

## **Rate of crime and the involvement of Army Soldiers in Post Conflict Society in Sri Lanka; Gender representation in Crime and Lack of the Psycho - Social awareness in the Army Profession.**

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### **Abstract**

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Rate of crime and the involvement of Army soldiers in post conflict society in Sri Lanka constitutes a substantial significance as lack of the psycho-social awareness in the army profession has caused to increase a number of individual criminal incidents in the post war society. And also the fact that the representation of gender in this rate of crime in the army sector has taken contemporary relevance to this study. However, this study looks at the level of the awareness of psycho-social knowledge and how it does affect on the rate of crime and the gender representation of the crime after the post-war conflict society in Sri Lanka. Using a mixed methodology, this study was conducted in the north eastern area covering ten army camps. In the quantitative analysis, it was revealed the level of psycho-social knowledge and the army involvement for the post war national crimes. Ten cases of nationally reported crime were analysed for identifying the relationship and involvement of army for that crimes. Ten in-depth interviews from focused group studies were conducted for investigating the real nature of the mind of army soldiers after the longly driven war. Data gathered from both quantitative methods and qualitative methods were analysed in comparatively and analytically in terms of the objectives of the study. Based on the gathered data and their analysis, this study notes the following conclusions; Army involvement for the noted national crimes is minimal, however, based on the studied ten cases of crime, selected conveniently for analysing the hidden facts behind the relationship between army involvement towards crime after post-war conflict society, it reveals, lack of the knowledge of psychology and art and cultural appreciation have caused to use military strategies for the criminal incidents. If the army soldiers after the war, who have previously were in battle field, were known on how to manage their depressed mind using psycho-social awareness, they could have escaped from involving criminal events. Both male and female have communicated their hidden feeling and sexual desires, occurring the criminal incidents. However, more representation from male is significant in the army involvement for these crimes. Finally, this study highly appreciates of a necessity of a thorough course of empowerment in psycho-social awareness in the very beginning of army initial training as well as in the post-war conflict society, so that establishment of a specialised division for mental health services is highly recommended for the respective military sectors.

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**Keyword:** Psycho-social awareness, Mental Health Services, Post-war conflict society, rate of crime, psychology and art and cultural appreciation.

## **Introduction/Background**

“The 30 year armed conflict in Sri Lanka has produced a new generation of veterans at risk for the chronic mental health problems that resulted following prolonged exposure to the war. Over 100,000 members of the Sri Lanka Army had been directly or indirectly exposed to combat situations during these years. There had been nearly 20 major military operations conducted by the Armed Forces from 1987 to 2009. A large number of combatants from the Sri Lanka Army were exposed to hostile battle conditions and many soldiers underwent traumatic battle events outside the range of usual human experience. These experiences include seeing fellow soldiers being killed or wounded and sight of unburied decomposing bodies, of hearing screams for help from the wounded, and of helplessly watching the wounded die without the possibility of being rescued. Following the combat trauma in Sri Lanka, a significant number of combatants were diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).” ( Dr. Neil J Fernando and Dr Ruwan M Jayatunge. 2014 February 13, Ontario, Sri Lanka Guardian).

Conflict Resolution in the post war society has been taking a significant contribution for solving emerging issues in the relevant societies in present socio-cultural background. Post-war reconstruction and development constitutes many equipments that manages a broad perspective of psycho-social intervention, despite of the physical and infrastructural applications. One of the burning social and cultural issues, especially after the North-Eastern war in Sri Lanka is increasing rate of crime, which associates certain members of army forces. This social behavior is very explicable in the post-war society when the role of trained Army sectors units and their profession are lacking sufficient empowerment on psycho-social awareness provided by respective authorities. Psychological counselling and forms of appreciation of culture and art are key methods, that can be used to flush out criminal mentality of Army servicemen in the post-war conflict society.

The combat operations in the North and East had involved military personnel in major ground combat and hazardous security duty. A significant number of combatants had post-traumatic reactions soon after the traumatic combat events. Majority of these reactions were undetected and untreated.

