

Research on the Influencing Factors and Coping Strategies of Psychological Stress Response in Military Battlefield

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Abstract

The victory or defeat of a war is often influenced by various factors. In order to win, in addition to having geographical and weapon advantages, the military quality of personnel is the most crucial, including top-level strategic design, on-site adaptability of military commanders, and the battlefield literacy of soldiers. Any war is bloody and cruel, requiring soldiers to possess good combat and psychological qualities. However, in harsh, complex, and dangerous battlefield environments, many soldiers may experience psychological stress reactions, leading to their combat effectiveness being weakened and affecting the entire battle situation. The paper elaborates on the connotation of psychological stress and stress response, analyzes the influencing factors of psychological stress response in battlefield soldiers, and finally proposes relevant coping methods, hoping to improve the psychological quality of Chinese soldiers on the battlefield, reduce stress response, and win every just war.

Keywords

Soldier, Battlefield stress response, Influencing factors, Response methods.

1. Introduction

As a special combat group, soldiers have undergone professional training to become the "Great Wall of Steel" and "Sword" on the battlefield. However, the brutality and variability of the battlefield may also exceed the physical and psychological endurance of soldiers, especially the psychological stress response that may completely destroy the psychological defense line of soldiers, leading to the loss of combat ability and an increase in non-combat personnel reduction, and even affecting the final result of the war. The stress response of military personnel is highly valued by armies around the world, and the main triggering and influencing factors have been studied and analyzed. The types of stress response have been clarified, and a series of appropriate methods such as mental health treatment, psychological protection, and training have been explored. The author hereby analyzes and explores relevant issues based on my own experience for exchange and reference.

2. Psychological Stress and Stress Response

Psychological stress refers to a sense of tension and discomfort that occurs in an individual's physical and mental state when facing changes, pressures, threats, or challenges from both internal and external environments. Stress response is a specific behavior or emotional expression made in response to psychological stress. Psychological stress response is not just a simple reaction, but a complex psychological activity process, which is a psychological adaptation and response process caused by individuals' perception and subjective evaluation of threats and risks. The psychological stress response process is shown in Figure 1.

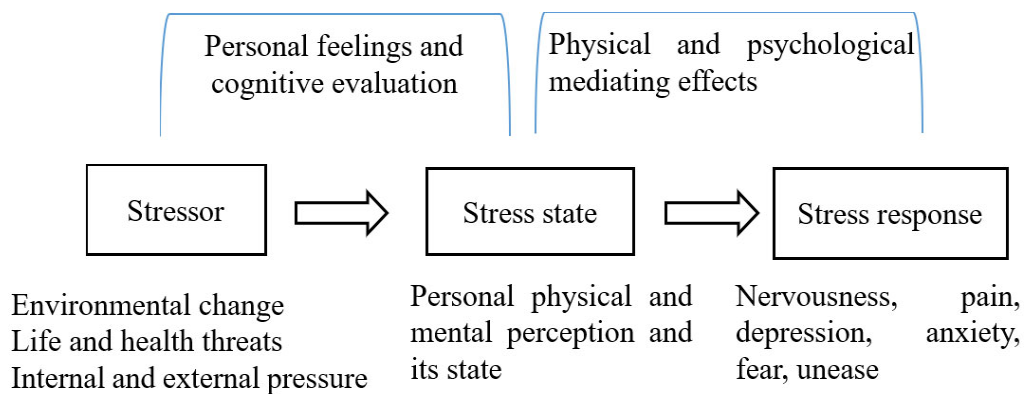


Figure 1. The psychological stress response process

There are various sources of psychological stress, which are closely related to the specific environment, occupational types, and situations encountered by individuals, such as life and work stress, interpersonal conflicts, health issues, and life safety threats. Different people have different reactions to different stressors. For example, some people may feel anxiety, despair, pain, and fear, while others may feel stimulation and excitement, which mainly depends on factors such as their self-control ability, personal life experience, and mental health status. Some people may be more prone to stress, while others can easily cope with it.

