

A Study on War-Induced Anxiety, Peace Attitude, and Psychological Well-Being of the Fathers of the Civilian Working Population and Fathers of Officers in the Armed Forces

Chhabra, H.K. * & Juneja, J. **

Abstract

The impact of war and armed conflict is not only witnessed on the battlefield, but it also seems to affect the psychological health of the families. The study in hand explored War Induced Anxiety, Peace Attitude and Psychological Well Being of a sample of 70 fathers of civilian working population and fathers of officers in the armed forces, respectively. Standardized measures of War Related Stress, Peace Attitude and Psychological Well Being were administered. Results indicated that fathers of officers in the armed forces had significantly higher War Induced Anxiety than fathers of the civilian working population. They also demonstrated stronger Peace Attitude and higher Psychological Well-Being as compared to the fathers of the civilian working population. The study seems to contribute to a growing body of research around peace psychology, family mental health, and support systems for defence families.

Keywords: War Induced Anxiety, Peace Attitude, Psychological Well Being, Armed forces, Fathers, Civilians.

War and combat like situations have profound and far-reaching consequences, affecting not only those who are directly involved in the combat situations but also the broader population, including the civilian working population and the families of the officers in the armed forces. Continuous exposure to war is linked to prevalence of psychiatric illnesses like anxiety, PTSD and depression in individuals. (Nisa et al., 2024)

Deaths caused by wars are merely the “tip of the iceberg.” Other consequences, apart from death, are not well documented. These include widespread poverty, malnutrition, disability, economic and social decline, and psychosocial illnesses, to name a few. Presence of cognitive impairments, acute stress reactions and changes in personality in individuals who are exposed to such environments has also been witnessed. (Khan & Altalbe, 2023)

The emotional and mental toll of war continues to be a pressing issue across the globe, with consequences that often persist long after the cessation of hostilities. Prolonged conflict, violence, and displacement may leave lasting scars on the psychological well-being of individuals, resulting in a significant burden on both the affected populations and the global mental health system. Only by gaining a deeper understanding of conflicts and the numerous mental health issues they cause, can effective strategies for addressing these problems be developed.

While soldiers, who are directly involved in war like situations, face direct exposure, their family members, particularly the parents may endure unique psychological stressors, including anticipatory grief, chronic anxiety, and fluctuating peace attitudes. Specific populations face an elevated risk of mental health disorders as a result of their exposure to war. Women, children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing mental health disorders are among the vulnerable populations that are especially vulnerable to the

psychological impacts of conflict. Findings of a study revealed that parents of male combat soldiers depicted higher levels of anxiety and depression as compared to the general population of the area. (Bitton et al., 2017)

Furthermore, fathers may be in a difficult position among these family members because despite their intense concerns for their children’s safety, they are frequently expected by society to maintain emotional fortitude. Fathers whose children are in the military may experience the psychological effects of war very differently than fathers whose children are civilians. Because their children are always in danger, armed forces officer’s fathers may likely suffer from war-related stress. In addition, their personal ties to the military may have an impact on how they view war and peace, which could lead to either a greater desire for peaceful solutions or an acceptance of warfare.

In contrast, fathers of the working civilian population may experience stress induced by the general threat of war to society but may not face the intense personal stakes that military families endure. Their peace attitude may be shaped more by media narratives and societal discourse than by direct involvement.

Although much research has focused on soldiers’ mental health and civilian war trauma, limited attention has been given to the unique psychological experiences of parents, especially fathers, based on their children’s military status. This study aims to fill that gap by examining War Induced Anxiety, Peace Attitude, and Psychological Well-Being in fathers of both, officers in the armed forces and fathers of civilian working population, respectively.

