

Military virtues: conceptualization and operationalization

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Abstract

Military virtues are core in military traditions, rituals and practices. Military virtues are the foundation of military personnel since he/she is in a profession which needs to evaluate the situations quickly and take the ethical decision. This paper attempts to address operationalization of the construct of Military virtues in-order to introduce an instrument to measure the same. Prior to that a working definition for the construct of military virtues developed. A set of military virtues is also presented as an objective of the study.

Key words

Military virtues, Vices, Personal character

Introduction

Ethical values and practices are very important in any organization. Workplace ethics culture and workplace ethics climate perceived by employees are significantly and positively linked to the level of employee engagement [Matwiejczuk, Voronov and Samul, 2019, p. 225; Mitonga-Monga and Cilliers 2015, p. 242, Szydło, 2015]. When the organizations and managers invest effort to ethical aspects, it can contribute to increased work engagement. The meaning of employee engagement is ambiguous among both academic researchers and practitioners [Macey and Schneider, 2008, p. 4; Samul, Skąpska 2015, p. 3, Szydło, 2018]. As per Dharmasiri [2010], employee engagement captures the essence of employees' head, hands

and heart involvement in work. It refers to employee's psychological state (e.g. one's identification with the organization), his/her disposition (e.g. one's positive feeling towards the organization) and performance (e.g. one's level of discretionary effort). In brief, it captures affective (feeling), cognitive (thinking) and behavioural (acting) dimensions of an employee [Dharmasiri, 2010, p.61-74]. In the modern world, the word 'virtues' has become more prominent than in any other times. Researchers emphasize that employees with a strong moral identity usually behave in accordance with these virtues, for example, they are generous, helpful, hardworking, caring and honest [He et al. 2013, p.686].

Military virtues are the basis of military personnel because they practice a profession needs to quickly assess the situations and make an ethical decision. Sandin [2007] state that soldiers are expected to perform tasks that are often more demanding than those expected of people in society in general. Researchers can say that the military virtues play a huge role in such circumstances. The view of Olsthoorn [2014] is very important when concerning about the importance of virtues in the military context. Olsthoorn [2014] points out that lacking virtues at the individual level, and in this specific case "the military and civilian chain of command had built a 'bad barrel' in which a bunch of good soldiers became transformed into 'bad apples' [Olsthoorn, 2014, p. 365]. According to Opatha [2010] virtues are universally accepted moral principles that do not vary according to race, nationality, religion, culture or any other classification. Opatha [2010] further state that values may not be universally accepted beliefs or ideals and may vary according to race, nationality, religion, culture or any other classification. This is the main difference between virtues and values. Barford [2019] argues that establishing and growing virtues is the acquisition and enhancement over time of certain habits. Vallor [2013] has established that virtues are habituated rather than inborn, whether or not a person develops a particular virtue will largely depend on whether they engage repeatedly in the kinds of practices that cultivate it. The virtue of honesty, for example, can only be acquired through repeated practice of truth-telling.

Scholarly work of Murphy [2002] presents Aristotle's views on character that is 'Each man speaks and acts and lives in accordance with his character'; the virtue of a man will be 'the state of character which makes him good and makes him do his own work well'. Figure 1 is about how virtues vices leads to the development of a good personal character. Opatha [2010] states that one's personal character is the degree, to which a person has virtues and vices, that is one's ability to develop and improve virtues and reduce or eradicate vices. The view of Adams [2006] is that bad states of moral character have traditionally been called vices. Opatha [2010] presents a set of vices in his study namely, jealousy, deception, desire for

others' things, greed, selfishness, anger, hostility, reprobation and retaliation. These vices need to be alleviated within or eradicated from the person and virtues need to be nurtured within a person is essential for the betterment for an individual and societal.

