

Comparative Study

Comparative Analysis of Coping Strategies and Psychological Wellbeing among Security Service Personnel of Different Age Groups

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the three types of coping strategies (Problem Focused Coping, Emotion-Focused Coping and Avoidant Coping) and PWB of security service personnel with varying lengths of service experience, aiming to understand how service duration influences these critical psychological aspects. By comparing personnel with different service tenures, this study seeks to identify patterns and differences that can inform targeted mental health for security service professionals. The findings reveal significant differences in coping strategies and PWB among security service personnel with different lengths of service providing insights into tailored interventions for enhancing the mental health of security personnel.

Keywords: *Coping Strategies, Psychological Wellbeing*

Challenges are ever-present in the security service sector. These challenges affect the psychological and physical wellness of people working in this sector. Stress, control, and mental health in general have a great impact on the lives of those employed as security guards. Security guards come across different scenarios. They go through rigorous training which may involve long hours away from home during deployment hence affecting their inner self. Stress is prevalent among security personnel because it can make one feel as if they are drowning under its weight alone. Sometimes, security service personnel might feel like they have less control over their lives, especially because they need to follow orders and rules.

Coping Mechanism

The term coping mechanism refers to the ways, means and strategies employed by a person to manage stress. Coping is a kind of interaction between the resources of man's own nature and the requirements from the environment (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Response to a stressor is not a simplistic function of merely responding to a stimulus. It is a two-way system of appraising the environment and self-capability or the self-coping abilities. The environmental appraisal is the primary appraisal and evaluation of the self-capabilities is the secondary appraisal. These both systems constitute a transactional system that determines the response by a person to cope with a situation and in what way (Lazarus & Folkman,

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1984). The assessment of an individual's style or pattern of coping may also involve looking at what a person does in response to everyday stressors for emotional stability (Gates, 2001). These behaviors include things like engaging in recreational pursuits, involving in personal care practices, getting support from family and friends, socializing with others around you and using cognitive as well as rational skills. According to Lazarus & Folkman (1984), there are two main types of coping- emotion focused coping and problem focused coping.

Coping to stressful situations has also been studied in terms of approach and avoidance behaviour which has its historical roots in Freud's psychoanalytic theory and defence mechanisms (Roth & Cohen, 1986). Avoidant strategy is directed toward the processes or steps initiated to prevent or circumvent situation to avoid or reduce any conflict or situation that is stressful. Horowitz (1986) enlisted a number of symptoms that may arise during the stress response system in research that studied the effects of stressful life events, psychiatric disorders, and pre-existing conflicts or functional deficits.

Psychological Well-being (PWB)

PWB is one of the most significant goals that individuals as well as societies wants to achieve. This term refers to something that is in good condition. It doesn't state what that 'something' is or what 'good' means. PWB can be specified as follows: first by specifying 'what', secondly by expounding on wellness criteria.

PWB concept is quite new. Fundamental researchers have so far been conducted on PWB multiple times. Consequently, consultation about PWB subject can be got while the methods developed for its measurement by researchers are being formulated. The idea about PWB was introduced by Cantril. This was referred to knowledge-based experience people picture themselves within their current situation. Whether it satisfies individual or not depending upon their different expectations than those proposed leads them either to total satisfaction or zero pleasure at all. In the recent years there is growth of quality life presented in popular literature and scientific literature. Especially the events describing the quality life affect the quality of life. Common people and scientists seem to be more and more interested. Quality life is observed in relation to individual's combination of physical social and PWB.

Security service personnel feel stressful and have heavy workload when they are on duty (Terte & Stephens, 2014) and suffer higher rates of mental illness (Goodwin, et al, 2015). The health of soldiers can be impaired by exposure to physical and psychological stress, which also affects their performance. Various studies have been made in the field of understanding the coping behaviour of a soldier under stress.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to investigate difference in mean of the coping strategies and PWB of security service personnel among two different age groups.

Research Questions

- To study the coping and PWB of security service personnel.
- To compare coping strategies and PWB of security service personnel between the two age group of 18 – 33 years and 34 – 47 years.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

The resilience and coping techniques to maintain a PWB is a well research topic in research domain. Lots of studies has enabled focused planning towards PWB. For a security service personnel the subject is more important due to the routine stress related with the job. The stress and pressure start from the time he or she joins for Basic Security service Training. The various paper published addressing coping strategies and PWB have been studied and review on the same is listed below.

