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Review

Navigating Moral Injury and Trauma in US Army Soldiers: A Holistic Approach Incorporating Self-Care, CBT, Personal Strength, and Spiritual Resilience

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This study explores a holistic approach to addressing trauma and moral injury in US Army soldiers, integrating four key elements: self-care, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), personal strength, and spiritual resilience. Moral injury and trauma are essential experiences for military people at war that both challenge the individual's psychological and existential frameworks. The proposed multifaceted approach aims to provide comprehensive support by addressing physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual aspects of well-being. Self-care practices form the foundation for overall health, while CBT offers tools for restructuring maladaptive thought patterns. Personal health is the basis of general well-being, and CBT is a set of skills that can change negative, distorted thinking patterns. The personal strength approaches include Resilience and post-trauma growth, where soldiers are encouraged to acknowledge their strengths. Spiritual resilience activities also build the subject's meaning and purpose for life to deal with moral dilemmas. Thus, the outlined approach provides an opportunity to adjust the work with participants depending on their needs and consider patient-oriented goals, providing the possibilities for their recovery and personal development during a more extended period. Aspects of this paper include analyzing activities and directions of these components, potential combined impacts of the components, and combined approaches of all the elements to adequately respond to multiple facets of well-being. While further research is needed to confirm this approach fully, its comprehensive nature and alignment with evidence-based practices suggest significant potential for supporting US Army soldiers in overcoming the impacts of moral injury and trauma.

Keywords: Moral Injury and Trauma, US Army, CBT, Spiritual Resilience and Personal Strength

INTRODUCTION

Moral injury and trauma are complex psychological phenomena that significantly impact the well-being of individuals, particularly those in high-stress professions

such as the military. These issues are of paramount concern for US Army soldiers due to the nature of their duties and the challenging situations they often face. This study explores the question: "How can a holistic approach incorporating self-care, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), personal strength, and spiritual resilience effectively navigate moral injury and trauma in US Army soldiers?"

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Definition of moral injury and trauma

While moral injury differs from trauma, in many cases, it is linked in the same direction. It describes the psychological distress that results from actions or violations against a person's moral or ethical code. Litz et al. (2009) observe that "moral injury results from a betrayal of 'what's right' in a high-stakes situation by someone in a legitimate authority position or oneself." For service personnel, such may come via participation in, witnessing, or failing to prevent actions against their moral beliefs.

Trauma, however, is essentially associated with experiences attending events related to the threat of death, serious injury, or sexual violation. The American Psychiatric Association observes criteria for trauma-related disorders, including the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) associated with exposure to such events, as mentioned by Yehuda et al. in 2015. Symptoms of trauma may include intrusive thoughts, avoidance behaviors, negative alterations in cognition and mood, and changes in arousal and reactivity.

Significance of the Topic for US Army Soldiers

The prevalence and impact of moral injury and trauma within the military context are substantial. US Army soldiers, due to the nature of their profession, are at heightened risk for experiencing both moral injury and trauma. These experiences can lead to a range of psychological difficulties, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and, in severe cases, suicidal ideation.

According to Wisco et al. (2017), out of the veterans from the US, 90% said they had encountered at least one of the possibly morally transgressive events in their time in the military, and 65.5% for reporting events observing Others' wrongdoing, and 25.5% concerning events which are a personal ethical violation by the individual or their colleagues. Such statistics support the critical need to attend to moral injury or trauma in the U. S. Army population.

Research question

The central research question guiding this paper is: How can a holistic approach incorporating self-care, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), personal strength, and spiritual resilience effectively navigate moral injury and trauma in US Army soldiers?

This question aims to explore the potential interactions between these four key elements and their collective efficacy in addressing the complex challenges faced by soldiers dealing with moral injury and trauma.

Overview of the four elements

a. **Self-Care:** This Component focuses more on the individual's health needs, ranging from emotional, mental, and physical. Self-care is a way of re-engaging with the body and feeling safe and in control for soldiers suffering from moral injury and trauma. Such practices may entail exercise, enough sleep, a balanced diet, and participation in recreational activities.

b. **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** This evidence-based therapeutic method provides the skills to treat cognitive abnormalities and behavioral alterations typical of moral injury and trauma. CBT is essential to the soldiers because it assists the soldiers to alter negative perceptions, which are unhelpful in handling stress unwanted style of dealing with stress and provides a secure and orderly approach to reprocessing trauma.

c. **Personal Strength:** This element is often referred to as resilience and involves learning how to understand and foster natural talents. For soldiers, this may involve identifying their fight and tenacity to go through each day and survive in the extreme conditions and situations they find themselves in. Personal strength can be applied to overcoming moral injury and other traumas that affect an individual's confidence and self-esteem.

d. **Spiritual Resilience:** This component relates to finding meaning and purpose in one's experiences. It incorporates how an individual sees a spiritual outlook and contacts nature, philosophy, religion, or those they believe in. It is well understood that spiritual strength could be helpful when a soldier gets trapped in a moral injury, particularly concerning identifying a pathway to what should be done about one's ethics.

By integrating these four elements, this paper proposes that US Army soldiers can develop a comprehensive strategy for navigating the complex terrain of moral injury and trauma. Each component addresses different aspects of an individual's well-being, creating a holistic approach that recognizes the interconnected nature of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

SELF-CARE

Definition and importance in mitigating moral injury and trauma

Self-care can be defined as the practice of taking deliberate actions to maintain and improve one's physical, emotional, and mental well-being. In the context of mitigating moral injury and trauma, particularly for US Army soldiers, self-care takes on a crucial role in the

healing and recovery process. According to Liz et al. (2009), moral injury occurs when an individual experiences a violation of their deeply held ethical beliefs, and trauma resulting from exposure to life-threatening or extremely distressing events can have profound and lasting effects on a soldier's overall well-being.

The responsibility to ensure self-care when addressing moral injury and trauma is considered critical for U. S. Army personnel. When such soldiers have sustained these psychological injuries and may require a beginning point of repairing the injury, practicing self-care may be helpful to them, especially considering the nature of their careers and the battles they go through. The U. S. Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program focuses on the need to practice self-care and participate in resilience training. It covers that self-care and resilience are vital to soldiers' mental health and ability to fight on the battlefield.

Self-care counters the adversative effects of moral injury and trauma in soldiers to regain control and improve health. This is important, especially in a military context where the soldiers may be deployed severally or exposed to bad events. These components mean that when soldiers adopt healthier ways of dealing with stressful situations, they stand to have a healthier lifestyle. This, in turn, may improve both their capacity to deal with trauma and integrate traumatic information and the healing process, which may result in the optimization of their operation.

Reconnecting with the body

Judith Herman's seminal work on trauma recovery emphasizes the importance of reconnecting with the body as a crucial aspect of healing from traumatic experiences (Zaleski, Johnson, and Klein 2016). When it comes to moral injury and trauma experienced by the soldiers of the United States Army, restoration of the connection with the physical self may be one of the most challenging yet enriching experiences, primarily because of the physical nature of military service and its exposure to danger.

