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A study of depression in military personnel

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Abstract— Recently, as the media has broadcast information about crimes committed by military personnel, society's negative opinion about military personnel continues to attract public attention. In light of this situation, military psychologists are confronted with the need to study depression, fear, and anxiety among servicemen, as they continue to commit criminal acts such as desertion, misuse of weapons and firearms, and incidents of self-harm or harm to others. In this study, we administered a survey to servicemen who have recently enlisted and proceeded to analyze the correlation between depression and the adjustment to military life among active-duty military personnel. The study reports that among 129 newly recruited military personnel, 9 percent exhibited moderate depression, and 15 percent displayed severe depression. According to the adaptability survey, 50 percent performed averagely, 17 percent performed poorly, and 6 percent performed very poorly. The results indicate a direct relationship between depression and adaptability, demonstrating that lower levels of depression have a lesser impact on adaptation.

Keywords— Depression, adaptability, Military life, Active-duty military Personnel.

1. INTRODUCTION

A study was conducted by the National Legal Institute of Mongolia, in cooperation with General Authority for Border Protection, investigating serious crime perpetrated by the Border Guard between 2015 and 2020, with the aim of identifying underlying causes and conditions. According to the research, 36.4 percent of suicides were perpetrated by temporary military personnel, 27.3 percent by sergeant, and 23 percent by officers. Regarding violations and crimes associated with weapons and firearms, 66.7 percent were determined to be intentional, while 33.3 percent were deemed unintentional. Notably, the

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majority of intentional offenses were committed by temporary military personnel, sergeants and officers [1].

These data underscore the necessity for comprehensive evaluations of emotional states, including fear, anxiety, depression, and propensity for risk-taking behaviors, particularly among individuals of military age. Through the examination of depression, military psychologists posit that alongside enhancing conscripts' satisfaction with their military service, fostering in their service, and their ability to adapt to military life, there exist tangible pragmatic advantages.

For newly enlisted servicemen, military service can be challenging to remain psychologically calm while experiencing a completely different environment from ordinary life. The high level of supervision, meticulously structured 24-hour regimen, strict adherence to military protocols, daily responsibilities, readiness for service, and demanding training requirements can have negative impact on their adaptation to military life. The majority of temporary military personnel are between the ages of 18 and 25 and may exhibit emotional immaturity, leading to various psychological issues. Hence, most do not volunteer for military service. In light of this situation, we aimed to study following;

First. Military psychologists are confronted with the need to study depression, fear, and anxiety among servicemen, as they continue to commit criminal acts such as desertion, misuse of weapons and firearms, and incidents of self-harm or harm to others.

Second. Recently, due to the weak ability to adapt to the changing environment, the problem of running away from military service due to depression and suicide continues to occur. 36.4% of them are conscripts[1]. Therefore, we decided to conduct this research.

Third. In this study, we aimed to investigate the relationship between temporary military personnel's depression and adaptation to military life.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Within the theoretical framework of the thesis, representatives of major psychological trends such as C.Lange, W.James, A.Leontiev, P.Anokhin, S.Rubinstein, P.Simonov, H.Dalgado, L.Festinger, V.Viliunas, Lindsay-Hebby, Benevik, Holton, C.Izard and S. Schachter are considered[2]. Depression originates from the term "deprimer" indicating feelings of sadness or a low mood. It is expressed in various forms and durations, ranging from a few months to several years. Individuals may experience depressive episodes following the loss of their deeply held values or beloved individuals. Notably, values are subjective and unique to each person. While everyone experiences occasional bouts of sadness as a natural response to challenging circumstances, depression extends beyond mere feelings of sadness to encompass physiological changes [3].

With this quality, emotions are involved and play an important role in the process of human behavior. Since its creation, humans have been adapting to new environments and reacting to them[4].

In his work, K. Izard regarded depression as an innate emotion characterized by genetic and physiological components. Symptoms of depression encompass reduced interest in activities, diminished energy and productivity, slowed movement and speech, feelings of sadness, anxiety, discontentment, and restlessness. Every aspect of the environment elicits negative emotions and pessimism, permeating an unpleasant atmosphere. Consequently, every occurrence within the surroundings, whether it be music or conversations among people, prompts feelings of aversion[5].