Stress reactions can be divided into two categories, positive coping and negative coping. Positive response refers to adopting positive methods to respond to stressors, in order to reduce or solve stress. This may include actively seeking support, setting goals, adopting coping strategies, adjusting attitudes, and seeking help. Negative coping refers to adopting negative ways to address the source of stress, such as avoiding problems and responsibility, overusing drugs or alcohol, etc. These methods usually do not truly solve the problem and may lead to more stress and difficulties. [1]

3. The Influencing Factors of Psychological Stress Response in Military Battlefield

The battlefield stress response of soldiers refers to the psychological and physiological reactions that healthy soldiers experience in extreme battlefield environments. This response includes two states, moderate and excessive. Moderate stress response is often a positive response, which has a stimulating and motivating effect on soldiers and helps to improve their combat ability. Excessive stress reactions can cause mental tension and willpower breakdown in military personnel, causing them to worry about their lives and feel hopeless about victory in the war, resulting in a loss of combat courage and confidence, and affecting the combat effectiveness of the troops. [2]

The factors that cause military personnel to experience battlefield stress reactions are diverse and vary from person to person, usually including the following influencing factors.

3.1. The Cruelty of War

War itself is a cruel activity, whether in the era of cold weapons or hot weapons, even in modern high-tech warfare, as long as there is war, there will be casualties and damage to facilities. As the main body of the battlefield, soldiers have personally experienced the entire process of the war, witnessed their comrades die and get injured in the war, and themselves will also suffer serious injuries. These cruel realities will have a huge impact on their psychology, which may affect their ability to execute instructions, their courage to fight, and their confidence in winning, leading to negative confrontations and even voluntary surrender. In the early stages of the

Korean War, the Korean People's Army had a high momentum and won steadily. But after the landing of the coalition led by the US military in Incheon, the war situation underwent a disruptive reversal. The People's Army suffered heavy losses under the pressure of the North Korean and coalition forces, coupled with the absolute advantage of the coalition's weapons and combat capabilities. In the face of cruel facts, the morale of North Korean officers and soldiers is low, and many of them feel hopeless, and even have surrendered in an organized manner.

3.2. Poor combat environment

Battlefields have randomness and are often subjected to very harsh environmental conditions, such as extreme weather conditions with high temperatures or severe colds, narrow, humid, and dark trenches and campsites, high decibel noise and intense vibrations on the battlefield, and a lack of timely and sufficient supplies of food, medicine, and other materials, all of which can have a serious impact on the physiological and psychological well-being of soldiers. Long term exposure to this harsh environment may result in psychological imbalance, stress reactions such as excessive tension, anxiety, and fear among military personnel, as well as various physical discomfort that can increase the level of psychological stress and lead to psychological attrition. For example, in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the cold winter had a great impact on the military operations of both sides. Under the heavy artillery fire of the Russian army, Uzbek soldiers could only solve everything in the waterlogged trenches. Due to food shortages, damp clothing, and many soldiers suffering from frostbite, starvation, and infectious diseases, the Ukrainian army on the front line desperately shouted to Zelensky that "Ukraine will be defeated in winter". Due to severe psychological stress reactions, the Ukrainian army experienced severe non-combat casualties.

3.3. Insufficient sleep and rest

On the battlefield, soldiers are often in a state of prolonged vigilance and high-intensity continuous combat, which greatly reduces their sleep and rest time. Insufficient sleep can have a serious impact on a person's cognitive function, emotional regulation, and stress response ability. Lack of sufficient sleep and rest may lead to problems such as lack of concentration, slow response, and emotional fluctuations in military personnel, exacerbating the occurrence of psychological stress reactions. Due to physical and mental exhaustion, battlefield casualties can also expand. [3] According to a survey by the American Sleep Research Association, approximately 72% of on-duty soldiers sleep less than 6 hours a day. Soldiers who have participated in war are redeployed to mission areas, and over 80% experience sleep disorders, while wounded soldiers sleep less than 5 hours per night. In 2011, some US soldiers who participated in the nighttime capture of Osama bin Laden experienced stress reactions due to 24-hour high alert and continuous tense search and sporadic combat, such as wanting to withdraw from the operation. Their ability to predict enemy situations, shooting speed, and psychological pressure were greatly reduced. Afterwards, most soldiers also experienced varying degrees of brain health damage and mental illness. [4]

3.4. The cohesion of the troops

In the battlefield environment, the cohesion of troops plays an important role in the psychological and stress responses of soldiers. The cohesion of a military unit is related to factors such as its honor, fighting spirit, and internal unity. If the unit has a good revolutionary tradition, has participated in many major battles and won multiple victories, and has mutual trust, support, and cooperation among comrades, it will form a strong internal cohesion that can give battlefield soldiers great confidence and courage, enabling them to face and respond well to various pressures and challenges on the battlefield. On the contrary, a lack of cohesion in troops may lead to soldiers feeling isolated and helpless, increasing their level of stress

response. In the War of Resistance Against US Aggression and Aid to Korea, Chinese volunteer soldiers, inspired by their excellent revolutionary tradition, tenacious fighting spirit, and the spirit of seeing death as if returning, were always able to overcome the enemy and defeat the powerful United States coalition.