Trauma and moral injury can often lead to a sense of disconnection or dissociation from one's physical self. Such a disconnection is helpful as a defense mechanism against overwhelming experiences, but it can work against the growth process in the long run. Such disconnection may be compounded among soldiers by the physical and emotional requirements of military training and combat. In this sense, Herman states that reconnection to the body is critical to regaining safety and autonomy, which are lost in the trauma aftermath (Zaleski, Johnson, and Klein 2016)

Herman's strategy of reconnecting with the body can be broken down into three relatively distinct categories that can be applied to the military setting. They include:

a. Establishing physical safety involves creating an environment where the soldier feels physically secure and protected from harm, which can be challenging given the inherent risks of military service.

b. Developing body awareness: Helping soldiers focus on their feelings and how their body responds to such stimuli since most of them might have developed a mechanism of denying themselves such feelings during stressful military operations.

c. Engaging in somatic experiences: Activities that promote physical presence can help counter the dissociation often experienced by soldiers on the battlefield.

Mindfulness meditation, yoga, and body scan are some of the practices that can easily be implemented for this reconnection among the U. S. Army soldiers. These techniques help the individuals focus on breathing, feelings, and body movements. The U. S. Army has recognized these practices, with some units incorporating mindfulness and yoga in their training regimes to strengthen soldiers' resilience and combat effectiveness (Farnsworth et al., 2014)

Activities promoting physical, emotional, and mental well-being

Self-care encompasses a wide range of activities that promote physical, emotional, and mental well-being. For US Army soldiers dealing with moral injury and trauma, engaging in a diverse array of self-care practices can provide comprehensive support for their recovery process and enhance their overall military performance.

Physical well-being

a. Regular exercise: Physical activities such as running, weight training, or team sports can help reduce stress, improve mood, and boost overall health. For US Army soldiers, maintaining physical fitness is not only a requirement but also a crucial aspect of self-care. The Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) and the newer Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) motivate soldiers to maintain their physical well-being, supporting their mental health.

b. Adequate sleep: A sufficient amount of sleep is vital for rebuilding the strength of humans mentally and physically. This can be especially difficult for soldiers since they have unpredictable working hours, might be deployed to other locations at any time, and their work involves handling a lot of pressure. According to Litz et al. (2009), some practical habits and behaviors one could adopt include proper sleeping habits, such as sleeping time and environment.

c. Balanced nutrition: Proper nutrition also improves physical well-being and can help engage in other self-care practices. The Performance Triad of the US Army, which includes sleep, activity, and food, clarifies that nutrition is critical to soldiers' performance and health.

d. Regular medical check-ups: Promptly attending to physical health concerns can prevent additional stress. This includes regular health assessments and seeking

medical attention for US Army soldiers, which is crucial for maintaining combat readiness and overall well-being.

Emotional well-being

a. **Journaling:** Changes are an essential aspect of our lives, and we often write about the things that happened and the feelings that accompanied the change to develop a better way of handling the change. This may be an excellent advantage for soldiers because they can take time to at least reflect on some of the occurrences during the training or real combat encounters.

b. **Connecting with others:** Maintaining social contacts and seeking help from comrades, friends, family, or supportive groups can bring emotional comfort.

c. **Engaging in hobbies:** Engaging in enjoyable activities throughout life can lead to a satisfying and pleasant life. In the case of military personnel, this could include pleasure activities they could engage in in their free time or away from the base to maintain a personal and social identity aside from being soldiers.

d. **Practicing mindfulness:** For instance, tension and stress can be managed, and emotional self-regulation can be achieved through basic meditation or deep breathing. The organizational user of mindfulness is the United States Army, which employs mindfulness in resilience training for its soldiers.

Mental well-being

a. **Learning new skills:** Skills development can help improve self-esteem and give one a sense of achievement. This might entail obtaining further military courses or the individual educational objectives of US Army soldiers.

b. **Setting realistic goals:** Establishing and working towards achievable objectives can foster a sense of progress and accomplishment. This aligns well with the goal-oriented nature of military training and operations.

c. **Practicing gratitude:** Regularly acknowledging positive aspects of life can shift focus from negative experiences and promote resilience. For soldiers, this might involve reflecting on the meaningful aspects of their service and the camaraderie within their unit.

d. **Seeking professional help:** According to Madden (1998), Psychotherapy or counseling can be helpful in cases of mental disorders where a person receives guidance according to a specific plan. The U. S. Army thus offers several mental health services such as the Behavioral Health Service Line and the Embedded Behavioral Health.

By combining these activities into their daily routines, US Army soldiers can create a comprehensive self-care practice that addresses multiple aspects of their well-being. This holistic approach can significantly contribute to their ability to navigate the challenges posed by moral injury and trauma while also enhancing their overall military performance and readiness.

Role in the recovery process

Self-care plays a pivotal role in the recovery process for US Army soldiers dealing with moral injury and trauma. Lisa Najavits, in her work on trauma and substance abuse recovery, emphasizes the importance of self-care as a fundamental component of the healing journey. While her work was not explicitly focused on military populations, the principles she outlines are highly relevant to the unique challenges faced by US Army soldiers.

Najavits argues that self-care serves several crucial functions in the recovery process, which can be adapted to the military context:

a. **Establishing safety:** Self-care practices facilitate the development of safety and structure, two often disrupted features of post-traumatic growth. It is essential to establish a long-lasting safety practice for the U. S. Army soldiers, knowing that they might be in conditions that are rather unsafe and require constant alert for a long time during the missions.

b. **Developing healthy coping mechanisms:** Self-care activities also offer healthier coping methods as compared to those the person may have adopted operating post-trauma. For soldiers, it may mean substituting an addiction, withdrawal, self-medicating, or other maladaptive behaviors with healthier strategies that may include exercise, meditation, and art.

c. **Promoting self-compassion:** Self-care activities offer healthier coping methods than those the person may have adopted operating post-trauma. For soldiers, it may mean substituting an addiction, withdrawal, self-medicating, or other maladaptive behaviors with healthier strategies that may include exercise, meditation, and art.

d. **Enhancing Resilience:** Healthy habits help soldiers develop the strength to face future stress and challenges on the battlefield. This aligns well with the US Army's strategy of focusing on a soldier's psychological well-being as part of readiness.

e. **Supporting overall recovery:** Self-care forms the basis of other therapeutic approaches to addressing the condition. (Farnsworth et al. (2014) noted that ensuring physical and emotional health permits soldiers to have improved treatment adherence and receptiveness to different aspects of the treatment model, such as trauma-focused therapies.

Najavits emphasizes that self-care should be viewed as an ongoing process rather than a one-time intervention. For US Army soldiers navigating moral injury and trauma, integrating self-care into their daily lives can provide sustained support throughout their recovery journey and military career. Self-care is a relevant intervention in preventing and mitigating moral injury and trauma among US Army soldiers. Using self-care definitions and learning the significance of self-care in the military environment, touch, recovery activities, and soldiers' acknowledgment of self-care's role in healing and resiliency can be built.

COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)

Overview of CBT as a therapeutic approach

CBT is a type of empirically supported psychotherapy that has received significant attention in treating several mental conditions, such as trauma and moral injury. Therefore, when dealing with these issues, CBT can give the U. S. Army soldier a more rigid plan to fix their psychological problem. CBT is based on the belief that one's thoughts, emotions, and actions are linked. Therefore, changing negative and dysfunctional cognitive processes enables people to reduce subjective discomfort and enhance their functioning. Historical mental health integration is a valuable approach, especially for soldiers who might have developed negative beliefs or constructive actions due to their traumatic incidents or moral instigations.

