Role of Psychological Well-Being in Air Veterans Adjustment in India

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The Armed Forces require young and physically and mentally strong soldiers to win wars. Therefore, about 60000 soldiers from the Indian Armed Forces retire every year (Ministry of Defence, 2020, p-166), called Ex-Servicemen (ESM) or Veterans in general. In the context of the Indian Air Force (IAF) in particular, these ESMs are called 'Air Veterans'. The IAF, in cooperation with the other branches of the country's armed forces, is responsible for safeguarding the national airspace. This study aims to examine the role of psychological well-being in Air Veteran adjustment in India. In this study, 150 Air Veterans across the country participated as a sample and their age, sex and education levels were matched. A purposive sampling method was used for data collection. For this study the behaviour tools used were (i) Psychological Well-being (PWB) scale and (ii) Personal Adjustment Inventory (PAI). Statistical tools were used for data management like the mean and SD were calculated, Pearson's Correlation was used to explore the relations between domains of PWB and PAI. Thereafter, stepwise multiple regressions were conducted for ascertaining the predictors of Air Veteran's adjustment (outcome variable). The results from the correlation analysis showed a statistically significant and negative correlation between the adjustment level of Air Veterans with all the domains of PWB i.e., Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life and Self-Acceptance including the overall Psychological Well-Being at $p < 0.01$. This implies a higher level of PWB among Air Veterans which is an indicator of lower adjustment-related difficulties and vice versa. The result is found in consistent with a previous research study (Eshan, 2011). In the domain of stepwise regression analysis, two main predictors of adjustment were reported viz. (i) Positive Relations with Others and (ii) Environmental Mastery. Based on the findings, it was recommended that PWB plays an important role in the lives of Air Veterans for a better adjustment to the civil society after their retirement.

Keywords: Psychological Well-Being, Adjustment, Air Veteran, Ministry of Defence, Indian Air Force

The Armed Forces of India stands as the second largest and fourth most powerful force in the world, which employs approximately 1.4 million personnel in various arms (Global Fire Power Annual Defence Review, 2022). India has achieved this milestone leaving behind many developed countries of the world. This position is a matter of pride for a country, especially during the transition phase, which is driven by rapid changes in technology and security challenges that are straining the international system and altering global hierarchies (Ministry of Defence, 2019, p-42). Indian Air Force (IAF) is one of the branches of the armed forces of India, which is the fourth largest Air Force in the world with highly skilled human resources and advanced technical equipment of global standards (Singh, 2009). IAF personnel have shown paramount devotion to the safety and security of the nation since independence. It is considered as a credible air power and is known as the foremost professional service in the world. Approximately 60,000 defence personnel retire from active military services each year, wherein most of them fall into the significantly younger age range of 35 to 45 years (Ministry of Defence, 2020, p-166). During their retirement period, most military members are in the age brackets where they are still left with unfinished domestic tasks, necessitating the need to search for a second career.

Psychological Well-being

This is characterised as a state of health, happiness, and affluence that is indicative of a good quality of life. It describes an individual's emotional health and overall functioning. It points to functioning at a high level of behavioural, emotional, and adaptive ability, rather than just being free of disease (Reber & Reber, 2001). Psychological well-being is defined by the Aristotelian concept known as the eudemonic perspective. The eudemonic perspective is defined by constructive actions, developing personal growth, cultivating positive characteristics, and benefiting others (Wood et al., 2009). Other characteristics associated with psychological well-being including engagement, self-acceptance, being respected, pro-social behaviours, optimal physical health and functioning, positive relations with others, cultivating positive characteristics, creativity, and optimism (Diener et al., 2000). A mentally healthy person is in a state of psychological well-being when they exhibit numerous beneficial mental health traits like an active ability to adapt to their surroundings and a sense of cohesiveness within themselves (Shek,1992). It is possible to achieve psychological well-being by finding a balance that is influenced by both difficult and fulfilling life situations. The well-being of military veterans has multiple domains. The six-factor model of psychological well-being created by Carol Ryff identifies six domains that affect a person's psychological well-being, satisfaction, and happiness. They are:

Autonomy. It determines the degree of independence in regulating one's behaviour irrespective of social pressures.

Environmental Mastery. It determines the optimal use of opportunities and the sense of mastery in managing environmental factors and activities, including managing everyday affairs and creating situations to benefit personal needs.

Personal Growth. It determines the degree to which an individual continues to develop, welcoming new experiences, and recognises improvement in behaviour and self over time.

Purpose in Life. It reflects toward individual's strong goal orientation and belief that life holds meaning.

