

## Role of Humor in Reducing Soldier Stress in the Military

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Humor in the army serves as a vital coping mechanism, helping soldiers manage stress, build camaraderie, and communicate dissatisfaction with leadership. It fosters resilience and humanizes the military experience through relatable anecdotes and jokes. Therefore, this study aims to analyze two objectives: the role of humor and the types of humor used commonly among Officers, JCOs, and ORs in the Indian Army. Data was collected from Officers 63 (28.90%), JCOs 43 (19.72%), and ORs 112 (51.38%), a total of 222 participants. Results revealed that affiliate humor is highest in all three ranks, followed by self-enhancing and least aggressive humor. Pearson correlations were performed between all the dependent variables to test the MANOVA assumption that the dependent variables would be correlated in the moderate range (i.e., .20 - .80). Aggressive and self-defeating humor reported a slightly lower correlation.

**Keywords:** Coping mechanism, affiliate, self-enhancing, self-defeating, aggressive,

“A sense of humor is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done” –Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Teams, as opposed to individuals, play a critical role in enhancing mission effectiveness and optimal performance. As such, organizations have begun to focus on team environments; researchers have reported the importance of pleasing and conducive work environments and suggested that humor is conducive in the formation of positive organizational climate as it increases cohesiveness (Mullen & Copper,1994), leader effectiveness as well as creativity (Hughes, 2009) and reduces stress by working as a pressure release mechanism (Rawat, 2018a). The military, too, has its brand of novel humor and often uses jargon that only soldiers can comprehend; Halley's comet viewing by the entire battalion is a popular joke that takes a dig at communication styles in the military (Rawat, 2019).

This paper studies humor as a primary stress alleviation intervention. Firstly, we describe humor and differentiate it from sarcasm, which may have adverse outcomes for individuals and teams. Secondly, based on the positive and negative effects that humor and sarcasm may have, we define military humor in the context of various situations in military life. Thirdly, various types of humor are used by officers, JCOs, and ORs in the Indian Army. Fourthly, we classify dimensions of humor to include, among others, affiliative humor (stories /jokes for the sole purpose of amusing others for healthier interpersonal relations), self-enhancing humor used to cope in difficult and frustrating situations, aggressive humor (at times, use humor that others may perceive to be hostile, yet increases team cohesion and performance ( Bullis & Eslinger,2018) when everyone has a familiar opponent – you), and self-defeating humor (used to get others to accept but with the original purpose contrary

to the humor). Fifthly, we explore affiliative humor in the military and cite exciting examples of how military personnel from different parts of the country bring in their cultural flavor of humor in the military. Sixthly, we discuss self-defeating humor and how it helps leaders holding appointments like Company Havildar Major (CHM), senior JCO, or Subedar Major (SM) to break the ice and establish rapport with soldiers in getting them to overcome odds to achieve complex tasks entrusted to them in constrained environments (Harris & Barnes, 2006). Finally, we explore applications of humor in military environments and how it may be used to bridge the yawning gap in perceptions across verticals and reduce unwanted stress up and down the military ladder.

### **Humor**

The term is derived from the humoral medicine of ancient Greeks, which taught that the balance of fluids in the human body, known as humor (Latin: Humor, "body fluid"), controlled human health and emotion (Sidle, 2000). In India, the ancient Sanskrit drama Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra* defined humor (*hasyam*) as one of the nine *nava rasas* (nine expressions), or principle *rasas* (emotional responses), which can be inspired in the audience by *bhavas* (emotion), the imitations of emotions that the actors perform. Each *rasa* was associated with a specific *bhava* portrayed on stage. Research has indicated that 90% of males and 81% of females, all college students, reported having a sense of humor as a crucial characteristic looked for in a romantic partner (Kuiper et al., 1998).

In the fourth century, the Greek physician Hippocrates believed good health depends on the proper balance of four fluids, or "humor," of the body, namely, blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile (Von Kirchenheim, 1996). Later, the Greek physician Galen introduced the concept that

an excess of any of them in an individual created a certain temperament or character (Martin, 2007). Humor is the faculty of perceiving what is comical or amusing or expressing it in speech, writing, or other composition (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). Humor relates to body fluids, determining our health and disposition (Goldenson, 1984). A mixture of characters and behavior is a personality consisting of traits, interests, drives, values, self-concept, abilities, and emotional patterns (Goldenson, 1984). Humor is divided into four components from a psychological perspective, namely, social context, cognitive-perceptual process, emotional process, and vocal-behavioral expression of laughter (Martin, 2007). We briefly describe these four components.

