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Predicting Emotional Adjustment and Resilience Among the Defenders of the Shrine

Akram Dehghandar[1], Maryam Mashayekh[2*]

1. M.A. Student, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran

2. Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran

* Corresponding author's Email: m.mashayekh@kiau.ac.ir

Abstract: The aim of this study was to investigate the role of subjective vitality in predicting the emotional adjustment and resilience of the defenders of the shrine. This study employed a descriptive correlational design. The statistical population consisted of all defenders of the shrine in Karaj during the years 1400–1401. A sample of 100 defenders was selected from the target population using random sampling. Participants completed three questionnaires: the Subjective Vitality Scale by Ryan and Frederick (1997), the Psychological Resilience Scale by Connor and Davidson (2003), and the Emotional Adjustment Scale by Rabie et al. (2007). The collected data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and regression analysis. The findings showed a significant positive relationship between subjective vitality and emotional adjustment among the defenders of the shrine. In addition, a significant positive relationship was found between subjective vitality and psychological resilience. The results also indicated that subjective vitality can predict emotional adjustment and psychological resilience among the defenders of the shrine.

Keywords: Subjective vitality, Emotional adjustment, Psychological resilience

Introduction

Subjective vitality is a fundamental component of psychological functioning (Jowell & Routledge, 2015), defined as the conscious experience of possessing psychological energy and aliveness (Ryan & Deci, 2008). As a form of psychological energy, subjective vitality facilitates the pursuit of purposeful actions and enhances overall productivity. Research indicates that elevated levels of psychological energy are positively correlated with resilience, health, and optimal psychological functioning (Jowell & Routledge, 2015; Ryan & Frederick, 1997). Conversely, low subjective vitality signifies a deficit in mental energy and serves as an underlying indicator of psychological distress, including depression (Auvland, 2010; Maynard et al., 2015). Subjective vitality is characterized by feelings of happiness, alertness, and being energized (Montano, Mondsalos, & Syd, 2013).

Individuals experiencing higher levels of subjective vitality demonstrate greater motivation for goal-directed activities, higher efficacy in coping with stressors, and improved psychological health. Studies have established a positive relationship between subjective vitality and life satisfaction, positive affect, self-esteem, psychological well-being (Artigosa-Marquez, Caranco-Chaves, & Hernandez-Mendo, 2015; Kawashima et al., 2015), and mindfulness (Visser, Hirsch, Brown, Ryan, & Moynihan, 2014).

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Furthermore, subjective vitality can be predicted by psychological well-being, life skills, and overall life satisfaction (Feyni, Kavoosian, Beigi, & Emami, 2010).

Emotional adjustment is a pivotal construct in shaping an individual's personality structure. It refers to the conscious manner in which a person recognizes, organizes, and expresses emotions, as well as how they respond to the emotions of others (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003). Emotional skill is distinct from the emotion itself; it represents a person's competence in utilizing emotions to regulate actions and social relationships (Gross, 1998). Broadly, emotional adjustment involves the capacity to control emotions, satisfy needs, establish healthy relationships, understand internal states, and maintain tolerance toward frustration and failure (Locke, 2015).

Given that emotion regulation plays a central role in normal development, deficits in this area are significant contributors to mental disorders. Theorists suggest that individuals unable to manage emotions effectively in response to daily events are more likely to exhibit clinical symptoms of internalizing disorders, such as depression and anxiety (Luthans, 2018).

Resilience has been comprehensively defined as the process, capacity, or outcome of successful adaptation to stressors under challenging conditions (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). As a process, resilience is the restoration of normal functioning following a stressful event (Garg, 2017). As an outcome, it manifests as constructive and valuable achievements gained after overcoming adversity (Richardson & White, 2002).