Individuals can hold distinct and potentially conflicting attitudes toward peace and war simultaneously. For example, a study was done on 89 participants, primarily undergraduate students, from a city in the Midwest of the United States. The Attitudes Towards War Scale was used to measure attitude towards war and peace, respectively. The findings suggested that atti-

*Professor, Department of Psychology, Panjab University, Chandigarh, Email:hkanwal11@gmail.com , hkanwal@pu.ac.in

**Research Fellow, Department of Psychology, Panjab University Chandigarh, Email:jayajuneja0425@gmail.com

tudes toward peace were associated with egalitarian beliefs, values of international harmony, and empathic concern, leading to intentions to engage in peace-related activities. Conversely, attitudes toward war were linked to authoritarian beliefs, values of national strength, and less personal distress, resulting in intentions to engage in war-like activities. (Bizumic et al., 2013)

Similarly, a link between anxiety and view towards war and peace during a violent conflict, was studied. Data was collected from 78 Jewish adolescents using self report measures. The results revealed that most of the adolescents, who were more anxious, were of the opinion that a military operation would resolve the situation for a limited time. (Braun-Lewensohn et al., 2014).

A systematic review was conducted to understand the associations of armed conflict along with the prevalence of mental illnesses such as major depressive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder etc. The findings revealed that the exposure to armed conflict was linked to increased mental health disorders. (Tay, 2022)

Another study was conducted among 323 Ukrainian university students aged 20-35 in October 2023. Respondents were divided into three groups based on their proximity to active hostilities: Group 1 (living in active combat areas), Group 2 (living in areas with missile and drone attacks), and Group 3 (living in areas without hostilities or in EU countries). An online survey was done to collect data, incorporating the Psychological General Well-Being Index (PGWBI) and the Coping Strategies Inventory (CSI). The results indicated that the war in Ukraine had a negative impact on the psychological state of students. The level of impact was higher among the students who were living close to the active combat zone. (Pyenko, 2023)

A study conducted on Ukrainian adults to evaluate the potential impacts of Russian-Ukrainian conflict and its psychological impact. The data was collected through online surveys from June 2022 to August 2022. The questionnaires administered included DASS-21, PSQI and Brief-COPE. It was found that 62.4% of Ukrainian adults reported symptoms of anxiety due to the ongoing conflict, highlighting a significant impact on psychological well-being. (Khan & Altalbe, 2023)

Military-related PTSD challenges faced by families of active military members and veterans was studied using semi-structured in-depth interviews. The qualitative data collected from 21 non-military parents and 4 adult children from Alberta. The results suggested that the disturbing behaviors exhibited by military members with PTSD create a need for families to develop coping strategies. (Collins & Tam, 2023)

A qualitative study was done to explore the psychological burdens experienced by individuals and their families during and after armed conflicts. The study emphasizes the dynamics of family relationships

and the transformation of military identity through observational analysis. The results emphasized the profound impact of combat experiences on family dynamics, highlighting difficulties in adaptation, emotional connection, and trust reestablishment upon returning to civilian life. The research identified typical difficulties faced by military relatives, including feelings of isolation, uncertainty, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion. (Nazmiiev, 2025)

Need of the study

In today's global climate of political instability, border tensions, and frequent exposure to news about armed conflicts, the psychological impact of war extends far beyond the battlefield. While soldiers are the most direct victims of war-related trauma, their families, especially parents are likely to bear an indirect yet profound emotional burden. Fathers of officers in the armed forces may experience persistent worry, anticipatory grief, and helplessness, driven by the uncertainty surrounding their children's safety during wartime situations.

Simultaneously, this group of fathers may develop a distinct peace attitude, shaped by their close association with the military. While some may deeply value peace due to their personal exposure to conflict-related stress, others may adopt a more pragmatic outlook towards national security. Comparing their Peace Attitude with those of fathers of civilian working populations can provide insight into how proximity to war shapes one's worldview, coping mechanisms, and value systems.

Furthermore, Psychological Well-Being is a crucial component of overall mental health, encompassing emotional balance, sense of purpose, and life satisfaction. Prolonged exposure to war-related stress, either directly or through loved ones, may lead to decreased well-being, emotional exhaustion, and difficulties in maintaining social or occupational functioning.