A large number of combatants of the Sri Lanka Army have been directly or indirectly affected by the armed conflict. These psychological and emotional traumas were resulted from witnessed killings, handling human remains, exposing to life and death situations, engaging and witnessing atrocities and numerous other battle stresses. This is a form of invisible trauma in the military.

But it has direct implications on the mental health of the soldiers. (Dr. Neil J Fernando and Dr Ruwan M Jayatunge. 2014 February 13, Ontario, Sri Lanka Guardian).

Even after the landmark major wars such as in the first world war and the second world war, many officers of Army forces as well as general soldiers were subjected to psycho-social training, while another number of military servicemen were admitted to lunatic asylums by the depressed mental disorders. Other affective factor leading to this behavior is the lack of proper literacy and education for army soldiers to cope with the ill-effects of military action, so that professional knowledge in security and defense for soldiers of the army forces was instrumental in some major national cases of crime in turn. Further, in this background, gender representation in the crime is also concentrated. How do masculinity and femininity represent in the rate of criminal act, that is supported by the army servicemen, is substantially focused in this study.

## **1. Literature Review**

Saman Kelegama (2011) in his paper titled Socioeconomic Challenges in Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Sri Lanka has made a substantial contribution to this literature. Iromy Dharmawardana (2013) has shown some salient information on post conflict Sri Lanka on her seminal paper titled Sri Lanka's Post-Conflict Strategy: Restorative Justice for Rebels and Rebuilding of Conflict-affected Communities. Ashoka Bandarage (2012) has further studied some impact of war reference to Sri Lankan experiences in his seminal paper titled Sri Lanka Towards Peace: An Alternative Perspective. Thomas Sowell (2004) in his Affirmative Action Around the World: An Empirical Study has expressed some relevant factors as well as impacts of post conflict societies, which is fundamental to this study as well. In 2008, Stewart Bell, in his contribution in Inside Sri Lanka: Your Cash Going to Arms, Say Ex-rebels, has made some relevant aspects within social change and war.

As Dr. Neil J Fernando and Dr Ruwan M Jayatunge (2011) pointed out, there is a substantial relationship between war and post-traumatic stress. The psychological trauma experienced by the military was colossal. The Eelam War in Sri Lanka had generated a considerable number of soldiers with combat related PTSD. Many victims are still undiagnosed and do not receive adequate psychological therapies.

Dr. Ruwan M Jayathuga (2014) has scientifically investigated the post war traumatic stress and its relation to Army servicemen of Sri Lanka. War has serious consequences for both short-term survival and longer-term recovery and development (Sørensen, 1998). War trauma represents a horrendous experience to the Sri Lankans. The Sri Lankan society is still struggling with the negative aftermath of the 30 year armed conflict. If not addressed effectively the psychological scars following combat can stay behind for many years. It can change the psychological markup of people making them more dysfunctional.

Londoño and colleagues (2012) indicate that exposure to violence in general and to armed conflict in particular has been consistently associated with an increased prevalence of mental illness. Although mental disorders are a major public health problem, the development of mental health services has been a low priority everywhere, particularly in low-and middle-income countries (Minas, 2012). Birgitte Sorensen (1998) has made a considerable study on , Women and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Issues and Sources attached to the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies. Problems faced by the women in the post war conflict society and available sources ,that can be utilized to solve those problems ,are substantially addressed in this seminal study.

## **2. Research Problem/ Research Questions and Hypothesis**

### **Statement of the problem**

As a result of a long drawn North-Eastern war, many post-war social issues can be immersed from the social retardedness affected by war. One of the fundamental issues of this situation is some criminal incidents are occurring with the use of techniques and equipments of army soldiers.