Positive Relations with others. It determines the individual's engagement in meaningful relationships with others that include reciprocal empathy, intimacy, and affection.

Self-Acceptance. It determines the degree of positive attitude of an individual about themselves.

Transitioning from a military institution to a civilian community comes with many challenges and can be handled effectively if managed properly. In the domain of the military, the overall well-being of the veterans largely depends upon the successful Military to Civilian Transition (MCT) outcomes. There are many important factors determining the success of MCT consequences like life skills readiness, controlling identity disruption, second career selection, financial support, achieving a new sense of purpose, housing requirements and effective healthcare facilities (Ashcroft, 2014; Atuel & Castro, 2019; Thompson et al., 2017). Many features of MCT account for various interacting factors that largely influence the well-being during their major life course.

Adjustment

The concept of 'adjustment' originated from the Darwinian concept known as 'Adaptation'. According to Darwin, only those species, which adapt successfully to the physical world, can survive. Selye (1956) proposed the physiological process of coping with stress. As a result, adaptation and adjustment constitute a functional perspective for viewing and understanding human behaviour. It is mainly considered as a process. It is the interface between an individual and his surrounding for sake of bringing harmony between them. According to Lazarus (1976), adjustment is a psychological process by which an individual manages to cope with various demands and pressures. Personal Adjustment, according to Rogers (1961), means understanding one's strengths and weaknesses while facing reality and achieving harmony with oneself. Humans are social animals and there must be a social adjustment that is a reasonable compromise between one's drive for self-realization and the demands of society (Fromm, 1941). Adjustment, whether positive or negative, is a measure of

mental health. The operational definition of 'adjustment' in the context of the present study is the capability of effective and successful self-transition in almost all domains of civil society with the highest contentment and acceptable standards of living. It is the behavioural process through which different individuals maintain a state of equilibrium with their environment. To be more precise, adjustment is a process of maintaining equilibrium between one's needs by overcoming the obstacles of their environment (www.britannica.com). Adjustment in psychology is defined as the behavioural process through which individuals uphold a state of equilibrium amid their various requirements and the obstacles faced in their surroundings. A sequence of adjustments begins when a need is felt and ends when it is satisfied (Britannica, n.d.). In this small segment of research, an endeavour has been made to see whether there is any relationship between psychological well-being and adjustment in Air Veterans.

Military organisations greatly differ from civilian organisations. Military culture is known as a collectivistic culture contrasting with civil culture, which is seen as individualistic (Coll et al., 2012). There is a considerable amount of research demonstrating the challenges and negative outcomes experienced by military personnel when they are discharged from military service and reintegrating into civilian society (Hammond, 2016). Transiting from one organisation, culture and society to another organisation, culture and society is normally challenging and stressful. Veterans transitioning to civilian society also face some challenges related to fulfilling basic psychological needs. The period after retirement was also found to be an important factor in social adjustment in military veterans, wherein the post-retirement 'Time' was found to be inversely proportional to the social adjustment factor (Verma & Singh, 2016). The study also revealed that the emotional adjustment plays an important role in effective social adjustment in life after retirement. Tankha and Nathawat (2006) reported that army officers scored significantly higher on the measure of the quality of life, and general well-being along with positive and negative affect as compared to junior-level officers. The study

findings suggested that as the officers moved up in the hierarchy, their quality of life improved, however self-esteem of both groups was found invariant. In the domain of psychological well-being among Indian Military personnel, Panwar (2011) highlights that a high level of psychological well-being resulted in better mental health and a high level of life satisfaction. Whereas, on the other hand, individuals with lower scores on PWB, experience psychological distress resulting in lower life satisfaction. Literature in the past ignored the psychological as well as adjustment-related challenges that come during the retirement phase (Ray & Heaslip, 2010). During the review, it was observed by researchers that past studies conducted on the veterans' fraternity were mostly limited to their re-employment, thus neglecting the vast spectrum of social re-integration challenges and adjustment (Burdett et al., 2013). Samele (2013) also reported the shortage of research studies on the transition of military personnel particularly from military to civil society. Bowes et al. (2018) explore how various psychosocial factors affect veterans' adjustment to the new civilian life after their retirement. The result of the study indicates that adjustment difficulty and the way of life of veterans were correlated to various psychosocial issues such as cognitive reappraisal, mental health, and experiential avoidance. These were found to be important indicators of adjustment-related difficulty of the veterans in general. The relationship between veteran adjustment and mental health was mediated by experiential avoidance and cognitive reappraisal, with experiential avoidance as the stronger mediator. The study also reported many psychosocial factors such as mental health, experiential avoidance and cognitive reappraisal, stigma, and self-stigma which were predictors of veteran adjustment-related problems.

