

Spiritual Well-Being and Moral Injury: Insights from the Armed Police Force, Nepal

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Abstract

The Armed Police Force (APF), Nepal functions in high-stress and morally complex environments, making its personnel vulnerable to challenges related to Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) and Moral Injury (MI). An attempt was made to examine the link between SWB and MI and explored group differences across key demographic and service-related variables. A total of 167 APF service personnel participated in the study and completed the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) and the Moral Injury Events Scale (MIES). Results revealed a weak but positive link between spiritual well-being and moral injury. No notable differences in SWB or MI were observed across groups based on age, gender, marital status, years of service, rank, deployment in conflict versus non-conflict areas, or combat exposure. However, a notable difference emerged in moral injury between service personnel with higher and lower educational levels, with lower-educated service personnel reporting greater moral injury. In contrast, no significant difference in spiritual well-being was found across educational levels.

Keywords:

Armed Police Force, positive psychology, spiritual well-being, moral injury, service personnel

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Introduction

Armed Police Force (APF), Nepal is a paramilitary nature organization responsible for border management, internal security, counterinsurgency, revenue support, disaster response, and humanitarian assistance. Due to these roles, APF personnel regularly operate in high-stress and morally complex environments such as conflict zones, disaster areas, and peacekeeping missions. These demands increase their risk of psychological strain and exposure to morally challenging situations.

Well-being is generally conceptualized as a multidimensional state of positive functioning encompassing physical, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of human life (Ryff, 1989). It reflects an individual's quality of life, emotional stability, meaningful relationships, and ability to cope effectively with demands in one's life (Diener, 1984). Maintaining well-being is crucial for the members of high-risk professions like paramilitary forces, who need to sustain resilience and operational readiness.

Within this broader framework, spiritual well-being assumes a critical role. Spiritual well-being (SWB) plays a crucial role in overall health (Ellison, 1983; Moberg, 2002). It encompasses a sense of meaning, purpose, connection, and inner peace. Studies indicate that spiritual well-being can alleviate stress, enhance resilience, and aid in healthy coping, particularly among high-stress groups such as military personnel (Pargament, 1997). For paramilitary forces, spiritual well-being serves as a protective element, enabling them to remain strong and resilient in the face of ongoing difficulties and moral dilemmas.

On the other hand, Moral injury (MI) is the profound emotional, psychological, and spiritual distress that occurs when an individual engages in or witnesses' actions that clash with their moral or ethical principles (Litz et al., 2009; Shay, 2014). In contrast to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is primarily linked to fear, moral injury is linked to feelings of guilt, shame, betrayal, and internal conflict (Bryan et al., 2018). Research on military and veteran populations indicates that moral injury can result in depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and challenges in everyday life (Griffin et al., 2019; Koenig et al., 2019).

Although SWB and MI have been extensively studied in Western military and veteran contexts, they remain underexplored in South Asian region, particularly among paramilitary forces such as the APF in Nepal. The socio-cultural background of Nepal, which values community, family ties, and spiritual traditions, may influence how APF service personnel experience spiritual well-being and moral injury. Factors such as education, rank, training, and deployment may also affect their responses to morally difficult situations.

This research employs Positive Psychology as its primary framework. Positive Psychology, a sub-branch of psychology, centers on recognizing and fostering human strengths, resilience, well-being, and flourishing, rather than merely focusing on deficits or disorders (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). By placing spiritual well-being and moral injury within this context, the research underscores the possibilities for growth, coping, and resilience among APF service personnel, drawing attention to elements that can improve mental, emotional, and spiritual health, even in high-pressure, ethically complex situations.

Understanding how SWB and MI relate in this context is important. It can add to global research on the mental and spiritual health of security forces and help develop culturally appropriate programs to build resilience, reduce stress, and improve the well-being of APF service personnel.