Army soldiers have been much experienced in the use of weapons and war equipments during the war, so that, by the end of the war, these trained work forces wanted to continue the same profession for illegal and criminal acts. This behavior occurred fundamentally in the lack of sufficient literacy in mental health and counselling and social internalization after the war. Whether gender is represented in what ways and mean is also significant. Further, increasing level of poverty is also fundamental to object their professional training into criminal events with supportive political and cultural background.

### **Research Problem**

1. Do army soldiers involve for the nationally reported crimes after long driven war? If so, what are the factors that caused to affect them in involving on the rate of crime?
2. Whether lack of the awareness of psycho-social knowledge affect on the involvement of army soldiers towards nationally reported criminal events after the post-war conflict society? If so, What are the existing levels of knowledge of psycho-social awareness in the army sector?

### **Research Questions.**

1. What is the relationship between national crimes and army involvement?
2. What are the persistent factors governed in the use of army professional experiences in socially harmful crimes?
3. How is the change of the mental and social behavior of army forces after the war?
4. How is the nature of the existing knowledge of psychology and cultural appreciation in the army sectors?
5. What are the capacities and backgrounds in implementing psycho-social learning for army forces?
6. What is the relationship between gender and rate of crime associated with the army soldiers?
7. What are the basic criteria in introducing a thorough psychological counseling knowledge and learning for Army forces in the post-war conflict societies in Sri Lanka?

## **Hypothesis**

Lack of the awareness of psycho-social knowledge in the army soldiers after the long drawn war have effected the involvement of the army soldiers towards nationally reported criminal incidents after the immediate period of the end of the war.

### **3. Significance of the Study**

This study is focused to study the ill-impacts of war towards the pattern of social change in post-war society. When there were much concentration of violence, crime, aggression, murder in the conflict season for a long period of time, it is persistent in the existing society, even after the post-war society, that is highly concerned for peace and ethnic harmony. However, even after the conflict, the society is much concern on increasing levels of the violence and highly sensational community information, that is plummeting over the tamed society from the war, so that general civilians are highly expected of a sensational story at their interest in the face of desensetional reporting of mass media. Army soldiers' involvement for criminal and illegal social behaviors is one of the problematic issues in post-war conflict society in Sri Lanka. This can be further studied in the perspectives of psycho-social literacy in the working sector in army forces, which remains significant in the post-war period in the army forces for a much consolidated and balanced peaceful society. Interestingly, for the rate of high crime and the involvement of army soldiers in such incidents after the post-war conflict context can be broadly analyzed with other associated factors of lack of sufficient understanding of mental health and the existing economic factor of poverty in the country. At the same time, how gender was represented in the rate of crime is also addressed by this study.

### **4. Objectives.**

The objective of this study is to identify whether there is a relationship between the rate of crime in the contemporary society and the security (defense) talents and experiences of army soldiers in the post-war society in Sri Lanka. Further, this study focuses on how gender is represented in the rate of crime, which associates with the army soldiers.

## **Specific Objectives**

1. To study the relationship between national crimes and army affiliation
2. To identify the persistent factors governed in the use of army professional experiences in socially harmful crimes
3. To reveal the change of the mental and social behavior of army forces after the war.
4. To identify the nature of the existing knowledge of psychology and cultural appreciation in the army sectors.
5. To identify the capacities and backgrounds in implementing psycho-social learning for army forces.
6. To investigate the relationship between gender and rate of crime associated with the army soldiers.
7. To study the basic criteria in introducing a thorough psychological counseling knowledge and learning for Army forces in the post conflict societies in Sri Lanka

## **5. Methodology**

This study was conducted using mixed methodology of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Primarily the field of the study was Kilinochchi, Trincomalee, Batticalow and Ampara covering Ten army camps including fifty army soldiers from each camp. They were given a structured questionnaire. This survey data were analyzed critically and comparatively.

In addition to quantitative analysis, the data were gathered from using a focused group interviews and In-depth Interviews selecting relevant members from the respective army camps in the study field. This data were analyzed comparatively and critically.