In recent years, researchers have explored the intersection of resilience and positive psychology constructs like subjective vitality. Both resilience and subjective vitality are associated with higher levels of euphoria, absolute happiness, and life satisfaction (Kent, Rivers, & Renn, 2015; Garg, 2017). Although they are independent constructs, they are interdependent in fostering leadership skills, critical thinking, and maintaining equilibrium throughout life (Antunes & Franco, 2016).

Understanding the relationship between subjective vitality, emotional adjustment, and resilience is particularly crucial among specialized groups such as the "Defenders of the Holy Shrines" (Modafean-e-Haram), who operate under extreme psychological and physical pressure. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the role of subjective vitality in predicting emotional adjustment and psychological resilience in this population. The primary research question is: Does subjective vitality play a significant role in predicting emotional adjustment and psychological resilience?

Material and Methods

The present study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design with an applied objective. Correlational research is particularly suited for this inquiry as it allows for the examination of the

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strength and direction of the relationships between variables—subjective vitality, emotional adjustment, and resilience—without experimental manipulation of the environment. From an applied perspective, the findings aim to provide actionable insights for psychological interventions within specialized military populations.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The statistical population comprised all "Defenders of the Holy Shrines" (military personnel) stationed in Karaj during the 2021–2022 (1400–1401 AH) period.

A sample of 100 participants was selected using a simple random sampling technique. While academic guidelines for correlational research suggest a minimum sample size of 50 to detect significant relationships (Delavar, 2016), a sample of 100 was chosen to enhance statistical power, reduce the margin of error, and ensure a more representative distribution of the population's characteristics.

Data Collection Protocol and Ethics

Due to the sensitive nature of the participants' roles and strict confidentiality protocols, direct access by the researcher was restricted. The selection process was facilitated by the administrative department of the relevant military organization (Quds Force of Karaj), which generated a randomized list of 100 personnel from their database. The researcher provided the questionnaires along with detailed instructions regarding the study's objectives and the voluntary nature of participation. To ensure anonymity and ethical integrity, participants returned the completed forms in sealed envelopes to the organization, which were subsequently handed over to the researcher for data entry and analysis.

Measurement Instruments

1. Subjective Vitality Scale (SVS): Developed by Ryan and Frederick (1997) within the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), this scale measures the state of feeling alive and alert and having energy available to the self.

Structure: It consists of 7 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Scoring: Total scores range from 7 to 35, where higher scores signify robust psychological energy and optimal functioning.

Reliability: The original authors reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.96. In Iranian contexts, Arabzadeh (2017) reported an alpha of 0.79. In the current study, the internal consistency was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86.

2. Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC): This instrument was designed by Connor and Davidson (2003) to quantify psychological resilience—the ability to thrive in the face of adversity.

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Structure: A 25-item multidimensional scale using a 5-point response format (0 = Not at all true to 4 = True nearly all the time).

Subscales: The scale measures five factors: Personal Competence, Tolerance of Negative Affect, Positive Acceptance of Change, Control, and Spiritual Influence.

Reliability: Previous Iranian studies (Mohammadi et al., 2006; Shakerinia & Mohammadpour Shateri, 2010) reported alphas of 0.89 and 0.91, respectively. The current study yielded a total alpha of 0.86, with subscale reliabilities ranging from 0.74 to 0.89.

3. Emotional Adjustment Scale: Developed by Rubio et al. (2007), this scale assesses an individual's emotional stability and their capacity to maintain balance during psychological pressure.

Structure: It comprises 28 items divided into two subscales: Lack of Regulation of Emotional and Physiological Impulses and Hopelessness and Wishful Thinking.

Scoring: Participants respond on a 6-point Likert scale. Items 21, 25, and 28 are reverse-scored to ensure directional consistency.

Reliability: Rubio et al. (2007) reported an alpha of 0.89, while Shokri et al. (2016) found a coefficient of 0.91. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha was calculated at 0.68, which, while slightly lower than previous studies, remains acceptable for psychological research involving specialized cohorts.

Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, data were analyzed using Pearson Correlation Coefficients to determine the bivariate relationships. Furthermore, Multiple Regression Analysis was employed to determine the predictive power of Subjective Vitality on the dependent variables (Emotional Adjustment and Resilience). All statistical procedures were conducted using SPSS (Version 26).

Results

Prior to conducting the inferential analysis, the normality of the data distribution was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, alongside skewness and kurtosis indices.

Table 1. Normality Assessment (Skewness, Kurtosis, and Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test)

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis	K-S Stat	Significance (p)
Subjective Vitality	-0.42	0.51	0.072	0.180
Emotional Adjustment	0.35	-0.22	0.065	0.200
Resilience	-0.18	0.11	0.058	0.200

As shown in Table 1, the significance level for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for all variables was greater than 0.05 ($p>0.05p > 0.05p>0.05$), indicating a normal distribution. Furthermore, the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within the acceptable range of -2 to +2, confirming that the data meets the assumptions for parametric statistical testing.

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Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationship between Subjective Vitality and Emotional Adjustment (including its subscales).

Table 2. Correlations between Subjective Vitality and Emotional Adjustment

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) Subjective Vitality	1			
(2) Total Emotional Adjustment	.48**	1		
(3) Lack of Regulation (Physio/Emo)	-.39**	.62**	1	
(4) Hopelessness & Wishful Thinking	-.32**	.58**	.44**	1
*Note: ** p < 0.01*				

The results indicate a significant positive correlation between Subjective Vitality and overall Emotional Adjustment. Notably, Subjective Vitality demonstrated a significant negative correlation with "Lack of Regulation" and "Hopelessness" ($p<0.01p < 0.01p<0.01$). This suggests that as subjective vitality increases, emotional maladjustment (dysregulation and hopelessness) decreases.

Table 3. One-Way ANOVA for Linearity (Regression Rationale)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	452.12	1	452.12	29.41	.000
Residual	1506.45	98	15.37		
Total	1958.57	99			

The ANOVA results ($p<0.01p < 0.01p<0.01$) confirm a linear relationship between the predictor and criterion variables, justifying the use of a linear regression model.

Table 4. Regression Summary for Predicting Emotional Adjustment

Variable	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	p
Emotional Adjustment (Total)	.48	.23	.22	29.41	.000
Lack of Regulation	.39	.15	.14	17.29	.000
Hopelessness/Wishful Thinking	.32	.10	.09	10.88	.001

Regression analysis revealed that Subjective Vitality is a significant predictor, accounting for 23% of the variance in total Emotional Adjustment, 15% in Lack of Regulation, and 10% in Hopelessness. The relationship between Subjective Vitality and Resilience (including its five subscales) was also examined.

Table 5. Correlations between Subjective Vitality and Resilience

Variable	Subjective Vitality ®	Sig. (p)
Resilience (Total)	.30	.002
Personal Competence	.35	.000
Tolerance of Negative Affect	.24	.015
Positive Acceptance of Change	.11	.273 (ns)
Control	.09	.371 (ns)
Spiritual Influence	.27	.007

As illustrated in Table 5, Subjective Vitality has a significant positive correlation with total Resilience, Personal Competence, Tolerance of Negative Affect, and Spiritual Influence ($p<0.01p < 0.01p<0.01$).

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However, the correlations with Positive Acceptance of Change and Control were not statistically significant.

Table 6. One-Way ANOVA for Linearity (Resilience)

Source	df	F	Sig.
Linear Relationship	1	9.78	.002

The significance level ($p<0.01p < 0.01p<0.01$) validates the linearity assumption for the resilience model.

Table 7. Regression Summary for Predicting Resilience

Dependent Variable	R	R^2	β	p
Resilience (Total)	.30	.09	.30	.002
Personal Competence	.35	.12	.35	.000
Tolerance of Negative Affect	.24	.06	.24	.015
Spiritual Influence	.27	.07	.27	.007

The regression results indicate that Subjective Vitality significantly predicts 9% of the variance in total Resilience. Among the subscales, it best predicted Personal Competence (12%). Conversely, Subjective Vitality did not play a significant role in predicting "Positive Acceptance of Change" or "Control" in this specific population.