Coping Techniques

Mental readiness training is an integrated process that encompasses the principles of emotional, cognitive and behavioural control taught in realistic security service training. In particular, trainers will identify physiological and cognitive stress responses in certain training situations. These include, how these reactions may affect a security service personnel's behavior, decisions are made and the course of action is taken. To do this, trainers must introduce trainees to the art of maintaining their cognitive and emotional status quo in situ as well as illustrate how these methods can be used appropriately (Thompson & McCreary 2006). Mental readiness training is an integrated approach that combines principles of emotional, cognition and behavioral control into real world of security service personnel training. More specifically, during some selected forms of instruction among the teachers would take note of such factors like how human response is affected through stressful moments. In turn they have impact on the individuals' decisions as well as the course of action taken while also having a greater effect when all put together (Megan M. Thompson, Donald R., 2006). However, mental strength becomes equally important with physical strength in security services. Such personnel are not only challenged by high stakes situations but they also have to deal with emotions and other related issues arising from these experiences at their places of work. Security operations must comprise resilience building programs on top of being about mental fitness and stress management so that personnel can be able to withstand challenges posed in their line of duty. Moreover, Psychological Wellbeing programs has far reaching effects for families of security service personnel too. The amount of pressure that security service organization places on family relationships, it important to implement support programs that prioritize the psychological wellbeing of spouses and children. The overall efficiency and readiness levels for security services depend on the health condition of families thus proving the interconnection between individual and collective psychological healthiness.

The individual is trained with skills for managing stress before being exposed to less severe types of stress so as to encourage coping mechanisms and confidence in their use (Hourani & Hubal).

PWB

The dominance of the developed psychological wellbeing connected to low chances of disease has been supported by scientific studies. Therefore, despite the possibility that these interventions are readily available, they have not reached many people who may benefit from them. However, inattention towards distinct dimensions of Psychological Wellbeing with regard to Physical Health Outcomes is a major problem; it may lead to poor health outcomes on the basis of different component (Claudia Trudel-Fitzgerald, 2019). There is an accumulating body of evidence showing that various dimensions of well-being are related to future chronic diseases and mortality, as well as potential mechanisms such as stress-buffering effects or healthier behaviors (Boehm JK, Kubzansky LD, 2012).

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Worker wellbeing has positive impacts both on employer organization and the employee. On the other hand, security service life poses numerous challenges which make it difficult for workers to reach satisfactory level of wellbeing. Given this reason, improving psychological well-being for security service personnel would be possible through designing programs that help enhance their psychological capital since psychological capital is a good predictor of an individual's well-being (Eduardo Hernández-Varas et al., 2019). Even when off duty, continuous exposure to stressful situations, including emergencies alone have long-term adverse health impact on a person both physically and psychologically. Further still, severe job demands such as physical training requirements or erratic schedules can modify a person's eating patterns or hygienic habits but also exposure to possibly traumatic forms of violence escalates stress experienced by employees thereby leading to intense pressure (Schaubroeck Riolli Peng & Spain 2011). Individuals' Psychological Wellbeing is seen in terms of self-perception and how he values himself (Ryff et al., 2012) as well as Psychological Wellbeing defined in these terms: "Psychological well-being is about lives going well. It is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively" (Felicia Huppert 2009).

Training programs that seek to develop resilient individuals, relieve stress among officers and promote their psychological fitness are an integral part of any security service's operations since this ensures endurance against a set of difficulties associated with service life while serving in such organizations (especially when in combat). Further, the effects of Psychological Wellbeing may not be limited to security service personnel but also affect their families too. Recognizing this strain, such organisation provide support programs for other spouses and children which prioritize their mental health and wellness being. The overall effectiveness and readiness of security service organisation directly depends on the mental health situation of their family members thus indicating how closely individual mental states are related to that of a society.