Beside the survey and interview methods, ten cases were used in the case study analysis in revealing rate of national crime, which associated army soldiers in the recent time after the war season in Sri Lanka. These cases were conducted as a qualitative critical analysis.

Further, In identifying the levels of learning in psycho-social factors in addition to army training, personal interviews were conducted by the senior army officers of the respective army camps.

### **Scope and Limitations**

In this study, it was focused only to the post-war psychological transition of the army soldiers in the Sri Lanka. Further, gender representation in the criminal acts was also examined in the study. The study focuses only the domain of the levels of knowledge in the psychological sciences in the practical field work at the army activities. Factors such as poverty and lack of social literacy of the army soldiers were also restricted by the data collection. Scarcity of the studies, that directly focused on the involvement of Army servicemen in the crime in post-war conflict society, is also one of the serious limitations to this study. Identifying the existing levels of knowledge in psychological awareness was also limited by the institutional ethical and disciplinary barriers of the Sri Lanka Army force. One of the major limitation in the overall field study of this research hypothesis, was working with the safeguarding of the emblem of Sri Lanka Army force.

### **6. Key Findings**

As this study focused on ten army camps in the North-eastern area, Survey was conducted to reveal the levels of the psycho-social knowledge at the soldiers personalities.

In-depth interviews from ten focused group were conducted through the use of senior Army officers from the study field in order to identify the systems of behaviors related to national crimes and the involvement of their army soldiers. Further, they were interviewed for clarifying the existing levels of psycho-social knowledge and its training, in addition to their army military knowledge. Another Ten cases of crime were analysed on whether army soldiers are involved and how gender is represented in the crime associated with the Army experiences.



### **1. To study the relationship between national crimes and army affiliation.**

According to the survey, carried out on the ten army camps, it was identified that majority of 89% of the army soldiers are not interested in applying military strategies for other public incidents, while another 11% of them are agreed in using what they are already trained in army in such incidents for personal security.

### **2. To identify the persistent factors governed in the use of army professional experiences in socially harmful crimes.**

More than 65% of the subjects were agreed on the fact that the absence of a post-war psycho-social awareness program has resulted in using military knowledge and strategic methods for criminal events after the long lasting war. The fact that there are small number of army soldiers, who have involved for criminal incidents, is also reflecting a necessity of a thorough training and awareness program on a post-war conflict society and its impact on the public society.

The military experiences of firing and the brave mind are two leading factors, that directly affect on the involvement of army soldiers for the reported national crimes after immediate post-war period. After the long drawn war, army soldiers's rate of absence was also high. Behind this, there were two identifications. One is soldiers had felt no further morale to come to the work as they are not given a substantial salary, which was expected after the war by them. And the second is this absent rate was also reasoned to the involvement of them on crime, so that they could dispel their laziness.

### **3. To reveal the change of the mental and social behavior of army forces after the war.**

Many army camps have introduced several social development program after the war. However, army soldiers, who have involved for crime, did not have sufficient educational qualification more than passing General Certificate of Education (Ordinary level). Rate of social literacy of Army soldiers, has been decreased after the war in the absence of socialisation programs and the programs of appreciation of art.

Rapidly expansion of new media; Mobile phone and internet is also another interesting fact that caused to make strange relations and communication with unknown strategies of crime. Strategic knowledge of crime was introduced not only from mobile phone with internet, but also from the channels of Television, from their ways of reporting crime in the investigative reporting programs.

In particular, hidden factors of sexuality and personal desires were overflowed with out delimiting to existing cultural and moral norms.

#### **4. To identify the nature of the existing knowledge of psychology and cultural appreciation in the army sectors.**

More than 90% of Army soldiers are highly interested in having training programs on psychology for their mental well-being in addition to their professional knowledge of army. And also 85% of the subjects are very interested in having a variety of program of cultural appreciation. However, the existing knowledge of psychology is very minimal, which is approximately 19%. Almost all the soldiers enjoy musical entertainment programs using mobilephone and media. In addition, they are rarely having some cultural program of music and theatre. More than 65% army officers recommend to conduct educational program on psychology and practical sessions of mental behaviours, in addition to conducting more and more practical sessions of cultural appreciation with music and theatre.