Key Therapy Components:

- Psychoeducation: Helping soldiers understand the nature of their symptoms and the CBT model.
- Cognitive restructuring: Identifying and challenging distorted thoughts.
- Behavioral activation: Engaging in positive activities to improve mood.
- Exposure therapy: Gradually confronting feared situations or memories.
- Skill-building: Developing coping strategies and problem-solving skills.

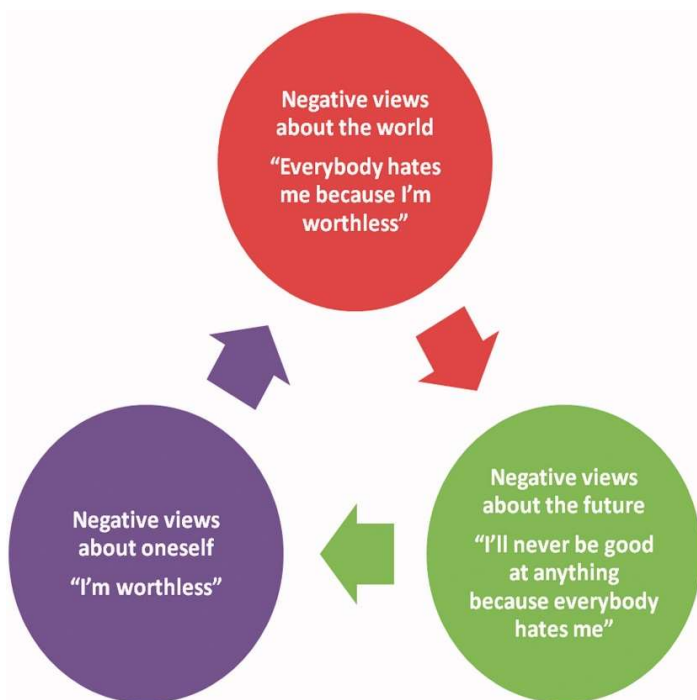


Figure 1. The cognitive triad of negative core beliefs

Source: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1755738012471029>

Cusack et al. (2016) meta-analysis stated that CBT has shown the potential to reduce PTSD symptoms and has established a significant effect in multiple studies¹. In particular, they found that the standardized mean differences were equal to -1.26 (95% CI: The effect size (range from -1.54 to -0.97) favored CBT interventions in reducing PTSD symptom severity compared to the control conditions. This thus shows that with CBT as a tool, there is the possibility of treating trauma-related matters affecting the soldiers of the U. S Army.

Identifying and challenging negative thought patterns

One of the primary focuses of CBT in treating moral injury and trauma is the identification and challenging of negative thought patterns. Military persons who have gone through horrific experiences or situations that pose moral dilemmas can end up having negative cognitive distortions regarding themselves, other people, or the environment.

These negative thought patterns often manifest as:

- Overgeneralization: Drawing broad negative conclusions based on a single event.
- Catastrophizing: Anticipating the worst possible outcomes in any given situation.
- Personalization: Assuming excessive responsibility for negative events beyond one's control.
- Black-and-white thinking: Viewing situations in extreme terms without acknowledging nuances.

CBT assists soldiers in identifying these thoughts and provides methods for contesting them. Moreover, behavioral therapists use the process of direction and questioning, similar to the Socratic method, to encourage soldiers to weigh the pros and cons of holding such beliefs and show them how they might be unrealistically looking at things.

Resick, Monson, and Chard (2006) noted that these negative cognitions should be targeted in CPT, a specific form of CBT designed for veterans and military members. They also state that 'stuck points' or thoughts that have to do with the trauma, which sustains PTSD, must be approached systematically in treatment.

Developing healthier coping mechanisms

Developing healthier coping mechanisms is a cornerstone of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in treating moral injury and trauma among US Army soldiers. Some soldiers may have developed other unhealthy ways of coping during active duty, like emotional numbing, being overly watchful, substance use, or avoiding social contact. Even if these strategies were helpful when the brain was in fight or flight response in some high-stress combat situations, they are counter-productive when applied in civilian life or when situational encapsulation does not involve combat.

The main aim of CBT is to replace maladaptive behaviors with more adaptive coping skills.

Table 1. CBT steps

1.	Identifying current coping strategies	Soldiers are guided to recognize their existing coping mechanisms, both adaptive and maladaptive.
2.	Psychoeducation	Therapists provide information about the effects of different coping strategies on mental health and overall well-being.
3.	Skill-building	<p>New, healthier coping strategies are introduced and practiced. These may include:</p> <p>a) Relaxation techniques: Deep breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, and mindfulness meditation are taught to manage stress and anxiety. These techniques help soldiers regulate their physiological responses to stress triggers. b) Problem-solving skills: Soldiers learn systematic approaches to break down and address challenges, promoting a sense of control and self-efficacy.</p> <p>c) Cognitive restructuring: Techniques for identifying and modifying unhelpful thought patterns are practiced, helping soldiers reframe negative interpretations of events.</p> <p>d) Exposure therapy: Gradual, controlled exposure to trauma-related memories or situations is used to reduce avoidance and fear responses. This is particularly effective for addressing PTSD symptoms. e) Assertiveness training: Soldiers learn to express their needs and emotions effectively, improving interpersonal relationships for progress and growth, can significantly boost this sense of self-efficacy.</p> <p>relationships.</p> <p>f) Time management and goal-setting: These skills help soldiers structure their lives post-deployment and work towards personal objectives.</p>
4.	Practice and reinforcement	Soldiers are encouraged to practice these new skills between sessions, often through homework assignments. This real-world application helps solidify the new coping mechanisms.
5.	Evaluation and adjustment	The effectiveness of new coping strategies is regularly assessed and adjusted as needed.

Empowering individuals and fostering resilience

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is an essential tool in helping people regain control and promoting Resilience among US Army soldiers affected by moral injury and trauma. This is especially true for cognitive-behavioral treatment since one of its primary goals is to transform soldiers from clients who need help to patients who participate actively in rehabilitation.

Resick, Monson, and Chard (2006) emphasize the importance of empowerment in their Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) manual, stating that the goal of therapy is to help veterans "become their therapists." This recovery approach empowers soldiers because it entails active participation on the part of the soldiers, which positively impacts their self-efficacy and post-trauma Resilience. It appears that through the process of identifying the distorted thinking patterns characteristic of PTSD and modifying them, the soldiers regain a measure of control

over their PTSD symptoms and, therefore, are empowered to manage this psychiatric condition.

Key aspects of empowerment and resilience-building in CBT include:

a. **Psychoeducation:** Ensuring the soldiers are well informed and knowledgeable about trauma, moral injury, and its consequences on the mental health of the soldier. Knowledge also plays a role in this process and reduces the perception of 'craziness,' of being alone, and that it is not one's fault that they feel this way; they now know that biological and psychological factors may be causing these symptoms.

b. **Skill-building:** Teaching practical techniques for managing symptoms and improving overall functioning. These may include cognitive restructuring techniques, relaxation methods, and problem-solving strategies. As soldiers master these skills, they gain confidence in coping with challenges.

c. Homework assignments: Promoting learned skills in specific and meaningful situations between therapy sessions. It also reaffirms what has been learned and helps soldiers identify progress, thus increasing self-efficacy.

d. Relapse prevention: Developing strategies to maintain gains and handle future challenges. This forward-looking approach prepares soldiers for potential setbacks and equips them with tools to navigate future stressors.

e. Strength-focused approach: Identifying and building upon existing strengths and positive coping mechanisms. This approach shifts the focus from deficits to capabilities, fostering a more positive self-image.

f. Goal-setting: Collaboratively setting and working towards achievable goals. This process provides direction and motivation, and achieving these goals reinforces a sense of accomplishment and control.

