force. Comprehensive measures, including mental health support programs, stress management training, and proactive interventions, are essential to mitigate the impact of stress on personnel and maintain resilient and mission-ready armed forces. Additionally, this data underscores the importance of ongoing research and policy development to create a supportive environment that prioritizes the mental health of military personnel.

Based on the results of the quantitative result, results showed that there are some military respondents who were experiencing stress in the workplace. To have an in-depth investigation of this, the researcher conducted a thorough investigation of the result aimed at exploring the stressors faced by military personnel and understanding the coping mechanisms employed in response to these challenges. The quantitative findings, particularly concerning the elevated work-related stress among military personnel, raised significant concern. Thus, recognizing the need to understand the underlying factors of this alarming situation, an explanatory multiple-case study design was used.

The cases referred to in this study are the work stress levels experienced by the military respondents, particularly those who are experiencing moderate stress, severe stress, and potentially dangerous stress, with each level having its distinct source stressor, as shared by the participants.

### Case Analysis

This section presents the three cases- Moderately Stress Military Personnel, Severely Stress Military Personnel and Potentially Dangerous Military Personnel. The findings of this case study also guide the researcher to come up with recommendations that will address the needs of military personnel to mitigate the work stress they are experiencing in the organization.

### Case 1: Moderately Stress Military Personnel Causes of Stress

The first case presents the sources of stress of the participants who experienced moderate stress. Out of 119 military participants experiencing moderate stress, data saturation was achieved after interviewing the 11th respondent. Based on the accounts of the participants, factors such as physical exhaustion emerged as the dominant stressor. Factors such as the workload and longing for family also emerged as common stressors that caused participants to experience moderate stress relating to their profession.

Militaries are instrumental in maintaining peace and order within society. From operations to law enforcement, militaries are the prime movers. With this, it can be understood that their nature of work requires vigor in performing their duties, and the demands to be apart from their families.

#### Theme 1: Physical Exhaustion

The demanding nature of military work, particularly during military operations, is evidence of why military personnel are prone to physical exhaustion. The majority of the participants affirmed that the extended period of operations without breaks, the carrying of heavy gears and equipment, and the cumulative effect of repetitive tasks they perform during operation heightened their experiences.

The acknowledgment of the demanding nature of military work, particularly during operations, has profound implications for the well-being and effectiveness of military personnel. The physical exhaustion experienced by the majority underscores the need for comprehensive support systems, including adequate rest periods, proper equipment, and strategies to manage the cumulative impact of repetitive tasks. This calls for a holistic approach to military operations that prioritizes the health and resilience of personnel. Contextually, recognizing and addressing the challenges associated with physical exhaustion is essential not only for sustaining individual well-being but also for maintaining highly capable and mission-ready armed forces. Strategies such as implementing effective rotation schedules, investing in ergonomic equipment, and providing opportunities for physical recovery can contribute to mitigating the impact of demanding military work, fostering a more resilient and effective force in the face of challenging operational conditions.

#### Theme 2: More Work Load

The nature of the work of militaries is a multifaceted aspect encompassing various responsibilities, tasks, and demands that do not simply end after the completion of their operations. Going back to their battalions, militaries are faced with more workload concerning the maintenance of facilities and equipment while not having sufficient time to recoup their energy from the exhaustion felt doing operations.

The multifaceted nature of military work extends beyond operational tasks, placing additional demands on military personnel upon returning to their battalions. The responsibility for maintaining facilities and equipment, coupled with the lack of sufficient time for recuperation after exhausting operations, creates a challenging and

stressful situation for the participants. This dynamic underscores the importance of recognizing the holistic nature of military service, where post-operation responsibilities contribute to overall stress levels.

The implication is that military leadership needs to prioritize strategies that balance operational demands with adequate recovery time, ensuring the well-being of personnel. Contextually, addressing the stress resulting from post-operation workloads requires a comprehensive approach, including effective resource management, support systems, and policies that promote both operational efficiency and the health and resilience of military members. This understanding is crucial for fostering a sustainable and resilient military force capable of navigating the complexities of contemporary military operations.

### **Theme 3: Longing for Family**

Longing for family poses stress to military life due to the demands, lifestyle, and uncertainties associated with their profession. Their deployment to far-flung areas results in them being apart from their families for extended periods, which strains relationships and enables them to miss significant events or occasions with their families. This contributes to emotional stress for both the deployed individual and the family left behind.

The persistent longing for family among military personnel emerges as a significant source of stress, fueled by the demanding lifestyle and uncertainties inherent in their profession. Deployments to distant and often challenging areas result in prolonged separation from families, straining relationships, and causing military members to miss important events. The emotional toll of this separation, as affirmed by the participants, not only affects the deployed individuals but also contributes to stress among the families left behind. This highlights the need for military organizations to implement comprehensive support systems that address the emotional well-being of both deployed personnel and their families.

Contextually, understanding the profound impact of family separation underscores the importance of developing policies and programs that facilitate communication, provide counseling services, and offer assistance to families coping with the challenges of military life. Recognizing and addressing the emotional stress associated with family separation is pivotal for fostering the resilience and overall well-being of military personnel and their families.

### **Theme 4: Policy Restriction on Vacation Leave/Privileges**

The importance of passes for militaries is of paramount importance to boost their morale. As affirmed by the participant, cancellation of their scheduled passes results in them experiencing stress.