#### **5. To identify the capacities and background in implementing psycho-social learning for army forces.**

78% of Army chief officers interest to include the psycho-social courses for their existing training programs. Specially, after the war, establishment of a division for mental health and psycho-social awareness is significant by the 87% of the army officers and 80% of general army soldiers.

At present, there is a minimal capacity to begin with such psycho-social programs with the expertise knowledge. However, 90% of army camps of the study agreed on the establishment of a specialised post for mental health for military sectors without prioritising post-war conflict period.

Though many soldiers and particularly officers are both mentally weak after a long lasting war period, they do not pretend their weaknesses of mental health.

#### **6. To investigate the relationship between gender and rate of crime associated with the army soldiers.**

As ten cases of crime that remain some involvement of army soldiers were analysed in this study, 80% of army soldiers were from male, while another 20% of army soldiers were from female. While male soldiers have contributed more on murdering and robbing, female soldiers have supported to establish the background environment for a grant crime. And on the other, by both a similar percentage (15%), these criminal incidents reflect sexual explosions with homosexuality and love for same sex relations.

#### **7. To study on basic criteria in introducing a mode for thorough psychological counseling knowledge and learning for Army forces in the post conflict societies in Sri Lanka.**

85% army chief officers agreed on having a specialised course on psychology leading to mental and behavioral health for their initial army training course at the very beginning, so that they will be enabling to escape from such post-war mental and behavioural problems. 78% of army soldiers agreed to have a specialised officer for mental health in addition to medical doctor. At the same time shocking 90% of general army soldiers believe if they are given an ample time for artistic appreciation and cultural freedom, it would be more practical to cope with the problematic mental situation.

#### **8. Discussion and analysis**

Police says nearly 18 percent of crimes in 2014 were committed by the armed forces (Colombage, 2014). Dr. Prabath Gunathilaka (2014) says desertion and crime in armed forces has spiked five years after civil war end due to absence of counselling. Police statistics suggest that in the first four months of 2014, nearly 18 percent of reported crimes were committed by members of the armed forces - a large increase on the 5 percent reported for the whole of 2013 (Police Media Spokesman SSP Ajith Rohana, 2014).

As Dr. Prabath Gunathilaka, psychologist of the Universities of Colombo and Canberra says, soldiers who fight violent or guerrilla groups can be subjected to scenes not normally seen on a battlefield, triggering post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that fosters irrational behavior. He believes the high number of desertions can also be attributed to the fact that these soldiers no longer feel constrained by the rules of the armed forces.

Soldiers have been witness to scenes on battlefields that many of us cannot imagine they have killed people and been praised for doing so. They now believe that they are above the law, and this is reflected in their decision to desert and pursue criminal activities.

Lack of the psycho-social knowledge in army force in Sri Lanka is also relatively justified with the similar result of the other social institutions as they are also lacking with the sufficient knowledge of psycho-social practice. As a country, which is fully devoted for the national development in almost all the sectors, it is significantly understood that the necessity of a fully blown training and awareness of psychological knowledge and counselling practice is a must.

Specially after the long drawn war, both military forces as well as general public could be affected from war psychology, so that dangerous effects of violence and aggression could be emanated from the war mentality. In order to manage post-war conflict disorders from the social perspective, one of the identified key areas is empowering the awareness of psycho-social knowledge and establishing sufficient places for taking mental health services.

Though it is a minimal number of army soldiers, who have involved for national criminal incidents, these individual cases denote that the urgent requirement of a course of psycho-social awareness campaign in the post-war conflict society. Particularly, the army camps situated in this research area, which is South-Eastern province, is highly vulnerable to military war experiences as they devoted many shades and labour for the final session of the war in one hand. And on the other, from earlier period of the very beginning of war, these soldiers and army officers have been experiencing many social and cultural restrictions and barriers.