Hence, the title of the study in hand shall be, "A Study on War-Induced Anxiety, Peace Attitudes, and Psychological Well-Being of the Fathers of the Civilian Working Population and Fathers of Officers in the Armed Forces."

Objectives

To assess the levels of War-Induced Anxiety in fathers of officers in the armed forces and compare it with the levels of War-Induced Anxiety in the fathers of civilian working population.

To compare the Peace Attitude in the two sample groups i.e. fathers of officers in the armed forces and fathers of civilian working population.

To compare Psychological Well-Being in the two sample groups i.e. fathers of officers in the armed forces and fathers of civilian working population.

To explore the relationship between War-Induced Anxiety, Peace Attitude, and Psychological Well-Being in the two sample groups i.e. fathers of officers in

the armed forces and fathers of civilian working population.

Hypotheses

H1: Fathers of officers in the armed forces are expected to exhibit higher War Induced Anxiety than fathers of civilian working population

H2: Fathers of the civilian working population are expected to exhibit stronger Peace Attitude.

H3: Higher War-Induced Anxiety is expected to be associated with lower Psychological Well-Being across both the groups i.e. fathers of officers in the armed forces and fathers of civilian working population.

H4: Peace Attitudes are expected to positively predict Psychological Well-Being across both the groups i.e. fathers of officers in the armed forces and fathers of civilian working population.

Design

The study shall comprise of War Induced Anxiety, Peace Attitude and Psychological Well being as variables. The relationship among the variables of War-Induced Anxiety, Peace Attitude and Psychological Well Being shall be explored across the two groups i.e. fathers of officers in the armed forces and fathers of civilian working population.

Method

Sample

A total sample comprising 35 fathers of officers in the armed forces and 35 fathers of the civilian working population were taken. The age range was 30 to 65 years and the mean age was 45 years. The sample was taken from urban and semi-urban regions. This was done in the aftermath of India Pakistan conflict 2025.

Tools

1. War-Related Stress Scale: The scale consists of 9 items, capturing key domains such as personal safety concerns, fear of conflict escalation, economic instability, access to basic needs, and anxieties related to war-induced uncertainty. Participants were asked to report how frequently they have experienced each item, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very Often). The total score ranged from 9 to 45, with higher scores indicating greater levels of war-related stress.

2. Peace Attitude Scale: The scale consists of 22 items evaluating five dimensions including socio-political factors, personal well-being, ease with diversity, environmental attitudes, and caring. The scale is used to understand the relationship between peace attitude and other variables, particularly in relation to sustainable behaviors.

3. Psychological Well Being Scale: The scale contains 18-items and is used to assess an individual's overall

psychological well-being. It measures six key aspects: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Each aspect is assessed with three questions, resulting in a total of 18 items.

Results and Discussion

The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive as well as inferential statistical techniques and the results are shown in tables below and are described and discussed.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of study variables.

	Groups	WRS	PA	PWB
Mean	A	31.7	92.9	4.95
	C	19.2	86.8	3.98
Median	A	31	92	4.80
	C	18	87	4.00
Standard Deviation	A	3.47	2.13	0.657
	C	8.23	4.33	0.990
Shapiro-Wilk W	A	0.830	0.900	0.954
	C	0.925	0.958	0.966
Shapiro-Wilk p	A	<.001	0.004	0.154
	C	0.019	0.195	0.347

Note: WRS= War Related Stress, PA= Peace Attitude, PWB= Psychological Well Being. Group A=Fathers of officers in the armed forces, Group C- Fathers of the civilian working population.

Table 2. Independent Samples t-test

	Statistic	df	p	Effect Size
WRS	8.23 ^a	68.0	<.001	1.97
PAS	7.46 ^a	68.0	<.001	1.78
PWB	4.81	68.0	<.001	1.15

Note: H₁: $\mu_a \neq \mu_c$

Levene's test is significant ($p < .05$), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances.

