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# Employee Resilience Into The Military-industrial Complex

The intention of this report is to give a clear insight into the military-industrial complex identifying and analyzing stressors related to current and former employees within this sector, giving great deal of attention to soldiers. The report will also discuss theories such as emotional labour and psychological contract in relation to building resilience. It will also break down past examples to suggest recommendations related to strengthen and promoting psychological resilience in order to help engage with millennials in the future.

Members of the military face unique tests to their profession, particularly during war. They are exposed to the awfulness of war either by direct encounters or through the injuries and deaths of their fellow service members. Numerous service members deploy multiple times, often within short periods of time. Military life overall is stressful with frequent relocations, long work hours, building new support systems with each move and the knowledge and reality that the mission always comes first.

Optimally, military service members are resilient, that is, they positively adapt when faced with challenges and adversity (Carver, 1997). Positive adaptation refers to the ability to maintain equilibrium or 'bounce back' from trauma, without developing psychological or psychiatric pathology and without sacrificing functional capabilities or social appropriateness (Schoon, 2003).

The long and frequent deployments of the military combined with the other consequences of combat, such as exposure to trauma, have tested the resilience and coping skills of the military service members and their families. While most military personnel and families are resilient under these difficult circumstances, many also experience difficulties handling stress at some point (Meredith et al., 2011).

## The Military-Industrial Complex (MIC)

US President Eisenhower was the first person to reference a Military Industrial Complex in 1961. He later adverted to something historically specific: the build-up of a vast permanent military establishment, and a standing arms industry, which raised his concerns for the unwarranted influence of these societal forces (Eisenhower, 1961). The military-industrial complex merged both a historical phenomenon and a political trope. The phenomenon was a foyer that campaigned vividly in the United States to promote increased military spending and arms production. It flourished for a quarter of a century during the Cold War (Roland, 2009). The components of the MIC may have changed but the dynamic and impact of vested interests remain (Dunne, 1995).

## Primary Stressors

In the military, much attention has been paid to the relationship between combat and the emotional health of military personnel (Jones, 1995). Indeed, current textbooks on military psychiatry focus primarily on the effects of combat stress, and the prevention of post-traumatic stress disorder (Solomon, 1993). Several studies have found work stress to be a significant

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source of distress for military personnel during routine peacetime assignments (Manning et al. 1981). The more dramatic aspects of wartime activities have been clearly established as precipitants of psychological stress (Blood, 1993). Recent research has established that combat, exposure to heavy casualties, deployment of units in a war zone, and unexpected mobilizations of reserve units are all correlated with higher levels of psychological distress (Perconte, 1993).

The military lifestyle consists of turbulent stressors that affect the military family. The most common stressor is deployment, but residential mobility, parent separation or absence, trauma and loss, and reintegration are all of equal importance due to the toll these positive and negative experiences take on the parent child dynamic and the overall family system (Murphey, 2013). Although there are many marks and reasons of combat stress, there are key common signs in the majority of the cases. These present such as: anxiety, sleeping problems, drastic changes in behavior or angry outbursts. Combat stress could often lead to stress injuries, which cause physical changes to the brain that disturb the way it processes information and deals with stress (Military One Source, 2018). During the height of the War on Terror, many services became available to help military families get through this difficult time and cope with these evident stressors. Services such as those offered through the military and at local schools, churches, or various companies and organizations provided support for parents and children prior, during, and after deployments (Murphey, 2013).

## **Employee Resilience**

Resilience is an interdisciplinary construct that is often defined in a broad manner, from a stationary trait to a dynamic capacity, which helps individuals to deal with and adjust positively to adversity. Research done beforehand has lacked clarity regarding whether resilience should be conceptualised as a state-like process, or a trait-like outcome to stress (Bonanno and Diminich, 2013). Recent ideologies suggest that resilience may be influenced by both stationary trait factors (e.g., positive personality) and malleable state factors (e.g., social resources) (Fletcher and Sarkar, 2016), which may react differently depending on both the magnitude of and exposure to, adversity (Biron, Ivers, Brun & Cooper, 2006). However, this is still unclear.