Rationale of the study

The life style of the Security Service Personnel is different from others. These security service personnel face a range of challenges. Some are such as; risk to life, frequent moves, goal oriented tasks in short amount of time required to be performed under paucity of time, fatigue, very strict adherence of discipline and time. A number of written and unwritten rules and codes of conduct, service specific ethos, values and traditions exists. These can never be traded off. The younger generations of personnel preserve the internal social fabric and inherent culture and traditions- some of the oldest ones in letter and spirit. But these cannot be bartered away for money or any other consideration whatsoever. The armed forces is not just a career option but it is a way of life for the proud men/women in the security services where failure is not an option when all else fails. Various dimensions are included in psychological well-being like emotional stability, mental health, job satisfaction and overall life satisfaction. For effective job performance, resilience as well as personnel fulfillment regard high levels of psychological well-being as necessary to security personnel. There are several detrimental consequences that may arise due to compromised psychological wellbeing such as anxiety, depression substance abuse among others.

In studying coping strategies and psychological well-being among security personnel, it is critical to acknowledge that age plays a significant role in shaping individual's experiences, stressors, and coping mechanisms. This study is divided into two age groups; 18-33 years old and 34 – 47 years old for more detailed analysis on how age related factors affect coping

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strategies and psychological well-being. Normally at an average age of 30 most individuals get married thereby getting themselves engaged into social responsibilities more than ever before. Likewise by this period one have almost served half his term liability in the security sector. Physical health profiles as well as stress resilience of below 33 years security personnel may differ from those of their counterparts in the older age groups. More physical resilient and able to meet the physical requirements of their roles, but above 33 years individuals are likely to have more stable identities and well-established self-concepts. They exhibit coping strategies that show a higher degree of psychosocial maturity, stronger support networks, and life experiences that bolster resilience and effective stress management. In this regard, the existing research has been conducted in order to investigate the link between coping strategies utilized by security service workers and psychological wellbeing in two age groups where individuals are aged between 18 and 47 years. The total period of service is generally around 34 years. Based on that, two age group is identified with a cut off at 14 years of service as well as another cut off point at 34 years that gives an age group of less than or equal to 33 years to greater than or equal to 34 years. In addition, the levels of self-declared psychological welfare as well as means of adapting to stress are analyzed for personnel. Moreover, we need to explore the variance in the mean scores for diverse psychological constructs across the ages equivalent below and above a threshold value of 33 years.

Over all the present study is relevant because it aims to find out the coping strategy that the people who are working in security services are using to deal with the adverse circumstances, like staying away from their families, working in stressful conditions, the coping mechanism will make them more resilient and thus it will affect the psychological wellbeing of the security service personnel.

METHODOLOGY

Objective

- To study the coping and PWB of security service personnel.
- To compare coping strategies and PWB of security service personnel between the two age group of 18 – 33 years and 34 – 47 years.

Variables

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies incorporate any techniques or thought patterns that individuals employ to deal with challenging or distressing circumstances. These typically encompass intentional, straightforward approaches to solving problems or managing one's response to difficult situations. Each of these elements can cause stress in the individual. This is one of the reasons of coping strategies being very important in security services since they involve a lot of stress. Such methods help people address their physical and mental issues like dangerous situations, trauma-related difficulties or high-pressure assignments. Some of the common methods include; sharing ones feelings with others who could be friends, relatives and colleagues, exercising regularly so as to reduce stress, using mindfulness for relaxation purposes and balancing between work and personnel life. It also includes training programs that focus on stress management and resilience. By doing this helps security personnel stay mentally fit which in turn makes them perform better at work hence maintaining their well-being over time. To counter this a coping strategy or combination of coping strategy help to reduce influence of stressors.

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Psychological Wellbeing (PWB)

PWB is a crucial element of mental health that involves being happy and finding meaning in life. It entails experiencing pleasure (hedonic happiness) and feeling fulfilled or purposeful (eudemonistic wellbeing). PWB further encompasses resilience, the ability to cope with stress, manage emotions and solve problems effectively. To understand what promotes PWB it's important to improve it. If people know what makes them feel good and deal with life challenges better, we can design special courses for them. Such programs may include exercises or tasks aimed to aid individuals gain more pleasure from life, seek deeper purposes in their activities as well as become talented at controlling emotions and stress levels. By concentrating on these elements an improvement of mental health will be achieved in individuals leading to higher welfare.

Sample Description

The test was administered on 70 male participants working in the domain in the age group of 18 years to 47 years. The participant were from different demographic profile and with an education background of minimum Sr. Secondary school. The sample was divided into two Age Groups as Age Group 1 (18-33 Years) and Age Group 2 (34-47 Years) based on their experience in their service.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Personnel working in security service sector.
- Only personnel who volunteered for the study were included.
- People between 18- 47 years were included in the study.
- Only male participant were asked to respond.
- Physically healthy personnel were included.