Review of Literature

Udovicich et al. (2025) examined the relationships between moral injury, self-coldness, self-warmth, depression, and suicidality among 400 retired police officers. Their findings revealed that moral injury, self-coldness, and self-warmth showed only weak and independent associations with suicidal ideation, while depression emerged as the strongest correlate of suicidality. This study is grounded in the cognitive-emotional model of moral injury (Litz et al.), which conceptualizes moral injury as the psychological aftermath of violating deeply held moral beliefs. Additionally, the inclusion of self-warmth and self-coldness reflects the influence of self-compassion theory (Neff), highlighting how internal emotional attitudes may buffer or intensify vulnerability to suicidal thoughts.

Levi-Belz et al. (2025) conducted a longitudinal study involving 374 Israeli combat veterans to explore relationships among exposure to potentially morally injurious events (PMIEs), trauma-related guilt, self-forgiveness, and suicide risk. Their results demonstrated that PMIE exposure predicted higher guilt, lower self-forgiveness, and increased suicide risk. Notably, self-forgiveness moderated these associations, protecting veterans with higher self-forgiveness from increased guilt and suicidality. This work reflects self-forgiveness and moral repair models, which emphasize the restoration of moral identity and reduction of moral dissonance following distressing events.

Similarly, D'Alessandro-Lowe et al. (2025) studied 181 public safety personnel, including police officers and paramedics, and found that moral injury was associated with reduced organizational support, diminished emotional wellness, and lower levels of self-compassion and social support. Here, the findings align with organizational stress

frameworks as well as social support buffering models, suggesting that contextual factors such as institutional support which play a vital protective role against the psychological impact of moral injury.

Allen et al. (2023) investigated ethical dilemmas among veterans of the UK Service Police using semi-structured interviews. Veterans reported instances where military commands conflicted with personal values, experiences of betrayal by trusted authorities, and feelings of disillusionment, shame, and guilt. These findings resonate strongly with Shay's betrayal model of moral injury, which conceptualizes moral injury as a violation of trust by leadership or institutions.

Torkaman et al. (2021) examined spiritual well-being and life purpose among 301 Iranian soldiers. Their results showed high spiritual well-being and moderate life purpose, reflecting underlying spiritual well-being and existential meaning frameworks. These models propose that spirituality and purpose in life play a central role in promoting resilience and emotional balance during morally or psychologically distressing experiences.

Brémault-Phillips et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study with Canadian military personnel exploring the relationship between spirituality, religion, and moral injury. Their findings showed that morally injurious experiences often triggered spiritual struggles -such as guilt, anger toward God, or loss of faith-while spirituality also served as a significant coping resource. This dual function aligns with Pargament's religious coping theory, which distinguishes between positive and negative spiritual coping and highlights their differential psychological outcomes.

Tricia (2019) examined moral injury in female veterans deployed during OEF/OIF. The participants reported experiences of gender-based harassment, sexual trauma, and professional marginalization, followed by a lack of recognition and respect upon returning home. These themes align with feminist trauma theory, which emphasizes the gendered nature of trauma, structural inequalities, and the compounded moral distress experienced by women in male-dominated institutions.

Tuttle et al. (2019) studied moral harm and compassion fatigue among 454 Finnish police personnel. Their findings demonstrated higher levels of compassion fatigue and moral injury, which corresponded with reduced compassion satisfaction. This study draws on Figley's compassion fatigue model, highlighting how repeated exposure to distressing incidents can erode emotional resources and lead to moral and empathic exhaustion.

Evans et al. (2018) explored whether spiritual struggles mediated the association between morally injurious events and psychological distress. Results indicated that veterans

who reported more religious or spiritual suffering also showed higher levels of anxiety, despair, and PTSD symptoms. This again reinforces spiritual struggle frameworks, which propose that disruptions in spiritual meaning-making can exacerbate psychological distress.

Finally, Zappalla (2018) examined combat veterans and found that lower spiritual wellness predicted higher levels of moral injury, suggesting that spiritual well-being may serve as a protective factor. This aligns with spiritual resilience models, which underscore the role of spiritual resources in mitigating moral distress.