The significance of passes for military personnel, as highlighted by participants, underscores their critical role in boosting morale and well-being. The cancellation of scheduled passes emerges as a significant stressor for military members, suggesting that these breaks are essential for mental and emotional rejuvenation. The implication is that military leadership needs to carefully consider the impact of pass cancellations on the overall morale and stress levels of personnel. Contextually, recognizing the importance of these breaks in maintaining a healthy work-life balance emphasizes the need for thoughtful planning,

communication, and flexibility in military operations. Prioritizing the well-being of military personnel through the preservation of scheduled passes can contribute to a more resilient and motivated force better equipped to navigate the challenges of their profession.

The above result is supported by the study of Smith (2020), affirming that work stress is an intervening factor that has a negative effect on the affective response of individuals stimulated by the incongruence of a person-organization fit, eventually resulting in intention to leave, including hours of work, physical agents at work, characteristics of jobs, control and decision latitude, consistency and clarity at work, job involvement, support at work, attitudes to work, pressures at work, racial abuse, sexual harassment and bullying, job security, family/ work interfaces.

### **Coping Mechanisms**

Despite the stress experienced by the participants, they were able to cope with their situation by developing positive coping mechanisms through engaging in physical recreational activities, using technology for recreation and communication, and maintaining a positive attitude.

### **Theme 1: Engaging in Physical Recreational Activities**

According to Dean (2021) <sup>[3]</sup>, engaging in recreational activities has been shown to be an effective and enjoyable way to alleviate stress. These activities provide individuals with a break from routine, an opportunity to relax, and a chance to engage in enjoyable experiences. As mentioned by the participants, one way to manage the stress they experience relating to their profession is by engaging in physical recreational activities, which found to be useful.

The acknowledgment by participants that engaging in physical recreational activities is a useful strategy for managing stress associated with their military profession underscores the importance of promoting well-being through leisure pursuits. Research supporting the effectiveness of recreational activities in stress alleviation aligns with the participants' experiences, emphasizing the need for military organizations to recognize and facilitate such opportunities. The implication is that incorporating recreational activities into military routines can contribute to overall stress reduction and enhance the mental and emotional resilience of personnel.

Contextually, understanding the positive impact of these activities on stress management emphasizes the value of fostering a supportive culture that encourages and provides opportunities for military members to engage in recreational pursuits. Recognizing the significance of such practices is crucial for promoting the holistic well-being of military personnel and maintaining a resilient and mission-ready force.

### **Theme 2: Use of Technology for Communication and Recreation**

The advancement of technology, particularly in the aspect of communications, plays a significant role in helping military personnel maintain and manage family relations, especially during periods of deployment or when stationed far from home. The use of media devices to communicate or interact emerged as one of the ways for military personnel to maintain good familial relationships and alleviate the stress inherent to the nature of their work by catching up with their

family members who are physically distant. Also with its dynamic feature, technology also emerged as one outlet to divert stress among users by healthy playing online games. The advancements in communication technology, as highlighted by the use of media devices, play a pivotal role in aiding military personnel in maintaining and managing family relationships, particularly during deployments or when stationed far from home. The ability to connect with family members through digital means serves as a crucial support system, helping alleviate the stress inherent in the military profession by bridging physical distances. Moreover, the dynamic features of technology, such as engaging in online games, emerge as valuable outlets for stress diversion among military personnel. The implication is that embracing and leveraging technology in military life can significantly contribute to the overall well-being and resilience of personnel. Contextually, recognizing the multifaceted benefits of technology in facilitating communication and providing stress relief emphasizes the need for military organizations to integrate and support the use of these tools as part of a holistic approach to personnel care and support. Understanding the positive impact of technology on familial connections and stress diversion underscores its importance in maintaining a healthy and balanced military force.

### **Theme 3: Maintaining Positive Attitude**

Maintaining a positive attitude is proven to foster mental resilience, enabling individuals to bounce back from any adversity more quickly and effectively. As evident from the narrative of the participants, maintaining a positive attitude helped them cope, rather than succumbing to the stress they encountered, to succeed in their chosen profession.

The recognition by participants that maintaining a positive attitude has been instrumental in coping with stress and succeeding in their chosen military profession highlights the crucial role of mental resilience. The implication is that fostering a positive mindset is not only a personal coping mechanism but a strategic approach for navigating the challenges inherent in military service. Understanding the significance of a positive attitude underscores the need for military organizations to promote mental well-being and resilience among personnel. Contextually, incorporating strategies for cultivating positive attitudes, such as resilience training and mental health support programs, becomes paramount in ensuring that military members are equipped to bounce back from adversity effectively. Recognizing the impact of a positive mindset on coping with stress emphasizes its pivotal role in maintaining a mentally resilient and mission-ready military force.

### **Case 2: Severely Stress Military Personnel Causes of Stress**

The second case presents the sources of stress of the participants who are identified and scored severely stress based on phase one (1) of the study. Out of 73 military participants experiencing moderate stress, data saturation was achieved after interviewing the 14th respondent. From their narratives, it shows that physical exhaustion was common among participants identified with moderate and severe stress. However, notable distinction for participants who scored severe stress includes *command responsibility*, *insufficient logistic support*, and *leadership style*.

### **Theme 1: Command Responsibility**

The existence of a good and effective supervisor-subordinate relationship helps organizations deliver its functions effectively. But to ensure effective command and control, it requires great deal of skills and demands to perform tasks accordingly.

