Memories: Soldier’s Repertoire in Enhancing Resilience & Enduring Deployment

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The moods, attitudes, behaviors and health of young cadets undergo a rapid transition during their formative military training. Cadets tend to focus more on physical aspects of their body in terms of health. Their body image and physical appearance to themselves and to the significant others can have a long lasting impact on their psychological health e.g. self-esteem, confidence, and trust on oneself. (Rawat, S. 2018)
Unlike any other religious scripture, the \textit{Bhagavad Gita} broadcasts its message in the center of the battlefield. (Krishnanananda 1980)
Arjun said - O Krishna! I only see my relatives here, wishing to fight us. My body is becoming weak, mouth dry, my body is trembling.

My bow is slipping from my hand and skin is burning. I am not able to even stand, my mind is swirling.
स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमहेसि ।
धम्यांदि युद्धाच्छेयोःन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते ॥

On observing your duty also, you should not waver(fear).
Because for warrior-clan, there is nothing more auspicious than a lawful battle.

यहचछया चोपपन्नां स्वर्गदवारायमावतूः
सुखिनः क्षत्रियः पार्थ लभन्ते युद्धमीहाश्रमः ॥

O son of Prutha! Only fortunate warrior-clan, get a chance to fight battle like this, which has come on itself and is an open door to heaven.

सुखदुःखे समेत कृत्वा लाभालाभां जयाजयां
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्सस्यसि ॥

Treat victory and defeat, gain and loss, pleasure and pain alike and fight in the battle. On fighting like this, you will not incur sin.
Arjun says - Destroyed is delusion and I have gained recognition (memory) of my own self through Thy Grace, O Achyuta. I am firm, with doubts gone. I will do Thy word.
• With reference to this description from Bhagwad Gita few points can be highlighted in context with current research:

• Any warrior may get psychologically impaired on exposure to combat.

• S/he may need external or internal motivation to overcome phase of emotional break down and need to be resilient for own survival and that of unit/ sub unit.

• Motivation may be retrieved from soldier’s own memories which consists of enormous amount of useful knowledge, skills and attitudes consciously perceived and stored at times in forms of various types of memories, namely, working memory, autobiographical memories, episodic memories, procedural memories, and so on.
Research

- The research involve study of how various memories facilitates a soldier to be resilient and be mindful while enduring deployments

- Observation
- Interaction
- Semi structured interviews
- Self reports
Objectives of Study

• How different kind of memories facilitates a soldier to be resilient and be mindful while enduring deployments

• How military training transforms the information processing skills and so the memories by its ethical way of conduct
Primary Set of Memories We All Posses

• Early age memories
• Memories of academics
• Memories of bonding within family and in a significant social circle
• Memories of love and affection we exchange
• Memories of self achievements
• Memories of first all event we sensed in this world
• Religious memories
• Memories of various procedures such as:
  • how to keep ourselves clean,
  • how to drive a bicycle, bike or car
  • how to operate digital gadgets,
  • how to climb the mountain,
  • And so on….
Additional set of Memories Soldiers Holds

• The moment when soldier’s inner forces leads him to join armed forces
• Selection Process
• Toughest challenges came across in formative training
• Belongingness formed between course mates & colleagues in formative military training
• Surprise inspections
• Handling of weapons and equipment
• Knowledge about previous wars
• Tactical information about risk factors
• Memory is an information-processing model in which information goes through three discrete stages: encoding, storage, and retrieval.

• Memory is made up of multiple memory systems that can work independently of one another.
Memory is a Repertoire

• Meaning to the Self
• Evaluation of events
• Motivation
• Orientation for future plans
• Refuge
• You An Asset To The Nation
MEMORY – Meaning to the Self

• Specific internal characteristics prevent soldiers from developing negative symptoms, challenging events become transformative, character building experiences. (Adler et al., 2008; Bartone, 1999, 2006).

• Character brings together the components of integrity, competence, respect and inspiration. (Horn & Walker, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2002)

• It is memory that enables to consider us as the same “me” on each new day. This psychodynamic function of ego, which is so necessary for perpetuation of identity and for survival. (…)

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• Autobiographical, Episodic, Procedural and memories collectively form the construct which creates the meaning to our identity
MEMORY – Evaluation of Past Events

- When a soldier settles down at the place of deployment he may get a little time to introspect while jogging his memories and can evaluate the past life events to conduct the focused efforts for creating more prosperous professional as well as personal future.

- Influencing what information is placed in working memory, episodic memory allows us to apply knowledge about our past to execute current tasks and to reflect on, plan for, and derive preferences for future situations. (Brown, K.W., Goodman, R.J., Ryan, R.M. and Anālayo, B., 2016)

- Psychometric evaluation is frequently conducted for monitoring soldiers mental health status and enhancing his duty effectiveness accordingly.