### **Social Context**

It is common knowledge that people laugh and joke with others rather than alone (Provine & Fischer, 1989). In a military environment, soldiers always live together among different cultures, languages, and religions. They tend to get to know each other by sharing their social customs through jokes, building a solid bond, and forgetting physical separation from family members, spouses, siblings, friends, and relatives (Rawat, 2018b). It can occur in conversation with a group of close friends, sitting around a table in a military canteen/cafeteria, or interacting with a group of soldiers under training, on course, or in any camp. Even when soldiers are in small groups or staying alone, they can watch a comedy show on television, read humorous books, or remember funny personal experiences at the end of the day. It can be used by platoon Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO), CHM, Regimental Havildar Major (RHM), Company Subedar, and other crucial administrative appointment holders in addressing soldiers. Light-hearted, playful humor serves essential social, emotional, and cognitive functions (Bateson, 2005). For example, the sports

NCO uses humor to interact with participants playfully during game parades with soldiers of all ages. At times, CHM delivers the order for next-day tasks during roll call in a humorous way to break the monotony of routine military life.

### **Cognitive-Perceptual Process**

Have you heard about the karate instructor in the military training Academy? He nearly killed himself the first time he saluted. When someone says or does something like this, we process the information or behavior through our senses and give meaning to the information from our frame of reference. This may be influenced by information from the environment or memory as we play with ideas, words, or actions in ways others may perceive to be funny. For example, leaders often use fun with two different meanings of words to break the ice and create rapport with soldiers. The critical aspect of humor is to create playfulness, which is something out of the ordinary and routine military life that may be too monotonous at times.

### **Emotional Process**

Research has shown that exposure to humorous stimuli increases positive emotions and mood (Szabo, 2003). The funnier a particular cartoon is rated in a battalion/regiment barber shop or at a motivational hall or recreation room by soldiers, the more strongly parts of the brain are activated; brain circuits underlie pleasurable emotional states associated with a variety of enjoyable activities, including eating, listening to enjoyable music, and even 'marital activity.' When soldiers laugh at something funny, they experience an emotional high rooted in their brains' biochemistry (Ekman et al., 1990). Emotions like depression, anxiety, fear, love, and sadness are balanced by humor in military environments (Rawat, 2018a).

### **Expression of Laughter**

The expression of good feelings and emotions is the outcome of pleasure accompanying humor and is an expressive component, namely, laughter and smiling. When CHM or Company Subedar cracks a joke, a smile indicates a lighter moment among soldiers, and laughter is the higher side of humor. Thus, laughter is essentially a way of expressing or communicating to other soldiers in any gathering; CHM indicates to the company that he is engaging in play, a sign of friendliness and playful intentions, indicating that one is in a non-serious frame of mind rather than being severe (Goodwin & Tang, 1991). Peculiar laughter sounds directly affect the platoon/company and is well understood by the CHM or Company Subedar, including positive emotional arousal that mirrors the emotional state of laughter (Gervais & Wilson, 2005). It also motivates the unit/subunit soldiers to behave in particular ways (Rawat, 2018).

### **Humor and Sarcasm**

The word 'sarcasm' derives from ancient Greek for 'to tear flesh, gnash the teeth, and speak bitterly.' Its first definition is 'a sharp, bitter, or cutting expression or remark; a bitter gibe or taunt.' Sometimes, conversations with sarcastic people may be funny, but their words can hurt the intended target exceedingly (Nancy, 2009). Humor is when someone leaves you laughing; sarcasm is when someone leaves you awestruck and thinking. Humor is an immediate reaction; sarcasm takes time to finish the job. Humor lightens your heart; sarcasm may leave it stuck. Humor needs people, and sarcasm needs pros. (Maryjesse, 2017). Sarcasm reaches some bitterness, jealousy, frustration, or dissatisfaction.

Sarcasm is expressed verbally with negative or critical attitudes toward soldiers or military environments (Kreuz & Roberts, 1993). There are two particular

circumstances that a military environment likes to draw a soldier's attention to concerning sarcastic utterances—generally, an insult retorted by sarcastic people. Sarcasm is humor used to criticize the situation or the people when it is unpleasant. People may use sarcasm under other conditions, but the situations described are what one would like others to remember. One could identify the difference between sarcastic insults, mocking and direct compliments, and less politeness. (Laval & Bert-Erboul, 2005). There are other circumstances under which both (seniors and juniors) may make humorous remarks, but these are the ones that both would like each other to keep in mind.