4. Effective Response to Psychological Stress in Military Battlefield

4.1. Strengthen mental health education and develop stress response plans

One is to attach importance to and strengthen the mental health education and training of on-duty soldiers. The military can organize psychological experts and trainers to carry out mental health education and training activities for military personnel. These activities can include lectures, seminars, and mental health knowledge training courses. Through these education and training, soldiers can understand the causes and effects of psychological stress, understand common psychological problems and coping methods, and improve their self-awareness and coping abilities. The second is to develop a scientifically sound battlefield psychological stress response plan. The military can develop corresponding stress response plans for various stress situations that may occur on the battlefield. These plans need to consider different types of battlefield environments and the stress reactions of soldiers, and clarify the relevant procedures and processes. For example, in response to casualties or emergencies, a rapid response psychological support team should be established to provide emergency intervention and psychological support to affected soldiers. Regular psychological counseling and counseling services can be provided for long-term combat and psychological stress in harsh environments. [5] Thirdly, establish and improve a mechanism for psychological crisis intervention. By establishing and implementing a psychological crisis intervention mechanism, it is ensured that soldiers who experience psychological stress reactions can receive timely psychological health assistance. This mechanism should include measures for rapid response, such as emergency contacts, a team of mental health experts, and emergency referral procedures. Through timely intervention and support, it is possible to prevent the further deterioration of psychological crisis and help soldiers better manage and respond to psychological stress on the battlefield. [6]

4.2. Strengthen battlefield simulation training and enhance psychological tolerance

Battlefield simulation training is an important method that can help soldiers enhance their psychological tolerance and adapt to the battlefield environment. One is to create realistic battlefield environments and simulate various reactive environments. By utilizing various facilities and technologies such as armament models and virtual reality technology, various battlefield environments and reactive environments are simulated, especially in modern high-tech war scenes such as gunfire, explosions, bloody casualties, muddy trenches, information interference, etc., allowing soldiers to intuitively experience real battlefield conditions. This helps them gradually adapt to the battlefield environment, reduce battlefield stress reactions, and enable them to remain calm and alert under high tension and strong pressure, making correct decisions and actions [4]. The second is to increase the intensity of psychological stress training. In battlefield simulation training, the intensity and difficulty of training can be increased to improve the coping ability of soldiers. For example, completing tasks within a limited time frame, facing continuous pressure and challenges, etc. Such training can train soldiers to remain alert in high-pressure environments and improve their psychological stress tolerance. [7]

4.3. Deepen the construction of combat spirit and enhance the cohesion of the military

Combat spirit refers to the belief and will of soldiers to persevere and continue to strive in the face of difficulties and challenges. By deepening the construction of combat spirit, the cohesion and morale of the military can be improved, making soldiers more responsible and collective in the battlefield. This helps to enhance the psychological resilience and self-identity of soldiers, enabling them to better cope with stress reactions on the battlefield. One is to promote heroic role models and inspire soldiers to learn from them by promoting typical deeds and heroes of heroic battles. These heroic role models can be historical generals and heroes, as well as outstanding fighters and exemplary commanders in reality. Their story and spirit will inspire soldiers to move forward bravely and not be afraid of sacrifice. The second is to strengthen the cultivation of collective sense of honor, emphasizing team cooperation and collective honor. By forming small teams, it can cultivate the team cooperation awareness and communication ability of soldiers, improve their understanding of collaborative operations with comrades in real battlefield, cultivate the awareness of mutual trust and support among soldiers, and establish a solid friendship among comrades. This helps to make soldiers more calm and more effective in dealing with various stress situations on the battlefield. The third is to adhere to the education of ideals and beliefs, cultivate the loyalty and belief of soldiers towards the country and the people, increase the cultivation of combat spirit, strengthen the soldiers' belief in victory, and help them form strong self-adjustment and self-control abilities, in order to reduce the occurrence of battlefield stress reactions and reduce the risk of stress reactions.

5. Conclusion

The cruelty of war and the harsh battlefield environment make it easy for soldiers to experience stress reactions, leading to a decrease in military combat effectiveness. By strengthening mental health education, developing stress response plans, strengthening battlefield simulation training, and deepening the construction of combat spirit, military personnel can effectively respond to battlefield psychological stress reactions. Not only does it help to ensure the mental health of soldiers, but it can also improve their adaptability and combat effectiveness on the battlefield.

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