



Occupational Mental Health and Resilience in Security and Defense Personnel: Emerging Challenges, Evidence-Based Interventions, and Organizational Strategies

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Abstract

Security and defense personnel operate in highly demanding environments characterized by chronic occupational stress, exposure to potentially traumatic events, and the continuous need to make critical decisions under conditions of uncertainty. These occupational demands place professionals at increased risk for psychological distress, burnout, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), highlighting the importance of comprehensive mental health strategies.

This paper reviews the principal psychosocial risk factors affecting security and defense professionals while examining resilience as a dynamic and multidimensional process that can be strengthened through individual, interpersonal, and organizational interventions. Particular attention is given to preventive approaches, psychological preparedness, emotional regulation, peer-support programs, and leadership practices that foster psychological safety and organizational resilience.

The review also analyzes emerging evidence-based interventions for trauma-related disorders, including eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), virtual reality-assisted exposure therapy, and non-invasive brain stimulation techniques. In addition, it evaluates recent developments in institutional mental health policies, identifying advances in early detection, stigma reduction, and access to psychological care, while acknowledging persistent organizational and cultural barriers that limit effective implementation.

Finally, the paper proposes an integrated framework that combines technological innovation, evidence-based clinical interventions, and organizational policies designed to promote long-term psychological well-being and operational readiness. Protecting the mental health of security and defense personnel is presented not only as an ethical responsibility but also as a strategic investment that enhances professional performance, organizational effectiveness, and the resilience of democratic institutions.

Keywords: occupational mental health; psychological resilience; security personnel; defense personnel; post-traumatic stress disorder; evidence-based interventions; organizational resilience.

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1. Introduction

Security and defense have undergone substantial transformations in the postmodern era, shaped by shifting geopolitical dynamics, technological innovation, and the diversification of global threats. These changes have not only increased the complexity of conflict scenarios but have also imposed greater psychological demands on professionals operating within this domain.

Security and defense personnel—including military members, law enforcement officers, and intelligence operatives—are frequently exposed to high-stress environments marked by uncertainty, rapid decision-making under extreme conditions, and repeated encounters with traumatic events. The psychological toll of such experiences can manifest in various forms, ranging from anxiety and depressive disorders to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), thereby highlighting the urgent need for effective coping mechanisms and resilience-building strategies.

In today's postmodern landscape—characterized by accelerated technological, social, and cultural shifts—these professionals face increasingly intricate psychological challenges. Mental health and resilience have become vital pillars for individuals tasked with managing persistent pressure, operational stress, and trauma. Understanding the underlying factors that influence their psychological well-being and identifying pathways to cultivate resilience is both a scientific and ethical priority (Páez, 2020).

This paper examines the primary psychological challenges confronting security and defense professionals, with a particular focus on the cumulative effects of chronic stress and the emotional consequences of their occupational roles. It also explores evidence-based intervention and prevention strategies, including resilience enhancement programs, psychological support systems, and specialized training models aimed at improving emotional regulation in high-risk environments. Finally, the paper underscores the essential role of psychology in modern security and defense frameworks, advocating for a more human-centered approach to strengthening both the well-being and operational effectiveness of those who carry out these critical duties.

2. The Human factor in postmodern security and defense

Security and defense professionals operate within environments marked by volatility, uncertainty, and continuous pressure. In the postmodern era, the psychological challenges they encounter have evolved considerably, exerting profound effects not only on their operational performance but also on their emotional and social well-being (Bonner & Ellender, 2022). This section explores the key factors that influence the mental health of individuals serving in these demanding roles.

2.1 New Forms of Warfare and Threats: The evolution of conflicts has created a scenario where threats are no longer limited to conventional confrontations. Hybrid warfare, psychological terrorism, and cybersecurity have expanded the cognitive and emotional demands on security and defense agents. Exposure to digital propaganda, misinformation, and psychological manipulation can generate confusion, mental fatigue, and decision-making difficulties.