### **Positive Effects of Humor**

Humor is vital in interpersonal relationships and enhances social probing, defusing conflict and tension and positive interactions, facilitating self-disclosure, and saving face (O'Leary et al., 2012). For example, it encourages divergent thinking (Hillman, 1995), increases motivation (John, 2011), builds confidence (Goodman, 1992), adds to enjoyment (Janet & Anna, 1996), improves comprehension (Powell & Andresen, 1985), aids retention (Ziv, 1988), enhances satisfaction (Parrott, 1994), improves productivity (Parrott, 1994), creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), reduces stress anxiety (Smith et al., 2007), reduces dogmatism (Parrott, 1994), reduces boredom, especially with repetition (Parrott, 1994), improves teacher/student rapport (Robinson et al., 2002), heightens interest (Carron et al., 1989), facilitates socialization [into the profession] (Paul et al., 2005), must be relevant (Ziegler, 1998), the dose must be excessive (Smit et al., 2002), and might be used to trivialize stressful events. The advantage of the sense of humor is overall health and psychological well-being (Cousins, 1979). A sense of humor plays a role in reducing psychological distress,

experiencing a high level of psychological well-being and superior physical health (Lefcourt & Martin, 1986); frequent use of a sense of humor will report less distress related to potentially stressful events to prevent the onset of emotional disorders (O'Connell, 1981).

### **Negative Effects of Humor**

Sarcasm and aggressive teasing are harmful types of humor that may negatively impact social relationships (Kalliny et al., 2006). The superiority theory elaborates that humor is a form of expressing superiority of one over another; laughter is 'nothing else but sudden glory' (Solomon, 2002). In the Army, 'superior'/'inferior' distinctions are often due to different points of view, which often leads to feelings of inferiority. Self-defeating humor negatively correlates with social competence and is considered negative humor styles, traits, bad moods, and aggression (Jeremy et al., 2005). Judicious use of humor may also contribute to other social competencies, such as initiating social interactions, providing emotional support, managing conflict among and with others in units/subunits, and is an essential social skill.

### **Application of Humor in military environments**

Researchers have revealed that humor can bridge leaders and subordinates and contribute to coming out of hectic daily schedules (Mihalcea, 2007). The experience and the excellent sense of humor of JCOs and CHMs help them to withstand difficulties and keep a lively spirit, even when faced with highly challenging obstacles (Strazdina, 2015). The Field Manual of the United States Army Leadership describes that a valuable character trait for leaders is a good sense of humor (Robert et al., 2006). Humor helps leaders holding appointments like CHM, senior JCO, or SM (Subedar Major) break the ice and establish rapport with soldiers to help them overcome odds and achieve

complex tasks entrusted to them in constrained environments. Among verbal humor, visual humor, and situational humor, verbal humor is often used to get the attention of subordinates in six primary levels, from concrete (low level) to abstract (high level), namely, language, target, situation, narrative strategy, logical mechanism and script opposition (Attardo et al., 1991). We shall discuss these briefly.

- *Language* explains the surface of jokes in linguistic aspects such as lexicon, morphology, syntax, and semantics. The structure of jokes and punch lines is often found in verbal humor (Hetzron, 1991).
- *Target* that covers or targets a group of people or community by the joke (Griffiths, 1998). For example, CHM and Senior JCO use humor more frequently on topics involving people in association with politics, computers, work, the relations between various cultures, and eating habits.
- *The situation* provides the location and participants in the context of a joke to the senior NCOs (Banas et al., 2011).
- *The narrative strategy* enables the CHM, Senior JCO, to build a dialogue, a straightforward narrative, or a riddle for the style of the joke.
- *The logical mechanism* provides a possible resolution mechanism to CHM, Senior JCO, for the incongruity between scripts.
- *Script opposition* is the thorough knowledge of the main idea to understand the particular soldiers' social environments.

One has to be mindful to express humor with different styles, typically both positively and negatively, in military and social

gatherings (Martin et al., 2003). Humor has been frequently associated with cohesive and non-cohesive work groups (Duncan, 1984) in forming communication patterns in different groups of soldiers from across the country.