Objectives

1. To study the relationship between adjustment and dimensions of psychological well-being among Air Veterans.

2. To explore dimensions of psychological well-being as predictors of Air Veterans adjustment in India.

Hypotheses

1. There will be no relationship between adjustment and dimensions of psychological well-being among Air Veterans.

2. Some dimensions of psychological well-being predict the Air Veterans adjustment in India.

Method

Design:

Ex Post Facto research has been employed for the present research since the participants are selected based on specific characteristics as per the inclusion/exclusion criteria mentioned subsequently.

Sample:

In the present research study, responses were obtained from a total of 150 retired Air Force personnel also called Air Veterans between the age group of 38 to 45 years. Participants were belonging to various parts of India.

Sampling Technique:

The purposive sampling method was used for sample selection. This was done as per the inclusion and exclusion criteria as per the objectives of the study, which are mentioned above. After identifying the target population, samples were selected based on the snowball technique of sample selection.

Sample Selection Criteria

Inclusion Criteria: Data were collected only from retired Air Force personnel (Air Veterans) between the age group of 38-45 years. All participants were married males. Air Veterans, who have opted for discharge from service on the accomplishment of their initial term of engagement in Air Force service (i.e., 20 years), are included in the present study. Air Veterans with a retirement period between three months to three years were included as part of the study.

Exclusion Criteria: The study did not include participants from the sister services, such as the Army or Navy. Since the study's age range was limited to participants aged 38 to 45, neither individuals under 38 nor beyond 45 were taken into consideration. Participants who were single and female participants were also excluded from the study. Air Veterans, who have been discharged from service on other grounds such as compassionate grounds/self medical grounds/ dependent medical grounds/ disciplinary grounds are not a part of the sample for the present study. Air Veterans with retirement durations of less than three months and more than three years were excluded from participation.

Variables

- Adjustment
- Psychological well-being

Tools used

Personal Adjustment Inventory (PAI): It is developed by Dr. C. G. Deshpande in 1982. It has a 20 statements inventory, wherein a participant must see how far each statement applies to him on a three-point scale. It has a reliability of 0.81 as measured by the split-half method using even-odd scores. This inventory is useful for identifying the personal adjustment of an individual.

Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB): This scale (Ryff, 2007) has been used to assess Psychological Well-Being. It has 42 items of measure that assesses six aspects of psychological well-being, including self-acceptance, environmental mastery, personal growth, and positive relationships with others. This test requires 6 to 8 minutes to complete with a reading level of a 6th to 8th standard student. The test-retest reliability coefficient value was 0.82.

Procedure:

Preliminary information about the subjects was taken using an information schedule. Both the scales i.e., Psychological Well-being and Adjustment Scales were administered at a time. All the participants were informed about the aim of the research. Both psychological scales were administered following standard procedures devised by the respective test devisor. After data collection, the scores were tabulated and measured through different statistical procedures. Accordingly, interpretations were completed, and conclusions were drawn.

Ethical Issues: Initially, a briefing was carried out to make the participants aware of the present study. They were made sure of the confidentiality of the data being provided by them. Informed consent from each participant was taken before the administration of the research questionnaires. They were informed that at no point their privacy will be invaded.

Statistical Analysis: Data collected were analysed using a statistical tool. Descriptive statistics (mean and SD) were formulated. Pearson's Correlation was used initially to explore the relations between domains of psychological well-being and adjustment. Thereafter, stepwise multiple regression was conducted for the primary research objective, to ascertain the domains of psychological well-being (independent variable) as a predictor of Air Veteran adjustment (outcome variable). Separate analyses were conducted for both objectives of the study. All assumptions for correlation and stepwise multiple regression were met (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. From the results shown in the table, mean scores of Autonomy (M = 35.3), Environmental Mastery (M = 35.2), Personal Growth (M = 36.9), Positive relations with others (M = 38.1), Purpose in life (M = 35.6), Self-acceptance (M = 37.7) were reported. It is evident that the scores in all the domains of well-being including overall psychological well-being are above the average score. It implied that they showed higher well-being in almost all the domains of psychological well-being. In the domain of adjustment, participants' mean score (M = 9.18) indicates 'High Adjustment' as per the test manual. As per the test developer, a lower

mean score indicates a better adjustment and the same was evident in the present study. From SD values, respondents showed almost similar variability in all the domains of well-being including adjustment, showing consistency in all the domains of well-being and adjustment.

