

Management of Deployment Stress in The Cyber Age

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Abstract

An overview of the literature on military-related stress confirms that stress remains part of the deployed soldier's life, whether it relates to concerns about his family back home, the nature of the military environment, accumulated stress, combat stress, or traumatic stress. All stress related to deployment is discussed under the umbrella term "deployment stress". Since the identification of combat-related stress more than a century ago, a debate has emerged on whether psychological debriefing should be done or not. This paper circumvents the debate on whether debriefing works or not by proposing a comprehensive process of utilising information technology to assist the deployed soldier to manage stress and to provide a tool for health care professionals and military commanders to identify psychological risks and consequently enable timeous intervention. The discussion starts by defining stress in the context of the military, giving an overview of current processes of managing combat-related stress in the South African National Defence Force, with specific reference to the challenges and limitations of the current process, including a debate on whether psychological debriefing should be done or not. These challenges have underscored the need to develop alternative stress management tools for the operational environment in the cyber domain, to augment current procedures. This chapter will therefore propose a model of user requirements for the development of a psychological health protection system for operational forces where software applications (tools) can be merged on a secure internet-based platform as a stress management tool for operations to minimise the risks related to deployment stress.