## Method

### Participants

The participants were served officers, JCOs, and ORs from the Indian Army who were 20 years and above, with a maximum of participants above 30. Officers were 63 (28.90%) with a minimum of 6 years of service, JCOs were 43 (19.72%) with a minimum of 11 years of service, and ORs were 112 (51.38%) with a minimum of 0 years of service. Out of 222 participants, four were rejected because of missing data {JCO(n=1), ORs(n=3)}. In this study, we used a sample of equal variance and picked up 43 officers and ORs using a random number generator.

### Instruments

This study's data collection instrument was a humor-style questionnaire (Martin et al., 2003), which can be administered to the age group 14 through 87 years; it is an introductory schedule (demographic details). The researcher developed an introductory schedule. It included age, rank, marital status, and years of service. Each scale has eight items with good reliability (Cronbach alpha ranging from 0.77 to 0.8; test-retest reliability ranges from 0.80 to 0.85). Further, significant correlations were found between HSQ scales and corresponding peer rating items, ranging from 0.22. Convergent validity was established using the most widely used humor and well-being scales (SHRQ, CHS, SHQ-6, and MSHS); the multiple Rs were all highly significant, ranging from .47 to .67 (all  $ps < .001$ ), indicating that the HSQ scales are pretty strongly related to these existing measures of sense of humor. Scoring is done using a 7-point Likert scale (1=totally

disagree, 2=Moderately disagree, 3=Slightly disagree, 4= Neither agree nor disagree, 5=Slightly agree, 6=Moderately agree, 7=Totally agree). Eleven items are reverse scored, i.e., 7=totally disagree, 6=Moderately disagree, 5=Slightly disagree, 4= Neither agree nor disagree, 3=Slightly agree, 2=Moderately agree, 1=Totally agree.

### Procedure

The questionnaire was forwarded to a WhatsApp group of officers in Google Forms as they understood the English and the

content, and the rest of the JCOs and ORs were collected randomly, inviting them after completing wellbeing workshops to fill the HSQ by explaining the contents to them in English. The name was not collected to maintain confidentiality. The. A total of 222 samples were collected {Officers(n=63), JCO(n=43), ORs(n=112)}.

### Results and Discussion

On assorting the data from all the ranks, the humor types are summed in Table 1.

Table 1. Means of all humor types of all groups

	Affiliate humor			Self-enhancing humor			Aggressive humor			Self-defeating Humor		
	Officers	JCO	ORs	Officers	JCO	ORs	Officers	JCO	ORs	Officers	JCO	ORs
Mean	42.39	41.98	43.76	39.85	40.05	41.28	26.47	23.48	22.29	31.66	29.62	29.80
SD	9.17	8.20	5.71	6.82	6.98	5.58	7.13	5.98	5.09	8.43	5.00	6.10
N	62	42	112	62	42	112	62	42	112	62	42	112

This table shows affiliate humor is highest in all three ranks, followed by self-enhancing and least aggressive humor. To know which means are most excellent among the three ranks in each style of humor, we did a MANOVA (Multivariate analysis of variance). Before conducting the MANOVA, Pearson correlations were performed between all the dependent variables to test the MANOVA assumption that the dependent variables

would be correlated in the moderate range (i.e., .20 - .80; Meyers et al., 2006). Aggressive and self-defeating humor reported a slightly lower correlation (see Table 2). In addition to this, the Box's M value of 57.29,  $p < 0.05$ , was significant based on Huberty and Petoskey's (2000) guideline (i.e.,  $p < .001$ ). Hence, the covariance matrices between the groups were not equal for the MANOVA.

Table 2. Correlation table

Ranks		Affiliate	Self-enhancing	Aggressive	Self-defeating
JCO(n=42)	Affiliate	1			
	Self-enhancing	.572**	1		
	Aggressive	0.137	-0.361*	1	
	Self-defeating	0.232	0.078	0.121	1
Officers(n=62)	Affiliate	1			
	Self-enhancing	0.433**	1		
	Aggressive	0.145	-.287*	1	
	Self-defeating	0.08	0.202	0.275*	1

ORs	Affiliate	1			
	Self-enhancing	0.373**	1		
	Aggressive	0.065	-0.218*	1	
	Self-defeating	0.255**	0.348**	0.064	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to test the hypothesis that there would be one or more mean differences between ranks (Officers, JCO, ORs) and humor style scores. A statistically significant MANOVA effect was

obtained, Pillai's Trace = .11,  $F(8, 422) = 3.08$ ,  $p < .05$ . The multivariate effect size was estimated at .055, which implies that ranks accounted for 5.5% of the variance in the combined dependent variable. Table 3 summarises the results.

