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DOMESTIC ABUSE AND ALCOHOL PROBLEMS WITHIN THE INDIAN ARMY

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Abstract

Domestic abuse is usually define, in minimal words, as some kind of act that has an agenda of control behind it. This control is usually exercised with help of violent actions that are perpetrated verbally and physically . In most of the cases the abuse is committed by family member and usually are accompanied by psychological repercussions. Although the there is huge plethora of literature on the topic, there is also a lack of diversity that can be seen especially when it is related with government organizations. Hence the objective of this essay is to explore the gap in the existing literature. Amongst numerous problems that exist within the Indian army, one aspect that remains unaddressed is 'domestic abuse.' However, if something is not said, it does not necessarily mean it did not happen. To understand this problem, we must first understand the 'sociology of organization' of the Indian army.

Domestic abuse is not only limited to itself; there is a whole array of factors within the military that influence the kind and the magnitude of the abuse that is being inflicted or carried out, and these factors might act in different combinations to constitute the process of abuse. For example, depending on the rank of the individual within the army, the magnitude of workload and responsibilities differ. At the same time, within this hierarchical structure, a very explicitly defined leverage is given to specific ranks that individuals exercise upon their subordinates. This structure provides superior control and better access to material goods and services, which can be seen with the example of the monthly liquor quota, which the army assigns according to the individual's rank. Talking about alcoholism, (Raju et al., 2002) say that there has been an increment of alcohol dependence amongst JCOs/ORs. Although there is a lack of correlation research on domestic and material abuse within the Indian army, bell, along with his colleagues,

said that the chances for a heavy drinker to be a spouse abuser are higher than that of an abstainer (2006).

The focus of this essay is to explore the causal relationship between alcohol dependence and domestic abuse within the households of individuals who have a history of serving in the army or are still serving in the Indian army. Due to the lack of content on the subject of interest within India, we will use literature based on the Western spaces of the army, where most of the research is done with the help of statistical data, which is extracted from army records that the organization maintains. These records contain data on individuals' medical history, race, sex, weekly consumption of alcohol, history of the abuse and violence that they have committed, and the description of the abuse and violence, which makes it more convenient to identify what factors led to the incident of violence or abuse. Throughout this essay, we will attempt to find out and address the gaps and similarities in the pre-existing literature on the subject of interest within the Indian context, contemplate the possible reason for the problems that exist relating to the topic, and come up with a hypothesis based on existing case studies.

INTRODUCTION

Does alcohol make things easier? Well, there is no point asking these questions when you do not have any other alternative to combat the prevailing crisis in organizations like the Indian army. The army is a place where drinking alcohol has become a metaphor for socialization and celebration. This practice is certainly not limited to celebratory occasions; it penetrates the private domains of the individuals serving in the army. Moreover, it further complicates their usual dynamics of living and coping, rendering them dysfunctional to a certain extent.

ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE AMONGST JCOs AND ORs

The tradition of alcohol goes beyond the history of the Indian army, but the institutionalization of the consumption of alcohol as a practice can be traced back to the colonial period when British officials started recruiting Indian locals to expand the British Indian Army. The locals consumed arrak, opium, and marijuana, which are potent intoxicants, and the British officials could not afford their soldiers being intoxicated on their duty, especially at the time when the British army was participating in the world war. However, to cope with the intensity of the conflict, the soldiers believed that they needed an altered state of consciousness, and this belief met the need for acceptance in the later phases of the British Indian army. The locals had their

way of acquiring these intoxicants and at that, in a very discreet manner through their relatives via parcels or the suppliers located in the cantonment area, and this was deterred by the British officials for obvious reasons. So, to reduce the use of hard liquors amongst the sepoys, they formulated a new system in which wine and beer were introduced to the soldiers (Cavin,2018). So, the system of liquor distribution quota that we see in the contemporary Indian army is probably derived from the system that the British officials introduced.

Now coming to the main question as to why is it amongst the JCOs and ORs that the alcohol consumption rate is comparatively higher despite their low quota of liquor distribution as compared to other commissioned officers? This question delves into the gap within the existing literature about the critical study on organisational Sociology of the Indian army, and to fill that gap, a psychosocial study on the question of 'how and why' needs to be done so that the interpretation of the existing statistical data would be made more accessible. As for now, I can only give speculative answers that are based on my interpretation of individual case studies of army personnel who are currently serving in the Indian army, or they have retired from their jobs. When asked, most of them said that they did not drink alcohol before entering the army, and according to Raju(2002), higher prevalence of alcohol dependence is found amongst individuals who have served for more than eleven years in the army and are in their mid-thirties.

The way the army as an organization works is very hierarchical, which means that the person who is or has a lower rank, is supposed to do the maximum amount of physical labour, and as your rank increases you are supposed to govern or direct your immediate subordinates who are below you in rank to do the work. As the ranks increase, the physical burden is lessened, but the mental burdens keep on increasing Because As the sepoy proceeds within the ranks from havaldar or towards the rank of junior commissioned officer, the amount of accountability also increases, which is proportional to the obligatory responsibility that is placed on the shoulders of the individual, which increases as he is more answerable for the immediate actions of the masses, which constitute the task force's central part. But it doesn't imply that the officers who are above the rank of JCOs are less burdened, rather it means that the Individuals who are holding the ranks of JCOs, Subedars, Hawaldars and Naik are Directly employed and physically engaged in the fieldwork.