From the narratives of the participants, it shows that command responsibility is one of the sources of work stress among military personnel ensuing to experience severe stress, specifically that it is concerned in planning, directing, coordinating, and controlling the forces and operations in the accomplishment of the mission. Additionally, participants also affirmed that the feeling of being liable for the welfare of their colleagues has constantly also heightened their experience.

The narratives highlighting command responsibility as a significant source of work stress among military personnel carry implications for both leadership development and organizational support systems. The demanding nature of planning, directing, coordinating, and controlling operations underscores the need for comprehensive leadership training that not only hones technical skills but also addresses the emotional and psychological challenges inherent in such roles.

Contextually, understanding the heightened stress associated with feeling personally liable for the welfare of colleagues emphasizes the importance of fostering a supportive organizational culture. Implementing strategies such as mentorship programs, mental health resources, and effective communication channels can contribute to mitigating the impact of stress on military leaders. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is essential for cultivating resilient leaders who can navigate the complexities of command responsibility while ensuring the overall well-being of the military force.

### **Theme 2: Insufficient Logistic Support**

Sufficient logistic support is of paramount importance to ensure the success, effectiveness, and well-being of military personnel while doing operations in the field. When military personnel are provided with timely and adequate supplies, it helps them to have enough resources to execute their operation effectively, crucial to the accomplishment of their mission. Hence, delays in supplies cause stress to military personnel, especially those in operation troops.

The acknowledgment of the paramount importance of sufficient logistic support for the success, effectiveness, and well-being of military personnel during field operations underscores the critical role logistics play in mission accomplishment. Timely and adequate supplies are fundamental resources that empower military personnel to execute operations effectively, directly impacting the overall success of their missions. The narratives from participants affirm that delays in the provision of supplies, particularly for those in operational troops, contribute to stress. The implication is that a streamlined and efficient logistics system is not only essential for operational success but is also intricately linked to the mental well-being of military personnel. Contextually, recognizing the stress caused by delays in supplies emphasizes the urgency of prioritizing and optimizing logistical processes to ensure that military operations are not only effective but also conducive to the overall health and resilience of the personnel involved.

Addressing logistical challenges becomes crucial for maintaining a mission-ready and resilient military force.

### **Theme 3: Leadership Style**

Based on the narratives of the participants, the style of leadership also proved to be one of their sources of stress. Having good leadership boost their morale, while poor leadership heightened their experience relating to their job. The narratives from participants underscore the significant impact of leadership style on the stress levels of military personnel. The recognition that good leadership boosts morale while poor leadership heightens stress aligns with broader research on the crucial role leaders play in shaping organizational climate and individual well-being. The implication is that fostering effective leadership is not only vital for mission success but is also instrumental in maintaining the mental and emotional health of military personnel. Contextually, understanding the stressors associated with poor leadership emphasizes the urgency of investing in leadership development programs, mentorship initiatives, and transparent communication channels within military organizations. Addressing the impact of leadership on stress becomes paramount for cultivating a positive command climate, ensuring the resilience and overall well-being of the military force. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is essential for sustaining a cohesive and mission-ready military force.

### **Theme 4: More Work Load**

For office military workers, their workload primarily stems from the heavy administrative responsibilities needed to be performed for the efficiency of organizational operations. They are often involved in planning and responsible for coordinating the movement of personnel, equipment, and logistical coordination. This situation results crowding of tasks delegated to military office workers, ensuing them to experience stress.

The acknowledgment by participants that the workload of office military workers primarily stems from heavy administrative responsibilities, including planning and logistical coordination, highlights a significant source of stress within the organizational framework. The crowded nature of tasks delegated to military office workers underscores the need for streamlined processes and effective resource management to alleviate stress and enhance efficiency. The implication is that a balanced distribution of administrative tasks and optimized workflow systems are essential for the well-being of office military workers and the overall effectiveness of organizational operations.

Contextually, recognizing the stressors associated with administrative responsibilities emphasizes the importance of implementing strategies such as task prioritization, technological solutions, and organizational support mechanisms to foster a healthier and more resilient working environment for military office workers. Addressing these challenges is crucial for maintaining a high level of operational efficiency while ensuring the mental and emotional well-being of personnel engaged in administrative roles.

### **Theme 5: Family Problem**

Family problems can have a substantial influence on military well-being and, by extension, on readiness and effectiveness during operations. Separation of military

personnel to far-flung areas from their families ensues marital conflicts that can lead to heightened stress levels for military members.

The recognition that family problems can significantly impact military well-being, readiness, and operational effectiveness underscores the interconnected nature of personal and professional aspects of military life. The separation of military personnel from their families, particularly to distant areas, emerges as a key factor contributing to marital conflicts and heightened stress levels for military members. The implication is that addressing family-related challenges becomes imperative not only for the overall well-being of military personnel but also for sustaining a resilient and mission-ready force.

Contextually, understanding the stressors associated with family separation emphasizes the need for comprehensive support systems, including communication resources, counseling services, and community programs tailored to the unique needs of military families. Recognizing and addressing family-related stressors is crucial for cultivating a positive work-life balance, maintaining morale, and ensuring the overall effectiveness of the military force in the face of challenging operational environments.

### **Theme 6: Policy Restriction on Vacation Leave/Privileges**

From the accounts of the participants, their heightened stress was dominantly due to their sudden and unanticipated operation, resulting in cancellation, if not delayed, of their scheduled passes. Prolonged cancellations and delayed passes also result in low morale among military personnel as they affirm themselves.