Some studies indicate that CBT has helped military staff develop coping mechanisms. For instance, Adler et al. (2011) explained a CBT-based resilience training program for US Army soldiers in the research². More precisely, the authors who conducted the study identified the overall enhancement of psychological well-being and optimism among soldiers trained with the workouts compared to others. Also, the levels of depression in the intervention group declined by 58%, while the resilience scores of the participants increased by 27%.

Moreover, the study reported that soldiers who received the CBT-based training had 58% lower chances of screening positive for PTSD (OR = 0.42, 95% CI). Moreover, it showed that the group who received the training had a 90% lower risk of a mini-mental state examination score of <19 (OR = 0.19-0.90) and 57% lower risk of screening positive for depression (OR = 0.43, 95% CI: 0.22-0.86) compared with the group who did not receive the training. Such results support further development of CBT-based interventions, not just for currently manifesting symptoms' amelioration but for future mental health problems prevention and promoting coping skills. Therefore, unlike other ways of treating individuals' diagnoses, CBT is viewed as a means of enhancing soldiers and promoting their psychological well-being in the long run. Thus, this approach can be perceived as quite suitable for the military as the identity associated with physical power and individual resistance might enhance its acceptance and efficacy within this group.

Adapting CBT for military culture and moral injury

CBT is effective in the treatment of trauma-related disorders. Still, it has to be modified to consider the military culture and moral injury, which is a significant concern among the soldiers of the U. S. Army. Litz et al. (2009) recommend implementing a new and specific treatment for TI called the method of CBT, which involves the components of exposure, cognitive restructuring, and

meaning-making therapy (Tsai et al. 2012)

This adapted approach focuses on several key elements:

a. Exploring the morally injurious event: It entails exploring factors such as the circumstances under which the event happened, the event's effects, and the soldier's role. The soldier has to relate the experience with the therapist's help and integrate it into their understanding of events.

b. Challenging distorted beliefs: Some moral injuries are attributable to soldiers' extensively distorted beliefs about responsibility and blame. These beliefs are identified through the adapted CBT approach, and cognitive restructuring is applied to alter these thoughts.

c. Fostering self-forgiveness and compassion: Most soldiers feel guilty and shameful after experiencing moral injuries. The adapted approach includes methods that enable positive changes in soldiers' attitudes toward themselves and their actions, making them less likely to experience negative emotions.

d. Reconnecting with personal values: post-traumatic self-dissolution may cause the individual to become disoriented from their ethical compass. Thus, this adapted CBT approach assists the soldiers in re-establishing meaning in their lives after the trauma by getting a new sense of purpose.

e. Addressing military cultural factors: The adaptation explores factors within the military environment, such as team identification, orientation towards the mission, and warrior culture. This is because it assists soldiers in balancing ethical military codes of conduct with their moral standards.

f. Incorporating moral repair: The approach includes features of moral repair, which remind the soldiers why they took specific actions or a series of actions and restore their moral self-image.

By incorporating these elements, the adapted CBT approach can capture the complex relationship between trauma and moral injury that many soldiers in the U. S. Army go through. This approach acknowledges the fact that moral injury is biphasic with PTSD and other trauma-related symptoms in most patients and should not be undertaken in isolation from other usual trauma therapies.

Personal Strength

Concept of tapping into inherent resilience

The Concept of tapping into inherent resilience is rooted in the understanding that individuals possess innate capacities to withstand and recover from adversity. For US Army soldiers facing moral injury and trauma, recognizing and leveraging this inherent resilience can be a powerful tool in the healing process. Resilience in this context refers to the ability to maintain psychological and physical well-being in the face of stress, adapt to

challenging circumstances, and bounce back from setbacks.

Inherent resilience in soldiers may manifest in various ways, including:

- a. Persistence in the face of hardship, built through rigorous military training
- b. Strong sense of duty and commitment to mission objectives
- c. Camaraderie and unit cohesion that provide social support
- d. Problem-solving skills honed through tactical training
- e. Physical and mental toughness developed through military service

Tapping into this inherent resilience involves helping soldiers recognize and apply these strengths to their current moral injury and trauma struggles. This process aligns with the military ethos of self-reliance and can be particularly effective for soldiers resistant to more traditional therapeutic approaches.

Tedeschi and Calhoun note that "the individual's struggle with the new reality in the aftermath of trauma...is crucial in determining the extent to which post-traumatic growth occurs" (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). By tapping into their inherent resilience, soldiers can actively engage in this struggle, potentially facilitating recovery and personal growth.

The process of tapping into inherent resilience often involves:

- a. Identifying existing resilience factors: Helping soldiers recognize their already demonstrated resilience in their military careers and personal lives.
- b. Reframing challenges: Encouraging soldiers to view current difficulties as opportunities to apply their resilient qualities.
- c. Skill reinforcement: Providing opportunities for soldiers to practice and strengthen their resilience skills in controlled environments.
- d. Peer support: Leveraging fellow soldiers' shared experiences and resilience to build a supportive community.

Studies reveal that resilience is not an individual characteristic but a process that can be bolstered by practice. Adler et al. (2015) urged that soldiers of the US Army who underwent Resilience training exhibited better mental health than those who did not. This suggests that it is possible to find and build on other resources for dealing with moral injury and trauma in struggling soldiers and to derive practical benefits from such efforts.

Post-traumatic growth

A relatively recent concept in the study of trauma is post-traumatic growth or PTG, which aims to shift the theoretical perspective from the traumatic events' negative impact and attempt to outline the possibility of personal positive change after the trauma. Tedeschi and Calhoun define

PTG as "positive psychological change experienced due to the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances" (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). From patient interviews, military men and women struggled with moral injury and trauma; the idea of PTG offered an optimistic view - the notion that not only have they suffered through these experiences but can be transformed by such events. Tedeschi and Calhoun's research identifies five key domains of post-traumatic growth:

- a. Greater appreciation of life and changed sense of priorities
- b. Warmer, more intimate relationships with others
- c. A greater sense of personal strength
- d. Recognition of new possibilities or paths for one's life
- e. Spiritual development

However, PTG does not extinguish the suffering that results from traumatic events. Tedeschi and Calhoun also agree when they write, "The experience of growth does not necessarily signal an end to pain or distress" (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). PTG could emerge at the same time as PTSD and moral injuries, with the soldiers continuing to suffer from its effects. The only way to understand this is to appreciate that growth and distress are not mutually exclusive. For this reason, several studies have indicated that PTG is quite frequent among people with trauma, including military personnel. For instance, according to Wisco et al. (2017), 72 % of the U. S. veterans had at least moderate PTG in at least one domain. Indeed, it indicates that most soldiers can learn and progress even when they experience extreme forms of post-traumatic stress or moral injury.

Facilitating PTG in soldiers may involve:

- a. Encouraging cognitive processing of traumatic events: Helping soldiers reflect on and make sense of their experiences.
- b. Fostering disclosure and narrative development: Providing opportunities for soldiers to share their stories and construct meaningful narratives about their experiences.
- c. They support the revision of fundamental beliefs and assumptions, assisting soldiers in reevaluating and adjusting their worldviews in light of their experiences.
- d. Helping soldiers identify positive changes: Guiding soldiers to recognize and appreciate areas of personal growth that may have resulted from their struggles.