The advancement of covert operations, psychological warfare campaigns, and the integration of artificial intelligence in conflict strategies have substantially increased the emotional burden on security and defense professionals. Moreover, the nature of asymmetric conflicts and ongoing counterterrorism efforts demand continuous vigilance and heightened mental readiness to navigate unpredictable and rapidly evolving situations. This pervasive sense of imminent threat often induces a state of hypervigilance, which, when sustained over time, contributes significantly to emotional exhaustion and chronic stress.

2.2 Cognitive and Emotional Load: Decision-making in high-uncertainty environments requires security and defense professionals to process complex information under extreme pressure. Facing ethical dilemmas, reacting quickly to crisis situations, and assuming responsibility for human lives are factors that increase cognitive and emotional load.

This burden is further intensified by the necessity to maintain sustained hyper-concentration in high-risk environments, which often leads to mental fatigue, difficulties in disengaging from work, and a diminished

capacity for psychological recovery. Emotional exhaustion not only affects individuals but also undermines team dynamics, impairing effective communication and collaborative decision-making.

Furthermore, repeated exposure to traumatic events may result in emotional desensitization or, alternatively, hypersensitivity, both of which threaten the individual's psychological stability. In some instances, professionals may exhibit symptoms of dissociation or emotional avoidance, which negatively impact their occupational performance and personal well-being.

2.3 Impact of Chronic Stress: Prolonged exposure to high-risk situations can lead to significant mental health problems. Among the most common effects of chronic stress in security and defense professionals are:

- **Burnout Syndrome:** Characterized by physical and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decreased sense of personal achievement. The accumulation of responsibilities and lack of adequate rest exacerbate this condition.

- **Anxiety and Depression:** Constant pressure and uncertainty can provoke severe anxiety symptoms, panic attacks, and depressive episodes. Additionally, feelings of guilt or frustration stemming from the inability to prevent certain threats can contribute to these clinical conditions.

- **Sleep Disorders:** Disruption of the circadian cycle, insomnia, and recurrent nightmares affect the body's recovery capacity and decrease cognitive performance. Rotating shift work and exposure to high-tension situations can hinder sleep reconciliation.

- **Interpersonal Relationship Problems:** Emotional tension can generate family conflicts, difficulties in socialization, and progressive isolation. Many professionals develop a sense of emotional detachment that interferes with their ability to establish healthy affective relationships.

- **Problematic Substance Use:** As an inadequate coping mechanism, some professionals resort to alcohol, medication, or drug abuse to mitigate the impact of chronic stress, which poses additional risks to their health and job performance.

- The combination of these factors can compromise the psychological stability of security and defense professionals, affecting both their crisis response capacity and their long-term quality of life.

3. Psychological Impact of Post-Traumatic Stress and Other Disorders Among Security and Defense Personnel

Professions within the security and defense sectors entail continuous exposure to events with the potential to cause profound psychological effects. From armed confrontations and covert operations to responding to disaster victims and humanitarian crises, these professionals routinely encounter circumstances that challenge their emotional resilience (IEEE, 2020).

The psychological consequences of such experiences can manifest in a variety of conditions, with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) being among the most prevalent. Nonetheless, other conditions also affect these individuals, including combat fatigue, emotional burnout, and disruptions to overall quality of life. The following section delves into the primary psychological disorders associated with security and defense work, examining their symptoms, impact, and potential coping mechanisms (Marchand et al., 2015; Porter et al., 2017).

3.1 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): PTSD is one of the most common psychological conditions among security and defense professionals. It is characterized by the re-experiencing of traumatic events through flashbacks or nightmares, avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, hyperactivation, and cognitive and mood alterations. The impact of PTSD can affect the individual's functionality both at work and in personal life, making it difficult to adapt to everyday life.

3.2 Combat Fatigue and Emotional Burnout: Combat fatigue is a psychological condition characterized by extreme exhaustion, decreased performance, and mood alterations. Security and defense

professionals operating in prolonged conflict zones may develop this condition due to overexposure to dangerous situations. It manifests as anxiety, demotivation, and, in some cases, depressive symptoms.