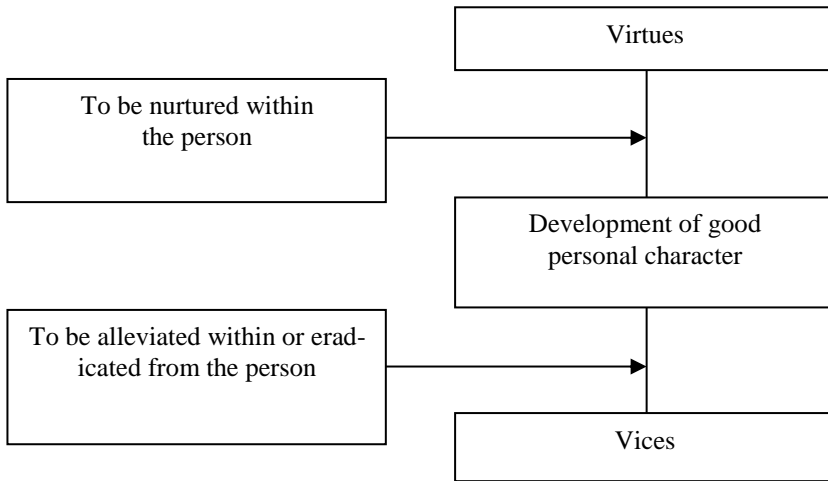


Fig. 1. Virtues and vices for development of good personal character

Source: Opatha (2010), *Personal Quality*, University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

González [2019] points out that virtues are widely recognized in society, as it already happens for lifelong learning. Cartagena [2017] state that military practitioners and theorists must acknowledge the fact that still there are ambiguities regarding virtues and military virtues. This indicates further studies in this field are needed.

The objectives of the paper are:

- To develop a working definition for the construct of military virtues.
- To present a set of military virtues.
- To operationalize the construct of military virtues.

1. Methodology

The literature was reviewed based on the archival method. This method was recommended by Tranfield et al., [2003]. Articles from the reputed databases such as Sage, Emerald and Taylor and Francis Online etc. and several books were studied to be rich literature sources.

2. Conceptualization of the Construct of Military Virtues

2.1. Virtues

Sandin [2007] define a virtue is a characteristic of an agent which (a) is beneficial to the agent itself and to moral patients, (b) engages the will and is thus not a skill, and (c) is corrective. Solomon (1999) points out that virtue is an essential aspect of an individual and the concept of virtues provides the conceptual linkage between an individual and his/her society [Solomon, 1999, p.12]. Schnitker et al. [2019] believes that virtue is more towards a characteristic adaptations connected to beyond-the-self identity [Schnitker et al. 2019, p. 276]. Researchers believe that character consists of virtues and vices. Opatha [2010] also has a similar view that is a virtue is a good habit and a good attribute that is useful for a person him/herself and other persons. Virtue can be defined as any psychological process that enables a person to think and acts so as to benefit him or herself and society' [McCullough and Snyder, 2000, p. 2]. Opatha and Teong [2014] also has the similar view as McCullough and Snyder [2000] that virtue is a good attribute which is useful for once self and other persons.

Opatha [2010] writes:

‘In order to excel in a particular field, country or organization a person must possess a good personal character, in addition to the enhancement of technical competence relevant to the particular field. A good personal character is of utmost importance’.

Opatha [2010] further writes that: ‘Absence of virtues results in the absence of a good personal character. Possession of virtues contributes to a good personal character, which leads to good personal quality. Good qualities or habits which do not harm a person are virtues. These are advantageous and favorable for self-development, others’ development and institutional development’.

Definition of virtues and the comments by the researchers of this study given under Table 1.