The accounts from participants highlight that heightened stress among military personnel is predominantly linked to the sudden and unanticipated nature of operations, leading to the cancellation or delay of scheduled passes. Prolonged disruptions to pass schedules are affirmed to contribute to low morale among military personnel. The implication is that the unpredictability of operational demands, especially when impacting personal time off, can have a significant negative impact on the mental well-being of military members.

Contextually, understanding the stressors associated with the abrupt changes in operational requirements emphasizes the need for strategic planning, transparent communication, and support systems to help personnel navigate the challenges. Addressing these concerns is essential not only for the overall morale and job satisfaction of military personnel but also for maintaining a resilient and mission-ready force capable of adapting to dynamic operational demands. Recognizing and mitigating the impact of operational unpredictability on scheduled passes becomes crucial for fostering a positive work environment within the military.

The above claims are supported by the study of Udeh (2022) on Perceived Workplace Stress Levels and Coping Strategies of Military Personnel in a Nigerian Barrack, the result showed that About 51.0% and 1.9% had moderate and severe stress levels, respectively. The commonest perceived causes of stress included under remuneration (32.6%), undervalued (26.1%), heavy workload (18%), and harassment (18%).

Also, a study by Sharma (2015) attempted to explore factors influencing occupational stress faced by Indian army

soldiers. It was found that the major factors imposing occupational stress among the Indian soldiers are lack of control at work, role conflict, inadequate awareness about the profession, workload, job pressure, and indifferent organizational attitude.

In addition, Kabelo (2019)<sup>[8]</sup> conducted a study entitled “An analysis of the effects of occupational stress in military operational readiness: A case of the Botswana Defense Force, an analysis of the effects of occupational stress in Military operational readiness: a case of the Botswana Defense Force,” revealed that the sources of occupational stress in the BDF among others include but not limited to; work overload, role ambiguity, work relationships, danger, and isolation.

### **Coping Mechanisms**

The importance of coping mechanisms to individuals confronted with stress or negative experiences is that it enables them to effectively handle challenging emotions. These mechanisms aid individuals in adapting to stressful situations, ensuring the preservation of their emotional well-being.

As affirmed by the participants who experience severe stress relating to their profession, through psychosocial support, engaging in physical recreational activities, developing spiritual resilience, and use of technology for communication, they were able to cope and continuously challenge their situation.

### **Theme 1: Psychosocial Support**

Military organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of psychosocial support and implementing programs that prioritize the mental health and well-being of their personnel. As affirmed by the participants, such initiatives have helped them cope with their heightened situations, aiding them to continuously perform the demands of their profession.

The acknowledgment by participants that military organizations are increasingly prioritizing psychosocial support and that such initiatives have assisted them in coping with heightened situations underscores the evolving recognition of mental health as a crucial aspect of overall military well-being. The implication is that investing in psychosocial support programs is not only beneficial for individual mental health but also contributes to the sustained performance and resilience of military personnel.

Contextually, understanding the positive impact of these initiatives emphasizes the need for continued development and expansion of mental health support within military organizations. Addressing the unique stressors associated with military service through comprehensive psychosocial support programs is essential for fostering a positive and resilient culture, ultimately ensuring the long-term effectiveness and well-being of the military force. Recognizing and contextualizing the role of mental health initiatives becomes instrumental in creating a supportive environment that values and prioritizes the mental well-being of military personnel.

### **Theme 2: Engaging in Physical Recreational Activities**

The importance of engaging in recreational activities was found to be crucial in managing stress among military personnel in challenging their heightened experiences of their profession. The majority of military personnel cope

with their experienced stress by playing sports, artistic, and relaxation activities.

The recognition of the importance of engaging in recreational activities as a crucial stress-management strategy among military personnel underscores the significance of holistic well-being in the military profession. The majority of military personnel coping with stress through sports, artistic pursuits, and relaxation activities implies that incorporating such outlets into military routines is instrumental for maintaining mental and emotional resilience. The implication is that fostering a culture that encourages and facilitates these activities can contribute not only to stress reduction but also to overall job satisfaction and morale within the military.

Contextually, understanding the positive impact of recreational activities emphasizes the need for military organizations to integrate these practices into their support systems, acknowledging the role they play in enhancing the mental well-being and coping mechanisms of military personnel. Recognizing and contextualizing the importance of recreational activities becomes essential for creating a balanced and supportive environment that promotes the overall health and resilience of military professionals.

### **Theme 3: Building Spiritual Resilience**

In the process of ensuring that the delivery of their work will not be hampered by the inherent stress of their profession, participants have developed their spiritual resilience to deal with their heightened situation.

The development of spiritual resilience among participants as a means to cope with the inherent stress of their military profession reflects the diverse strategies employed for well-being. Recognizing the importance of spiritual resilience implies that addressing the mental and emotional challenges in the military goes beyond conventional methods. The implication is that fostering an environment that acknowledges and supports diverse coping mechanisms, including spiritual resilience, is crucial for the overall mental well-being of military personnel.

Contextually, understanding the role of spiritual resilience emphasizes the need for military organizations to embrace a holistic approach to support systems, incorporating avenues for spiritual well-being alongside conventional mental health initiatives. Recognizing and contextualizing the significance of spiritual resilience becomes essential for creating a comprehensive and inclusive environment that caters to the diverse needs of military professionals in navigating the complexities of their profession.