Emotional burnout is associated with the gradual loss of the ability to regulate stress and cope with pressure. This condition is linked to prolonged exposure to traumatic events and excessive workload. Common symptoms include apathy, insomnia, and deterioration of personal relationships.

3.3 Coping and Prevention Strategies: Security and defense professionals operate in contexts of high psychological demand, where constant exposure to stress, danger, and decision-making under pressure can significantly impact their mental health. For this reason, it is essential to develop and implement coping and prevention strategies that allow them to effectively manage the emotional and cognitive demands of their work, minimizing the risk of psychological deterioration and enhancing their resilience.

Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioral processes individuals employ to manage adverse situations. For security and defense professionals, these mechanisms can be categorized into active and passive strategies. Active coping includes seeking social support, training in emotional regulation skills, and applying problem-solving techniques. These approaches foster a proactive response to stress and help build greater resilience to pressure. Conversely, passive strategies—such as avoidance or emotional suppression—may offer temporary relief but, over time, increase vulnerability to psychological disorders like anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Among the most effective active coping strategies is cognitive restructuring, grounded in cognitive-behavioral therapy. This approach enables the modification of dysfunctional thought patterns that may arise in response to traumatic experiences or chronic stress. By identifying and challenging negative beliefs, professionals can develop a more balanced and realistic perspective on the challenges they face, thereby alleviating the associated emotional burden.

Training in mindfulness and emotional regulation has proven to be a valuable tool in preventing psychological burnout. Mindfulness practice enhances professionals' capacity for emotional self-regulation, improves attentional focus, and reduces stress levels. Similarly, techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing and progressive muscle relaxation can help decrease physiological arousal linked to high-pressure situations, promoting overall well-being.

Social support constitutes another fundamental pillar in the prevention of psychological burnout. Building support networks—both professional and personal—facilitates emotional expression and the sharing of experiences, which reduces the isolation often experienced by these professionals. Mentorship programs, peer support groups, and designated emotional decompression spaces within institutions can cultivate an organizational culture that values psychological well-being and encourages mutual care.

At the organizational level, it is essential to implement prevention policies that address occupational stress and secondary trauma. Such measures include resilience training, periodic monitoring of professionals' emotional states, and clear protocols for psychological crisis management. Integrating psychoeducational mental health interventions into the training of security and defense personnel can foster greater awareness of the profession's emotional risks and equip individuals with effective coping tools.

Furthermore, institutions must promote a healthy balance between professional and personal life. Continuous exposure to high-pressure environments combined with insufficient recovery time can lead to progressive burnout, culminating in exhaustion if not properly managed. Establishing adequate rest periods, flexible shift scheduling when feasible, and encouraging recreational activities outside of work are vital for preserving mental health among these workers.

Early detection of psychological distress is also a key preventive measure. Awareness and recognition of symptoms related to post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and depression enable timely and effective intervention. Incorporating regular psychological assessments within routine medical check-ups facilitates the identification of potential risks before they escalate into serious conditions.

Finally, the role of leadership within security and defense organizations must be emphasized. Leaders who prioritize mental health, provide support to their teams, and foster an organizational climate rooted in trust and respect substantially enhance professional resilience. Leadership trained in emotional intelligence and effective communication is instrumental in promoting the psychological well-being of their members (Boga, 2023).

4. Resilience and coping factors in high-risk contexts

Security and defense professionals, frequently exposed to highly stressful environments, must develop resilience and coping strategies to maintain their psychological stability. Resilience—defined as the capacity to adapt positively in the face of adversity—emerges as a critical factor in mitigating the detrimental effects of stress and exposure to danger (Bennet et al., 2024).

Resilience has historically been a fundamental element within the military domain. Traditional psychological prevention strategies have encompassed personnel selection, screening, training, unit cohesion, and leadership. However, these approaches have often lacked specific integration of mental health science. The interest in resilience among military leaders was previously more intuitive, exemplified by figures such as Clausewitz (Delgado, 2022). While these traditional strategies have frequently demonstrated practical effectiveness, they have rarely undergone empirical validation.