Tab 1. Definitions of virtues

Author	Year	Definition	Comments
McCullough and Snyder	2000	Any psychological process that enables a person to think and acts so as to benefit him or herself and society	Identified as a psychological process Facilitate person's development Facilitate societal development
Sandin	2007	A virtue is a characteristic of an agent which (a) is beneficial to the agent itself and to moral patients, (b) engages the will and is thus not a skill, and (c) is corrective	Identified three characteristics in a virtue. They are, (a) beneficial to the agent itself and to moral patients (b) engages the will and is thus not a skill (c) corrective
Opatha	2010	Virtue is a good habit and a good attribute that is useful for a person him/herself and other persons	Virtue is a good habit and a good attribute Virtue is valuable for person him/herself and other persons
Schnitker, King and Houlberg	2019	Hybrid personality units emerging when characteristic adaptations are given meaning by a transcendent narrative identity	Virtue is a characteristic adaptations connected to beyond-the-self identity

Source: Own study based on [McCullough and Snyder 2000, p.1-10; Sandin, 2007, p. 303-313; Opatha, 2010, p.33].

By considering definitions given Table 1, the researchers present a working definition for military virtues.

Working definition for military virtues in this article is: military virtues are the favorable attributes that are useful for moral prominence of military, individual development of the military personnel and societal development.

2.2. Set of virtues

Hart et al., [2019] reveals that several researchers present their own set of virtues. Olsthoorn [2014] has identified courage, loyalty and respect as military virtues. On the other hand, Robinson [2007] as cited in Olsthoorn [2014] courage, discipline, loyalty and obedience are traditional military virtues. Szutta [2020]

identified benevolence, honesty and justice as virtues. Opatha [2010] provides a set of virtues namely honesty, patience, gratitude, humility, respect, benevolence, tolerance, self-discipline, caring and loyalty. Peterson and Seligman [2004] as cited in Shryack et al. [2010] presented a set of virtues; namely, wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence.

Tab. 2. Set of virtues

Author	Year	Type	Virtues
Szutta	2020	Virtues	benevolence, honesty, justice
Olsthoorn	2014	Military virtues	Courage, Loyalty, Respect
Robinson	2007	Military virtues	Courage, Discipline, Loyalty, Obedience
Opatha	2010	Virtues	Honesty, Patience, Gratitude, Humility, Respect, Benevolence, Tolerance, Self-Discipline, Caring, Loyalty
Peterson and Seligman	2004	Virtues	Wisdom, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance, Transcendence

Source: Own study based on [Olsthoorn, 2014, p.78-93; Robinson, 2007, p.256; Opatha, 2010, p.53; Peterson and Seligman 2004; Szutta, 2020, p.1-15].

2.3. Towards a set of Military Virtues

Military virtues are increasingly seen within military ethics as the best way to underpin the ethics education of military personnel is a view of Olsthoorn [2017]. Researchers of this study present a set of military virtues namely, loyalty, courage, respect, self-discipline, patience and caring. Olsthoorn [2014], Robinson [2007] and Opatha [2010] identified ‘loyalty’ as a virtue. Robinson [2007] and Opatha[2010] identified that self-discipline as a virtue in their set of virtues. Olsthoorn [2014] and Opatha [2010] have identified ‘respect’ as a virtue. Olsthoorn [2014], Robinson [2007] and Shryack et al. [2010] identified ‘courage’ as a virtue. Therefore, the virtues such as loyalty, self-discipline, respect and courage has selected under the criteria numbered one. Opatha [2010] has identified ‘patience’ and ‘caring’ as virtues. Researchers have selected these two virtues to their set of military virtues under the criteria numbered. Referring to all the authors above, the researchers see a commonality that courage is the commonly considered virtue. Further to that Loyalty and Respect which is more or less synonymous are the commonly considered virtue. The researchers identified these there based on the following facts, (1) most of the other researchers identified these virtues are

very important, (2) at least one researcher in his/her scholarly work has identified the important of this particular virtue.

Below is an example provided by the SLAF official website under the title called '*Winds of change –how we turned the tide*' and authored by Hendawithara [2009] proves the whole world that SLAF soldier has the virtues like humanity, caring, justice, respect, tolerance and self-discipline. 'The days when targets were engaged purely at pilot's discretion or merely relying on a radio call was over. Targets were carefully analysed for proximity of civilian settlements, places of worship, hospitals, schools etc. was the highest priority. There were many occasions where the fighters were taken away from operations simply due to the fact that the safety of the civilians' and non-combatants could not be compromised. After all, the SLAF was targeting terrorists and ONLY terrorists' [Hendawithara, 2009, https://www.airforce.lk/uploads/articles/winds_of_change.pdf].