Correlation analyses

Table 2. Correlation between domains of Psychological Well-being and Adjustment among Air Veterans

Domains of PWB	Adjustment
Autonomy	-.319**
Environmental Mastery	-.461**
Personal Growth	-.432**
Positive Relations with others	-.471**
Purpose in Life	-.309**
Self-Acceptance	-.424**
PWB (Total)	-.486**

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Pearson's correlations were conducted to explore the relationships between the outcome variables (adjustment) and the independent variable (psychological well-being). The results of Pearson's correlations are summarised in Table 2. The correlation analysis showed a statistical significance and a negative correlation between the adjustment level of Air Veterans with Autonomy (r = -.319, p < .01), Environmental Mastery (r = -.461, p < .01), Personal Growth (r = -.432, p < .01), Positive Relation with Others (r = -.471, p < .01), Purpose in Life (r = -.309, p < .01), Self-Acceptance (r = -.424, p < .01) and overall Psychological Well-Being (r = -.486, p < .01). Since, higher scores on adjustment show poor adjustment and same was found to be negatively

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for Psychological Well-Being and Adjustment Variables

	PWB						Adjustment
	Autonomy	Environmental Mastery	Personal Growth	Positive Relations with Others	Purpose in Life	Self-Acceptance	
Mean	35.3	35.2	36.9	38.1	35.6	37.7	9.18
SD	5.82	7.14	7.21	6.8	6.6	6.6	5.15

correlated with all domains of psychological well-being indicates that greater the adjustment related difficulties amongst the Air Veterans, the psychological well-being will decrease and vice versa. Therefore, the proposed null hypothesis that there will be no relationship between adjustment and dimensions of the psychological well-being among Air Veterans is rejected. The study by Eshan (2011) on the psychological well-being of retired soldiers reported a significant and positive effect between psychological well-being and the level of happiness and adjustment post-retirement.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Since the second objective of the study was to examine the relative predictive value of domains of psychological well-being for adjustment among Air Veterans a stepwise multiple regression analysis model in general was found appropriate for this objective of the study. However, under the stepwise multiple regression analysis model, the forward selection method was found more suitable as the objective is to find the significant predictors among the domains of psychological well-being for the adjustment. Table 3 shows the results of stepwise regression analysis for the outcome variable (adjustment). The results indicated that two significant predictors of adjustment emerged with an overall multiple R =.505 and a total variance of 25.5%.

Table 3. Summary of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis (Forward Selection Method)

Step	Variable	Multiple R	R^2	F	P
1	Positive Relations with Others	.471	.221	42.102	.000
2	Environmental Mastery	.505	.255	6.598	.011

Out of the domains of well-being, positive relations with others were the most pertinent predictor of adjustment entering the equations at step one. The R for this variable was found to be .471. This demonstrates that Positive Relations with Others among the domains of well-being is an influencing predictor of Air Veterans adjustment post-retirement. This explains 22.1% of the variance in the Air Veteran adjustment. Environmental Mastery appears to be another important predictor which was entered at step two of the analysis. Environmental mastery alone explains 3.4% of the variance (change R2) in the Air Veterans adjustment. The results of stepwise regression analysis (forward selection) clearly demonstrate two predictors out of six domains of PWB for the Air Veteran adjustment. These predictors are Positive Relations with Others and Environmental Mastery, which jointly account for 25.5% of the variance (R^2 = .255) in the Air Veterans adjustment. The present finding is consistent with an earlier study done by Bowes et al. (2018) on Veterans Adjustment, wherein mental health along with other psychosocial factors were important predictors of Veterans Adjustment. Similarly, Thompson et al. (2016) in their study explored the level of mental health and well-being in general among Armed Forces veterans of Canada. In their study, mental health was found to be an important factor in Veterans Adjustment, and it supports the multidimensional approach for enhancing the well-being of veterans for appropriate adjustment after their retirement.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to shed light on the relationship between Adjustment and Psychological Well-Being among Air Veterans. The findings of the study reveal that there is a significant and negative correlation between all the domains of Psychological Well-Being including Overall Well-Being with the Air Veterans Adjustment. As the scores on Psychological Well-Being increase, the score on adjustment is going down, which is an indicator of a better adjustment pattern amongst Air Veterans. In the present study, social relationships and environmental mastery have emerged as good predictors of Air Veterans Adjustment after their retirement. A healthy lifestyle pattern with the disciplined way of living and higher self-esteem during in-service and after retirement as well may have contributed to optimal well-being levels among this community. These specific personal characteristics ingrained in these personnel during the in-service period may have assisted them to handle the

adjustment-related difficulties if not completely then certainly up to a large extent.

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