These results suggest that for "Defenders of the Holy Shrines," subjective feelings of energy and vitality are more closely linked to their internal sense of competence and spiritual fortitude than to their perceived control over external environments or acceptance of change. This is consistent with military psychology literature where "internal mission drive" (vitality) sustains performance even when external control is low.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate a significant positive relationship between subjective vitality and emotional adjustment among "Defenders of the Holy Shrines." Specifically, regression analysis confirmed that subjective vitality serves as a robust predictor of emotional adjustment. These results are congruent with the findings of Arslan (2020), who established that subjective vitality exerts both direct and indirect influences on psychological adjustment, mediated by a sense of belonging.

This relationship can be explained through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Subjective vitality is considered a direct reflection of the "state of the self." When military personnel experience higher levels of vitality, they possess a surplus of "ego resources" (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). This psychological energy acts as a buffer against the regulatory depletion caused by the high-stress environments of combat and deployment. Consequently, these individuals are better equipped to

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recognize, organize, and express their emotions adaptively—core components of emotional adjustment. In the face of adversity, vitality serves as a protective factor that prevents emotional dysregulation, thereby fostering greater psychological well-being.

Furthermore, the negative correlation found between vitality and the subscales of "Lack of Regulation" and "Hopelessness" suggests that mental energy provides the cognitive "fuel" necessary to suppress impulsive physiological responses. For personnel operating in high-stakes environments, vitality transforms from a mere mood into a critical functional resource for maintaining emotional stability.

A secondary conclusion from these results is that the fulfillment of basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—is likely the underlying mechanism driving both vitality and emotional adjustment in military personnel.

Defenders of the Holy Shrines operate under extreme environmental and situational stressors that pose a continuous threat to their mental health and adaptive capacities. To navigate these challenges, physical energy alone is insufficient; they require a sustained "psychic energy" (vitality). When these personnel feel a sense of purpose and competence in their mission, their subjective vitality increases. This, in turn, provides the resilience needed to cope with the rigorous demands of their duties. As noted in the results, vitality explains a significant portion of the variance in emotional adjustment, highlighting that mental "aliveness" is a prerequisite for maintaining a balanced personality structure in the field.

The results also revealed a significant positive correlation between subjective vitality and total resilience, as well as its subscales of Personal Competence, Tolerance of Negative Affect, and Spiritual Influence.

Vitality represents the "power to persevere." Individuals with high subjective vitality experience a sense of enthusiasm and zest for life, which naturally enhances their capacity for resilience. According to the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001), positive states like vitality broaden an individual's momentary thought-action repertoire, allowing them to build enduring personal resources. For defenders stationed far from home, engaged in complex military operations against asymmetric threats (such as ISIS), and facing the existential pressures of war in Syria, vitality is the catalyst that converts potential resilience into actual adaptive behavior.

The significance of the Spiritual Influence and Personal Competence subscales is particularly noteworthy. In this specific population, vitality is likely fueled by a strong ideological or spiritual conviction, which reinforces their sense of competence. While vitality did not significantly predict "Control" or "Acceptance of Change," this can be explained by the nature of military life, where external control is often held by the command structure rather than the individual. Thus, the resilience of these

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defenders is more internally driven (through vitality and competence) than externally focused (through environmental control).

In conclusion, subjective vitality is not merely a byproduct of health but a functional precursor to resilience and emotional stability. For the "Defenders of the Holy Shrines," fostering environments that support psychological energy—through spiritual support, recognition of competence, and maintaining social connections—can significantly enhance their ability to adjust emotionally and remain resilient under fire. These findings suggest that psychological interventions for military personnel should shift focus from merely "reducing stress" to "replenishing vitality" as a primary strategy for operational readiness and long-term mental health.

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