3. Operationalization of the Construct of Military Virtues

The three main dimensions for the construct of military virtues are namely, loyalty, courage, respect, self-discipline, patience and caring.

3.1. Loyalty

Olsthoorn [2014] in his study has identified the importance of the virtue called loyalty. According to Olsthoorn [2014] loyalty has identified as a traditional military virtue and it is clear the importance of this virtue called loyalty in today's military context as well. Sandin, [2007] points out that Samuel Huntington, mentions 'loyalty and obedience' as 'the highest military virtues. As spelt out in the US Army document, Seven Core Army Values, one of the most important and vital virtue is loyalty. 'Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit and other Soldiers. Bearing true faith and allegiance is a matter of believing in and devoting yourself to something or someone. A loyal Soldier is one who supports the leadership and stands up for fellow Soldiers' [Sandin, 2007, p.310]. Researchers such as Olsthoorn [2014], Robinson [2007] and Opatha [2010] identified 'loyalty' as a virtue not as a value. The researchers of this study agree to the view of Opatha [2010] that is the values may not be universally accepted beliefs or ideals and may vary according to race, nationality, religion, culture or any other classification. Opatha [2010] also points out that virtues are universally accepted moral principles that do not vary according to race, nationality, religion, culture or any other classification, which is the main difference between virtues and values. By

considering all these facts loyalty identified as a virtue. Healy [2013] mentions that there are many different things to which a particular person can be loyal: families, friends, favorite sports teams, favorite shops amongst others etc. Keller [2007] states that when a particular person is loyal to someone or something and then it has an effect on his/her actions. Keller [2007] further states that he/she show loyalty by following its orders, promoting the interests of the object, prioritizing it in some way over other potential choices.

Iddagoda and Abeysinghe present an interesting insight to a newspaper in 2019 with the title of ‘Pentagram from the military context for the corporate world’. There they say ‘Loyalty, when it comes to the military context, binds one’s actions and obligations to each other as well as to units, troops, community and country; it is a reciprocal obligation of both leaders and subordinates’.

By considering all these the researchers identified two elements for the dimension called loyalty.

Tab. 3. The elements and statements of the dimension called loyalty

Element	Statement
Honour and serve	I honour and serve my country, organization (military organization)
Mutual obligation	I have a mutual obligation of both leaders and subordinates

Source: Authors own work.

3.2. Patience

Patience is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary [2007] as ‘the ability to accept delay, trouble or suffering without becoming angry or upset’. Opatha [2010] also has a similar view. Opatha [2010] states that patience involves bearing a situation, thing or human that is difficult or unpleasant, without complaining and being disappointed. DeMarco [1996] says that patience gives the flexibility that a person need, in order to find worthwhile pursuits when other opportunities are unavailable. DeMarco [1996] states that patience allows us to bear foolishness without growing angry and tolerate monotony without becoming bored. Opatha [2010] identifies patience as a person’s ability to accept unpleasant, difficult or upsetting things, situations or persons bravely, and deal with it mentally and physically.

Real patience is a very important virtue. According to Opatha [2010] the components of patience are: bearing difficulties and impediments caused by people purposefully or inadvertently, dealing with natural troubles and distresses (coming

from weather, climate and rain etc.) bravely or even with pain, not becoming angry and/or not retaliating or responding oppressively etc., continuing functions which are being done so far without stopping due to difficulties, bearing alone if there is a pain, dealing with troubles and pains which come from mosquitoes, serpents, rats, cockroaches etc. and bearing pains which occur in the body.

By considering the above mentioned elements, researchers can say if a person has the virtue called “patience” and if he/she Handle without complaining and being disappointed. Therefore, the element called patience measured by a statement such as ‘I am good at tolerating a circumstance, that is complex, hard and unpleasant, without complaining and being disappointed’.