Existing studies have identified relationships between moral injury, spiritual well-being, and psychological distress within military and public safety personnel (Udovicich et al., 2025; Levi-Belz et al., 2025; D'Alessandro-Lowe et al., 2025; Brémault-Phillips et al., 2019). However, research in several respects remains limited. Very few studies investigate police or paramilitary forces within the South Asian region, like the Armed Police Force of Nepal, especially active-duty personnel exposed to ongoing morally challenging events. Also, though spiritual well-being is an identified protective agent, its role in mitigating moral injury within policing contexts remains underexplored. Gender, occupational culture, and institutional factors may modulate moral injury; however, these variables are generally not considered (Tricia, 2019; Allen et al., 2023). Most studies adopt quantitative or retrospective designs, with only a few qualitative insights into lived experiences and coping processes.

These gaps bring forth the need for studies on the interplay of moral injury and spiritual well-being among active APF service personnel that may inform interventions to enhance resilience, moral repair, and psychological well-being.

Objective

To evaluate the spiritual well-being and moral injury experienced by the service personnel of Armed Police Force, Nepal.

Hypotheses

H1: There will be a significant association between spiritual well-being and moral injury among Armed Police Force service personnel.

H2: Armed Police Force service personnel with higher education levels will report lower levels of moral injury compared to those with lower education levels.

H3: No significant differences in spiritual well-being or moral injury will be observed based on age, gender, marital status, rank, years of service, deployment area or combat exposure.

Research Methodology

The research design refers to the overall plan or strategy guiding a study to ensure that questions can be thoroughly and systematically pursued. In general, research designs may be descriptive, correlational, experimental, exploratory, or mixed-methods, depending on the objectives. Similarly, research approaches identify the way data are collected and analyzed, and these can be quantitative, qualitative, or a mixture of both. Quantitative approaches involve the collection of numerical data using structured tools such as surveys, questionnaires, and standardized scales, enabling statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. Qualitative approaches aim to understand experiences, meanings, and social contexts through methods such as interviews, focus groups, observation techniques, and content analysis. Mixed-methods approaches integrate both quantitative and qualitative techniques in order to provide a more complete understanding of the research problem. Data collection techniques include self-report methods, direct observation, analysis of secondary data, and experimental manipulations, among others, based on the purpose of the study and population. Effective research design will also incorporate the selection of appropriate tools and techniques that are valid, reliable, and suitable for participants while following basic ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary response. When research design, approach, and methods of data collection are carefully aligned, researchers can ensure that meaningful, accurate, and generalizable results are obtained from their studies.

From a philosophical perspective, the ontology that underpins this research makes the assumption that moral injury and spiritual well-being are actual, quantifiable constructs that exist within people and can differ depending on the situation and demographic group. This research is guided by positivist epistemology, which emphasizes objective measurement, standardized tools, quantifiable relationships, and statistical inference as legitimate methods of learning about psychological phenomena.

In our study we have employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, and correlational research design in investigating the association of spiritual well-being and moral injury among APF service personnel in Nepal. A quantitative approach was followed to allow for objective measurement of both constructs, with standardized instruments, and statistical testing of the hypotheses of the current study. The current study also provided a descriptive and comparative perspective whereby differences in spiritual well-being and moral injury were analyzed based on different demographic and service-related variables, which included age, gender, marital status, education, rank, years of service, deployment area, and

combat exposure. Responses were gathered using structured self-report questionnaires that included Spiritual Well-being Scale (SWBS) and Moral Injury Events Scale (MIES), which measured religious and existential well-being and exposure to morally injurious experiences along with relevant associated distress, respectively. A demographic questionnaire was also administered to elicit information about personal and occupational characteristics related to the study. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique as a strategy of ensuring representation from key groups within the APF. Strict ethical considerations were taken into account through informed consent and ensuring confidentiality.