Currently, resilience frameworks are increasingly grounded in scientific evidence. According to García-Silgo (2013), for military resilience programs to be genuinely effective, they must rest upon empirical foundations. Otherwise, there is a risk that such programs rely on arbitrary criteria, intuition, or longstanding traditions that, despite appearing promising, do not guarantee positive impacts on health, well-being, or operational performance. Castro and Adler emphasize that evidence-based methodology requires, first, that program content be supported by prior research, and second, that the training interventions themselves have been validated. Furthermore, these authors caution that validation extends beyond observing improvements in pre- and post-intervention assessments; it demands demonstrating significant effects through controlled studies utilizing randomized samples.

4.1 Psychological resilience: Individual and trainable characteristics for effective stress management

Among the individual factors contributing to resilience are:

- Self-confidence and self-efficacy: Believing in one's ability to face challenges increases psychological resistance.
- Emotional regulation: The ability to manage emotions and stress improves decision-making in critical situations.
- Sense of purpose and personal values: A strong sense of duty and commitment to the professional mission reinforces resilience in the face of adversity.

4.2 Stress Management and Emotional Regulation Training as Part of Professional Development

In the context of postmodern security and defense, stress management and emotional regulation training play a crucial role. Professionals working in these fields constantly face high-pressure, uncertainty, and risk situations, which can affect their performance, well-being, and decision-making. Therefore, the implementation of structured training programs in these competencies is fundamental.

4.2.1 Fundamentals of Stress Management

Stress is a natural physiological and psychological response to external and internal demands perceived as challenging. Within the security and defense sectors, stress may arise from multiple sources, including exposure to hostile environments, rapid decision-making under pressure, and the emotional weight associated with certain missions.

Stress management approaches encompass cognitive, behavioral, and physiological strategies aimed at mitigating the negative effects of stress while optimizing individual performance. Among the primary techniques utilized in these programs are:

- Breathing and relaxation techniques: Methods such as diaphragmatic breathing and progressive muscle relaxation help decrease physiological arousal associated with stress.

- Cognitive restructuring: The process of identifying and modifying dysfunctional thought patterns that can intensify anxiety and stress responses.

- Resilience training: The development of skills that enable individuals to confront adversity while preserving emotional and cognitive equilibrium.

- Mindfulness and attention training: Meditation-based practices designed to enhance concentration and reduce emotional reactivity to stress-inducing stimuli.

4.2.2 Emotional Regulation in High-Demand Environments

Emotional regulation is the capacity to adaptively manage one's emotions in order to maintain psychological balance and enable effective responses in demanding situations. Within the security and defense fields, this skill is crucial for strategic decision-making and for fostering constructive interactions with colleagues and civilians alike.

The most commonly used emotional regulation strategies include:

- Emotional identification and acceptance: Recognizing emotions without judgment allows proactive addressing.

- Cognitive reappraisal: Modifying the interpretation of a situation to reduce its negative emotional impact.

- Adaptive emotional expression: Assertive communication of emotions to avoid the accumulation of psychological tension.

- Use of emotional recovery routines: Incorporation of regenerative activities such as physical exercise, adequate rest, and social support.

4.2.3 Application of Training in Operational Contexts

The success of stress management and emotional regulation training lies in its practical application in real operational environments. For this, programs should include:

- Simulation of high-pressure scenarios: Trainings based on realistic situations that allow participants to practice emotional regulation in controlled contexts.

- Continuous evaluation and feedback: Monitoring participants' progress to adjust strategies according to their needs.

- Integration with other training programs: Including emotional regulation as part of the comprehensive development of competencies in security and defense.

4.3 Social Support and Teamwork as Key Protective Factors Against Emotional Burnout

Social support and teamwork are fundamental components of resilience among security and defense professionals. A strong support network within the workplace helps mitigate the effects of stress and promotes psychological well-being. Fostering a work environment grounded in mutual support and collaboration is essential to enhancing coping capacities in high-pressure situations.