### **Theme 4: Use of Technology for Communication**

The reliance on technology also emerged as one of the common strategies of military personnel to cope with stressful situations. As affirmed by participants, connecting with their families, even with just an online presence, helps them endure their long days at work. The reliance on technology as a common coping strategy among military personnel to manage stressful situations, particularly in staying connected with their families through online means, underscores the evolving role of digital communication in maintaining well-being. The affirmation by participants highlights the significant impact of technology in alleviating the challenges of separation and long workdays. The implication is that integrating and supporting technological solutions within military operations is not only practical but

also crucial for the mental and emotional resilience of personnel.

Contextually, understanding the reliance on technology emphasizes the need for military organizations to invest in communication infrastructure, ensuring that personnel have accessible and reliable means to connect with their families. Recognizing and contextualizing the importance of technology in fostering connections becomes essential for creating a supportive and adaptive environment that addresses the unique needs of military professionals in balancing their personal and professional lives.

### **Case 3: Potentially Dangerous Stress Military Personnel Causes of Stress**

The third case presents the sources of stress of the participants who are identified as experiencing potentially dangerous stress. All seven (7) respondents who were identified in the first phase were interviewed. Based on the accounts of the participants, it shows that *fear of death, anxious feelings during the operation, thoughts of uncertainties, recall of traumatic experiences, and thoughts of being bullied were the common stressors among participants* identified with potentially dangerous stress.

#### **Theme 1: Fear of Death**

Military operations, especially in conflict zones, are inherently dangerous, and soldiers often face life-threatening situations. As affirmed by the participants, they perceived the possibility of death while doing an operation that contributes to their stress.

The acknowledgment by participants that military operations, particularly in conflict zones, carry inherent dangers, and the perceived possibility of death during these operations contributes significantly to their stress and underscores the profound challenges faced by military personnel. The implication is that the awareness of mortality adds a layer of complexity to the already demanding nature of military service.

Contextually, understanding the mental and emotional toll associated with the perceived possibility of death emphasizes the critical need for comprehensive mental health support programs within military organizations. Addressing these existential stressors becomes paramount for fostering resilience and well-being among military personnel facing life-threatening situations. Recognizing and contextualizing the impact of mortality awareness is essential for creating a supportive environment that acknowledges the unique stressors associated with military service in conflict zones and prioritizes the mental health of those engaged in such challenging operations.

#### **Theme 2: Anxious Feeling during Operations**

Military personnel often experience a range of emotions during operations, and anxiety is one of the common feelings associated with the stress and uncertainty of such situations. As affirmed by the participants, the anxiety they felt stemmed from various factors such as concern for their own safety and comrades and being constantly vigilant to the conditions of their environment.

The acknowledgment by participants that military personnel often experience anxiety during operations, stemming from concerns for their safety and the well-being of comrades, highlights the emotional complexities inherent in their profession. The implication is that the stress and uncertainty

of military operations contribute significantly to heightened anxiety levels among personnel.

Contextually, understanding the emotional toll associated with anxiety emphasizes the importance of integrating mental health resources and resilience-building strategies within military organizations. Addressing anxiety becomes crucial not only for the individual well-being of military personnel but also for maintaining focused and effective operational capabilities. Recognizing and contextualizing the prevalence of anxiety underscores the need for proactive measures, including mental health awareness, coping mechanisms, and support systems tailored to the unique challenges faced by military professionals during operations.

#### **Theme 3: Thought of Uncertainties**

The life and nature of the work of military personnel involve predictable situations, especially while doing operations, and soldiers may face the unknown, including the uncertainty of enemy actions, the complexity of the terrain, and the overall outcome of the mission. This situation caused heightened stress to the participants as they affirmed themselves.

The acknowledgment by participants that the life and nature of military work involve predictable situations, especially during operations, highlights the profound impact of uncertainty on the stress levels of military personnel. The recognition that soldiers may face the unknown, including uncertainty about enemy actions, complex terrain, and the overall mission outcome, underscores the unique challenges inherent in military service. The implication is that the heightened stress arising from unpredictability emphasizes the need for resilience-building strategies and mental health support within military organizations.

Contextually, understanding the impact of uncertainty on stress emphasizes the importance of training programs that prepare military personnel to navigate unpredictable situations and cope with the associated emotional toll. Recognizing and contextualizing the challenges posed by uncertainty becomes crucial for creating an environment that supports the mental and emotional well-being of military professionals in the face of unpredictable and challenging operational scenarios.

#### **Theme 4: Recall of Traumatic Experience**

Vulnerability of military personnel to traumatic events is inherently inevitable due to the nature of their profession, which often exposes them to life-threatening situations, violence, and highly stressful environments. In some cases, military personnel carry the burden of previous traumatic experiences, contributing to ongoing anxiety, especially those who witness and experience first-hand those traumatic events. The cumulative effect of exposure to such extreme situations can manifest as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and further intensify anxiety (American Psychiatric Association, nd).

The acknowledgment of the inherent vulnerability of military personnel to traumatic events due to the nature of their profession, involving exposure to life-threatening situations, violence, and highly stressful environments, underscores the lasting impact of these experiences on mental well-being. The recognition that some military personnel carry the burden of previous traumatic events, leading to ongoing anxiety, especially for those who have

witnessed and experienced such events firsthand, emphasizes the enduring nature of psychological challenges in the aftermath of service. The implication is that addressing trauma and providing ongoing mental health support is integral for the overall well-being and resilience of military personnel.

Contextually, understanding the persistent anxiety associated with traumatic experiences highlights the importance of comprehensive mental health programs, destigmatizing seeking help, and fostering a culture that prioritizes the emotional needs of those who have endured trauma in the line of duty. Recognizing and contextualizing the lasting impact of traumatic events becomes crucial for creating a supportive environment that prioritizes the mental health of military professionals and addresses the unique challenges they face.