Variables

In the present study, several demographic and service-related characteristics were treated as independent variables, including age group, gender, marital status, education level, rank, years of service, deployment area (classified as high-stress or low-stress locations), and combat exposure. These variables were selected because they represent key factors that may influence the psychological and spiritual experiences of Armed Police Force service personnel. The dependent variables in the study were spiritual well-being and moral injury.

Sample

Using a purposive sampling approach, the study drew a sample of 167 personnel serving in the Armed Police Force, Nepal across multiple regions. The participants included 157 male personnel and 10 female personnel.

Participation Requirements

The study included Armed Police Force service personnel who were between 18 and 55 years of age, currently serving in the force, and who provided informed consent to participate. Individuals who declined to participate or did not give consent were excluded from the study.

Tools

Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS)

This scale was developed by Paloutzian and Ellison in 1982. It is a self-report questionnaire, which was designed to examine the overall quality of a person's spiritual health. It consists of 20 items which is rated on a six-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The higher scores indicating greater perceived spiritual well-being. It has shown strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's α typically exceeding .85.

Moral Injury Events Scale (MIES)

It was developed by Litz and colleagues in 2013. It is a self-report instrument consisting of nine items rated on a six-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Higher scores indicate greater exposure to morally challenging events. The scale demonstrates good reliability, with Cronbach’s alpha typically ranging between .80 and .90.

Procedure

Permission to collect data was secured from the Chief of the Armed Police Force (APF), Nepal. A Google Form link was then distributed to APF service personnel who consented to participate. The study's goals were explained to the participants, and they received assurances that their answers would be kept private and used only for research. Clear instructions were provided within the Google Form, and the research team made themselves available via phone and email to address any questions or concerns from participants.

Findings and Discussion

Using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), the data analysis was conducted. The calculations included the mean, standard deviation (SD), t-values, and correlation.

Table 1

Demographic Details of Armed Police Force Service Personnel (N=167)

Variables	Categories	F	%
Age	25-35 Years	24	14.4%
	36-45 Years	100	59.9%
	46-55 Years	43	25.7%
Gender	Male	157	94%
	Female	10	6%
Marital Status	Married	159	95.2%
	Unmarried	8	4.8%
	10 th	14	8.4%
Education	12 th	24	14.4%
	BA	17	10.2%
	MA	108	64.7%
	MPhil	2	1.2%
	PhD	2	1.2%

Years of service	5-10 Years	13	7.8%
	11-15 Years	20	12%
	16-20 Years	39	23.4%
	More than 20 Years	95	56.9%
Religion	Hinduism	154	92.2%
	Buddhism	6	3.6%
	Christianity	4	2.4%
	Kirat	2	1.2%
	Islam	1	0.6%
Rank	DIG	2	1.2%
	SSP	8	4.8%
	SP	24	14.4%
	DSP	45	26.9%
	INS	44	26.3%
	SI	10	6%
	ASI	4	2.4%
	Other rank	30	18%
Posting area	Conflict Zone	92	55.1%
	No Conflict Zone	75	44.9%
Combat exposure	Yes	90	53.9%
	No	77	46.1%

Source: Google Forms survey data (2025).

Table 2

The Relationship Between Spiritual Well-Being and Moral Injury in APF Service Personnel

		Spiritual well-being	Moral Injury
Spiritual well-being	Pearson Correlation	1	0.027*
	N	167	167
Moral Injury	Pearson Correlation	0.027*	1
	N	167	167

Source: Based on Google Forms survey data (2025) analyzed using IBM SPSS

Table 2 shows the relationship between spiritual well-being and moral injury in APF service personnel. It suggests that the two variables have a weak positive association.

Table 3

Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-values for Spiritual Well-Being and Moral Injury among APF Service Personnel with Higher and Lower Educational Levels.