Exclusion criteria:

- Uneducated people were not taken for study.
- People with age below 18 and above 47.

Sampling Technique

- Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the study, Purposive Sampling was used in the study.

Hypothesis

- There will be no significant difference in coping strategy of security personnel between the two age group of 18 – 33 years and 34 – 47 years.
- There will be no significant difference in PWB of security personnel between the two age group of 18 – 33 years and 34 – 47 years.

Tools

Coping Questionnaire-Brief-COPE (Carver et al., 1997)

Problem-Focused Coping (Items 2, 7, 10, 12, 14, 17, 23, 25) is considered by the aspects of active coping, use of informational support, planning, and positive reframing. Emotion-Focused Coping (Items 5, 9, 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28) is considered by the aspects of venting, use of emotional support, humour, acceptance, self-blame, and religion. Avoidant Coping (Items 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 16, 19) is considered by the aspects of self-

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distraction, denial, substance use, and behavioural disengagement. The types of Coping strategies are mentioned below:

- **Problem-Focused Coping:** This strategy involves taking active steps to address the cause of stress directly. People using problem-focused coping try to solve the problem that is causing their stress.
- **Emotion-Focused Coping:** This strategy helps individuals manage their emotional response to stress rather than the stressor itself. It involves techniques like talking to friends, meditating, or engaging in hobbies that make them feel better.
- **Avoidant Coping:** This strategy involves ignoring or avoiding the stressor. People using avoidant coping might try to distract themselves with other activities, such as watching TV, sleeping, or using substances like alcohol.

Ryff Scales of PWB - 48 items was also to be administered on the 100 participants in the study. A scale is used to collect data on the PWB of adolescents. Ryff Scales of PWB -48 items (PWB) PWB scale was developed by Ryff in 1989.

In addition to the original model that had 128 items, shorter versions have included 84, 54, 42 and 18 items, generally with equal numbers of items per PWB variable. The scale chosen for this study contains 42 statements reflecting six dimensions of PWB: self-acceptance, positive relation with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Response is made using Ryff Scales PWB -42 items (PWB). The scale chosen for this study consists of forty-two statements reflecting six areas of PWB: self-acceptance positive relation with others autonomy environmental mastery purpose in life and personal growth. The PWB is valid and reliable and is suitable for use in assessing the PWB.

Statistical analysis

Descriptive Analysis was used in the study. Analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical procedures, including informed consent, approval, privacy, and the right to withdraw by subjects.

RESULTS

The data reveals that older security service personnel (AG2) consistently show higher levels of both coping strategies and PWB dimensions compared to younger personnel (AG1). This suggests that age is a significant factor in how security personnel cope with stress and maintain psychological health. The findings emphasize the need for age-specific mental health interventions that cater to the unique needs and coping mechanisms of different age groups within the security services sector. Tailored support programs can enhance the overall wellbeing and effectiveness of security service personnel.

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Table 1 Descriptive of Variables and their Dimensions for both Age Groups

	N		Mean		SD	
	AG1	AG2	AG1	AG2	AG1	AG2
Problem Focused	35	35	18.66	22.20	5.00	3.02
Emotional Focused	35	35	24.91	30.97	4.53	4.38
Avoidance	35	35	14.09	17.88	3.18	3.47
Autonomy	35	35	21.88	24.57	3.88	2.27
Environmental Mastery	35	35	21.91	24.94	4.32	2.31
Personal Growth	35	35	24.20	26.51	4.06	2.10
Positive Relations	35	35	22.60	25.71	4.28	2.67
Purpose in Life	35	35	21.60	24.11	3.44	1.89
Self Acceptance	35	35	24.62	27.11	4.40	2.20
PWB	35	35	136.83	152.97	19.00	7.73

Note: AG1 = Age Group 1, AG2 = Age Group 2, SD = Standard Deviation.

The table-2 provides the t-values, degrees of freedom (df), and significance levels for various psychological variables between two age groups of security service personnel. The significance levels indicate whether the differences between the groups are statistically significant.