The newspaper article titled ‘Pentagram from the military context for the corporate world’ Iddagoda and Abeysinghe also highlighted the fact that ‘the military context, the weather neither an excuse nor a barrier when it comes to accomplishing a mission’. Opatha [2010] also identified that ‘dealing with natural troubles’ is a component of patience. As a result, the second statement of the dimension of patience is ‘I can deal with harsh weather conditions’.

Tab. 4. The elements and statements of the dimension called ‘patience’

Element	Statement
Handle without complaining and being disappointed	I am good at tolerating a circumstance, that is complex, hard and unpleasant, without complaining and being disappointed
Adjustability	I can deal with harsh weather conditions

Source: Authors own work.

3.3. Respect

Opatha [2010] identifies respect as honor or esteem. It involves working or behaving with reputation and honor regarding certain persons and certain things. Opatha [2010] says that the virtue of respect involves admiration felt within the self towards a person or thing with good qualities, ideas, achievements or contributions made to others, organizations, nation and even the world. Opatha [2010] states that a particular person respecting another person or a thing indicates that he/she draws his/her attention and consideration to that person or thing seriously.

Opatha [2010] brings up several categories of people that a person should respect. They include: leader of one’s religion, priests or monks of one’s religion, a person’s parents, a person’s teachers, persons who have really contributed to one’s

nation, language and religion in the way that is far more than what that person has done, persons who are superior in terms of personal character (moral qualities) and persons who are more matured (adults).

Opatha [2010] also mentions several things that one should respect. They are: doctrine of a person’s religion (teaching of a religious leader), sacred books on which the religion is based (scriptures), books used for education, one’s schools and universities, status of religious leaders and very important contributors, monumental buildings and sculptures of a particular culture and history, national flag, anthem, tree, flower etc. and other physical and natural things which were immensely useful for a person’s development

Elements and statements of the dimension of ‘respect’ is depicted under Tab5.

Tab. 5. The elements and statements on ‘Respect’

Element	Statement
Dignity of others	I value and concern the dignity of others
Respect religious and cultural material and natural things	I respect natural things, monumental buildings and sculptures of a particular culture and doctrines belongs to a particular religion

Source: Authors own work.

3.4. Self-discipline

Bennett [1997] mentions that ‘self-discipline means saying yes to the right things and no to the wrong things’ For that reason, dimension called ‘self-discipline’ measured by the statement called ‘Ability to say ‘yes’ to the right things and ‘no’ to the wrong thing ie. unlawful order that is against the constitution’. Opatha [2010] states, when people are living in a society, how a nation will accomplish the virtue of self-discipline are: 1) to meet established rules and regulations of behavior, 2) to protect the organizations from illegal and harmful actions of immoral personnel, 3) to protect the life of a person from illegal and harmful actions of another person or a group of other persons, 4) to ensure peaceful and orderly working environments for the achievement of organizational goals and objectives, and 5) to promote fairness and order in the treatment of people and the conduct of industrial and national relations.

According to Opatha [2010] there are five actions one should do for building and enhancing self-discipline. They are: accepting the rules (official instructions and norms) and regulations (legal provisions or legitimate requirements) which someone happens to face; respecting the rules and regulations; observing the rules and regu-

lations willingly; not needing another to direct or supervise someone to adhere to rules and regulations; keeping on adhering to rules and regulations continuously.

The person who has the virtue of ‘self-discipline’ does not need any person to direct him/her to adhere to the rules and regulations as mentioned by Opatha [2010]. Consequently, the second statement that measure the dimension ‘self-discipline’ is “I follow the rules and regulations which happened to me willingly”.

Tab. 6. The elements and statements on ‘Self-discipline’

Element	Statement
Say ‘yes’ to the right things	Ability to say ‘yes’ to the right things and ‘no’ to the wrong things <i>i.e.</i> unlawful order that is against the constitution
Willingness of following rules and regulations	I follow the rules and regulations which happened to me willingly

Source: Authors own work.