Variable	Higher educational level N=129		Lower educational level N=38		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Spiritual well-being	83.81	10.17	83.86	12.19	0.02(NS)
Moral Injury	31.95	8.83	36.32	8.48	2.68*

NS-No Significant, *Significant at $p < 0.05$

Source: Based on Google Forms survey data (2025) analyzed using IBM SPSS

Table 3 exhibits that APF service personnel with higher educational levels reported slightly lower spiritual well-being (M = 83.81, SD = 10.17) compared to those with lower educational levels (M = 83.86, SD = 12.19); however, the difference was minimal. The t-test value of 0.02 indicated that the difference between the groups was not statistically significant. In terms of moral injury, APF service personnel with lower educational levels showed higher scores (M = 36.32, SD = 8.48) than those with higher educational levels (M = 31.95, SD = 8.83). The t-test value of 2.68 revealed that this difference was statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4

Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of Spiritual well-being and Moral Injury in Older and Younger APF Service Personnel.

Variable	Older APF service personnel N=43		Younger APF service personnel N=124		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Spiritual well-being	82.79	9.96	84.17	10.84	0.72(NS)
Moral Injury	31.48	7.86	33.41	9.22	1.21(NS)

NS-No Significant

Source: Based on Google Forms survey data (2025) analyzed using IBM SPSS

Table 4 depicts that younger APF service personnel reported slightly higher spiritual well-being ($M = 84.17$, $SD = 10.84$) than older personnel ($M = 82.79$, $SD = 9.96$); however, the difference was minimal. The t-test value of 0.72 revealed that no statistically significant difference was found between the groups. Similarly, younger APF service personnel showed marginally higher moral injury scores ($M = 33.41$, $SD = 9.22$) compared to older personnel ($M = 31.48$, $SD = 7.86$). The t-test value of 1.21 indicated that the difference between the groups was not statistically significant.

Table 5

Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of Spiritual Well-Being and Moral Injury among Male and Female APF Service Personnel.

Variable	Male N=157		Female N=10		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Spiritual well-being	83.71	10.45	85.60	13.45	0.54(NS)
Moral Injury	33.02	9.00	31.40	7.62	0.55(NS)

NS-No Significant

Source: Based on Google Forms survey data (2025) analyzed using IBM SPSS

Table 5 indicates that female APF service personnel reported slightly higher spiritual well-being ($M = 85.60$, $SD = 13.45$) than male personnel ($M = 83.71$, $SD = 10.45$); however, the difference was minimal. The t-test value of 0.54 revealed that no statistically significant difference was found between the groups. Similarly, female APF service personnel showed marginally lower moral injury scores ($M = 31.40$, $SD = 7.62$) compared to male personnel ($M = 33.02$, $SD = 9.00$). The t-test value of 0.55 indicated that the difference between the groups was not statistically significant.

Table 6

Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of Spiritual Well-Being and Moral Injury among Married and Unmarried APF Service Personnel.

Variable	Married APF service personnel N=159		Unmarried APF service personnel N=8		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Spiritual well-being	83.87	10.62	82.88	11.13	0.25(NS)
Moral Injury	32.75	8.88	36.25	9.42	1.08(NS)

NS-No Significant

Source: Based on Google Forms survey data (2025) analyzed using IBM SPSS

Table 6 demonstrates that married APF service personnel reported slightly higher spiritual well-being (M = 83.87, SD = 10.62) than unmarried personnel (M = 82.88, SD = 11.13); however, the difference between the groups was minimal. The t-test value of 0.25 indicated that the difference was not statistically significant. In terms of moral injury, unmarried APF service personnel had marginally higher scores (M = 36.25, SD = 9.42) compared to married personnel (M = 32.75, SD = 8.88). The t-test value of 1.08 revealed that the difference between the two groups was also not statistically significant.

Table 7

Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-values for Spiritual Well-Being and Moral Injury among APF Service Personnel with Higher and Lower Educational Levels.