In the context of depression, individuals often exhibit a deceleration in the pace of thought formation and speech articulation, leading to manifestations such as slowed cognitive processing, subdued vocalization and limited verbal expression. Commonly observed are repetitive questioning and responses characterized by succinct replies such as “yes” or “no”. Furthermore, individuals with depression typically harbor a pessimistic perspective encompassing retrospection, current circumstances, and prospects. Additionally, there is a tendency towards overestimation of personal deficiencies and a proclivity for fixating on adverse past experiences[2].

In the future, this self-blame as a criminal and sinner can turn into delusions of depression. Under such circumstances, the individual may become entrenched in the conviction that they are “worthless wretched, wicked, sinful, or culpable” potentially leading to self-harming behaviors aimed at alleviating this distressing state.

A depressed individual may experience suicidal ideation, believing that death is preferable to continuing to live in their current state, and may devise specific suicide plans. Ultimately, they might impulsively attempt suicide without alerting those around them and may conceal their suicidal thoughts from others.

A depressed patient’s motivation, desire, interest, need, and initiative decrease. Their actions slow down. The patient spends most of their time involuntarily not working, sitting with their face down on the bed, or lying under the covers. Decreased appetite and sexual desire, accompanied by a rejection of food and drink due to symptoms such as nausea and aversion to meals, are common. Interest in daily activities, including eating and working, diminishes, leading the patient to neglect self-care. Signs of frequent sighing and tearful crying are clearly evident.

During depression, individuals may experience physical symptoms such as enlarged pupils, constipation, elevated heart rate, and weight loss.

Depression classified into mild, moderate, and severe categories. Criteria for determining the severity include:

- Feelings of depression
- Loss of energy
- Inactivity
- Decreased pleasure, desire, and interest in activities
- Reduced ability to concentrate
- Insomnia and restlessness
- Digestive issues
- Perceptions of being dispensable
- Self-condemnation

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- Inability to be critical of the environment
- Psychomotor retardation
- Weight loss
- Other symptoms may arise from internal organs

In cases of mild depression, only two or three of the aforementioned symptoms are typically evident, and while the individual experiences feelings of depression, they are able to continue with their work. In essence, their capacity to work remains intact[3]. In moderate depression, four or more of the aforementioned symptoms manifest. The individual experiences significant depressive feelings, making it exceedingly challenging to sustain work. Their work capacity is substantially diminished, and they begin encountering various challenges in their professional responsibilities. In cases of severe depression accompanied by signs of cognitive decline, most of the aforementioned symptoms are evident: feelings of depression, reduced self-confidence, increased self-criticism, and thoughts of or engagement in suicidal behavior. Observable changes in internal organ function become more pronounced. Additionally, alongside these symptoms, hallucinations, confusion, psychomotor slowing, or seizures may occur. These hallucinations and delusions could be either psychosomatic or non-psychosomatic in nature. The severity of the depression escalates to the point where individuals may struggle to fulfill their usual responsibilities [7].

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESULT

The purpose of this prospective study we investigate the relationship between temporary military personnel's depression and adaptation to military life.

First, we utilized Beck's Depression Inventory test, second adaptability study, and third we used SPSS program, Pearson correlation coefficient, and Homogeneity test methods. The study included total 129 newly recruited military personals in November 2023 Ulaanbaatar Mongolia.

3.1 Reliability analysis

The results of the study were processed using SPSS software using reliability analysis, Person's correlation, Homogeneity test and LSD multivariate analysis. After analyzing the validity and reliability of the research data before processing the research results, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.841, which is sufficiently reliable.

Table 1. Reliability analysis

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.841	41

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According to the research results, 58 percent of temporary military personnel are not experiencing depression, 18 percent have mild depression, 9 percent have moderate to severe depression, and 15 percent have severe depression.

