

# Military Psychology: Cognitive & Emotive Performance Enhancement Strategies

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**Abstract**—This short-research paper will look into Military Psychology, emphasizing on performance enhancement. The application of psychology infused with principles of emotional intelligence, critical thinking protocol and strategies of leadership initiates performance enhancement within an individual and then collectively to a unit in the military. Their unpredictable operational environment requires individual or the unit, when meeting challenges to apply high definition to their design and for this they must have communication and synchronization and a deliberate doctrine to swarm and decentralize the negative environment created by the challenge. To bring level of details to awareness in the military all must have a high developed and acute sense of situational awareness of the environment of operation. A positive sense of meaning is associated within an individual and groups when there is an adoption of clear goals. Identifying goals and team building skills maintains the spirit of the unit and the collective identity.

**Keywords**—Applied Psychology, Emotional Intelligence, Military Units, Leadership Strategies, Psychology of Performance.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**M**ILITARY psychology is the research, design and application of psychological theories and experimentation data towards understanding, predicting and countering behaviors either in own, friendly or enemy forces or civilian population that may be undesirable, threatening or potentially dangerous to the conduct of military operations. [3]

Military personnel face significant challenges in the routine course of their work. By virtue of frequent service in a combat zone in today's conflict, work hours are long and the need for vigilance and self-protection is high. [3] In these dangerous and fast-paced environments, military personnel need a high definition of human design. High definition of human design is when the cognitive and emotional behavior is harmonized to produce an individual who is asset based operating with optimum effectiveness. Asset based means the utilization of force multipliers within an individual and external factors such as a good team and effective leaders.

To instigate this level of functioning in an individual the environment must harbor a leadership culture, which is defined by the collective thought and action of formal and informal leaders acting together to influence goals for effectiveness [2].

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Effective deployment of force multipliers leads to consistent performance that meets or exceeds expectations of organic growth. Leadership is also a mission and leadership requires mission-critical intelligence, which focus on the levers that drive creation, value incubation and finally harvesting of leadership skills, mobilization and empowerment in the team. Empowerment in the team brings forth and enhances natural attributes which would be:

- Interpersonal relationships,
- Motivating others,
- Managing conflict,
- Initiating collaboration,
- Team building

The tools which can enhance the performance level are: Emotional Intelligence, Smart Protocol Thinking, Situational Awareness, Principles of Social Cohesion, Communications: Verbal and Non-verbal through knowledge of Micro and Macro Facial expressions, Body Leaks, Context analysis, Creative Critical Thinking, Team dynamics, Predictive profiling and Learning system applications.

In this short research paper the researcher has only discussed a few tools that are:

- Emotional Intelligence
- Principles of Social Cohesion
- Creative Critical Thinking.

These tools will enhance performance of soldiers and leaders during training and in battle by providing inputs to create the right environment, qualification courses and innovative trainings

Emotion is clearly an important aspect of the brain, the nature of emotion has been debated within psychology for the past 100 years, this formal debate goes back to William James's famous question: Do we run from the bear because we are afraid or are we afraid because we run. The neural basis of emotions, the build-up, neural clogging and neural detoxification [4] all these factors can be trained and an individual can learn to regulate and down-regulate emotions by being equipped in emotional intelligence and its myriad applications in our daily existence.

Emotional proposal is made of 3 primary sources:

- Verbal & Visual Conditioning
- Modeling – What we have witnessed
- Specific meaningful Incidents – what we have

experienced

Changing the neural substrates of emotions and emotion-reaction will not only affect neurology of one's brain but the physical reaction will be affected too, thereby assisting the individual to motivate and maintain the control on down-regulation of negative emotion in a constructive manner. Change in one facilitates changes in the entire human design. We create new areas with new competencies. [5]

V: Vim and Vigor

I: Increased Sharing

M: Motivation and Management

V.I.M = Combination of attributes or advantages which makes a specific emotion more effective than another emotion of comparable size. Example: Extreme Happiness as compared to Extreme Sadness. Down regulation of emotion is taking V.I.M and using it to your advantage. This is also known as force multipliers. A force multiplier is anything and everything, which can be taken by an individual and used to their advantage to increase their potential. In organizations brain storming is one such process where a group of people in various departments come together and take each other's potentials multiply it with their and come up with options, suggestions and innovations.

Components to enhance Positive Emotions within oneself

- Emotional Meaning
- Awareness
- Purpose
- Utilization of Emotions
- Regulation of Emotions
- Emotional Support

With these components one can propel to Self-Expansion - the 2nd law of life. The first one is, Self-Preservation. [5]

Sleep deprivation and fatigue have historically been major topics of study for the high-risk combat environment, in particular, a declination of cognitive abilities creates significant risk and is known to result in poor decision making and problem solving leading to unnecessary loss of life. [3]

Performance enhancement is the deliberate cultivation of an effective perspective on achievement and the systematic use of effective cognitive skills. A soldier can maximize performance by mastering thinking habits and emotional and physical states. The adaptive response of an individual to stress is determined by a multiplicity of genetic, environmental and developmental factors. Alterations of the ability to respond to stressors, as for example inadequate, excessive and/or prolonged reactions, may lead to disease. Moreover, excessive and/or chronically imposed stressors may have adverse impact on a variety of physiologic functions, such as growth, reproduction, metabolism and the immune- competence, as well as on personality development and behavior

## II. DISTINCTION – MAKING TRAITS (DM) & DISTINCTION – DISSOLVING (DD)

The Triune Brain Theory of Paul MacLean describes the

three parts of the brain, which assist in DM and DD. They are the Reptilian brain (R-Complex), Limbic brain and the neo-cortex.