Variable	Higher educational level N=129		Lower educational level N=38		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Spiritual well-being	83.81	10.17	83.86	12.19	0.02(NS)
Moral Injury	31.95	8.83	36.32	8.48	2.68*

NS-No Significant, *Significant at $p < 0.05$

Source: Based on Google Forms survey data (2025) analyzed using IBM SPSS

Table 7 exhibits that APF service personnel with higher educational levels reported slightly lower spiritual well-being (M = 83.81, SD = 10.17) compared to those with lower educational levels (M = 83.86, SD = 12.19); however, the difference was minimal. The

t-test value of 0.02 indicated that the difference between the groups was not statistically significant. In terms of moral injury, APF service personnel with lower educational levels showed higher scores ($M = 36.32$, $SD = 8.48$) than those with higher educational levels ($M = 31.95$, $SD = 8.83$). The t-test value of 2.68 revealed that this difference was statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 8

Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-values of Spiritual Well-Being and Moral Injury among APF Service Personnel with Longer and Shorter Years of Service.

Variable	Longer years of service N=96		Shorter years of service N=71		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Spiritual well-being	83.63	9.50	84.03	11.96	0.24(NS)
Moral Injury	32.17	9.25	33.94	8.32	1.28(NS)

NS-No Significant

Source: Based on Google Forms survey data (2025) analyzed using IBM SPSS

Table 8 illustrates that APF service personnel with shorter years of service reported slightly higher spiritual well-being ($M = 84.03$, $SD = 11.96$) compared to those with longer years of service ($M = 83.63$, $SD = 9.50$); however, the difference was minimal. The t-test value of 0.24 indicated that the variation between the groups was negligible. In terms of moral injury, personnel with shorter years of service showed marginally higher scores ($M = 33.94$, $SD = 8.32$) than those with longer years of service ($M = 32.17$, $SD = 9.25$). The t-test value of 1.28 revealed that this difference was not statistically significant.

Table 9

Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-values of Spiritual Well-Being and Moral Injury among Higher and Lower Ranking APF Service Personnel.

Variable	Higher ranking APF service personnel N=136		Lower ranking APF service personnel N=31		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Spiritual well-being	83.68	9.92	84.32	13.29	0.30(NS)
Moral Injury	31.85	8.59	37.61	8.79	3.35(NS)

NS-No Significant

Source: Based on Google Forms survey data (2025) analyzed using IBM SPSS

Table 9 demonstrates that APF service personnel with lower ranking reported slightly higher spiritual well-being ($M = 84.32$, $SD = 13.29$) compared to those with higher ranking ($M = 83.63$, $SD = 9.92$); however, the difference was minimal. The t-test value of 0.30 indicated that the variation between the groups was negligible. In terms of moral injury, lower-ranking APF service personnel showed higher scores ($M = 37.61$, $SD = 8.79$) than higher-ranking personnel ($M = 31.85$, $SD = 8.59$). The t-test value of 3.35 revealed that this difference was not statistically significant.

Table 10

Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-values of Spiritual Well-Being and Moral Injury among APF Service Personnel Posted in High Conflict and No Conflict Zone.

Variable	Posted in conflict areas		Posted in non-conflict areas		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Spiritual well-being	83.47	9.51	84.00	11.28	0.32(NS)
Moral Injury	33.85	9.19	31.74	8.52	1.51(NS)

NS-No Significant

Source: Based on Google Forms survey data (2025) analyzed using IBM SPSS

Table 10 unveils that APF service personnel posted in non-conflict areas reported slightly higher spiritual well-being ($M = 84.00$, $SD = 11.28$) compared to those posted in conflict areas ($M = 83.47$, $SD = 9.51$); however, the difference was minimal. The t-test value of 0.32 indicated that the variation between the groups was negligible. In terms of moral injury, personnel posted in conflict areas showed higher scores ($M = 33.85$, $SD = 9.19$) than those in non-conflict areas ($M = 31.74$, $SD = 8.52$). The t-test value of 1.51 revealed that this difference was not statistically significant.

Table 11

Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-values of Spiritual Well-Being and Moral Injury among APF Service Personnel With and Without Combat Exposure.

