# Addressing Suicide Trends

## Abstract

The suicide trends in the military have become prevalent to the extent that the number of soldiers committing suicide is higher than that of the civilians. The number of soldiers committing suicide began to rise after the massive deployment in the Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite the indication that the suicide cases are caused by Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression, the cause is the deployment to combat. These forms of deaths are very detrimental in many ways to the forces which have led to the need for coming up with practices that will reduce such cases. It would also be critical to have a better understanding of the prevalence of suicidal deaths in the military in an attempt to ensure there is a limited loss of trained military personnel. Though drugs have been associated with the increased suicide case, trends are not reducing because drugs de-sensitize and do not change the suicide trends in the military.

## Issue Facing the Suicide

Individuals in the military have been at a great risk of committing suicide or having suicidal ideation. Different factors have been linked to the high prevalence of the military personnel in committing suicide and have attributed to the high number of cases that have been reported. It is critical to note that the rates of deaths of the military as a result of suicide are much higher than that of civilians. Such statistics is an indication that there are many issues that the military personnel face that has led to the increased number of suicide cases. These cases can be dealt with in an effective manner through useful programs.

1. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is one of the major issues that have been associated with the deaths due to suicide among the military. PTSD is commonly associated with the exposure of the military to the battlefield which might affect the psychological aspects of an individual. The images of the deaths of people may lead to mental torture which is responsible for the traumatic stress afterward. Moreover, the alienation with one's family, whenever there is a call for duty, is also a significant factor that leads to increased levels of PTSD and eventually it can make an individual decide to commit suicide (Ramsawh et al., 2014).
2. Depression is a key issue that makes the military to think of committing suicide. Some of the soldiers are depressed, especially as a result of the conditions that they are exposed to in the battlefield. Whenever depression takes root in the life of military personnel, it is hard to know, and in most cases, the victims end up committing suicide. Some of the soldiers are not ready psychological for deployment and when it happens; it affects them significantly which can be a cause of depression. Certain levels of depression when not addressed effectively have been responsible for the increased deaths experienced in the military.
3. The comorbidity has also been associated with the high number of suicidal cases in the military. In most cases, comorbidity is a combination of PTSD and depression. When a person is having both disorders at the same time, it is a huge risk, and they can commit suicide any time. In the military, a significant number of soldiers have had both disorders at the same time, and it has been led to many cases of suicidal attempts. PTSD and depression when not detected earlier and diagnosed might lead to many deaths since it is the most fatal of all the cases that cause suicide (Ramsawh et al., 2014).

## Root Cause

Research has indicated that the military is registering a huge number of deaths as a result of suicide more than the civilians. The deaths have been associated with psychological factors and disorders such as PTSD and depression. However, the main concern that arises is to determine the root causes of the high rates of suicide in the military. It is through the understanding of the root causes that effective measures and recommendation can be made so as to curb the menace.

The increased number of deaths of the military personnel as a result of suicide is attributed to the sustained combat operations. The deployment of soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq is the starting point of the increased number of deaths in the military. Before the deployment, the number of soldiers committing suicide was much lower that what is being experienced in the present day. Besides, most of the soldiers that have committed suicide have been exposed to combat and deployed in war-torn areas. Most of the soldiers committing suicide have been exposed to combat when they were not psychologically ready to deal with the results of war. As a result, it gets overwhelming for them to the extent of getting psychological disorders (LeardMann et al., 2013).

Deployment in the battlefield exposes the soldiers to very many occurrences that are emotionally disturbing. One of the cases is killing a person or witnessing one die during the war. Whenever the flashbacks of the killing of people in the war are experienced, they can cause mental disorder. Moreover, the war zone is characterized by all forms of physical abuses such as rape, beating, or torture. These are events that cause a lot of pain to the victims, but at the same time, they had a detrimental effect on the mental health of the soldiers. The constant exposure of such inhumane acts could lead to trauma and depression. The endless scenes of dead and decomposing bodies that lie in the field are also a cause for the increased causes of death. It is such scenes that cause mental and emotional disturbance and as a result leads to different forms of disorders. The fear of dying in the war also becomes a great contributor of suicide attempts since one witness the deaths of their friends and fellow soldiers. These are happening that have adverse effects on the mental health of the soldiers and lead to psychological disorders which eventually leads to suicide.

## Impact on the Forces

1. One of the major impacts of the increased suicide rates in the military is on the unit effectiveness. The forces have been affected greatly by the deaths of the unit members which have led to inefficiency in the performance of the various military units. Suicide can lead to the death of very useful members of the unit who provided specialized services. Losing such individuals is very detrimental since it denies the unit the opportunity to be successful in subsequent operations that might happen. The time wasted in finding replacements is also a key factor that may lead to the inefficiencies in the performance of their role. The time required to train a person in so as to replace the lost life derail some of the unit’s operations.
2. The suicide deaths also affect the forces financially. Since the deaths that are being experienced are many, there is the need to recruit new soldiers now and then so that they can replace the lost ones. The recruitment and training process is costly to the military and requires ample time so as to ensure the soldiers are well trained. The resources that are used to train new soldiers as replacements would be used for other tasks that would be beneficial to the forces as well as making their roles more effective.
3. The increased number of suicide deaths can also lead to the loss of morale as well as the cohesion of the unit. When many soldiers commit suicide, and it becomes a norm, it destroys the morale of other soldiers to continue performing their tasks in an effective way. Moreover, the cohesion of the unit might be affected significantly since the members of a particular unit do not have enough time to bond due to the constant losses.

## Recommendations to Prevent Suicide in the Military

One of the recommendations that can be used in preventing suicide in the military is through screening and assessment of the soldiers that are seen to be at a greater risk to commit suicide. The assessment would be critical because the soldiers would be given the necessary medical attention; hence, effectively dealing with any case of suicide attempt (Zamorski, 2011).

Selection can also be an effective way of ensuring there are reduced numbers of suicide deaths in the military. The soldiers being deployed to war-torn areas are supposed to be selected after they have undergone a medical and psychological check-up. It would be an effective way of ensuring that those at a higher risk of committing suicide are not deployed to engage in war. As a result, those that are deployed in the various areas to engage in war are mentally fit and strong to deal with the events and happenings on the battlefield.

Resilience training among the soldiers is also a key recommendation since it attributes significantly to the reduction of the suicide case. The soldiers are trained on the events in the battlefield and how to respond to the emotional distress that might be caused by the occurrences. It is an effective way since the soldiers are prepared and they become aware of how to deal with any form of mental disturbances. Besides, the use of education awareness could also play a significant role in preparing the soldiers mentally before they go for combat. It is a necessary way of ensuring that nothing gets them unexpected (Zamorski, 2011).

## Conclusion

It is evident from the various researches made that there is a rise in the total number of suicide cases in the military. Psychological factors and disorders such as PTSD and depression are the key factors that have attributed to the high rates of deaths in the military. The cause of the increased cases of suicidal deaths can be attributed to the deployment of the soldiers in war-torn areas and the events that unfold affect them mentally and emotionally. These deaths have had a significant impact on the military as a unit. Various recommendations such as screening and assessment, selection, and resilience training are some of the best practices that the military can adopt to deal with the menace.

## References

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