3.5. Caring

Caring is giving love and attention to people and things that matter to a person [Virtues Project International, 2001 as cited in Opatha, 2010]. Because of caring, people and things that matter to someone get protected is a view of Opatha [2010]. ‘People or a person loves include his/her parents, brothers and sisters, friends and teachers, spouse and children generally. One may have special people whom he/she loves. Therefore, researchers can say one statement of the dimension of ‘caring’ is. Opatha, [2010] identified some components of caring. They are one has a very strong feeling towards some person; one shows his/her feelings in the way he/she behaves with them. Opatha [2010] states that a person also can have caring with respect of things, physical things such as a vehicle, home etc. By considering these facts, the researchers identified the second statement to measure the dimension called ‘caring’ is ‘I secure physical things such as a vehicle, home etc’.

Tab. 7. The elements and statements on ‘Caring’

Element	Statement
Strong feeling towards loved ones	I protect my loved ones <i>i.e.</i> parents, siblings, friends and teachers, spouse and children etc.
Care about physical things	I secure physical things such as a vehicle, home etc.

Source: Authors own work.

3.6. Courage

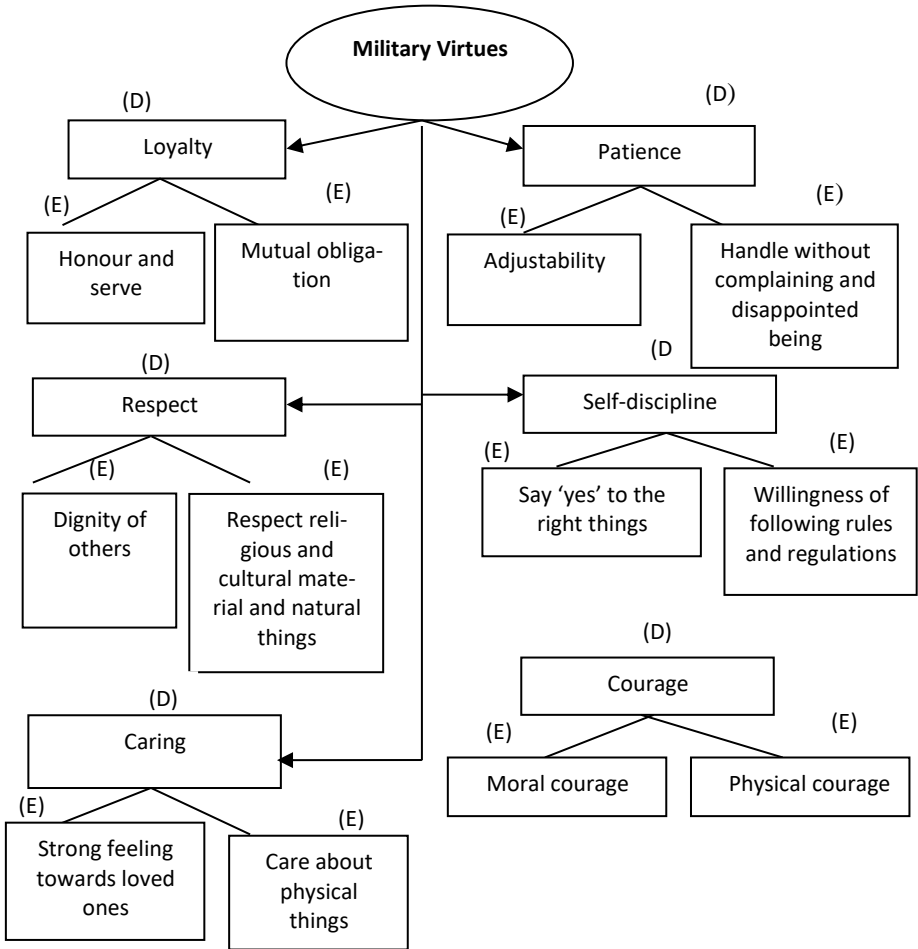
Olsthoorn [2014] identified that there are two types of courage in the military context. They are “physical courage and moral courage’. According to Olsthoorn [2014] physical courage refers to what is at stake— life and limbs. By considering this the first statement of the dimension called ‘courage’ is ‘I pledge to sacrifice my life and limbs for the sovereignty of my country’. On the other hand, moral courage refers to the higher end that this form of courage aims at (and not to what is at stake in the case of moral courage: esteem, popularity and so forth). Soldiers who are willing to correct a colleague when they think him wrong, or even report him if necessary due to moral courage is another view of Olsthoorn [2014]. Therefore, dimension of ‘courage’ measured by the statement of ‘I am willing to correct the fellow soldiers when they are wrong’.

