



Comparing Resilience: The Divergent Experiences of Military Personnel and Civilians

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“As the world navigates through unprecedented challenges, fostering psychological well-being becomes a revolutionary act of self-care, empowering individuals to harness their inner resilience and navigate tumultuous waters with grace.”

The concept of psychological well-being revolves around the intricate combination of experiencing positive emotions and functioning effectively. Feeling good encompasses not only happiness and contentment but also involves emotions like affection, confidence, and engagement. On the other hand, functioning effectively encompasses the development of one’s potential, maintaining control over life, having a sense of purpose by working towards valued goals, and fostering positive relationships. In the present scenario, military personnel and civilians exhibit notable variations in how their psychological well-being intertwines with resilience. Military personnel face unique adversities, including rigorous training, deployment to diverse terrains, armed conflict, counter-insurgency operations, and prolonged separation from family during international exercises. Similarly, civilians confront challenges such as job security, personal growth, familial relationships, and societal survival.

Resilience in civilians varies individually based on exposure to adverse conditions and the extent of their experiences. Environmental conditions and the nature of stressors differ significantly for military personnel and civilians. Military personnel undergo specific endurance training to cultivate resilience and, consequently, enhance psychological well-being. In contrast, civilians must find their individual pathways to build resilience and achieve psychological well-being.

Endurance training has distinct effects on the psyche of military personnel, creating artificial stress that can impact psychological well-being positively or negatively in the long run. Conversely, civilians, who may engage less in physical activities, are often presumed to have lower resilience levels and, consequently, lower psychological well-being.

Novotney (2009) [1] discussed how resilience training of U.S military troops decreased the chances of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in soldiers. It also highlights those soldiers with low levels of physical and psychological health prior to combat had two to three times the risk of symptoms or a diagnosis of PTSD after deployment, compared with those who had higher baseline for mental and physical health scores.

According to Deuster and Silverman (2013) [2], physical fitness serves as a pathway to health and resilience, contributing to an individual’s ability to withstand, recover, and grow in the face of stressors and changing demands. The article emphasizes the positive physiological and psychological benefits of regular exercise and physical activity, linking physical fitness to traits and attributes associated with resilience.

According to Nindl, *et al.* (2018) [3], modern warfare operations often take place in volatile and challenging environments, necessitating military personnel to exhibit readiness and resiliency in the face of stressors for optimal cognitive and physical performance. The article explores various domains of resiliency, including physiological versus psychological aspects, sex differences, contributions of aerobic and strength training,

thermal tolerance, and the interplay of nature versus nurture. The interconnectedness of these domains underscores the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to understanding and enhancing resilience for military performance.

Foster, *et al.* (2020) [4] found resilience to emerge as a protective factor for frontline healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, mitigating psychological issues like anxiety, depression, and burnout.

Zhao, *et al.* (2020) [5] investigated 697 air force soldiers from China. Structural equation modeling revealed the following: (1) resilience had a positive predictive effect on active coping style; (2) the emotion regulation strategy of self-comfort mediated the relationship between resilience and positive coping style; and (3) social support moderated the latter half of the intermediary process, in which resilience influenced the active coping style of soldiers through self-comfort. The influence of resilience on air force soldiers was a mediating effect, in which resilience could not only directly predict the coping style of soldiers but also influence their coping style through self-comfort. Social support enhanced the influence of self-comfort on coping style.

Goncalves, *et al.* (2022) [6] analyzed the relationship between individual's resilience and various occupational health indicators among health care workers in Spain. The findings indicated significant associations between individual's resilience and occupational health indicators, with age and organizational resilience playing moderating roles in certain aspects such as stress perception and medical leave. The study emphasizes the importance of considering both individual and organizational resilience in intervention programs to enhance the occupational health of health care workers.

Organisations can introduce resilience building programs to enhance the psychological well-being of their employees like physical training, spiritual training, frequent visits by counsellor hence improving the efficiency of their work. The differences in psychological well-being and resilience between males and females, both in military personnel and civilians, highlight the necessity for gender-specific approaches in mental health and resilience-building programs.

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