Hence, the establishment of a thorough awareness of psycho-social knowledge and practice within this background is highly productive in decreasing the involvement of military strategies to develop local criminal incidents.

Moreover, scientific understanding on how criminal behaviors affect on the human mind and the strong relationship with the post-war society could be more effective in the management of military forces after the war in one hand. And on the other, it is not only the military group ,who involve in the national criminal acts, but as they are highly experienced with military startegies and they have been fed up by the war experiences, military forces are vulnerable to the criminal action.

Representation of gender in this senario is remain significant in the modern social scientific analysis.However, while both male and female in the army are susceptible to the mental health issues in the post-war conflict society, male represent a wider involvement in crime more than the involvement of female in the army sector.Dr. Jayathunga (2014) also highly emphasised the necessity of a psycho-social intervention in management post-war society comparing with the post war periods of some of the other world famous wars.

Post-war societies are highly vulnerable. Therefore the combat trauma in the post-war era has to be managed effectively. There are numerous examples from other countries that reveal the susceptibility of the social networks and communities in the post-war period. For example, soon after the American Civil War, some of the traumatized soldiers formed an extremist movement that called KKK which engaged in racial violence. Many American volunteers who participated in the Spanish Civil War engaged in social violence and some Lincoln Brigade soldiers became top criminals. Post-Vietnam War caused a vast social chaos in the USA.

Similarly, many Afghanistan veterans of the Red Army engaged in organized crimes in the former USSR.Soon after a mass conflict like war, there is a tendency to political extremism and sometimes religious fundamentalism to emerge. In a post conflict, society social fabric is fragile, people are traumatized and they become easy targets to these extreme and damaging forces. Soon after the WW 1, Germany faced such a situation and NAZIS could exploit the collective trauma experienced by the German people. The Taliban fundamentalists grabbed power at the end of the Afghan- Soviet conflict.

Hence, there is an impending risk that Sri Lankans face today and the Democratic forces have an absolute responsibility to restore peace and justice system in the Country.

## 9. Conclusions

Lack of sufficient knowledge in psycho-social practices in Army units and the problem of economic poverty are two identified fundamental factors, that basically affect to the rate of increasing crime including robberies, murder, in the contemporary society of Sri Lanka. Despite the fact that the Sri Lanka Army has competition in their profession in the long determined war period, almost all the sectors of defense and security sectors are at the minimum level of the scientific knowledge in mental health and psycho-social awareness.

After the war, substantial number of soldiers, who were subjected to severe effects of violence and brutality in the battlefield were possible to leak their talents and skills in defense in achieving their personal objectives under the absence of personality training or personal development avenues in the post-war conflict period. As per the gathered information in the data analysis, this study assumes ,that the inability to cope with the post-war social change , Army soldiers and some of the Army officers were vulnerable to the existing private and public issues of the political economy of the contemporary social and political system.

High rate of absence was also affected to the involvement of army soldiers in the criminal action. According to the interviewed data , reason behind the rate of absence after the war was due to the collapse of soldiers hope of that they would be given a substantial salary increase. Further, when they went to their village in the war season, soldiers had interesting heroic stories to tell their colleagues and friends. However, after war ,they were neutralised by their colleagues and friends as they did not have such kind of previous heroic stories to exaggerate their national contribution to the country. Finally, this study concludes that the Army servicemen could be caught to ill-impacts of long driven war, if they were not provided sufficient scientific knowledge for coping with the post war conflict issues.

Based on this conclusion, the study recommends to develop the initial training and senior level in-service training within the scope of post-war conflict perspective, so that the courses of psychological counselling, psycho-social awareness, appreciation of culture and fine Arts could be integrated to the existing lessons of mental health for military sectors as an effective mode for conflict resolution. And also specialised division for mental health should be established by the use of expertise knowledge of psychological sciences and therapeutic communication for the respective Army units for smoothly manage the ill-impacts of post-war period.

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