The process of helping individuals achieve PTG is not about exaggerating or denying people's suffering or claiming that trauma is somehow helpful. Instead, it is about valuing people's ability to transform themselves even in the most challenging times of their lives. Regarding moral injury, PTG can be meaningful since it calls for addressing existential issues and redefinition of the role of the soldier.

Additionally, Tedeschi and Calhoun note that PTG is not an automatic or universal outcome of trauma. They state, "post-traumatic growth occurs concomitantly with the

attempts to adapt to highly negative sets of circumstances that can engender high levels of psychological distress" (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). This underscores the importance of providing appropriate support and interventions to facilitate growth.

Recognizing and cultivating individual strengths

Recognizing and cultivating individual strengths is crucial to harnessing personal strength in the face of moral injury and trauma. This approach aligns with positive psychology principles and focuses on identifying and leveraging a soldier's unique capabilities, talents, and positive attributes.

For US Army soldiers, individual strengths may include:

- a. Leadership skills
- b. Adaptability and flexibility
- c. Attention to detail
- d. Physical fitness
- e. Tactical and strategic thinking
- f. Teamwork and communication abilities
- g. Emotional Resilience
- h. Technical expertise in specific areas

The process of recognizing these strengths involves both self-reflection and external feedback. Soldiers may be encouraged to:

- a. Reflect on past successes and moments of pride
- b. Identify skills and attributes that have helped them overcome challenges
- c. Seek feedback from peers, superiors, and family members about their perceived strengths
- d. Complete standardized strength assessment tools

Once identified, these strengths can be cultivated and applied to the challenges posed by moral injury and trauma. For example, a soldier with strong leadership skills might be encouraged to take a mentoring role in a support group. In contrast, someone with high emotional resilience might focus on developing coping strategies to share with others. Tedeschi and Calhoun note that "individuals facing a wide variety of challenging circumstances experience significant changes in their lives that they view as highly positive" (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). Soldiers can actively contribute to these positive changes by recognizing and cultivating their strengths.

Research has shown that a strengths-based approach can be particularly effective in military populations. A study by Adler et al. (2015) found that US Army soldiers who received strengths-based resilience training significantly improved mental health outcomes compared to a control group.

Cultivating individual strengths may involve:

- a. Setting goals that leverage identified strengths

Seeking opportunities to use and develop

- b. strengths in daily life
- c. Reframing challenges as opportunities to apply strengths
- d. Celebrating successes and progress in strength development

Contribution to the healing journey

Personal strength, encompassing inherent resilience, post-traumatic growth, and individual strengths, Provides excellent support to the recovery process of U. S. Army soldiers with moral injury and trauma. This approach works alongside other treatments, encouraging soldiers to be involved in rehabilitation, thus increasing their agency.

Critical contributions of personal strength to the healing journey include:

- a. Enhanced coping mechanisms: Soldiers can also be taught to better cope with stress and anxiety, as well as identify symptoms of moral injury and trauma by harnessing their usual resilience and personal characteristics.
- b. Improved self-efficacy: Identification of Self or Personal Attributes and Development is crucial as this will assist the soldiers to have confidence in achieving their challenges and recovery goals.
- c. Meaning-making: Moral injury is consistent with the need for a sense of meaning-making, which is what post-traumatic growth offers as a framework.
- d. Resilience building: Mastery training can help build a general level of soldier well-being as coping resources by training soldiers to become more resilient to future events.\
- e. Positive identity reconstruction: This is good for soldiers who become disoriented because of moral injury or trauma. It enhances the identification of new strengths that help construct a healthy self-image.
- f. Motivation for recovery: This is a crucial reason people are willing to work on their recovery; it offers the potential for personal growth and the discovery of latent talents.
- g. Complementing clinical interventions: Personal strength approaches can enhance the effectiveness of other therapeutic interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, by promoting active engagement and self-reflection.

Research supports the importance of personal strength in recovery from trauma. For instance, a study by Tsai et al. (2015) of veterans with PTSD found that those who reported higher levels of post-traumatic growth showed more significant reductions in PTSD symptoms over time. This suggests that fostering personal strength and growth

can contribute directly to symptom reduction. Tedeschi and Calhoun emphasize that "post-traumatic growth is not universal, nor is it a necessary outcome, but it is common" (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). For soldiers who do experience growth, it can be a powerful force in their healing journey.

Integrating personal strength into the healing journey may involve:

- a. Incorporating strength-based assessments into initial evaluations
- b. Encouraging soldiers to keep journals documenting their strengths and growth
- c. Including discussions of personal strength and growth in therapy sessions
- d. Developing peer support programs that emphasize sharing of strengths and growth experiences
- e. Providing psychoeducation about post-traumatic growth and resilience

The contribution of personal strength to the healing journey is particularly relevant in addressing moral injury. Moral injury often involves a deep sense of shame, guilt, or betrayal that can be resistant to traditional therapeutic approaches. By focusing on personal strengths and growth potential, soldiers can begin to reconstruct their moral identity and find new ways of understanding their experiences. For example, a soldier grappling with guilt over actions taken in combat might, through the process of recognizing personal strengths and exploring post-traumatic growth, come to see their struggle as evidence of their strong moral compass.

Moreover, personal strength aligns well with military culture, which values resilience, adaptability, and personal growth. This cultural alignment can make personal strength approaches more accessible and acceptable to soldiers who might resist other forms of intervention. It's important to note that while personal strength approaches offer significant benefits, they should not be seen as a replacement for other evidence-based treatments for moral injury and trauma. Instead, they should be integrated into comprehensive treatment plans that address the full range of challenges soldiers face. For instance, Tedeschi and Calhoun caution that "the presence of growth does not necessarily signal an end to pain or distress" (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). This highlights the need for ongoing support and intervention, even as soldiers experience growth and increased personal strength.

The correlation between resilience and personal strength

Soldiers draw upon multiple internal and external resources in adversity to cope with challenges. Resilience and personal strength are two distinct concepts inherent to a soldier's capacity to overcome hardships. While both are essential to recovering from moral injury, they represent different approaches. Wood et al. (2011) defines *personal*

strength as inherent qualities that allow optimal functioning and performance. Such qualities may include courage, determination, commitment to duty, and perseverance, which are necessary for soldiers to endure immediate hardships. In a broader sense, resilience represents the dynamic adaptation and recovery process (Stainton et al., 2019). Resilience highlights the long-term capacity for well-being upon emerging from complex challenges.

The demands of military service require personal strength to endure in the moment; however, the ability to adapt and recover from setbacks relates to the larger concept of resilience. Resilience is crucial in recovery, enabling soldiers to return from challenges and continue service. Integrating resilience into daily routines is a hallmark of psychological well-being. A study by Sefidan et al. (2021) showed that higher rates of resilience predicted lower perceived levels of mental distress and increased military performance. As the foundation of resilience, soldiers benefit from capitalizing on their strengths to adapt to and overcome trauma and moral injury.

Both resilience and personal strength are essential qualities that enable soldiers to navigate the emotional distress associated with moral injury. Transgressions that violate inherent morality create internal conflict as there is a violation of beliefs about right and wrong (Litz et al., 2009). How soldiers utilize personal strength and resilience impacts their capacity to manage feelings of guilt and shame or changes in worldview. While not everyone experiencing moral injury develops emotional distress and adverse health impacts, those who present a higher level of resilience tend to be more adept at managing stressors and are quicker to recover post-event (Sefidan et al., 2021).