Additionally, resilience is a concept that has become popular in both academic research and applied practice over the last 30 years (Estrada, Severt, and Jiménez-Rodríguez, 2016). However, the understanding of resilience has been hampered by inadequate conceptualization and theorizing, reflected in colloquialisms in applied practice and the conflation of resilience with other terms in previous research. Associated terms such as 'mental toughness', 'emotional intelligence', 'hardiness' and 'grit' are often used interchangeably with resilience (Andersen, 2011) where both hardiness and grit connote a 'hardy constitution', absent of any reflective meta-cognitive appraisals (Fleming and Ledogar, 2008), rather than an adaptive response to stress, which is a fundamental aspect of resilience (Masten, 1994). These misunderstandings have led to related measurements, which have been identified in past reviews (Fletcher and Sarkar, 2013). Millennials have been inquired about their hardship and ability to deal with pressures in recent years (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010).

## **Academic Theories**

### **Psychological Contract**

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The concept of the psychological contract was conceived over fifty five years ago. As early as in 1962 the psychological contract was defined as a series of mutual expectations (Levinson et al. 1962). However, the most recognised definition comes from Rousseau who stated that the psychological contract was “an individual’s beliefs regarding the terms of conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another party” (Rousseau, 1989). The psychological contract is an individual’s idiosyncratic interpretation of the terms of an exchange (Robinson and Morrison, 1995). Such terms may be implicit or explicit, oral, or written (Eckerd, Hill, Boyer, Donohue, and Ward, 2013). The terms of an individual’s psychological contract comprehend an employee’s understanding of her or his obligations as well as those of the employer (Dabos and Rousseau, 2004). When an individual senses a failure in the fulfillment of the psychological contract, this is identified as psychological contract breach (Eckerd, Hill, Boyer, Donohue, and Ward, 2013). Psychological breach has a negative impact on job attitudes (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, and Bravo, 2007). It is generally linked to lower job satisfaction, lower affective commitment and higher turnover intention rates (Lapointe, Vandenberghe, and Boudrias, 2014). On the contrary, psychological contract fulfillment has positive effects on job outcomes (Conway, Guest, and Trenberth, 2011). Compared with civilian contexts, a military position is more than just a job, as it extends into life outside of work. Equally, it can be argued that the implications of a breach of psychological contract have wider-reaching implications for military personnel, affecting every aspect of their lives (Edgar, Riley, Brown, Diamond, and Lovell, 2005). Nevertheless, psychological contract breach in the military has received little attention.

## **Emotional Labour**

The term ‘emotional labour’ highlights the similarities as well as differences of emotional and physical labour. In order to assist in the management of patients’ emotions in the everyday working, emotional labour requires an individualised but trained response (Allan and Smith, 2005). It also implicates the suppression or induction of feeling, in order to sustain an outward appearance that produces in others a feeling of being cared for in a safe place (Hochschild, 1983). Emotional labor is particularly typified by three characteristics: face-to-face or voice contact with the public; it requires the worker to produce an emotional state in another; it allows the employer through training and supervision to regulate a degree of control over the emotional activities of workers (Smith and Lorentzon, 2007).

The military is an especially interesting context for studies of emotional labor. Moreover, it demands of its member’s practices and skills that are antithetical to those privileged in the vast majority of civilian occupations. To put it bluntly, the mandate of the military is to ‘perfect the techniques of lethal violence’ (Kovitz, 2003). This demands the deliberate management of soldiers’ emotions; to prepare them for the realities of military labor and to help them renegotiate their relationship to violence, killing and death. Such practices — through which civilians are turned into soldiers — are diverse, complex and deeply embedded in the structure and culture of the military (Godfrey, Lilley, and Brewis, 2012). Furthermore, the military, during basic training in particular and in many respects also operational tours, is a total institution (Goffman, [1961] 1991).

Its members carry out their daily activities alongside numerous other members, all of whom are treated identically; they work, play and rest in the same place; their lives are rigidly scheduled; and all activity is designed to serve the purposes of the wider institution.