Table 3. Multivariate MANOVA Table

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Ranks	Pillai's Trace	0.11	3.08	8	422	0.002	0.055
	Wilks' Lambda	0.89	3.14b	8	420	0.002	0.056
	Hotelling's Trace	0.12	3.2	8	418	0.002	0.058

a Design: Intercept + Ranks

b Exact statistic

c The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

d Computed using alpha = .05

To determine which rank caused the significant difference in humor style, follow-up ANOVAs were done. Before conducting a series of follow-up ANOVAs, the homogeneity of variance assumption was tested for all four dependent variables. Based on a series of Levene's  $F$  tests, the homogeneity of variance assumption was considered satisfied, even though two of the 4 Levene's  $F$  tests were statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). Specifically, although the Levene's  $F$  test suggested that the variances associated with the affiliate humor, aggressive humor, and self-defeating humor scales were not homogenous. An examination of the standard deviations (see Table 4) revealed that none

of the most significant standard deviations were more than four times the size of the corresponding smallest, suggesting that the ANOVA would be robust in this case (Howell, 2009). A series of one-way ANOVAs on the four dependent variables was conducted as a follow-up test of the MANOVA. As can be seen in Table 2, aggressive humor was statistically significant, with effect sizes (partial  $\zeta^2$ ) of 0.09. This means that ranks caused 9% of the variance in aggressive humor style. The rest of the humor styles were nonsignificant, i.e., these humor styles were almost similar across the three ranks of the Indian Army.

Table 4. Follow-up ANOVA

Dependent variables	Officers		JCO		ORs		df	F	Sig	Partial eta squared
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
Affiliate	42.70	9.35	41.84	8.15	42.84	5.89	2	1.22	0.30	0.01
Self-enhancing	40.35	7.13	39.47	7.88	40.28	6.73	2	1.26	0.29	0.01
Aggressive	27.33	7.45	23.40	5.94	22.23	5.42	2	9.99	0.00	0.09
Self-defeating	32.49	7.93	29.30	5.36	29.23	5.64	2	1.82	0.17	0.02

Finally, post-hoc analyses (Games and Howell) were performed to examine individual mean difference comparisons across all three levels of ranks and all four humor style scales. The results revealed that post-hoc mean comparisons of aggressive humor style (see Table 5) were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). In all these cases, the trend of the effect was linear (see Table 5). In other words, on average, officers used aggressive humor most. However, the difference between the means of officers and JCO is 2.99,  $p=0.06$ ,

which is not significant, i.e., the use of aggressive humor among officers and JCO is similar. On the other hand, the mean differences between officers and ORs is 4.17\*,  $p<0.05$  is highly significant, suggesting that aggressive humor is more common among officers than ORs, with an effect size of 0.91 estimated by Cohen's  $d$ . Comparing the means of JCO and ORs shows non-significant differences (difference=0.18,  $p=0.98$ ).

Table 5. Mean comparisons

Dependent Variable	Ranks (I)	Ranks (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval					
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound	SD-officers	SD-JCO	SD-ORs	Cohen's d
Aggressive	Officers	JCO	2.99	1.29	0.06	-0.09	6.07	7.45	5.94	-	0.63
		ORs	4.17*	1.03	0.00	1.73	6.61	7.45	-	5.42	0.91
	JCO	ORs	1.18	1.04	0.50	-1.32	3.68	-	5.94	5.42	0.29

\* $p<0.05$

The other humor styles show no significant differences in means. However, results must be interpreted cautiously, as using different humor styles is similar in all three ranks.

### **Humor between Officers-PBOR (Personnel below Officer Rank) Relationships**

It has been found in research that humor may affect the quality of the relationship between officers and subordinates; PBORs may perceive their relationship with their

officers to be of high quality (in quality of emotions, loyalty, contribution, and professional respect) between PBOR self-reported humor style and officers self-reported humor style (Wisse, 2014). Several studies have noted that humor is associated with creativity at work, which stimulates intellectual activity that is directly relevant to achieving workplace objectives (Holmes, 2007). Researchers identified four 'S' in a fun work environment for a positive atmosphere in organizations to attract and retain soldiers: **Staff-oriented workplace fun, Supervisor-**

oriented workplace fun, **S**ocial-oriented workplace fun, and **S**trategy-oriented workplace fun (Simon, 2017). In terms of communication behaviors of JCOs who use humor, this study examined relationships among jawans' perceptions of JCOs' humor orientation, assertiveness, responsiveness, avoidance strategies, approach strategies, and overall senior leaders' satisfaction .