The present study investigated War Induced Anxiety, Peace Attitude, and Psychological Well-Being among fathers of armed forces officers and fathers of civilian working population, integrating descriptive statistics, group comparisons, and predictive analyses to evaluate four hypotheses. By combining numerical findings across all three tables, the discussion provides a comprehensive interpretation of how exposure to war-related contexts shapes psychological functioning and value orientations.

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression analysis predicting Psychological Well Being

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	95% CI for B
Intercept	2.01	2.21	-	0.91	.366	[-2.40, 6.43]
WRS	0.048	0.014	.44	3.56	<.001	[0.02, 0.08]
PA	0.014	0.026	.06	0.52	.608	[-0.04, 0.07]

Descriptive statistics indicated clear group-level differences across all study variables as seen in **Table 1**. Fathers of armed forces officers reported substantially higher mean levels of War Related Stress ($M = 31.70$, $SD = 3.47$) compared to fathers of civilian working population. ($M = 19.20$, $SD = 8.23$). They also demonstrated higher Peace Attitude ($M = 92.90$, $SD = 2.13$ vs. $M = 86.80$, $SD = 4.33$) and higher Psychological Well-Being ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 0.66$ vs. $M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.99$). These descriptive trends were further substantiated through inferential analyses.

In line with **Hypothesis 1**, independent samples *t*-test results confirmed that fathers of armed forces officers experienced significantly higher War Induced Anxiety than fathers of civilian working population, $t(68) = 8.23$, $p < .001$, with a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.97$) as seen in **Table 2**. The magnitude of this effect indicates a substantial and meaningful difference between groups, underscoring the psychological salience of having a child directly exposed to military conflict. This strong numerical evidence robustly supports **H1** and aligns with theoretical perspectives emphasizing anticipatory stress and emotional proximity to threat.

Contrary to **Hypothesis 2**, Peace Attitude was significantly higher among fathers of armed forces officers rather than fathers of civilians. The group difference was statistically significant, $t(68) = 7.46$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size ($d = 1.78$). The mean difference of over six points on the Peace Attitude scale suggests not only statistical but also practical significance. These numerical findings indicate that closer exposure to the realities of war may strengthen peace-oriented values rather than diminish them, thereby refuting **H2**. Psychological Well-Being also differed significantly between the two groups. Fathers of armed forces officers reported higher Psychological Well-Being scores, and this difference was statistically significant, $t(68) = 4.81$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size ($d = 1.15$). The consistency between the mean differences and effect sizes highlights the robustness of this finding.

Further insight was provided by the multiple regression analysis as seen in **Table 3**, which examined whether War-Induced Anxiety and Peace Attitude predicted Psychological Well-Being across both groups. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(2, 67) = 12.69$, $p < .001$, explaining approximately 16% of the variance in Psychological Well-Being ($R^2 \approx .16$). This indicates a modest but meaningful level of

explanatory power for the combined predictors.

Contrary to **Hypothesis 3**, War-Induced Anxiety emerged as a significant positive predictor of Psychological Well-Being ($B = 0.048$, $SE = 0.014$, $\beta = .44$, $t = 3.56$, $p < .001$). The standardized beta coefficient indicates a moderate-to-strong relationship, suggesting that higher anxiety scores were associated with higher levels of psychological well-being. This numerical pattern directly contradicts the hypothesized negative association and implies that, in this context, anxiety may reflect emotional involvement, responsibility, and meaning rather than psychological impairment. Accordingly, **H3** was not supported.

With respect to **Hypothesis 4**, Peace Attitude did not significantly predict Psychological Well-Being ($B = 0.014$, $SE = 0.026$, $\beta = .06$, $t = 0.52$, $p = .608$), and the confidence interval included zero. Despite substantial group differences in Peace Attitude, their lack of predictive power suggests that peace-oriented values alone may not directly influence subjective well-being. Instead, such attitudes may operate at an ideological or moral level, exerting indirect effects through other psychosocial mechanisms. Therefore, **H4** was also not supported.