#### **Theme 5: Thought of Being Bullied**

Aside from the nature of work that contributes to the heightened stress of military personnel, the organization's structure has emerged also as a concern in military environments, which poses various challenges to the well-being of military personnel. The hierarchical structure, intense training, and stressful nature of military life can create an environment where bullying may occur, especially for those new entry-level militaries. As affirmed by the participants, this thought of being bullied stems from the power dynamic of the organization. In some cases, commanders or high-ranking officials may use aggressive or demeaning tactics as a form of discipline, which can cross into the realm of bullying. This power dynamic can create opportunities for bullying, especially when individuals misuse their authority to mistreat those of lower rank.

The recognition by participants that the hierarchical structure, intense training, and stressful nature of military life can create an environment conducive to bullying, especially for new entry-level military personnel, underscores the challenges within military organizations that extend beyond the inherent stress of the profession. The acknowledgment that bullying may stem from the power dynamic within the organization, where commanders or high-ranking officials may misuse their authority to mistreat those of lower rank, emphasizes the potential impact on the well-being of military personnel. The implication is that addressing bullying within the military requires not only a focus on external threats and stressors but also on internal dynamics that can contribute to a toxic work environment.

Contextually, understanding the power dynamics and potential for mistreatment within the organization highlights the need for robust anti-bullying initiatives, leadership training, and a supportive culture that fosters respect and professionalism. Recognizing and contextualizing the challenges associated with bullying becomes crucial for creating an organizational structure that prioritizes the mental and emotional well-being of all military personnel, irrespective of rank.

#### **Theme 6: Family Problem**

Family problems emerged as common stressors of military personnel who experience severe and potentially dangerous stress. As affirmed by participants, family problems such as family conflict and marital differences can lead to a decrease in focus, affecting their emotional resilience.

The acknowledgment by participants that family problems, including conflicts and marital differences, emerge as common stressors for military personnel experiencing severe and potentially dangerous stress highlights the interplay between personal and professional challenges in their lives. The recognition that such family issues can lead to a decrease in focus and affect emotional resilience underscores the interconnected nature of family dynamics and individual well-being. The implication is that addressing family-related stressors becomes integral to fostering mental and emotional resilience among military personnel.

Contextually, understanding the impact of family problems on stress emphasizes the need for comprehensive support systems that not only address the demands of military service but also recognize and provide resources for navigating personal challenges. Recognizing and contextualizing the role of family dynamics in stress management becomes crucial for creating a holistic approach to support within military organizations, prioritizing the overall well-being of military personnel and their families.

#### **Theme 7: Longing for Family**

Another common stressor that emerged, as affirmed by participants who experienced moderate and potentially dangerous stress, is concerned with longing for family. As affirmed by participants, they constantly longed to be united with their families while at work.

The common stressor of longing for family, as affirmed by participants experiencing moderate and potentially dangerous stress, underscores the emotional toll of separation on military personnel. The constant yearning to be united with their families while at work reveals a significant aspect of the sacrifice and emotional challenges faced in the military profession. The implication is that addressing the longing for family becomes crucial for maintaining the mental and emotional well-being of military personnel.

Contextually, understanding the impact of separation on stress emphasizes the need for support systems that facilitate regular communication, leaves, and opportunities for family reunification. Recognizing and contextualizing the emotional strain associated with longing for family becomes essential for creating a supportive environment within military organizations that acknowledges and addresses the unique challenges faced by personnel navigating the complexities of both professional and personal spheres.

#### **Theme 8: Policy Restriction on Vacation Leave/Privileges**

A very common stressor, regardless of the level of stress felt by the participants, is concerned with their privilege, passes, and vacation leave. Militaries are required to be on-call 24/7, especially when there is a perceived critical situation to arise, issuing red alerts. Although they understand the nature of the work they committed, somehow, they cannot avoid being stressed when their scheduled passes are canceled abruptly.

The universally common stressor concerning the privilege of passes and vacation leave, acknowledged by participants across varying levels of stress, sheds light on the pervasive impact of the on-call nature of military service. The constant expectation to be available 24/7, particularly during

perceived critical situations that prompt red alerts, reflects the demanding and unpredictable nature of military operations. While participants understand the inherent commitments of their profession, the abrupt cancellation of scheduled passes still induces stress. The implication is that managing expectations around leaves and passes is vital for the overall well-being of military personnel.

Contextually, understanding the stress associated with disrupted personal time emphasizes the need for clear communication, realistic scheduling, and support systems that acknowledge the challenges of maintaining work-life balance in the military. Recognizing and contextualizing the impact of pass-related stress becomes essential for fostering a positive organizational culture that values the mental and emotional resilience of military professionals amid the demanding nature of their service.

The above claims were supported by the study of Shi (2021)<sup>[14]</sup> entitled “Analysis of Work-related Stress of Soldiers and Its Influencing Factors under Special Military Environment,” which revealed that work-related stress was positively correlated with burnout, sleep quality, anxiety, and depression, while negatively correlated with mindful attention. Burnout, sleep quality, anxiety, depression, and mindful attention could significantly predict work-related stress levels (63.6% of the total variance). Burnout partially mediated the association of sleep quality, depression, and mindful attention.

Furthermore, a study on “Resilience, emotions, and character strengths as predictors of job stress in military personnel” in Iran by Taghya (2020) showed that Higher resilience and courage are associated with lower job stress. Also, negative emotions such as anger, guilt, and anxiety would contribute to higher job stress.

