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Severe Stress Among Army Personnel

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Why in News

According to the findings of a study by **United Service Institution of India (USI)**, a Service think tank, **more than half of Indian Army personnel seem to be under severe stress.**

Key Points

- **Stressed Army Personnel:**
 - The Army has been **losing more personnel every year** due to suicides, fratricides and untoward incidents **than in response to any enemy or terrorist activities.**
 - **Prolonged exposure** of Indian Army personnel to **Counter Insurgency and Counter Terrorism (CI/CT) environment** has been one of the contributory factors for **increased stress levels.**
 - This loss is **substantially greater than the operational casualties suffered by the Armed forces.** In addition, a number of soldiers and leaders have been affected by hypertension, heart diseases, psychosis, neurosis and other related ailments.
 - Officers experience comparatively **much higher cumulative stress levels,** compared to the **Junior Commissioned Officers (JCO)** and **Other Ranks (OR)** and the stress causative factors are also different.
- **Causes of Stress:**
 - **Among Army Officers:** Inadequacies in the **quality of leadership, overburdened** commitments, **inadequate resources, frequent dislocations,** lack of **fairness and transparency** in postings and promotions, insufficient accommodation, **indifferent attitude of civilian officials,** etc.
 - **Among Lower Rank Officials:** Excessive engagements, domestic problems, lack of dignity, lack of recreational facilities and conflict with seniors as well as subordinates, etc.

- **Impact of Stress on Work:**

Units and subunits under stress are likely to witness an **increased number of incidents of indiscipline**, unsatisfactory state of training, inadequate maintenance of equipment and **low morale** that adversely affects their combat preparedness and operational performance.

- **Suggestion:**

Stress prevention and management should be treated “as a leadership role at Unit and Formation level”.

- **Army’s Stand:**

The Army has **rejected the study**, stressing that the **sample size** for the survey was **too “miniscule”** to arrive at such **“far reaching”** conclusions.

The study has been **done by one individual**, with a sample size of **around 400 soldiers**.

- **Related Steps Taken:**

- Provision of **better quality of facilities** such as clothing, food, married accommodation, travel facilities, schooling, recreation etc. and periodic welfare meeting.
- Conduct of **yoga and meditation** as a tool for stress management.
- Training and deployment of **psychological counsellors**.
- Institutionalization of projects ‘**MILAP**’ and ‘**SAHYOG**’ by the Army in **Northern & Eastern Command** to reduce stress among troops.
- A ‘**MansikSahayata Helpline**’ has been established by the Army & Air Force to take professional counselling.
- **Mental Health Awareness** is provided during pre-induction training.
- Formation of **Military Psychiatry Treatment Centre at INHS Asvini** and establishment of **Mental Health Centres** in Mumbai, Visakhapatnam, Kochi, Port Blair, Goa and Karwar.
- Previously, **Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR) had completed research projects** that focused on identifying factors causing suicides among troops deployed in Field and Peace areas. It had found in its studies that **not getting timely leave** was one of the stress factors triggering suicidal behaviour.

Recommendation included: rationalizing grant of Leave, counselling at the time of leave, decrease workload, reduction in tenure of deployment, increase in pay and allowances, improvement in living conditions, building better interpersonal relations between the officers and men, training programmes in stress management and psychological counselling, enhancing basic and recreation activities and redress of grievances.

Source:TH