Soldiers generally undergo both physiological and psychological stresses; officers use humor in interaction with soldiers to reach the expected pattern to be maintained; for example, appreciation through a punch-line can diminish the pleasure derived from the joke (Nezu et al., 1988) in the course of this process, nervous energy or excess tension is discharged (Lefcourt & Martin, 1986). Officers often use humor during unit working hours to find soldiers in two states, like telic (serious-minded) state or para telic state (playful, process vs. outcome-oriented). If it is a telic state, the officer-in-charge understands that soldiers are experiencing unpleasantness in that it is interfering with the attainment of the goal. Such soldiers are presumably anxious about the completion of the task and may not be equipped to handle an additional boost in anxiety or stress levels. Under such circumstances, humor comes to the rescue.

### **Dimensions of Humor**

An individual difference in the use of humor is distinguished by four humor styles: two adaptive (affiliative and self-enhancing humor, which are potentially beneficial to relationships and emotional well-being) and two maladaptive (aggressive and self-defeating, which are considered potentially detrimental) dimensions of humor (Martin & Kuiper, 1999). We shall discuss the same briefly:

*a) Affiliative humor* (stories /jokes to amuse others for healthier interpersonal relations, adjustments, and emotional well-being).

Research evidence has found that positive self-evaluative standards lead to higher levels of social self-esteem and lower levels of depression; the increased use of affiliative humor may facilitate the development and maintenance of social support networks that foster and enhance well-being.

*b) Self-enhancing humor* (used to cope in difficult and frustrating situations) does not hurt anybody, based on talking big, a kind of protection, raising individual self-esteem. For example, CHM mentioned to his troops how he fell in the bathroom because the floor was wet and now 'cannot sit on his butt,' using self-deprecating humor to drive home the critical point of precaution to be taken in the bathroom.

*c) Aggressive humor* (sometimes using humor that others may perceive as hostile) increases team cohesion and performance when everyone has a familiar opponent – you). Aggressive humor is unrelated to negative affect at work; aggressive humor moderates the direct path (i.e., between abusive supervision and dysfunctional resistance) but does not moderate the indirect path (Goswami et al., 2015; Mills & Carville, 2009). It is expressed as sarcasm, irritating comments, and mocking.

*d) Self-defeating humor* (used to get others to accept, is related to negative emotions, low self-esteem, and low social support (Kuiper et al., 2004), but with the original purpose contrary to the humor. Harmful self-evaluative standards lead to the use of more self-defeating humor, which results in lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression; the greater use of self-defeating humor may result in the development of maladaptive social support networks that impede psychological well-being.

### **Humor as Stress Alleviation**

Research has proved that humor is vital in coping with stress and adversity (Lefcourt, 2001). Non-serious humor is played on different occasions, military routines are managed, and life-threatening situations are handled by laughing at jokes, which makes soldiers feel light (Zajdman, 1995). A humorous way of moving together allows stressed soldiers to shift perspective on a stressful situation, makes them feel light, and brings refreshing and relaxed thoughts. The situation becomes less stressful and more manageable (Kuiper et al., 1993; Martin et al., 1993). Jokes and spontaneous conversational humor during recruit training and cadet training replace feelings of anxiety, depression, and anger, enabling trainees to think more broadly and flexibly and helping in creative problem-solving (Rawat, 2018). Negative stress-related emotions (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998) are alleviated by jokes of different varieties (Rawat, 2018).

Humor is considered a coping mechanism or, in the present scenario, a stress management strategy similar to a positive reevaluation when the situation is not directly under one's control (Simonsen, 2016). Officers posted with unit/sub-unit use protective mechanisms by playing games with soldiers in different humorous ways that sustain soldiers' dignity and help them cope with life's difficulties (Rawat, 2019). They help individuals avoid tensions, accompanied by conflicts between consciousness and unconsciousness, and avoid the causes of all of the problems in one's body, namely, anger, guilt, fear, and criticism by others (Lika, 1996). Humorous episodes during daily games parade among officers, JCOs, and NCOs remove frustration and resistance to unpleasant feelings, emotions, and experiences. It reduces anxiety and tension; it improves soldiers' emotional and physical self-feeling. Thus, it appears that throughout

military life, the cognitive play of humor has been adopted as a means of dealing with difficulties and hardships, contributing to the resilience and coping potentials that have enabled soldiers to survive and thrive in challenging, stressful, Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) environments.