The intersection of personal strength and resilience demonstrates a shared role in enabling soldiers to overcome adversity and move forward with a sense of well-being. These qualities enhance the preservation of self-worth despite existential conflict and distress related to violating core moral beliefs (Koenig & Al Zaben, 2021). Cultivating resilience and personal strength equips soldiers to face challenges with greater confidence and fortitude.

SPIRITUAL RESILIENCE

Definition and role in navigating moral injury and trauma

Spiritual resilience refers to maintaining or regaining one's sense of meaning, purpose, and connection to the sacred or transcendent in the face of adversity, trauma, or moral challenges (Farnsworth et al., 2014). In the context of military service, spiritual resilience plays a crucial role in helping service members navigate the complex ethical terrain and potentially traumatic experiences they may encounter.

Farnsworth et al. (2014) define moral injury as "perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations." They note that approximately 90% of veterans report encountering at least one potentially morally injurious event during their service. Spiritual resilience can protect against the negative psychological impacts of moral injury by providing a framework for making meaning out of difficult experiences and maintaining a sense of coherence. The US Army has incorporated "spiritual fitness" into its Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program to build resilience and prevent mental health issues. This reflects a recognition of the importance of spiritual resources in coping with the stresses of military service. Moreover, the challenges in defining and operationalizing spirituality in a diverse military context (Weitzman 2021)

Finding meaning and purpose in experiences

One of the main components of spiritual resources is the ability to regain meaning and purpose in the case of adversity or trauma. This meaning-making process can enable service members to fit the adverse experiences into their life stories and, therefore, their belief systems.

Farnsworth et al. (2014) highlight the importance of meaning-making in the context of moral injury. They note that spiritual and religious belief structures are often at the core of individuals' meaning systems, informing their beliefs about self and the world. When morally dangerous events challenge these belief systems, it can lead to significant psychological distress. However, spiritually resilient individuals may be better equipped to engage in adaptive meaning-making processes.

Moreover, Weitzman (2021) discusses how the Army's spiritual fitness training aims to help soldiers develop a sense of meaning and purpose beyond themselves. This includes fostering connections to something more significant- a higher power, nature, or a sense of mission. According to Weitzman, approximately 65% of military personnel identify as Christian, while about 25% are non-religiously affiliated. This diversity underscores the need for flexible approaches to spiritual resilience that can accommodate various belief systems.

Bartone (2005) emphasizes the critical role of leaders in helping troops find positive meaning in their experiences. He suggests that leaders can foster spiritual resilience by:

- a. Regularly affirming the importance and value of the mission
- b. Encouraging proactive problem-solving when issues arise
- c. Framing challenges as opportunities for learning and growth
- d. Helping troops see their role within a larger, meaningful context

Contribution to the sense of coherence and integration (Koenig, 2012)

Koenig's research highlights the positive impact of religion and spirituality on mental health outcomes. He notes that religious and spiritual beliefs can contribute to coherence by providing an overarching framework for understanding life experiences. This sense of coherence is a crucial component of spiritual resilience.

According to Koenig, numerous studies have found positive associations between religious/spiritual involvement and mental health. For example:

- Over 70% of studies examining the relationship between religion and well-being found a positive correlation.
- Approximately 80% of studies on religion and hope or optimism reported significant positive associations.
- About 75% of studies on religion and purpose/meaning in life found positive correlations.

These findings suggest that spiritual beliefs and practices can contribute significantly to psychological resilience and well-being.

In the military, spiritual resilience can help service members integrate potentially fragmenting experiences into a coherent life narrative. Farnsworth et al. discuss how moral injury can shatter one's sense of a meaningful, orderly world. Spiritual resilience, by providing a stable meaning system, can help individuals maintain or rebuild this sense of coherence in the face of morally challenging experiences. Weitzman (2021) notes that the Army's spiritual fitness training aims to help soldiers develop a more flexible, functional belief system to accommodate difficult experiences. This aligns with Koenig's findings on the integrative function of spirituality in promoting mental health and resilience.

Incorporating spiritual practices

Spiritual resilience can be fostered through a variety of practices, both religious and secular. The military has increasingly recognized the value of incorporating diverse spiritual practices into resilience training and support programs.

Organized Religion

Traditional religious practices remain essential to spiritual resilience for many service members. Weitzman (2021) notes that chaplains play a significant role in the Army's spiritual fitness program, although efforts are made to accommodate diverse beliefs. Religious services, prayer groups, and faith-based counseling can provide valuable support and meaning-making resources. Koenig's research indicates that religious involvement is associated with numerous positive mental health outcomes. For instance:

- Regular religious attendance is associated with a 30-50% reduction in the risk of depression.
- Religious practices are linked to lower suicide rates, with one study finding a 5-fold lower rate of suicide among frequent religious attendees.

meditation

Meditation has been accepted in military territories as technique for boosting coping systems. Detailing practices that can be integrated into non-religious or religious frameworks, these methods have been proven to minimize stress and enhance emotion regulation. Based on the composition and application of mindfulness-based interventions, Farnsworth et al. (2014) urge that moral injury might benefit from the practice due to mindfulness's non-judging capabilities in accepting multifaceted and conflictive mental processes.

Nature Connection

Another approach to spiritual strengthening that has drawn recent interest is a connection with nature. Bartone talks about how being in nature can make people feel spiritual and how it is helpful in their perspective when considering one's problems. Modern commanders seek to make their soldiers challenging and credible, and that is why some military programs include elements borrowed from the nature of handling stress. For instance, wilderness therapy programs have emerged as effective treatments for veterans diagnosed with PTSD and moral injury. Such programs usually incorporate recreational activities that are done outside and journaling activities to enable the patients to have meaningful lives. Furthermore, Weitzman (2021) talks about spirituality involved in military fitness programs and how it relates to nature and the universal universe with the acknowledgment of the ability of nature to make one have everlasting spiritual experiences.

Integrating Diverse Practices

There are diverse beliefs regarding spiritual practices, and thus, it is appropriate to provide the soldiers with different religious practices while at the same time allowing them to practice the specific kind of spiritual belief that they hold. According to Weitzman (2021), the vagueness of the term "spirituality" used in military programs allows for this latitude to be constructed and appropriated by service members in this particular manner. The spiritual component is introduced as an additional domain of focus to the physical, emotional, and social domains that the military already targets to obtain a more holistic and long-lasting resilience of its staff.

In conclusion, Spiritual resources act as critical coping mechanisms that enable the service members to deal with military service's moral and psychological demands. Promoting purpose, structure, and relationship to the

divine spiritual resilience can become one of the protective factors against moral trauma or injury. Introducing various spiritual approaches in the military teachings and assistance programs is evidence of the emerging awareness of the need to foster such aspects of human existence for balanced well-being. The use of spiritual resilience interventions in military environments can be considered a revolution in how the US Army addresses people's mental state and quality of life. It acknowledges that spiritual resources could work alongside conventional psychological therapies to provide a better model of resilience.

Synergistic Approach

Interconnectedness of the four elements

The four elements discussed in this paper - Self-Care, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Personal Strength, and Spiritual Resilience - are deeply interconnected in their approach to navigating moral injury and trauma in US Army soldiers. This interconnectedness provides a collective framework for addressing the complex challenges soldiers face in their recovery process.