Key factors in this regard include:

- Group cohesion: Teams with strong cohesion show less vulnerability to stress and greater capacity to face crises.

- Effective communication: The ability to share experiences and emotions with colleagues allows better stress processing and reduces emotional isolation.

- Positive leadership: Leadership that promotes trust and cooperation enhances collective resilience and strengthens team morale.

- Neuroscience of Coping: Brain Mechanisms Involved in Stress Adaptation

The neuroscience of coping investigates the brain processes involved in stress regulation, decision-making under pressure, and psychological resilience. In the security and defense sectors, understanding these mechanisms is essential for optimizing both performance and emotional stability among professionals.

Coping strategies can be classified into three major categories based on their neurobiological impact:

- Problem-focused coping: Involves the use of active strategies to modify the source of stress, activating the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and promoting planning and problem-solving.

- Emotion-focused coping: Focuses on regulating emotions derived from stress, involving the ventromedial prefrontal cortex and limbic structures such as the amygdala.

- Avoidant coping: Characterized by suppression or denial of stress, often associated with hyperactivation of the amygdala and reduced prefrontal regulation, which can lead to maladaptive responses.

5. Intervention and prevention strategies for mental health issues

Scientific literature indicates that emergency and disaster situations exert a greater impact on mental health than on physical health. Security and defense professionals are particularly likely to encounter such events, rendering them more vulnerable to significant psychological consequences.

The current century has been marked by terrorist attacks, natural disasters, mass casualty incidents, wars, economic crises, and social unrest. In 2001, the World Health Organization estimated that 10% of individuals experiencing traumatic events would develop mental health problems, while another 10% would face difficulties functioning normally in daily life (World Health Organization, 2001). Over time, research has increasingly highlighted the psychological toll of disasters and emergencies, noting that for every person physically injured, four suffer psychological harm (García-Real et al., 2020).

Mental health among security and defense professionals is a critical factor affecting both their personal well-being and operational effectiveness. These individuals work under demanding conditions, face constant exposure to high-risk situations, and bear significant emotional burdens. Consequently, they are at elevated risk of psychological disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and chronic fatigue. Implementing effective intervention and prevention strategies not only enhances their quality of life but also improves their capacity to perform their duties.

Such strategies must adopt a comprehensive approach that integrates early detection tools, psychological support programs, resilience training, and the cultivation of an organizational culture that prioritizes mental well-being. The following sections outline key strategies in this domain

5.1 Early Detection and Psychological Evaluation

Early detection of mental health issues is crucial for mitigating long-term consequences and ensuring timely, effective intervention among security and defense professionals. Prolonged stress and exposure to traumatic events can produce symptoms that, if left unrecognized, may evolve into more severe psychological disorders and impair an individual's operational capacity.

To achieve timely detection, it is recommended to implement periodic psychological evaluations to monitor the emotional and cognitive state of professionals. The most commonly used methods in this context include:

- Standardized questionnaires: Scientifically validated tools such as the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) allow for the assessment of specific symptoms related to mental health.

- Structured clinical interviews: Evaluations conducted by specialized psychologists that provide a deeper analysis of the individual's emotional state and detect warning signs.

- Physiological monitoring: Biomedical indicators such as heart rate variability, cortisol levels in saliva, and sleep patterns can provide objective information about the stress level and mental health of professionals.

- Neuropsychological evaluations: Tools such as attention, memory, and executive function tests help identify cognitive alterations related to chronic stress and mental fatigue.

In addition to evaluation methods, it is essential for security and defense institutions to implement early intervention protocols. When signs of psychological distress are identified, immediate access to specialized support should be ensured, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, psychological counseling, and psychoeducation programs focused on stress management.

The effectiveness of early detection largely depends on the awareness of professionals and the presence of a work environment that promotes open communication and mutual support. In this context, it is crucial to eliminate the stigma surrounding the pursuit of psychological help and to cultivate an organizational culture that recognizes mental health as a fundamental component of professional performance.