The answer that the individuals gave, who have served or are still serving in the Indian army in regards to their inclination towards material or alcohol abuse was reduced to work stress and

other responsibilities that they have been adhering to for a long time. But many factors are dynamically involved, which leads to the individual to seek refuge in alcohol, these factors are often neglected as they might tarnish the image of the Indian army. One of them is that the army does not have a limit of minimum working hours, which implies that the soldier will work whenever it is needed, regardless of the time, place, or situation, even if the individual is going through a psychological or personal crisis. And, the army act, 1950 just adds on to solidify this regime, in simpler terms, legalizing inhuman treatment of subordinates by establishing hierarchy and distributing authoritative powers to the higher ranks. Although there are procedures to challenge the authorities, but the account of these challenges taking place is very rare and complicated. The factor of transparency and awareness becomes very crucial while we are examining or trying to explore organizational units like the Indian army, and along with these things, there is also a need for the production of critical literature based on the Indian army, which is to be done by actively scrutinizing factors like topography, religion, gender, caste, etc.

Since the data is in the context of Indian reserved force and, to be more precise it is about the category of non-commissioned officers (JCOs and ORs). Hence study is only limited to male constituents of the army because most of the females personnel are either admitted to the ranks that are above JCOs, or they are enlisted for doing desk jobs. While we are on the topic, I would also like to highlight the research conducted by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, which said that women in general have a lower tolerance to alcohol because of lower amount of physiological water, and if in women, there is a progression of harmful drinking pattern toward alcohol dependency, the risk of injury, and morbidity also increases showing a significant increment as compared to men. But the positive side is that women (based on comparative research conducted within the US Army on women) are more likely to take the initiative to participate in rehabilitative programs to get out of the cycle of alcohol consumption (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1999).

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND THE INDIAN ARMY

To begin with, there is close to no amount of seminal literature (within the Indian context) on the topic of domestic abuse perpetrated by army personnel, so addressing the topic becomes very demanding. But taking from the works done in countries like Britain and USA by scholars like McCarroll and his colleagues (2009), we find that the cases of non-mutual abuse within

the military settings increase along with the intensity and severity of the abuse when the perpetrator is intoxicated by consuming alcohol. Despite the presence of statistical data, it cannot be directly inferred that alcohol leads to violence; many things dynamically play an essential role in the whole process, that is, from thoughts of being violent towards violent actions. As per the article written by (Bell et al., 2006) in which he examined spouse abuse and alcohol problems among whites, Hispanics and African Americans US army soldiers, he found that there are several socio-cultural factors that influence alcohol consumption patterns. Moreover, the incident of abuse is heavily affected by the pattern of consumption. In both articles, there was no definitive answer as to whether there is a solid antecedent-cause relationship between alcohol consumption and domestic abuse(violence).

As said by Atherton (2009), In the Army individuals are trained or conditioned(domesticated) to perform activities that are believed to be feminine(cleaning, cooking, etc) despite it being a hyper masculine space, activities that the individual is not used to or activities that are conducted within the army that might conflict with values that the individuals upholds,(not saying that doing basic chores should only be limited to a specific gender, rather the problem lies in the pre- composed identity that is constructed by the society, through norms) causing frustration and uncertainty. And when we consider the magnitude of the work regardless of the nature of the work, it is very exhausting and at times takes a toll over the physical conditions of the body of the individual.

In a case study situated in the contemporary setting of the Indian army, an individual aged 39, consuming approximately 12- 14 drinks per week, showed bouts of aggression although not so frequently and, as reported by his family, he would get angry at tiny mistakes. In the case of this family, at the initial stage of his service(6-7 years), there were multiple cases of spouse abuse and child abuse (domestic violence), but as years passed by, there was a decrease in the incidents of abuse. And when confronted about these incidents, the subject would first deny the incident and later justify it by pointing out the small mistakes that made him angry, or he would reduce his actions to repercussion of work stress.

Although this case study cannot be generalized, multiple cases are similar to this one, and there is still much research to be done before a conclusory relationship can be established between alcohol consumption and domestic abuse if there is one.

CONCLUSION

Like in every research, there is a possibility of missing out on important cases, which might affect the data output. Precisely when the research is about sensitive topics like abuse, in India, especially for people who are influenced by traditional values, the probability of these cases remaining undressed increases exponentially. The tradition Moreover, values are not to be blamed here. Instead, the social infrastructure and the methods of assessing (like the methods of assessing intelligence, which had a very Western notion and later how by developing a systematic understanding of intelligence, culture-specific intelligence test was defined), so there is a need for reformation to increase the sensitivity towards these issues and devise different methods of conducting survey and introducing rehabilitative programs.

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