Self-Care as a Foundation

For instance, exercising is one of the ingredients of self-care that not only strengthens physical health but also improves mood and cognition, making the soldiers more open to CBT interventions and improving the recognition and nurturing of self-strengths. Some research carried out by Adler et al. (2011) showed that a comprehensive fitness program that included activities such as physical exercise enhanced the mental health of soldiers of the US Army who were involved in the study in terms of mental health as there was a decline in symptoms of PTSD as well as symptoms of depression. Another component of self-care is sleep, which is critical for cognitive and affective processing, foundational for CBT, and fortifying personal strength. In the case of the U. S. Army, the Performance Triad, which seeks to enhance soldier's wellness, focuses on sleep, activity, and nutrition.

CBT's Complementary Role

CBT offers the reasoning instruments and approaches that support the action and improve the self-care activities. CBT may enhance the results of self-care procedures by assisting the soldiers in changing their thinking patterns and encouraging them to practice them regularly. For instance, a soldier who has been under CBT training might note down with the help of the trainer that negative thinking must be controlled and replaced with positive thinking as they adopt new methods of positively ascribing to things such as exercising or sleeping as necessary for their improvement.

Personal Strength and Its Synergies

Personal Strength, Resilience, and post-traumatic growth are positively related and reciprocally interact with self-care and CBT. Strengthening the soldier's sense of self-organism can transform self-efficacy for the better, encouraging them to invest themselves more fully in self-care and the CBT designed for them. Post-traumatic growth is the framework by Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) that can facilitate the optimistic view of how soldiers can change for the better as they wrestle with highly demanding situations. This growth can happen in various forms, such as appreciation of life, more fulfilling relationships, and increased self-efficacy.

Spiritual Resilience's Integrative Role

Spiritual resilience is close to the other elements but still different. This suggests that CBT's cognitive preparatory strategies can enhance the cognitive processes that facilitate spiritual resilience. For instance, the use of spiritual to get a positive sense of pain can assist in enhancing CBT in how it handles changes in perceptions of adversity. For instance, Koenig's systematic review of Religion, spirituality, and health notes that there are positive gains of practice in spirituality regarding mental health, where depression and anxiety have been recorded to be low. Therefore, spiritual resilience practices can improve the efficiency of other injury and trauma treatment interventions.

Addressing Moral Injury

There are some unique features in this connection between these elements that require a distinct focus – such as the moral injury of the students – where various cognitive, affective, behavioral, and spiritual processes are intertwined. According to Litz et al. (2009), moral injury refers to the direct participation in, Observation, or learning of activities that are repugnant to one's ethical standards and norms; consequently, such complex experiences require a treatment approach that not only addresses cognitive distortions but also enhances overall wellness of the person afflicted with moral injury, builds up and strengthens personal resilience and spiritual healing.

Benefits of a holistic approach

Adopting a holistic approach that integrates all four elements offers several significant benefits for US Army soldiers navigating moral injury and trauma. This comprehensive strategy addresses the multifaceted nature of these challenges and provides a robust framework for recovery and growth.

Comprehensive Coverage

The holistic approach ensures comprehensive coverage of soldiers' needs. Each element covers an area specific to recovery and includes provision for physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual needs. This reduces the possibility of leaving areas of caregiving that need healing uncovered or not given adequate attention. For instance, although CBT can help manage some PTSD symptoms, it can hardly resolve the general existential concerns of moral injury. Spiritual resilience practices can meet this need, create meaningful structure, and offer tools for moral repair.

Synergistic Effects

The components in the system can have synergistic relationships, which means that the overall result is more than the individual entities combined. For instance, integrating elements of CBT, such as cognitive restructuring, with clients' spiritual beliefs on meaning-making could cause a more significant shift in the client's way of perceiving reality compared to CBT alone or spirituality alone. Koenig (2019) discovered that people who participated in psychotherapy and spirituality demonstrated more significant improvements in mental health than participants in either type of treatment.

Flexibility and Personalization

The multi-element framework supports flexible and individualized preferred prevention and treatment strategies. It lets the soldier work through the number of elements that can be changed or adapted to fit one's needs at a particular period in the recovery process. This widely discussed personalization can increase interest in content and provide higher rates of effectiveness. For instance, a soldier who rejects conventional therapy at first could be engaged via self-care activities or faith practices. As they build trust and see benefits, they may become more open to engaging with CBT or exploring personal strengths.

Enhanced Resilience

By simultaneously developing multiple areas of strength and coping, soldiers can build a more robust overall resilience to future challenges. This aligns with the military's focus on comprehensive soldier fitness. For example, the US Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program recognizes the importance of addressing multiple domains of well-being to enhance overall resilience. The holistic approach proposed here extends this principle to the specific context of moral injury and trauma recovery.

Cultural Congruence

Including spiritual resilience in the holistic approach enhances its cultural congruence with military values and traditions. Many soldiers come from backgrounds where spiritual or religious beliefs play a significant role, and the military itself has a long history of recognizing the importance of spiritual fitness. Weitzman's (2021) analysis of the US Army's spiritual fitness program highlights the military's recognition of the need for a multidimensional approach to soldier well-being. The approach acknowledges this critical aspect of many soldiers' lives and worldviews by explicitly including spiritual resilience, potentially increasing its acceptability and effectiveness.

Long-term Sustainability

While social well-being is not a part of the approach as a component, it is achieved in any of the four methods. Clinician-administered interpersonal transactions may also fall under self-care and aspire to association and aid. CBT may contain group factors whereby one soldier would be imparted on how the rest of the soldiers in the group have been coping with such occurrences. According to Bartone (2005), the lack of social support in military areas is significant because the presence of sound information regarding social relations diminishes stress and trauma. Such a concept can be seen in the components of the holistic approach, namely social elements.

Enhanced Self-Efficacy

As soldiers engage with and see progress across multiple domains, their sense of self-efficacy and control over their recovery process will likely increase. This enhanced self-efficacy can further motivate continued engagement and growth. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy suggests that individuals who believe in their ability to effect change are more likely to persevere in the face of challenges and setbacks (Bandura 2015). The holistic approach, by providing multiple avenues for progress and growth, can significantly boost this sense of self-efficacy.

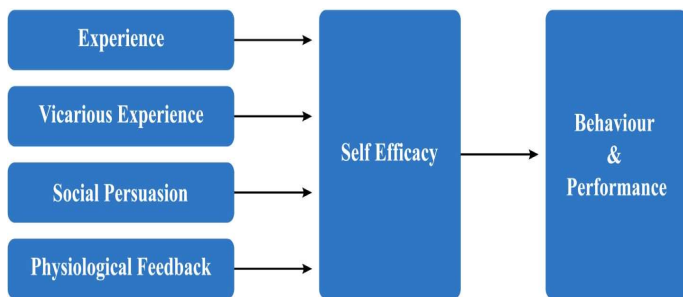


Figure 2. Bandura's Theory of self-efficacy
Source. (<https://www.simplypsychology.org/self-efficacy.html>)

Addressing different aspects of individual well-being

The synergistic approach effectively addresses various aspects of individual well-being, providing a holistic framework for recovery. This comprehensive approach recognizes that well-being is multifaceted and that addressing all aspects simultaneously can lead to more robust and sustainable improvements.