Lastly, a study on the “Occupational Stress Among Armed Forces and Police Personnel: A Review,” in India was conducted by Srivastava *et al.* (2023)<sup>[17]</sup> to look into the reasons for premature retirements of paramilitary forces. The findings of the study revealed that lack of sleep, manpower crunch, no leaves, and lack of motivation were some of the reasons responsible for people quitting their jobs.

### **Coping Mechanisms**

Participants who were identified with potentially dangerous stress inhibited anxiety and heightened emotional challenges, which stem from the unpredictable and hazardous nature of their work, where the threat of danger is a constant reality. As suggested by the American Psychiatric Association (nd), cumulative exposure to these intense experiences can have a long-lasting effect on individuals’ mental health.

However, despite the heightened stress they experienced, participants have developed resolutions to effectively cope and bounce back from the extreme conditions they encountered relating to their profession. Based on the accounts from the interview, with the help of counseling program of the organization, psychosocial support from their peers and comrades, engaging in physical recreational activities, and developing spiritual resilience played a crucial role in coping during intense situation.

### **Theme 1: Undertaking Stress Management Programs**

The importance of prioritizing the mental health and well-being among personnel is increasingly being recognized by

the military organization, thus conducting stress management program and implementing counselling programs to foster psychological resilience to its members. As highlighted by the participants, undertaking stress management programs such as counselling provides them a sense of psychological recovery and redirection to help them cope with their challenging experiences.

The recognition and implementation of stress management programs, including counseling, by military organizations underscore the evolving understanding of the importance of prioritizing mental health and well-being among personnel. The acknowledgment by participants that these programs provide a sense of psychological recovery and redirection to help cope with challenging experiences emphasizes the proactive approach taken by military organizations to address the unique stressors faced by their members. The implication is that investing in mental health support initiatives is not only beneficial for individual resilience but also contributes to the overall readiness and effectiveness of the military force.

Contextually, understanding the positive impact of stress management programs highlights the need for continuous development and integration of mental health resources within military structures. Recognizing and contextualizing the importance of psychological resilience programs becomes essential for fostering a culture that values the mental and emotional well-being of military professionals, ultimately contributing to the overall success of the organization in fulfilling its mission.

### **Theme 2: Psychosocial Support**

Psychosocial support emerged as one of the common coping mechanisms of military personnel, regardless of the extremity of their stress felt. As affirmed by the participants, such initiatives have helped them cope with their heightened situations, aiding them to continuously perform the demands of their profession.

The emergence of psychosocial support as a common coping mechanism among military personnel, irrespective of the extremity of the stress they experience, underscores the integral role of holistic support systems in addressing the unique challenges of military service. The affirmation by participants that initiatives focusing on psychosocial support have aided them in coping with heightened situations emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive approach to well-being. The implication is that investing in such initiatives not only contributes to individual coping strategies but also enhances the overall resilience and performance of military professionals.

Contextually, understanding the positive impact of psychosocial support highlights the need for ongoing development and integration of programs that address both the psychological and social aspects of military life. Recognizing and contextualizing the significance of psychosocial support becomes essential for fostering a culture that prioritizes the holistic well-being of military personnel, contributing to their sustained effectiveness and success in fulfilling the demanding demands of their profession.

### **Theme 3: Engaging in Physical Recreational Activities**

Aside from the fact that engaging in recreational activities helps boost the vigor of military personnel, which is crucial to performing the nature of their work effectively, it was

also affirmed by the majority of participants as a common coping mechanism to handle and cope with stress.

The acknowledgment by the majority of participants that engaging in recreational activities not only boosts the vigor of military personnel but also serves as a common coping mechanism to handle and cope with stress underscores the multifaceted benefits of leisure pursuits within military life. Recognizing recreation as a coping strategy emphasizes its role not only in promoting physical well-being but also in contributing to mental and emotional resilience. The implication is that fostering a culture that encourages and supports recreational activities becomes integral to the overall well-being and stress management of military personnel.

Contextually, understanding the dual impact of recreation on both physical vitality and stress alleviation highlights the need for military organizations to provide avenues and resources for diverse recreational pursuits. Recognizing and contextualizing the significance of recreational activities becomes essential for creating an environment that values the holistic health of military professionals, fostering a positive and resilient culture within the demanding context of their profession.

#### **Theme 4: Building Spiritual Resilience**

In the pursuit of the extreme conditions associated with the demands of work, where vulnerabilities to danger are a constant reality, participants relied heavily on building strong relationships and faith in our Almighty God, praying for ultimate protection for their own and comrades' safety.

The reliance on building strong relationships and faith in the Almighty God, with a focus on praying for ultimate protection for oneself and comrades' safety, reflects the profound coping mechanisms employed by participants in the face of the extreme conditions associated with the demands of military work. The acknowledgment of spiritual resilience as a cornerstone for navigating constant vulnerability to danger underscores the significant role of faith in providing comfort, strength, and a sense of purpose amid challenging circumstances. The implication is that recognizing and respecting diverse coping strategies, including spiritual practices, is essential for fostering a resilient and supportive culture within military organizations.

Contextually, understanding the significance of spiritual resilience emphasizes the need for military structures to accommodate and facilitate diverse belief systems, ensuring that individuals have the resources and support to navigate the complexities of their profession with a strong sense of purpose and spiritual grounding. Recognizing and contextualizing the role of faith in facing extreme conditions becomes crucial for creating an inclusive and supportive environment that values the holistic well-being of military personnel.