5.2 Psychological Intervention Programs

Psychological intervention programs are essential for addressing mental health challenges among security and defense professionals. These programs must be specifically tailored to the unique needs and challenges of this population, incorporating evidence-based strategies aimed at enhancing emotional well-being and strengthening coping capacities.

5.2.1 Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is one of the most effective interventions for treating mental health issues in this sector. Its approach focuses on identifying and modifying negative thought patterns and dysfunctional behaviors. In the context of security and defense, CBT can help professionals manage anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms through techniques such as cognitive restructuring, gradual exposure, and coping skills training.

5.2.2 Prolonged Exposure Therapy

Particularly useful for treating PTSD, Prolonged Exposure Therapy allows individuals to progressively confront traumatic memories and situations in a safe environment. This reduces the intensity of negative emotional responses and improves emotional regulation.

5.2.3 Resilience Training

Resilience programs are designed to strengthen professionals' ability to face stress and adversity. These programs include strategies such as boosting self-confidence, identifying sources of social support, and developing problem-solving skills.

5.2.4 Group Interventions

Group support is a key component of psychological intervention. Group therapies allow professionals to share experiences and coping strategies, reducing feelings of isolation and promoting cohesion among peers.

5.2.5 Psychosocial Support

Access to psychosocial support networks within security and defense institutions is fundamental. Programs that integrate psychological support, counseling, and wellness services can help professionals manage the emotional challenges arising from their work.

Effective implementation of these programs requires institutional commitment, specialized training for mental health professionals, and the removal of barriers to accessing psychological services. Additionally, it is crucial that these programs are flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of security and defense professionals.

5.2.6 Innovative Therapies

Innovative therapies have played a crucial role in promoting the mental health of security and defense professionals, aiming to more effectively address the psychological aftermath of prolonged exposure to extreme stress, violence, and trauma. In recent years, the incorporation of neuroscience-based approaches, technology, and personalized treatments has enabled the development of more effective interventions tailored to the specific needs of these professionals.

One of the emerging therapies with significant impact is Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy (VRET), which has proven particularly effective in treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This intervention allows professionals to gradually and controlledly relive situations that have caused traumatic impact, promoting desensitization and cognitive restructuring without exposing the patient to real risks. By simulating specific scenarios that security and defense agents face in their work, this technology offers highly personalized treatment with a higher adherence rate compared to traditional therapies.

Another innovative approach is the use of non-invasive brain stimulation, such as Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) and Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation (tDCS), which have shown promising results in regulating neuronal activity in patients with symptoms resistant to conventional treatment. These techniques can improve PTSD, anxiety, and depression symptoms, especially in professionals who have developed dysfunctional emotional processing patterns following high-impact experiences.

In the field of psychotherapy, Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) have gained significant relevance. CPT helps professionals modify negative beliefs associated with traumatic events, allowing them to reconstruct more functional narratives about their experiences. On the other hand, EMDR facilitates the integration of disturbing memories through bilateral brain stimulation, helping to reduce their emotional intensity. Both therapies have been adopted by various security and defense institutions due to their effectiveness in reducing the impact of trauma.

5.2.7 Mental Health Policies in Security and Defense Forces

Mental health policies within security and defense forces have evolved to meet the current needs of their professionals, adopting increasingly preventive and comprehensive approaches. Historically, mental health care in these institutions has been hindered by stigma and insufficient resources, creating significant barriers to accessing psychological treatment. However, growing evidence regarding the critical role of psychological well-being in operational performance and decision-making has driven substantial reforms in many organizations (Campbell, 2023).

In this context (Ministry of Defense, 2016), several security forces have implemented early detection programs for stress and trauma symptoms through periodic psychological assessments and monitoring systems aimed at tracking personnel's emotional states. These initiatives seek to identify signs of burnout before they develop into clinical disorders, enabling timely interventions. Additionally, rapid and confidential psychological support hotlines have been established to ensure professionals can seek help without fear of reprisals or stigma.