Variable	With Combat Exposure N=77		Without Combat Exposure N=90		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Spiritual well-being	84.87	11.60	81.45	12.22	1.84(NS)
Moral Injury	32.61	9.23	33.20	8.67	0.42(NS)

NS-No Significant

Source: Based on Google Forms survey data (2025) analyzed using IBM SPSS

Table 11 illustrates that APF service personnel with combat exposure reported slightly higher spiritual well-being ($M = 84.87$, $SD = 11.60$) compared to those without combat exposure ($M = 81.45$, $SD = 12.22$); however, the difference was minimal. The t-test value of 1.84 indicated that the variation between the groups was negligible. In terms of moral injury, personnel with combat exposure showed slightly lower scores ($M = 32.61$, $SD = 9.23$) than those without combat exposure ($M = 33.20$, $SD = 8.67$). The t-test value of 0.42 revealed that this difference was not statistically significant.

Discussion

The current study investigated the spiritual well-being and moral injury among Armed Police Force service personnel in Nepal. Consistent with the first hypothesis, the results revealed a modest positive association between spiritual well-being and moral injury. This suggests that personnel with higher spiritual well-being reported slightly higher moral injury, which contrasts with findings by Zappalla (2018), who observed that stronger spiritual well-being and a greater sense of meaning and purpose were associated with lower moral injury among veterans. This discrepancy may reflect contextual differences, cultural factors, or the nature of paramilitary service in Nepal.

Regarding the second hypothesis, the study found that APF service personnel with higher education levels experienced lower moral injury compared to those with lower education levels, although no significant differences were observed in spiritual well-being across education groups. This finding suggests that while spiritual beliefs may remain relatively stable across educational backgrounds, cognitive resources, coping strategies, and access to supportive networks afforded by higher education can protect personnel from

moral injury. APF service personnel with lower education may face increased exposure to frontline duties, higher-risk assignments, and limited adaptive coping strategies, contributing to greater vulnerability to morally injurious experiences.

Aligned with the third hypothesis, no significant differences were found in spiritual well-being or moral injury based on age, gender, or marital status, nor across other demographic and service-related variables such as years of service, rank, deployment in conflict versus non-conflict areas, or combat exposure. These results may be attributed to the cohesive organizational culture of the APF, standardized training, shared ethical codes, and common exposure to occupational stressors, which help to buffer against disparities in moral injury and spiritual well-being. Furthermore, the consistent availability of peer support, resilience training, and culturally grounded spiritual practices may serve as protective factors, contributing to the relatively uniform levels of spiritual well-being and moral injury across diverse groups of personnel.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of education as a factor influencing moral injury while emphasizing that spiritual well-being may be more deeply rooted in personal beliefs and cultural norms. These findings underscore the need for tailored interventions focusing on developing adaptive coping strategies, resilience, and institutional support, particularly for personnel with lower educational backgrounds, to mitigate moral injury while supporting overall spiritual well-being.

Conclusion

The findings of the study reflect a modest positive association between spiritual well-being and moral injury among the personnel of the Armed Police Force. Except for education level, most demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status, years of service, rank, deployment in either a conflict or non-conflict area, and combat exposure did not have significant differences in either spiritual well-being or moral injury. Those with higher education reported lower moral injury than those at lower educational levels, while spiritual well-being did not differ significantly across education groups.

These results could be interpreted within the framework of Moral Injury Theory, advanced by Litz et al. (2009) and Shay (2014), which clearly states that psychological and emotional harm occurs as a result of experiences that infringe upon one's personal moral or ethical values. The findings also echo Meaning-Making Theory, articulated by Frankl (1959) and Park (2010), which framed the particular role of personal resources, such as spirituality, in dealing with situations that represent moral difficulty. In this perspective,

spiritual well-being may function as a protective factor, allowing personnel to process morally injurious experiences and maintain psychological resilience.

Whereas past research underlined more frameworks in terms of self-compassion, religious coping, and social support, the current study argues that education and spiritual resources may have a particularly great part in mitigating moral distress among APF personnel. These results add support for incorporating interventions focused on spiritual support with education into programs aimed at promoting the mental and moral health of paramilitary personnel.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors

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