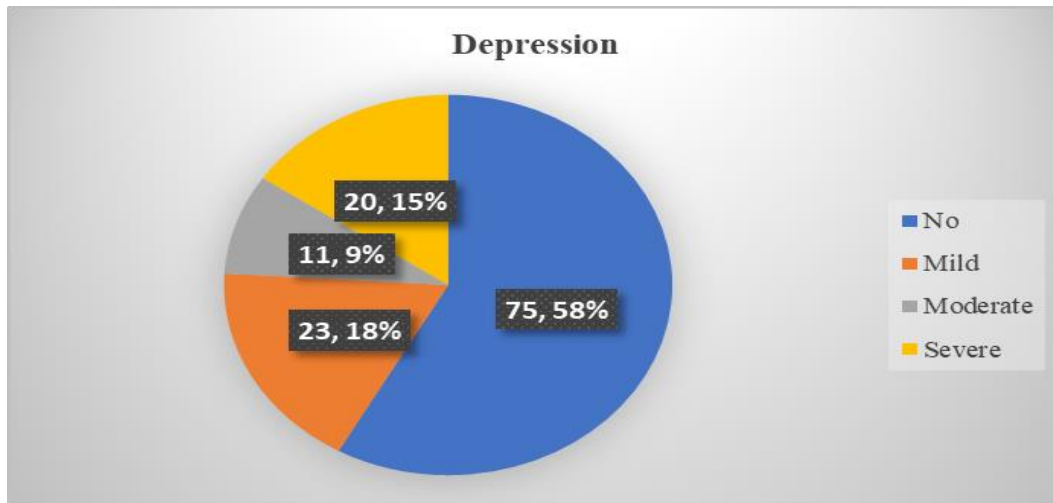


Figure. 1. Depression

Over 40 percent of the respondents reported experiencing depression. Despite new warriors appearing to be adults, their life experiences, knowledge of risk protection and prevention, and cautious behaviors are not yet fully developed. Consequently, the support and guidance of adults remain crucial. Understanding the nuanced relationships, attitudes, feelings, and demands of this age group is a unique aspect. The improper approach and communication attitude of leaders can potentially exacerbate the crisis within this age group. Hence, officials working with military-age youth can foster a conducive environment for their successful completion if military service by acquiring effective methods and knowledge that consider their developmental and psychological characteristics.

According to the adaptability survey, 27 percent (35 soldiers) of temporary military personnel were rated as very good, 50 percent (65 soldiers) as average, 17 percent (22 soldier) as poor, and 6 percent (7 soldiers) as very poor.

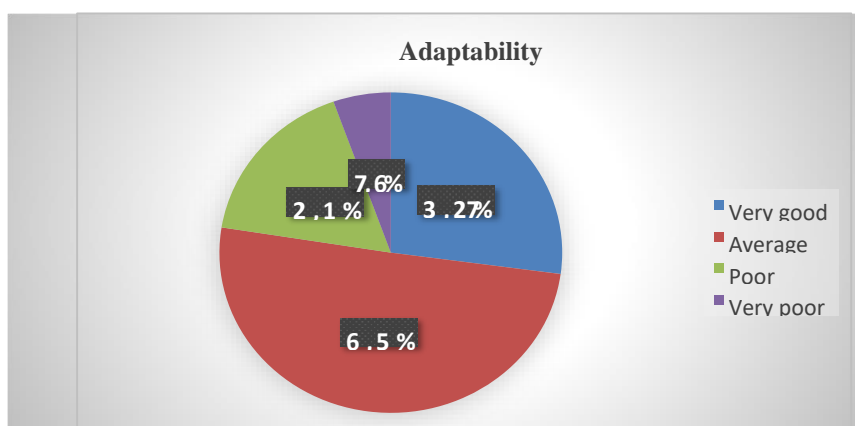


Figure. 2. Adaptability

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Over 50 percent of the study participants exhibit average or low adaptability, suggesting psychological restlessness when faced with the transition into a social environment vastly different from their everyday lives, and when encountering the daily training and preparation demands, This implies that their capacity to adjust to military life is relatively weak.