Taken together, the numerical findings across all three tables reveal a complex psychological profile among fathers of armed forces officers. Very large effect sizes for War-Induced Anxiety and Peace Attitude, coupled with higher Psychological Well-Being and a positive anxiety well-being relationship, highlight the coexistence of stress and resilience. These results emphasize the need to move beyond linear stress-distress models and adopt integrative frameworks that account for meaning-making, identity, and value-driven coping in populations indirectly exposed to war.

Conclusion

The present study provides an integrative understanding of War-Induced Anxiety, Peace Attitude, and Psychological Well-Being among fathers of armed forces officers and fathers of civilian working population by situating the findings within established psychological models. Consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping, the findings demonstrate that psychological outcomes are shaped not merely by the presence of stressors but by cognitive appraisal and contextual meaning. Despite experiencing significantly higher War-Induced Anxi-

ety, fathers of armed forces officers reported stronger Peace Attitude and greater Psychological Well-Being, suggesting that anxiety in this context may reflect adaptive vigilance and emotional engagement rather than psychological vulnerability.

Beyond theoretical interpretation, the findings emphasize that psychological responses to war-related contexts are multifaceted and cannot be understood through simplistic stress-distress frameworks. Higher anxiety coexisted with enhanced well-being, indicating the presence of adaptive psychological processes that may buffer emotional strain. Stronger Peace Attitudes among fathers of armed forces officers further suggest that proximity to conflict may deepen appreciation for harmony and nonviolence rather than foster hostility. Together, these findings underscore the importance of adopting nuanced, strength-based perspectives when examining populations indirectly exposed to war and highlight the need for supportive interventions that recognize both vulnerability and resilience within military family systems.

Implications

1. **Clinical and Counselling Implications:** The findings of the present study highlight the need for mental health professionals to adopt nuanced and context-sensitive approaches when working with fathers of officers in the armed forces. Elevated war-induced anxiety in this population should not be interpreted solely as an indicator of psychological pathology. Instead, clinicians should assess the functional role of anxiety, recognizing that it may coexist with adaptive coping, emotional engagement, and psychological well-being. Therapeutic interventions may benefit from focusing on emotional regulation, meaning-oriented coping, and resilience-building rather than exclusively targeting anxiety reduction.
2. **Preventive and Community-Level Implications:** At a community and preventive level, the findings suggest the value of structured psychosocial support programs for families of armed forces personnel. Psychoeducation initiatives can help normalize war-related anxiety and reduce stigma associated with emotional distress. Group-based interventions and peer support networks may provide opportunities for shared meaning-making, emotional validation, and collective coping. Given the higher peace attitude observed among fathers of officers in the armed forces, community programs may also leverage these values to promote dialogue, emotional expression, and constructive engagement within families and communities affected by conflict.
3. **Policy and Organizational Implications:** From a policy perspective, the results underscore the importance of extending mental health services beyond serving personnel to include their fam-

ily members. Military and governmental agencies should consider integrating family-focused psychological support within welfare and rehabilitation frameworks. Routine mental health screening, accessible counselling services, and crisis intervention resources for parents of armed forces personnel can help address emotional needs proactively. Importantly, policies should recognize that psychological well-being can be present alongside anxiety, and service provision should be flexible and strength-based rather than solely risk-focused.

Future Directions

Future studies should further examine the mechanisms underlying the unexpected positive association between War-Induced Anxiety and Psychological Well-Being observed in the present study. Longitudinal research is needed to clarify whether this relationship reflects adaptive adjustment over time or context-specific coping processes. Given that Peace Attitude did not predict Psychological Well-Being despite significant group differences, future research should explore potential mediators such as meaning-making, resilience, and social support. Expanding the investigation to include qualitative approaches may also help capture the subjective experiences that quantitative measures cannot fully explain. Such efforts would refine hypothesis-driven models of psychological functioning in populations indirectly exposed to war.

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