- A soldier can also conduct the process of self-evaluation as and when required.
MEMORY – Motivation

• Belongingness enhance employees’ cooperative behavior, which they operationalized as compliance. De Cremer and Van Knippenberg (2002)

• Memories of early achievements & rewards
• Memories of belongingness
• Memories of stories of bravery of the soldiers fought previous wars
MEMORY – Orientation For Future Plans

• Memories of the previous enemy operations can be referred for strategic planning to be used in further operations if needed.

• Memories of failures can be the directive factor in implementing corrective measures to avoid further personal or professional losses.
MEMORY – Refuge (protection, shelter)

• There comes the time when a soldier may undergo the circumstances such as extreme challenging deployment conditions, negative leadership, asymmetric warfare and many more..

• A soldier may feel impaired or distorted by this negative influential factors

• People try to reduce discrepancies between the situation they evaluate and global meaning, and restore a sense of the world (semantic memory) as meaningful and their own life as worthy (working memory provides decision making, comprehension and reasoning). This is referred to as a meaning-making effort and when such efforts are successful, it leads to better adaption to the stressful event. (Park and Folkman 1997) , Park (2010)
MEMORY – “You” an asset to the Nation

• “You” An Asset To The Nation

• Memories of successful conduct of risky operations
• Experiences in altruistic operations such as disaster management, safeguarding the Nation, people with high degree of responsibility & accountability enables soldier to assign high level of meaning to his dedicated life while experiencing high level of self esteem too
• Memories of the respect, affection, concern exhibited by governing authorities and people keeps soldier motivated for long
Method & Research Design

• Case History Method
• Observing actual application of different memory concepts explained in psychological terms
• Associating those with real memories shared by soldiers
• Identify the target population
• Set up meetings
• Record their stories
• Test their response through a form of stimulation or real experience
Case Study 1

- Col. CS served 27 years in Indian Army
- Deployed in Siachen Glacier, the highest battlefield in the world with an altitude of 21,000 feet where very inclement weather and inhospitable terrain are perceived as “enemies”.
- Got hit by a shrapnel and sustained injury to the wrist due to enemy shelling; still endured more than 3 months on a same battlefield fearlessly.
- After being asked by his seniors to return back on a base camp and get treated for his injury; CS opted for not leaving the battlefield and decided to go back with his entire team only when they will be relieved by other battalion by higher formation.
- Re-Joined duties on discharge from military hospital
Case Study (contd..)

- He was a keen football enthusiast & player who played all regimental games.
- He is religious and believes “God as first and last resort” that gives soldiers the strength to endure hardships.
- On asking about “what was his first memory after getting hit, coming back from a black out and being conscious thereafter”?
- CS answered…..he first came across a thought about the safety of his troops spread out on that field.
- CS admitted that the memory of grueling training he served with team members helped him recognizing his own capability and capacity to withstand extremely stressful conditions which he has endured during military training and this made him resilient during this tough deployment.
- In addition to his inbuilt outstanding enduring capacity military training provided him with the opportunity to restructure and enhance the senses of being responsible, accountable for him and for significant others as well.
- He shared the changes he observed in concepts of self perception, commitment to self and others, concept of being disciplined which were the outcomes of formative military training.
- CS still has vivid memories of the stories of bravery, courage and velour his mother use to narrate him in his childhood which lays an impact on perceiving the things around.
Case Study 2

• YJ a wing commander served for 28 years in Air force
• Lost his limb in operations
• A strong hearted soldier who feels thankful to the Forces for facilitating him in each possible way when he got injured and providing the long lasting service to help him to partially recover his loss.
• He stated that while surviving deployment we all have in our memory that in the circumstances of losing a limb or life ..military institution is well enough to provide medical and other related services and will give the necessary support to himself and his family. This develops deeper bonding and sense of responsibility towards military institution also improves the degree of duty effectiveness.
• He believes that a cadet should have basic temperamental and physical inbuilt foundation for becoming a soldier.
• YJ appreciates the role of physical fitness training conducted in formative military training which helped him in maintaining balanced temperament and handling detachment from family in early days.
• He still has memories of the acts exhibited by his senior officers transcending hierarchical boundaries while facilitating juniors in exceptional cases.
• He also emphasized the importance of memories related to public & political events to be remembered for future strategic planning in war movements.
Findings

• Memories plays a vital role in day to day conduct of soldier’s life.

• Compared to other professions military profession demands high level of intensities in maintaining the skills such as obedience, integrity, loyalty, secrecy, trustworthiness & team bonding.

• Memories posses the power to work as a “Search Engine Influenced by Human Factor” which is not dependent on any external resources to perform.
THANKS.....!!

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