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Stress, Well-Being And Hardiness In The New Zealand Military: A Transactional Model

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Abstract

The present research sought to investigate stress in the New Zealand Army from a transactional perspective (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Traditional models of stress have focused on linear or cause and effect relationships, often referred to as stressor-strain models, when attempting to explain the complex nature of stress. However, stressor-strain models often emphasise the negative consequences of stress and tend to incorporate a “one size fits all” approach where stress is assumed to be negative and unavoidable. It is argued that people differ in their response to stress, the types of stress they experience as well as the intensity and duration of stressful encounters.

The current research investigated appraisal, coping, cognitive hardiness and work related stress in 439 military personnel. Positive and negative outcomes were measured as well as the role of moderating and mediating variables in the stress process. Results provide empirical support for a transactional model of occupational stress consisting of both negative and positive pathways. Associations were found between challenge appraisals, adaptive coping and positive psychological and physical outcomes. Associations were also found between threat appraisals, maladaptive coping and negative psychological and physical outcomes. Cognitive hardiness was not found to be associated with building adaptive coping strategies and did not mediate or moderate the positive pathway to stress. However, cognitive hardiness did mediate the negative pathway suggesting a potential protective element to this construct.

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