Another key strategy has been the integration of mental health topics into training and education programs. Police academies, armed forces, and specialized units increasingly incorporate modules on stress management, emotional regulation, and resilience, preparing personnel to confront the psychological challenges inherent to their roles. Moreover, crisis intervention protocols have been developed to provide

immediate assistance to individuals exposed to high-impact events, such as armed confrontations, attacks, or natural disasters.

Policies have also progressed regarding the promotion of work-life balance. Measures such as limiting excessive shifts, regulating rest periods, and fostering wellness activities within institutions have been introduced. Additionally, some countries have designed progressive reintegration programs for personnel who have experienced severe psychological issues, ensuring a safe and effective return to duty.

Legislatively, several nations have begun recognizing post-traumatic stress as an occupational condition within security and defense sectors, improving access to medical and therapeutic benefits for affected individuals. Furthermore, some organizations have promoted the establishment of specialized mental health units within their structures to better address their members' needs.

Despite these advances, significant challenges remain. Cultural resistance to acknowledging psychological difficulties within these forces continues to hinder normalization and access to treatment. Resource limitations in some institutions restrict the availability of specialized programs and reduce the capacity for early intervention. Addressing these challenges requires ongoing research and enhanced collaboration between mental health professionals and security and defense organizations.

6. Conclusions and future perspectives

The mental health and resilience of security and defense professionals constitute a critical challenge in the postmodern era. The increasing complexity of operational environments, coupled with heightened psychological demands, underscores the necessity for a holistic approach to the prevention and management of emotional burnout. This chapter has demonstrated that constant exposure to stress, violence, and high-stakes decision-making can profoundly affect the psychological stability of these professionals, with significant repercussions for both their performance and overall quality of life.

Identifying risk factors associated with chronic stress, trauma, and occupational burnout is fundamental to understanding the psychological implications inherent to these professions and to designing effective coping strategies. Fostering resilience—conceptualized as the capacity to adapt positively to adversity—has emerged as a central focus of interventions targeting security and defense personnel, at both individual and organizational levels. The implementation of emotional regulation training, access to robust support networks, and the promotion of self-care practices have all proven to be essential tools in mitigating the psychological impact of adverse experiences.

Recent advancements in innovative therapeutic approaches have significantly enhanced the treatment of disorders such as post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and depression among these professionals. Techniques such as virtual reality-assisted gradual exposure to traumatic memories, non-invasive brain stimulation, and cognitive restructuring-based psychotherapies have increased the effectiveness of interventions, enabling more rapid and individualized recovery processes. However, for these therapies to yield meaningful results, it is imperative to ensure their accessibility within institutions and to foster an organizational culture that recognizes psychological well-being as integral to operational effectiveness.

In terms of mental health policy, notable progress has been made in the implementation of preventive strategies, including the early detection of psychological distress, the integration of mental health education in initial training, and the development of institutional support mechanisms. Nonetheless, structural challenges remain, such as cultural resistance to acknowledging psychological vulnerability, persistent stigma surrounding the pursuit of professional help, and resource limitations within certain organizations. Overcoming these barriers demands a steadfast commitment from security and defense institutions, as well as increased investment in specialized programs dedicated to promoting the psychological well-being of their members.

Looking to the future, it is essential to deepen research into the psychological effects experienced by the security and defense workforce, with the aim of developing increasingly effective strategies for the prevention and treatment of emotional burnout. The integration of emerging technologies—such as

artificial intelligence and biomarker analysis for early stress detection—offers new opportunities to enhance the capacity to address the psychological challenges faced by these professionals. Furthermore, promoting organizational leadership grounded in emotional intelligence and staff well-being could significantly transform the management of psychosocial risks within these institutions.

Ultimately, the psychological well-being of security and defense professionals must be regarded not as a peripheral concern but as a strategic priority that directly impacts both individual performance and societal safety. The establishment of a culture that values mental health, the reinforcement of preventive policies, and access to innovative therapeutic interventions are all vital to ensuring the emotional sustainability of these professionals in the postmodern era. The ongoing challenge lies in achieving a balance between operational demands and psychological care, ensuring that those who protect society are themselves equipped with the necessary resources to safeguard their own well-being.

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