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## Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)

The business tendency has fed a constant pattern that the immaculate employee is committed to work elevating it over family obligations. The main reason is society's tendency to overvalue efficiency, consumerism, and job commitment against family values (Lewis, 2003). But organizations decided to experiment, implementing alternative work arrangements in their work environment, as an alternative to effectively respond to market volatility and workforce needs (Stavrou, 2005). It is quite challenging to determine the exact definition of FWAs due to overlapping concepts and their applications. Nevertheless, there is a consensus that FWA include arrangements, where the employee selects, in general, the location, time, and duration of their work-related duties and tasks (Kossek and Michel, 2011, p. 8).

Some of the most common FWAs are: flextime, a compressed work schedule, and job sharing.

- Flextime

Flextime, or variable work hours, coordinates the work schedule into a stable core period spent in the habitual workplace and independently chosen flexible periods for the remainder of the schedule. The variable work hours arrangement is deemed easiest to implement and is widely used by numerous countries (Altman and Golden, 2007; OECD, 1999; OECD, 2014). It has the minimum impact on operational readiness, while not relying on additional technological, administration or organizational costs. Furthermore, it includes most of the benefits found in flexible arrangements such as increased productivity, retention, effectiveness, financial performance positive employee morale, organizational commitment and lower absenteeism (Baltes et al., 1999)

- Compressed Work Schedule

A second usual arrangement is the compressed schedule. This presents the option of working fewer days per workweek but more hours per day to accomplish the necessary 40-hour or 37.5-hour workweek requisite. Classic examples are the 4/10 and 3x12.5 schedules (three or four days of extensive work hours for longer weekends), and the 8x9 option (1 day off biweekly) (DeCenzo and Robbins, 2005). The trade-off is usually days off for family obligations or longer weekends. It is extensively used in the military.

- Job Share

Lastly, this common and low-cost arrangement allows two or more employees to share the tasks and responsibility of one full-time position with or without overlaps. Typical examples are two employees working daily mornings and afternoons or on alternate weeks with changeover periods in between. Acquiescent to (Gallo, 2013), typical reasons to pursue this arrangement are having a second job, family or educational obligations, and a desire for a less stressful work schedule.

## Analysis/discussion Using Examples and Military Cases

Growing concern over rates of mental health problems among military personnel (e.g., Hoge et al., 2004; Reger et al., 2009) has led to interest in the use of mental health interventions within

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the military context. The focus in this section is with regard to the most common mental health interventions within the military in general and in the U.S. in particular.

## **Battlemind**

Battlemind embodies the inner strength and confidence in the face of difficulty that soldiers must show (Adler, Bliese, McGurk, Hoge, and Castro, 2009a). The Battlemind program has the target of diminishing mental health symptoms by helping U.S. soldiers acclimate to stress faced throughout the deployment cycle (Adler, Castro, and McGurk, 2009b).

## **Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness**

Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness is currently the primary preventive mental health and well-being program used by the U.S. Army (Casey, 2011). It represents the largest psychological health initiative ever implemented within the U.S. military (Cornum, Matthews, and Seligman, 2011). It is aimed at developing psychosocial resilience in soldiers and is rooted in the principles of positive psychology in that the focus of the program is on preventing mental health problems and developing psychological strengths (Casey, 2011; Cornum et al., 2011). The program takes a holistic approach which considers both the effects of family relationships on soldier health (Gottman, Gottman, and Atkins, 2011) and effects of military life on the mental health of soldiers' families (Park, 2011). Consequently, soldier fitness is defined as a multidimensional construct, emphasizing the importance of emotional, family, social, and spiritual aspects of psychological health. Individual resilience training is provided throughout the army (Corum et al., 2011) and incorporates aspects of Battlemind (Adler et al., 2009a). For example, pre-deployment spousal resilience training aims to prepare the spouse for the hardships associated with managing the family while their significant other is on deployment, maintaining a strong relationship with their significant other throughout the deployment period, and teaches spouses resilience-based skills.

