

**‘A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG
INDIAN SOLDIERS UNDER PERSONNEL BELOW OFFICER RANK’**

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to study the various factors causing occupational stress and its effect on individuals and the organization, as a whole. It identifies the major factors of stress, classifiable into nine categories i.e., job content, work load and work place, working hours, participation and control, career development, status and pay, role in organization, interpersonal relationships, organizational culture and home-work interface. Here, an attempt is made to study the factors of occupational stress and its effects on Indian soldiers under PBOR (Personnel Below Officer Rank).

Key Words: Occupational stress, interpersonal relationship, organizational culture, home-work interface, PBOR

1.1 Introduction

The security and sanctity of our nation has been threatened, time and again, in the past and in order to defend the same in conflicts which may take place in the future, the Indian Army needs a physically and mentally strong armed force. But no human being can be exempt from stress. Apart from instigating several lifestyle ill-habits, chronic diseases, childlessness and hormonal variations, stress has also triggered a tendency to commit fratricide in individuals displaying violent traits and suicidal tendencies in distressed individuals. There were as many as 635 cases of suicide and 67 cases of fratricidal killings in the three services of Armed Forces from 2003 to 2007, of which the Army was the worst affected.

As reported by the Ministry of Defence, a soldier takes his own life, every third day, a rate that is much greater than the loss of life in combats. From 2007 to May 2010, 208 soldiers lost their lives to militancy while 368 soldiers killed themselves during this period. The disturbing trend of suicides and fratricidal killings in the Armed Forces, caused by its increased stress levels, calls for urgent control measures. This research intends to draw to the fore the grass-root problems faced by the Army personnel and throws light on the suggestions to minimize the same, with the aim of aiding the Army authorities in implementing appropriate measures to control stress among its men.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Economic Times reported that, in the year 2018, 80 army personnel committed suicide, out of which 56 were from the Indian Military service, alone. The Times of India also reported the statistics on the same lines, which was agreed upon by the Minister of State for Defense, Shri. Subhash Bhamre. Such reports pave a way to pinpoint the factors leading to this crisis.

1.3 Significance of the study

Despite media reports on the problem of high occupational stress levels in the Indian Army, no in-depth research has been conducted to find out its specific sources, effects and the impact of measures being employed to reduce the stress of the soldiers. Hence, it is most crucial to conduct a detailed study on the same.