The ability to effectively adapt to situational demands and navigate unforeseen challenges inherent in the fulfillment of official duties within unique contexts is notably influenced by the interplay between leaders and governing authorities.

Upon analyzing the impact of the four levels of depression on adaptability, a notable correlation emerges between adaptability and depression. Furthermore, the average adaptability group signifies depression-free rates across the overall distribution.

In contrast, the severe group is associated with low adaptability, indicating that lower levels of depression have a diminished impact on adaptability.

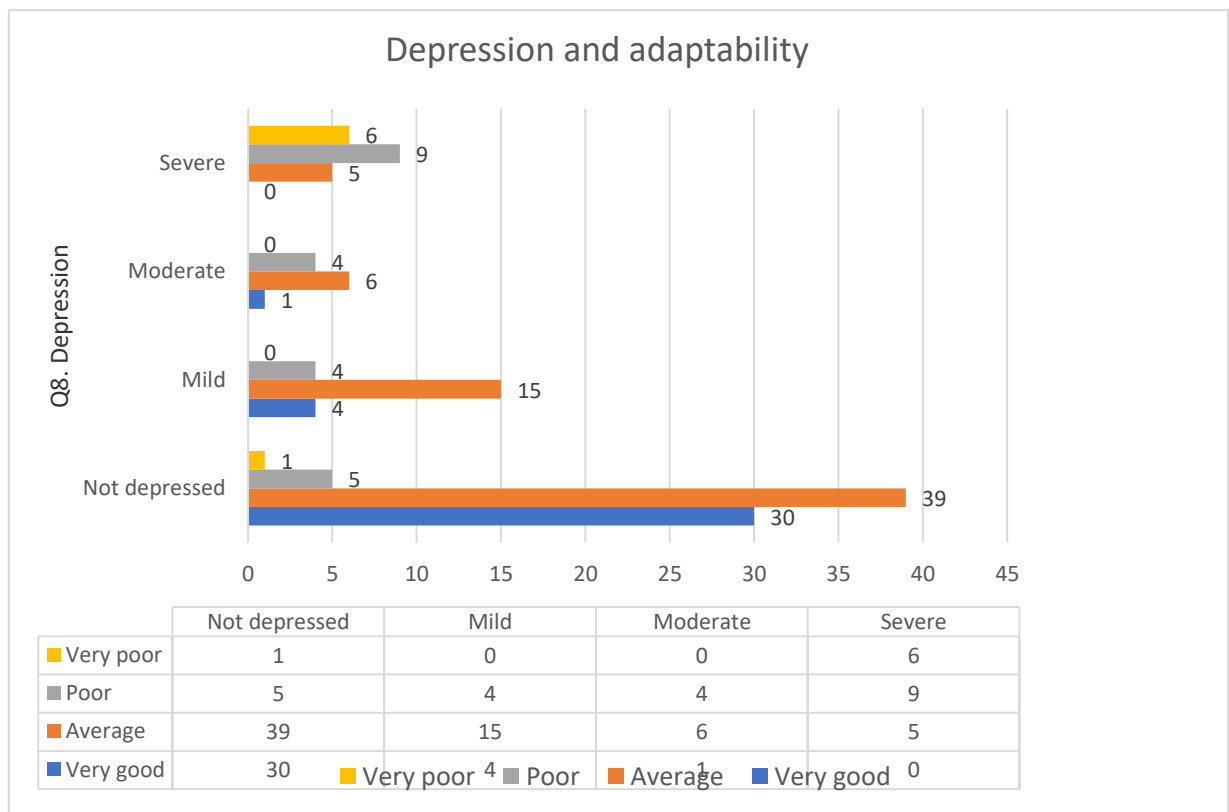


Figure 1. An index of the correlation between depression and adaptability

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It can be observed from Figure 3 that a high correlation exists, as demonstrated by Pearson's correlation analysis during statistical processing.