Imbalance occurs when one set of traits are dominant than the other. Distinction-making traits are seen in activities such as creating hierarchies, having a rigid set of objectives, paying close attention to details as opposed to whole, valuing precision and orderliness. These are the product of the R-complex and are necessary for survival. Control must be established to effectively deal with the crisis. When an individual or a group esteems these traits over distinction-dissolving traits, however, a breakdown in empathy and flexibility occurs.

Distinction-dissolving traits value richness of experience, intuition, complexity, higher tolerance for ambiguity and a holistic emotional appraisal. These traits are also needed for survival. They insure creativity, flexibility, intuitive thinking and diversity within an appreciation of the whole. Intermingling of thoughts from various stimuli ensures brain progress. Ability to change, have courage and determination to execute must accompany distinction-dissolving traits in the neo-cortex. When inaction prevails and the group or individual have no clear focus they become weak and ineffective. [5]

## III. SOCIAL COHESION AND TASK COHESION THROUGH TEAMBUILDING

The team is important to successful recruiter performance. Applying creative thinking in a team brings power of Prediction (what one might think will happen, what questions one can ask),

Probing (who might have a different idea about this particular question, what is puzzling you and how could you clarify), Ponder (how would you sum up your ideas, does everyone agree, if not then why not?)

In-groups are those that reciprocally link individuals' attitudes and behaviors with the group-level conditions in which they are situated. Groups are cohesive when group-level conditions are producing positive membership attitudes and behaviors and when group members' interpersonal interactions are operating to maintain these group-level conditions. (Positive intent or negative - cohesion comes when all agree)

Cohesive groups are self-maintaining with respect to the production of strong membership attractions and attachments.

A unifying notion for the success of the process, a state of equilibrium has to be reached within an individual, which depends on the imaginable specifics of the goal. The more specifics are clearly detailed the easier the goal becomes. Incongruence within self can be made congruent by connecting the points of conflict by a constructive path so what the person feels and what the person wants to be achieved is achievable. The continuity maintained between the individual and the specifics decipher the methodology an individual takes to pursue the goal and make it a success.

Components of social cohesion and leadership culture provide a clear sense of the unit's importance, unique

capabilities, and dedication to professionalism. Unit's marksmanship training can also be expanded through performance-enhancement training by means of class room based presentation and individual one-on-one training sessions to explore confidence, goal setting, and concentration strategies using the tools of Emotional Intelligence and Critical Thinking Systems. Two complementary types of self-discipline, referred to as mindsets, are the major components in confidence training. The first is the discipline to physically "train." The second is the discipline to unconditionally trust what has been trained. Confidence is gained through the correct application and blending of these two mindsets [3].

#### IV. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

One of the affective styles of functioning through E.I is the capacity to regulate negative emotions and specifically to decrease the duration of that negative affect once it arises [4].

Our Brain is subjected to constant structuring and restructuring through pattern associations. Neural Substrates are elemental for our natural state. It is a substance that is acted upon in a biochemical reaction; they are basically carriers of information, and the bio-chemical reaction produces information. Neural Substrates lead us to challenges, choices, creative critical thinking and transferring learning through experience. [6] They set our internal emotional climate through appraising our external environment at all times. Seeking patterns, making connections is what our brain is doing continuously through the influence of emotions. We all have emotional intelligence, the only question is how much with awareness we use this intelligence to regulate and down-regulate our emotion-reaction-action. [8]

##### A. Critical Thinking Systems

- Systems thinking – Recruit & Replenish, Maintain effective rapport, effective communication system, brand control, perception management.
- Personal mastery – personal commitment, material & knowledge skill sets
- Mental models – setting the environment to mirror behavior
- Shared Vision – sanctuary to instill like mindedness
- Team Learning – through team dynamics equation.

##### B. Goal setting

Goal setting facilitates reaching full potential and establishes the dream, but more important, it constructs the path or process to get to that dream.

Goal setting is the critical part of Leadership culture.

Goal setting steps:

- Is the goal specific, challenging, approachable, measurable, inspirational?
- What are the steps necessary to achieve this goal?
- What might be the barriers and what will I do to overcome them?
- How to enhance my commitment and motivation?

- What else do I need to do to be successful?

Key Components to recognize the inherent potential within for the aforementioned to come to fruition:

- Identity Development
- Values Assessment
- Discovering purpose
- Goal Planning and setting
- Time Management
- Feedback task learning and performance loop

##### C. Performance Enhancement Psychology

- The cognitive foundation reveals understanding of brain-behavior, which brings confidence and operates in the most effective manner. It helps to restructure ineffective or negative beliefs and cultivate a powerful self-image.
- Goal setting helps to identify the meaning of task and performance and to forecast long-term performance objective.
- Situational Awareness helps to attending to important cues, and utilizing its levels, which are [9]:
  - Awareness of information
  - Comprehension of its meaning
  - Projection of future status

#### V. CONCLUSION

Stress management and Emotion Regulation is learnt by understanding how stress operates in the human system and mastering techniques of rapid recovery, resiliency and energy management instead of burnout and fatigue. Imagery and visualization: The process of seeing, feeling, and experiencing desired outcomes and taking actions to attain them builds confidence and a readiness to move forward. Neuroanatomically visual cortex dominates all other systems in the brain so visual codes enhances memory and recall so to increase the use of the visual codes through imagery and visualization delivers effective performance

These competencies improve individual and team performance by empowering individuals to use critical thinking learning systems and create effective thinking habits to perform with confidence, improve attention to levels of details, regulate and down-regulate emotional responses under high performance demand along with the ability to operate with a sense of clarity regarding immediate actions and their long-term results.

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