Table 2 T-Test Results

	t	df	Sig
Problem Focused	-3.59	68	0.001
Emotional Focused	-5.69	68	0.000
Avoidance	-4.77	68	0.000
Autonomy	-3.53	68	0.001
Environmental Mastery	-3.65	68	0.001
Personal Growth	-2.99	68	0.004
Positive Relations	-3.64	68	0.001
Purpose in Life	-3.87	68	0.000
Self Acceptance	-2.98	68	0.004
PWB	-4.65	68	0.000

The statistical analysis reveals significant differences in coping strategies and PWB between the two age groups of security service personnel. In all measured dimensions, the older age group (Age Group 2) scores higher than the younger age group (Age Group1). These findings suggest that older security personnel have more developed coping mechanisms and better psychological health compared to their younger counterparts. The results underscore the importance of providing age-specific mental health interventions to address the distinct needs of different age groups within the security services sector.

Interpretation of Results

The result confirms that the significantly difference exists in the age group of 18-33 years and 34-47 years in the psychological construct of self-acceptance, positive relation with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personnel growth in PWB and Problem focused, Emotional Focused and Avoidant Coping Strategies under Coping Strategies in security service personnel. As the present study was focused on the model of coping strategy and PWB in security service personnel, they are the one who are supposed to

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be effective in stress and adverse environment. The type of task assigned, amount of years of service was analyzed in the study.

In the present study the objective was to study the relationship between PWB and coping strategy among security service personnel with T test tool. The hypothesis was to establish the fact that there exists no statistical significant difference the age group of 18-33years and 34-47 years in PWB and Coping Strategy of individuals in security services and it revealed that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between the means of the two age groups.

DISCUSSION

The result confirms that the significantly difference exists in the age group of 18-33 years and 34-47 years in the psychological construct of self-acceptance, positive relation with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth in PWB and Problem focused, Emotional Focused and Avoidant Coping Strategies under Coping Strategies in security service personnel. As the present study was focused on the model of coping strategy and PWB in security service personnel, they are the one who are supposed to be effective in stress and adverse environment. The type of task assigned, amount of years of service was analyzed in the study.

In the present study the objective was to study the relationship between PWB and coping strategy among security service personal with T test tool. The hypothesis was to establish the fact that there exists no statistical significant difference the age group of 18-33years and 34-47 years in PWB and Coping Strategy of individuals in security services and it revealed that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between the means of the two age groups. With increasing age of service personnel, the PWB is increase due to the upgradation in terms of pay, promotion, improved family support and increased learning, maturity. They are more responsible in executing task compare to young age group.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study was limited to age group 18 to 47 years.
2. The sample size was taken limited (70).
3. The study is conducted with Male population only.

Recommendation for Future Research

1. The study can be extended Male as well as Female security service personnel.
2. The study can be extended further with taking other specific variables like physical medical status, socio-economic status.
3. The study can also be done with other working professionals.
4. The study can also be done with house wives of security service personnel and dependents.

CONCLUSION

The goal that was to establish the fact that there exists no statistical significant difference in the age group of 18-33years and 34-47 years in PWB and Coping Strategy of individuals in security services and it revealed that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between the means of the two age groups which was achieved successfully through this study.

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It is also deduced in the study using T Test that the difference between the means for various sub scales coping strategies and sub scales PWB groups in the age group of 18-33years and 34-47 years, are significant different. This was the very objective of this project to establish the relationship between the taken variables.

As per WHO, between the age of 14-24 years, a human faces various challenges including academics problems, peer pressure, communication gap between youth and elders, depression, social or physical identity, career, relationships, unemployment and many such problems. A boy joins security service at the age of 18 years. He/She generally serves for 34 years and then retire from service. They are made to undergo a harsh training and get the chance to serve a one of the most difficult terrain in worst of the external as well as internal environment. They are made to face challenges with respect to his task, routine, family front and his socio-economic status.

The study analyzed various sub scale of psychological construct to include self-acceptance, positive relation with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personnel growth and Problem focused, Emotional Focused and Avoidant Coping Strategies under Coping Strategies in security service personnel. The implications are as follows:

1. The finding of the study gave the knowledge about the relationship psychological construct of self-acceptance, positive relation with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personnel growth in PWB and Problem focused, Emotional Focused and Avoidant Coping Strategies in security service personnel in the age group of 18-33years and 34-47 years.
2. The finding of this study can also be further expanded in future so that it will help Fire fighter and Police personnel in larger context.
3. The finding of this study can be further used for designing stress relief and art of living theme for security service personnel.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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