Tab. 8. The elements and statements of ‘Courage’

Element	Statement
Physical courage	I pledge to sacrifice my life and limbs for the sovereignty of my country
Moral courage	I am willing to correct the fellow soldiers when they are wrong

Source: Authors own work.

Dimensions and elements of the variable of military virtues have been depicted in Figure 2. For this method researchers got an influence of scholarly works of Iddagoda et al. [2016]; Iddagoda and Opatha [2017]; Iddagoda and Opatha [2018]; Iddagoda and Gunawardana [2017].



D – Dimension, E -elements

Fig. 2. Conceptualization and operationalization of the variable of military virtues

Source: Authors own work

Instruments

1. I honour and serve my country, organization (military organization)
2. I have a mutual obligation of both leaders and subordinates
3. I am good at tolerating a circumstance, that is complex, hard and unpleasant, without complaining and being disappointed.
4. I can deal with harsh weather conditions.
5. I value and concern the dignity of others.
6. I respect natural things, monumental buildings and sculptures of a particular culture and doctrines belongs to a particular religion.
7. Ability to say 'yes' to the right things and 'no' to the wrong things *i.e.* unlawful order that is against the constitution.
8. I follow the rules and regulations which happened to me willingly.
9. I protect my loved ones *i.e.* parents, siblings, friends and teachers, spouse and children etc.
10. I secure physical things such as a vehicle, home etc.
11. I pledge to sacrifice my life and limbs for the sovereignty of my country
12. I am willing to correct the fellow soldiers when they are wrong

Conclusion

Virtues are common in every profession. Code of ethics is another way to state virtues and every profession is inherited with a set of virtues or code of ethics. Ethical behaviour is expected and appreciated in the present context than in any other era. The reason being for such is, the ethical behaviour or value for virtues are diminishing day by day. The nations, multi-nationals, corporates and individuals are going for unethical practices at the expense of their standing virtues and values. In this paper an effort was taken to see the state of military virtues in the today's context. The working definition for military virtues is that "Military virtues are the favorable attributes that is useful for moral prominence of military, individual development of the military personnel and societal development". Set of military virtues provided as a part of the study. They are namely, are namely, loyalty, courage, respect, self-discipline, patience and caring. These virtues identified as the main dimensions for the construct of military virtues when operationalizing the construct. Elements and statements to measure each dimension are also identified.

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Cnoty wojskowe: konceptualizacja i operacjonalizacja

Streszczenie

Wartości moralne i praktyki etyczne są bardzo ważne w każdej organizacji. Cnoty wojskowe są podstawą tradycji wojskowych, rytuałów i praktyk. Kodeks etyczny jest podstawą pracy personelu wojskowego, ponieważ wykonują oni zawód, który musi szybko oceniać sytuację i podejmować etyczną decyzję. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie zestawu cnót wojskowych oraz opracowanie definicję konstruktów cnót wojskowych. W niniejszym artykule podjęto również próbę operacjonalizacji konstrukcji cnót wojskowych w celu wprowadzenia instrumentu do jej pomiaru.

Słowa kluczowe

cnoty wojskowe, etyka w miejscu pracy, charakter osobisty