## **Mental Skills Training (MST)**

Mental Skills Training consists of enhancing mental and emotional components of psychological functioning through a wide range of exercises, including mental rehearsal, positive imagery, goal setting, and self-talk (Martens, 1987; Rushall, 1992). Prior research on MST in the field of sport psychology has demonstrated positive effects on the self-confidence (e.g., Frey, Laguna, Ravizza, 2003), cohesion (e.g., Hodge and Hermansson, 2007), and performance (e.g., Thelwell and Greenlees, 2003) of athletes. Taking into account the similarities in physical demands of soldiers and athletes, MST was expected to enhance soldier performance (DeWiggins, Hite, and Alston, 2010) and resilience (Hammermeister, Pickering, and Ohlson, 2009). Correspondingly, MST has been utilized in numerous resilience-building programs in the U.S. military. In one, the MST intervention involved 20 minute sessions, 3-4 times per week, for a 10-week period and included self-talk, goal-setting and relaxation techniques. People who took part in reported greater resilience and self-confidence, and showed superior performance on physical tests (Hammermeister, et al., 2010).

## **Conclusion**

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Promoting resilience in the military has increasingly become a critical objective. There is perhaps no context where stress and emotional well-being are more important than they are in the military. These factors play a tremendously important role in determining performance, health outcomes, and turnover intentions in this context. Beyond the rigors of day-to-day life in the military, the negative effects associated with the high stress experience of combat deployments often spill into the family domain as well. Yet despite the importance of these factors and the dedicated efforts of researchers working in this domain, fully capturing the nature of the processes underlying these phenomena remains elusive. Studying emotions and wellbeing in the military context is inherently difficult owing to a variety of factors. First and foremost, the military is an organizational culture characterized by an unwillingness to display emotions or acknowledge personal weakness. This, coupled with a distrust of mental health practitioners, makes gathering reliable, accurate data a constant challenge.

Moreover, given the fact that service members are constantly rotating in and out of combat environments, there is an extremely high degree of variability in their reported emotional well-being over time. Add to this the fact that numerous factors contribute to the experience of stress and wellbeing make a comprehensive study capturing all relevant factors logistically (and potentially statistically) impossible. Thus, we are left with an incomplete picture. Prior literature has identified a number of important stressors and has established that both personality and relational circumstances can serve as protective factors, but much is still left to be discovered. The issues surrounding emotional well-being and stress in the military may be complex, but the importance of the problem cannot be overlooked. This context plays a role in the lives of millions of individuals, both directly and indirectly.

## **Limitations**

This report fills some gaps in knowledge about which factors promote resilience, with particular attention on military population but still has some limitations. Further research could have been done on other FWAs, common mental health interventions or primary stressors but the length would have been an issue. Additionally, future researchers should assess any new regulations and changes in current legislation that could accelerate or facilitate the implementation of more FWAs.

## **Recommendations**

Reported below are recommendations on building resilience within the military to engage millennials in the future:

- FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS (FWAs)

FWAs could have a significant positive impact on morale, retention, and motivation in the work environment. This will help the military to retain millennials and reassure them on their needs and concerns. Furthermore, FWAs are considered a tool for increasing organizational effectiveness and achieving work-life balance.

- REPORT TO MILITARY MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES ADVICE REGARDING THE VARIETY OF RESILIENCE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

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With such a wide variety and rapid increase in programs that are available, it is difficult for individuals and millennials to decipher the trade-offs of using different services or programs. A resource guide for resilience programs that compares and contrasts the different types of services offered by different programs would increase awareness about different options. This will improve millennials' confidence on relying on these programs.

- **STRENGTHEN EXISTING PROGRAMS**

Evaluation will help to identify strengths and weaknesses of existing programs, possibly aligning with the resilience factors identified here, allowing for improvements to be implemented in an evidence-informed fashion. In addition, randomized controlled trials that compare promising programs with the strongest evidence as well as the current effort to combine programs with the most potential based on current evidence (such as evaluations of the Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program, currently under way) are recommended and will ensure millennials are provided with the latest improvements in them. Ultimately, additional funding targeted at evaluating existing programs will be needed to accomplish these goals

- **ENGAGE SENIOR MILITARY LEADERS**

A major challenge to building a resilience program within the military culture is getting support from senior operational leadership. Placing oversight of resilience programs in personnel training programs and training operational commanders to fully understand their role in building a resilience force will help promote values important to the Service cultures. This will encourage millennials to join the army with a well-built idea and clearer perspective.