Physical Well-being

Physical well-being is primarily addressed through self-care practices, particularly those focused on exercise, nutrition, and sleep. Regular physical activity not only improves overall health but also has been shown to have positive effects on mental health, including reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Rosenbaum (2020) conducted a meta-analysis of the impact of exercise interventions on PTSD and noted that such a form of treatment was moderately effective when patients with PTSD undertook them. This goes to support calls for physical exercise to form part of the treatment regime for people with moral injury and trauma.

Emotional Well-being

Emotional well-being is addressed through multiple elements of the holistic approach. CBT provides tools for emotional regulation, helping soldiers identify and manage difficult emotions associated with moral injury and trauma. Personal strength approaches foster emotional resilience by assisting soldiers to recognize their capacity to cope with challenges. The holistic approach, mainly through its CBT and spiritual resilience components, provides frameworks for processing and transforming these complex emotions.

Cognitive Well-being

Cognitive well-being is primarily targeted through CBT, which directly addresses maladaptive thought patterns and beliefs. For soldiers dealing with moral injury, CBT can help challenge distorted thoughts about responsibility, guilt, or self-worth. Resick et al. (2006) work on Cognitive Processing Therapy demonstrates the effectiveness of cognitive interventions in addressing PTSD and related cognitive distortions in military populations. The holistic approach extends these cognitive interventions by integrating them with other elements that can reinforce and deepen cognitive shifts.

Social Well-being

Although it is not a separate component of the approach, social well-being is promoted in any of the four elements. Self-care may also involve clinician-implemented interpersonal transactions that foster association and

assistance. CBT can include group elements, which would teach one soldier how the other soldiers in the group have been dealing with similar experiences. Bartone (2005) found that lacking social support in military areas is influential because knowledge about solid social relations reduces stress and trauma. This idea can be seen in the holistic approach's various components, including social elements.

Existential Well-being

Existential well-being is primarily addressed through spiritual resilience practices, which help soldiers find meaning and purpose in their experiences. This is particularly important in moral injury, which often involves a shattering of fundamental beliefs about oneself and the world. Koenig's (2019) research indicates that individuals who engage in spiritual or religious practices often report a greater sense of purpose and meaning in life, which can be protective against mental health challenges. The holistic approach incorporates these findings by explicitly addressing existential concerns through its spiritual resilience component.

Moral and Professional Well-being

Moral well-being is a crucial aspect of recovery from moral injury, and all four elements of the holistic approach contribute to addressing it. CBT can help soldiers process and reframe morally injurious events, challenging distorted beliefs about responsibility and guilt. Personal strength approaches can help rebuild a positive self-concept and recognize the growth potential even in the face of moral challenges.

On the other hand, Professional well-being is indirectly supported by the holistic approach. By promoting overall mental health and resilience, the approach supports soldiers' ability to perform their duties effectively. This aligns with the military's interest in maintaining a psychologically fit fighting force. Adler et al.'s research on comprehensive soldier fitness programs demonstrates how holistic approaches to well-being can enhance job performance and career satisfaction in military contexts. The proposed approach extends these findings to the specific context of moral injury and trauma recovery.

Integration with Trauma Recovery Models

The holistic approach aligns with established models of trauma recovery, such as Judith Herman's three-stage model: establishing safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection. (Umer and Aziz 2022) Self-care practices contribute to establishing safety by promoting physical and emotional stability. CBT and personal strength approaches facilitate remembrance and mourning by providing tools to process traumatic memories and integrate them into a coherent narrative. Spiritual resilience supports reconnection with self, others, and

meaning, helping soldiers rebuild a sense of purpose and connection to the larger world.

Addressing Comorbidity and Flexibility in the Recovery Process

The synergistic approach also has the potential to address the high rates of comorbidity often seen in military populations dealing with trauma and moral injury. Wisco et al. (2017) found that among veterans reporting potentially morally injurious events, there were high rates of co-occurring PTSD, depression, and suicidal ideation. By simultaneously addressing multiple dimensions of well-being, the holistic approach is well-positioned to tackle these complex, interrelated challenges. The holistic approach recognizes that recovery is not a linear process and that different aspects of well-being may need attention at different times. For instance, a soldier might initially focus on establishing physical safety and stability through self-care practices before delving into the cognitive work of CBT or the existential questions addressed by spiritual practices.

The use of self-care combined with CBT, personal strength as well as spiritual resilience can be applied as a model approach with the U. S. Army soldiers that can treat moral injury and trauma. They are physical, emotional, cognitive, social, existential, ethical, and professional, thus helping the individual build resilience and may experience positive psychological change after suffering trauma. That, however, indicates that this approach may be the best way of helping the soldiers get support to enhance their well-being and resilience as the research progresses. Future research directions should then confirm the interactivity and specify the scope of enhancement to the client's needs.

CONCLUSION

Recap of the multifaceted approach

This research has explored a holistic approach to navigating moral injury and trauma in US Army soldiers, integrating four key elements: self-care, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), personal strength, and spiritual resilience. Self-care protects an individual's physical and emotional well-being by exercising, eating right, and sleeping well. CBT offers resources for recognizing negative behaviors of mentation, ways of how to fight against them, techniques for constructive voluntary behavior, and strategies for dealing with psychological trauma. Personal care focuses on mobilizing one's resources, drawing upon the trauma, and promoting post-traumatic growth. Spiritual resilience assists in making sense of suffering and finding hope or purpose in events, thus contributing to constructing meaning. All of them are pertinent to a soldier's life and must be addressed; therefore, a holistic recovery program must be formed.

Importance of integrating all four elements

The combination of these four elements is essential for several reasons. Combined, it guarantees that soldiers' requirements are met in every aspect, with every aspect of recovery covered by a different element. This integration makes the approach adaptable and sensitive to the soldiers, thus making it possible to address their specific issues as they seek the services. Therefore, having several aspects of strength built simultaneously can improve the soldiers' capacity to prepare for future difficulties. Cultural fit is consequently gained by including Spiritual Resilience, which is compatible with the military's ethos. Moreover, it enables a holistic treatment of individuals that helps prevent relapse since the several aspects of their wellness addressed do not facilitate the sustainability of their recovery.

Potential for overcoming impacts of moral injury and trauma on US Army Soldiers

This multifaceted approach holds significant potential for helping US Army soldiers overcome the impacts of moral injury and trauma. It acknowledges that these experiences are complex and offers techniques to match the many dimensions of the cognitive, affective, behavioral, and even spiritual domains. The structure of the approach is based on self-care and personal strength, which contribute to the soldiers' activity in the recovery process. This increases the soldiers' ability to identify strengths and assets since the focus is on strengths and personal power's resilience. By employing spiritual resilience exercises, one can derive new ways of providing meaning to the experience and, therefore, establish ways of processing the experience and putting it into coherent meaning within one's life. Additionally, the approach comprises many areas of functioning and can bring about effective treatment of mental disorders and better well-being in general. As a result, the approach offers a more extensive system that can guide the healing process after the primary treatment.

However, more research is needed to ascertain the effectiveness of this approach. Still, the all-compassing nature and the approach's compliance with evidence-based practices illustrate its vast potential in one's survival of moral injury and other related conditions affecting the U. S. Army soldiers. Addressing different wellness aspects and building on the soldiers' potential can achieve recovery, strength, and positive change. It acknowledges that healing from moral injury and trauma is not simple, and one has to focus on different domains of a person. This combined approach provides a solid foundation for the support of soldiers on their road to recovery and rejuvenation of their well-being.

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