1.4 Objectives of the study

1.4.1 To examine the factors affecting occupational stress

1.4.2 To identify the influences of occupational stress

1.5 Research Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature and is based on secondary data.

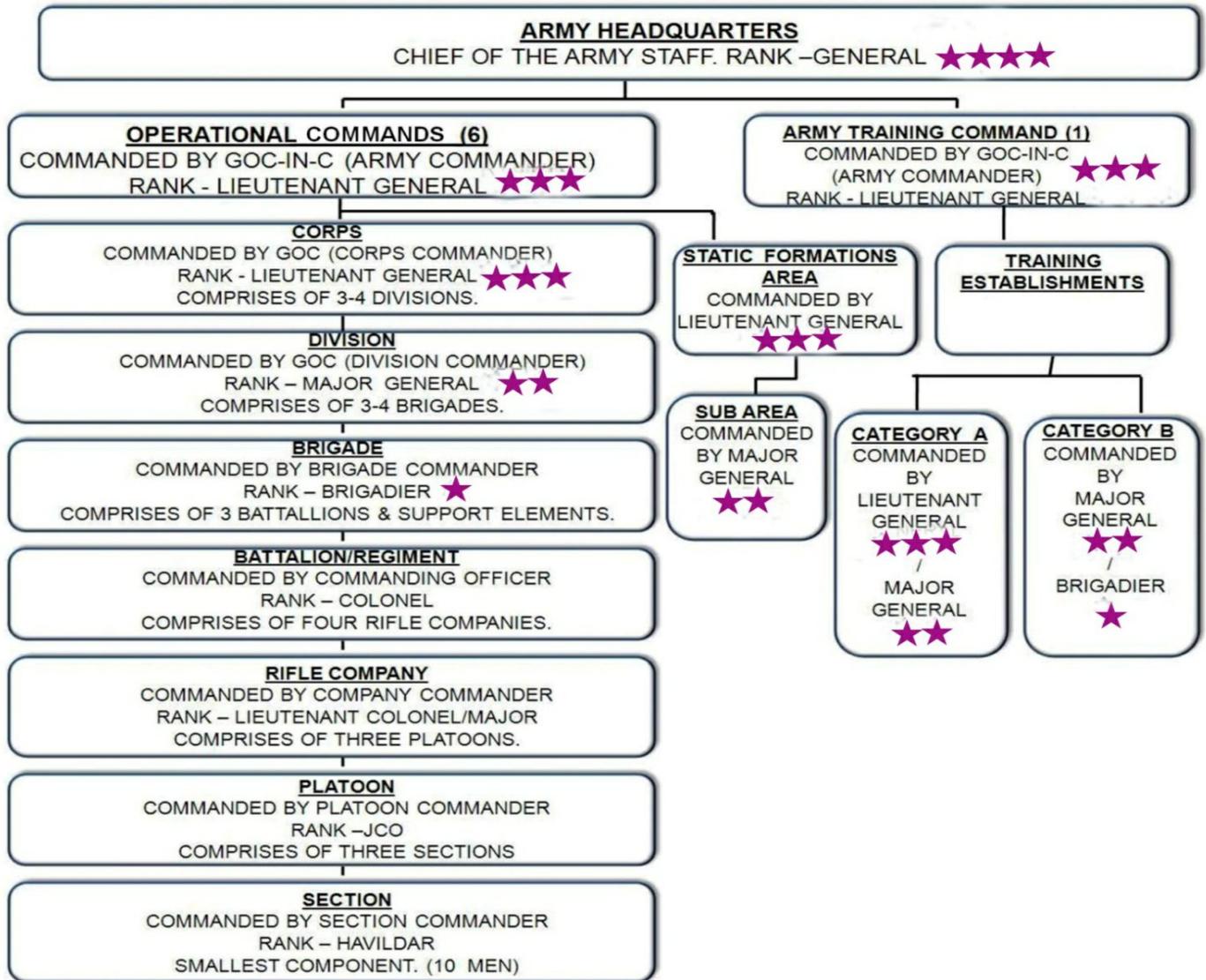
Part II

Theoretical frame work on Occupational Stress

2.1 The Ministry and Departments of Indian Army:

The Ministry of Defense works through the following four departments.

1. **The Integrated Defence Staff (IDS)** is responsible for the Defence Budget, establishment matters, defence policy, matters relating to Parliament, defence co-operation with foreign countries and synchronization of all defence-related activities.
2. **The Production Department of Defence** concentrate into various categories of functions viz., defence production, indigenization of imported stores, equipment and spares etc. Production department units controlled by the Ordnance Factory Board and Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs).
3. **The RD Department of defence** give guidance to the Government on scientific aspects of military equipment and logistics and to formulate research, drafting and devising plans for equipment needed by the Army.
4. **The Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare** takes care of rehabilitation, welfare and retirement benefits of ex-servicemen.



2.2 Hierarchy of the Indian Army

2.3 Ranks under PBOR(All promotions are done by a selection process)

RANK	POST	HONOUR	RETIREMENT AGE WHICH EVER IS EARLIER
2.3.1. Junior Commissioned Officers	1. Subedhar Major	Golden National emblem with stripe	34 -54
	2. Subedhar	2 gold stars with stripe	30-52
	3. NaibSubedhar	Gold star with stripe	28-52
2.3.2 Non-commissioned Officers	1. Havildar	Insignia 3 rank chevrons	26-49
	2. Naik	Insignia 2 rank chevrons	24-49
	3. Lance Naik	Insignia 1 rank chevron	22-48
2.3.3 Soldiers	1. Sepoy	Insignia plain shoulder badge	According to the corps that they serve in

2.4 Factors affecting Occupational stress

1. Nature of the job: tedious, lacking variety, unpleasant and aversive tasks.
2. Workload: too much or too little to do, and working under deadlines.
3. Working hours: strict and rigid working schedule; long, unexpected and untimely hours, and poorly devised shift systems.
4. Influence and Involvement in decision-making: lack of participation and uncontrolled decision making
5. Career Development, job grade and pay: job insecurity, lack of promotion prospects, under or over-promotion, work of low esteem, piece rate payment schemes,

unclear or biased performance evaluation, and being over or under competent for the job.

6.Responsibilities in the organization: unclear and contradicting roles within the same job, accountability for people, constantly dealing with them and their difficulties.

7.Fraternal relationships: insufficient, unsympathetic or unsupportive supervision, unhealthy relationships with co-workers, victimization and violence, insulated or secluded work, no prescribed procedures for dealing with grievances.

8.Organizational ambience: poor communication and leadership, lack of transparency about organizational objectives and structure

9.Domestic and Career Boundaries: conflicting pressures of work and home, lack of backing for familial problems at work, and lack of support for work problems at the domestic level.

2.5 The Influences of Occupational Stress

2.5.1TheInfluences of occupational stress on individuals

Stress affects people in various ways, causing unusual and dysfunctional mental health, resulting in absence or even discontinuation from work.

- a) becoming increasingly discouraged and restless
- b) degraded skills
- c) difficulty to concentrate ,think and make reasonable decisions
- d) inability to relax or concentrate
- e) reduced enjoyment of work and lower commitment levels
- f) fatigue, depression and anxiety
- g) insomnia
- h) experiencing serious health problems such as:
 - I. Heart disease
 - II. Disorders of digestive system
 - III. Increased blood pressure
 - IV. Headache

V. Musculoskeletal disorders.

2.5.2 The Influences of Occupational Stress on Organizations in general

The health and overall performance of an organization with stressed workers is adversely affected in the following ways:

- a) Higher rate of absence
- b) Increased labour turn-over
- c) Lower commitment towards the job
- d) Inefficient performance and productivity
- e) Higher cost of production
- f) Increased incidence of industrial mishaps
- g) Damage to the goodwill of the organization

Part -III

Findings and Conclusions

Occupational stress is related with work demands that create more pressures and challenges in their ability to perform work in the organization. It can be caused by various factors that can be affected badly on both individuals and the organization. Proper attention is needed to identify these factors and their ill-effects on the resources of the workplace.

- Mental disorders, job apathy and cognitive intentions were identified as strong effects of occupational stress.
- Lack of positivity and alertness contribute much to mental illness, head ache and anxiety being the most common physical and mental symptoms respectively.
- In addition, both the factors of sluggishness, viz., unsuitable and uninteresting profession, and lack of willpower and dissatisfaction from job were found strongly contributing towards their construct.

The Indian Army plays a significant role in protecting our nation and hence, its personnel are to be physically, mentally and emotionally healthy. Since, the policies

and plans designed by the officer rank, are mainly executed by the PBOR category, there is a considerable amount of inevitable stress. It is necessary to identify, control and convert negative stress into a positive outcome.

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