### **Humor as Coping in Interpersonal Relationships**

Humor is vital in facilitating healthy personal and social relationships by using humor to cope with stress. It brings intimacy (Hampes, 1994), empathy (Hampes, 2001), social assertiveness (Bell et al., 1986), and interpersonal trust (Hughes, 2009) among soldiers. Coping humor usually takes the form of joking comments and other playful communication among each other during or shortly after stressful events (Henman, 2001). Humor may be used to manage other soldiers' emotions as well as one's own (Francis, 1994); humor may provide the stressed soldier with an alternative way of looking at the stressor, alleviating feelings of distress and enhancing positive emotions (Fuller & Sheehy, 1974). Psychologically well-adjusted soldiers with pleasing personal relationships use humor to enhance their well-being and closeness to others. Meetings of groups of soldiers regularly enhance to change their perceptions of the situations, their emotional state, and the nature of their relationship with each other.

### **Role of Humor in Military Hospitals**

Researchers have identified that humor and laughter may relieve pain by distracting the unwell soldier and increasing discomfort thresholds as effectively as relaxation (Cogan et al., 1987; Mazer, 1981). Laughter promotes health. Humor and laughter provide a means for soldiers admitted or recuperating in any military, Naval, or Air Force hospitals to make light of their illness and maintain a spirit of optimism; jokes about

death are a way for soldiers to distance themselves emotionally from thoughts of their mortality. It has been reported that humor can contribute to medical fields and the educational process; humor reduces anxiety and stress, builds confidence, improves productivity, reduces boredom, heightens interest, encourages divergent thinking, and helps students learn (Ziegler, 2009). Medically, humor and laughter may relieve pain by distracting the patient, enhancing the respiratory process, breaking the tension, or interrupting a moment of grief with a light-hearted comment; intelligence contributes to humor, and laughter increases discomfort thresholds as effectively as relaxation (Ljungdahl, 1989). Behavior patterns are also responsible for increased risk of heart disease, ambitiousness, hostility and aggressiveness, competitiveness, impatience and time consciousness, muscle tension, rapid and emphatic speech, irritability, and outward expression of anger (Rosenman & Chesney, 1982). Doctors in the Indian armed forces emphasize the functional physiological benefits of laughter, such as restoration of homeostasis, stabilization of blood pressure, massage of vital organs, and the subjective sense of well-being (Keith-spiegel, 1972).

### **Conclusion**

Sensible use of humor may be an effective method of coping with stress and maintaining a cheerful disposition in the face of adversity. Humor may be an essential emotion regulation mechanism that enhances the ability to manage emotions. It provides physical and emotional benefits and can improve the quality of soldiers' lives. All ranks use Humor in military situations to minimize, avoid, change, or tolerate and accept stressful situations in any form. A better understanding of humor may help soldiers overcome the stressful social, physical, emotional, and cognitive challenges in military life and explore its use in solving

everyday routine situational challenges. Recognizing the importance of humor, units /sub-units/formations in military institutions have incorporated laughter as a routine parade to be practiced after every physical and yoga training session. Although there is a considerable amount of research evidence for humor as a mechanism for coping with stress and relationships between humor and positive and negative moods, further research is still recommended on the sense of humor and emotion-related abilities in the future.

Just enduring in a military environment is in itself challenging, and having a good sense of humor often helps cope with the constant demands, be it continuous feedback on 'performance improvement', living in close quarters and confined environments with others who were once 'strangers', the typical military diet which causes craving at times for home cooked food, the constant moving, marching, continuous training, and sleep deprivation distinctive of military life. Dealing with these unique situations demands different skill sets, and the absence of coping mechanisms may eventually overwhelm even the most resilient among soldiers. Nevertheless, the good news is that humor provides a crucial coping mechanism wherein these 'strangers' will soon be lifelong friends, and you acquire the ability to laugh together at the good times and the 'not-so-good times.' Laughter, they say, is the best medicine- do you have it in your preventive first-aid kit?

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