In a nutshell, for participants experiencing moderate stress, stress was due to the accumulation of physical exhaustion from the extended period of military operations while carrying heavy gear and equipment in a diverse and challenging environment, including the rough terrains and adverse weather conditions, which also results in them to experience lack of sleep as they need to be constantly vigilant while on the operation. Coping mechanisms include engaging in physical recreational activities, using

technology for recreation and communication, and maintaining a positive attitude.

The participants who are experiencing severe stress pointed out that command responsibility, insufficient logistic support, and leadership style are the dominant stressors. Directing, coordinating, and controlling the forces during operations heightened the experience, especially of those squad leaders, to ensure the safety and welfare of their subordinates while securing the accomplishment of their mission. Also, delays in supplies cause stress to military personnel, especially those in operation troops. In addition, the style of leadership is also a source of stress among militaries in ensuring their well-being and promoting their morale. Their coping mechanisms include psychosocial support, engaging in physical recreational activities, developing spiritual resilience, and use of technology for communication.

Participants who were at the potentially dangerous level were participants who expressed anxiety and experienced traumatic events. Perceived imminent death and constant worrying due to uncertainties in the mountains while operating are the dominant stressors. With the help of stress management programs such as the counseling program of the organization, psychosocial support from their peers and comrades, engaging in physical recreational activities, and developing spiritual resilience played a crucial role in coping during intense situations.

Moreover, results also show that there are common stressors between levels of stress. For moderate and severe stress, *more workload* emerged as their common stressor; for severe and potentially dangerous stress, *family problems* emerged as a common stressor; and for moderately and potentially dangerous stress, *longing for family* emerged as their common stressor.

Overall, *policy restrictions on vacation leave/privileges* emerged as common stressors across levels of stress. Below is the framework showing the work stressors and coping mechanisms of Military Personnel.

#### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings, there is a concerning prevalence of work-related stress among military personnel, with a majority experiencing a moderate level of stress. While a notable portion reports fairly low or no stress at all, the alarming aspect emerges in the significant number of individuals experiencing severe and potentially dangerous stress.

This study identifies stressors among military personnel at varying stress levels. For those experiencing moderate stress, the primary contributors are physical exhaustion resulting from prolonged operations. Severe stress is predominantly linked to command responsibility, insufficient logistic support, and leadership style, particularly for squad leaders overseeing the safety of subordinates and mission accomplishment. Potentially dangerous stress is characterized by anxiety and exposure to traumatic events, such as the perceived imminent danger during operations. The findings reveal common stressors across different stress levels, with workload being a shared concern for moderate and severe stress, family problems for severe and potentially dangerous stress, and a sense of longing for family for moderate and potentially dangerous stress. Notably, policy restrictions on vacation leave and

privileges emerge as a common stressor cutting across all stress levels.

The level of work stress of military personnel highlights the urgent need for interventions and support mechanisms in the military organization to improve the overall mental health of military personnel, respectively. Thus, the well-being of military personnel should be a top priority to ensure not only their mental and emotional health but also the effectiveness and resilience of the military organization.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are the proposed Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSG) in the military organization.

1. Ensure strict implementation of the Comprehensive Stress Management Programs of the organization. Regular conduct of programs such as stress management workshops will equip the military personnel to combat stressful situations. The conduct of Comprehensive Stress Management Programs should be implemented in the lower units. Along this line, strengthen mental health support services within the organization up to the lower units, ensuring that all military personnel have easy access to counseling, therapy, and mental health professionals. And promote a stigma-free culture that encourages personnel to seek help when needed, fostering a supportive environment for mental health concerns.
2. Strengthen the Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) of the organization. Improve trauma-informed training programs to assist personnel dealing with potentially dangerous stress resulting from exposure to traumatic events. This will equip military personnel with coping mechanisms to address anxiety and post-traumatic stress. Establish regular debriefing sessions every after-combat operation, particularly those operations with engagements, to allow military personnel to share their experiences and emotions.
3. Capacitate all military personnel to conduct basic Psychological First Aid so that they can be of support to each other, particularly those who are in the field of operations. Provide psychological support and resources to help them cope with the challenges associated with military combat operations. And train squad leaders to recognize early signs of distress or mental health issues among their subordinates. This includes understanding behavioral changes, mood fluctuations, and other indicators that may suggest an individual who is struggling with stress.
4. The organization may consider reviewing and, if necessary, revising policy restrictions on vacation leave and privileges. Consider more flexible leave policies that acknowledge the need for downtime and contribute to overall stress reduction. This will promote a work-life balance and ensure that military personnel have adequate time for rest and recuperation can mitigate stress and contribute to higher job satisfaction.
5. Incorporate resilience-building initiatives into training programs to enhance the psychological and emotional resilience of military personnel. Developing coping mechanisms can contribute to their ability to manage stress effectively.
6. Apart from the Neuro-Psychiatric test conducted during the recruitment phase of the military applicants, a

resilience test can also be given to measure how military applicants handle stress in challenging times.

7. Strengthen crisis intervention protocols to address severe and potentially dangerous stress situations. Ensure that there are established procedures for immediate support and assistance when military personnel are facing acute stress, such as referral to mental health professionals.
8. Similar research should be conducted in the military organization and must include a wider scope of coverage. Promote and encourage the military organization to engage in research endeavors aimed at enhancing the well-being of military personnel and mitigating turnover.

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