Table 2. Pearson's Correlation Analysis of Depression and Adaptability

Correlation			
		Adaptability	Depression
Adaptability	Pearson's correlation	1	.582**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Sample	129	129
Depression	Pearson's correlation	.582**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Sample	129	129

It can be seen from table 2 that it is highly correlated between depression and adaptability by Pearson's correlation analysis of statistical processing.

Table 3. Homogeneity Test Analysis of Depression and Adaptability

Depression					
	Q6. Adaptability	N	Subset		
			1	2	3
Student-Newman-Keuls ^{a,b,c}	Very good	35	1.17		
	Average	65	1.65		
	Poor	22		2.77	
	Very poor	7			3.57
	Sig.			.128	1.000

The non-depressed group exhibits comparable adaptability to the average group, with adaptability being influenced by the personality characteristics of the non-depressed cohort. Conversely, the mild depression group aligns with the low adaptive group, while the severe depression group aligns with the very low adaptive group, underscoring the impact of depression levels on adaptive capacity.

4. CONCLUSION

Despite the implementation of various measures aimed at enhancing the adaptability of new conscripts to military service, incidents of crimes and disciplinary violations associated with maladjustment among the temporary military personnel continue to persist. According to the research, 58 percent or 75 of the conscripts were not experiencing depression, while 18 percent or 23 exhibited mild depression, 9 percent or 11 showed signs of moderate depression, and 15 percent or 20 were identified as having severe depression. Additionally,

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more than 40 percent of the respondents reported experiencing depression. While new warriors may seem like adults, their life experiences, understanding of risk protection and prevention, and cautious behavior are not fully developed. Therefore, the guidance and advice of adults remain crucial. The cultivation of nuanced relationships, attitudes, feelings, and demands is a distinctive characteristic of this age group.

The improper approach and communication attitude of leaders may contribute to the crisis within this age group. Therefore, officials working with military-age youth can facilitate a conducive environment for their successful completion of military service by acquiring effective methods and knowledge that consider their developmental and psychological characteristics. According to the adaptability survey, 27 percent (35) of temporary military personnel were rated as very good, 50 percent (65) as average, 17 percent (22) as poor, and 6 percent (7) as very poor.

Over 50 percent of the study participants exhibit average or low adaptability, suggesting psychological restlessness as they navigate the transition into a social environment vastly different from ordinary life, along with the demands of daily training and preparation. This indicates a relatively poor ability to adapt to military life.

This study identified a direct relationship between conscripts' depression and their adaptation to military life. Furthermore, depression emerged as the primary determinant in classifying soldiers based on their level of adjustment. The study's results highlight the significant role of depression in the psychological domain, with issues in this area underlying maladjustment. Soldiers who experience lower levels of depression tend to exhibit higher levels of self-confidence, interest in service, pride in themselves and their service, and better stress management abilities. This suggests that depression significantly influences military life and its potential to cause harm.

Acknowledgments

1. Officials tasked with working with military-aged youth should endeavor to learn and implement effective methodologies that consider their developmental and psychological characteristics. By doing so, they can foster a conducive environment that facilitates the successful completion of their military service.
2. Consistently provide psychological counseling and support services to address relationship issues encountered by military servicemen, including temporary military personnel. The objective is to normalize their relationships and psychological well-being, instilling a sense of enjoyment and pride in their military service.
3. When offering psychological counseling to conscripts, prioritize their voluntary requests and attentively listen to their concerns. Provide assistance in overcoming difficulties, support their needs, and guide them in making informed decisions.
4. Officials working with soldiers should attentively observe and communicate with each soldier, fostering a positive atmosphere in their interactions. They should listen to and respect soldiers' wishes and, if necessary, collaborate with psychologists to address any needs.
5. To create an environment where temporary military personnel can seek guidance from psychologists to address feelings of anxiety, anger, depression, loneliness, and

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unhealthy behavior habits. This entails providing professional psychological counseling services and enhancing support systems to facilitate improvement in mental health services.


6. The findings of the aforementioned study underscore the necessity of regularly organizing activities such as psychotherapy and psychological support. These interventions are crucial for addressing negative emotional symptoms, including depression, anxiety, and frustration, stemming from workplace stress and office conditions.

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

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