**Assignment Two**

**Peer Review on Scientific Journal Article**

**“Symptoms of Psychological Distress and Post-Traumatic Stress**

**Disorder in United States Air Force Drone Operators”**

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**Introduction**

The article describes the results from a survey conducted in 2012, and compares those results with a similar survey conducted in 2010. The surveys collected data regarding stressors and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in drone pilot operators. Despite the difference in the population surveyed between the 2010 and the 2012 studies, the overall assessment shows similar results with a higher number of occupational stressors and a low number of PTSD symptoms.

**Merits**

Data from a higher sample number and a higher response rate was gathered during the second study, providing more data for analysis. The same methodology was used for both studies, using the standard self-report outcome questionnaire (OQ-45.2) and the military PTSD checklist.

The study makes great use of data tables to show demographic, stress and PSTD symptom comparisons between the two studies.

Since the study is performed on drone pilots who are not exposed to direct combat, the authors point out similarities in the stressors reported by drone operators and virtual warriors, such as the ones in the intelligence communities and cyber units.

The authors explained the considered limitations on the studies conducted, such as potential bias from self-report surveys, especially when it comes to mental health issues. The study even points out the culture among military personnel, and the belief that diagnosis of mental health conditions could be detrimental to a potential promotion, the status of a security clearance and other career opportunities.

The authors provide very clear and specific recommendations for further studies, strategy and infrastructure. As technology advances and warfare changes with it, the way we assess and diagnose the warfighter also needs to evolve and account for a warfighter who could be experiencing combat related stress in a non-combat zone.

**Critique**

Table I depicts differences in the population surveyed between the 2010 and the 2012 study, and there is no explanation of why the population size and composition differed from 2010 to 2012.

Additionally, it is unclear if past history of previous mental health conditions, or conditions correlated to mental health conditions were considered in any of the surveys conducted.

**Discussion**

This study is of high importance as the rapid developments in technology change how we conduct warfare and what our troops get exposed to. This study needs to evolve and be conducted more regularly, to collect more data for our leaders to make informed decisions regarding the well-being of our troops.

One factor worth investigation is, have there been any changes in training policies or mental health assessment specifically for drone operators between 2010 and 2012.

Additional things to consider for future studies could be the impact of social media and changes in gender policy for our troops. Those factors can add additional stress factors to the day to day operations of our troops.

While keeping surveys anonymous is a great way to get high rates of response on a study it also lacks previous information from the individuals surveyed. The mental health state of the troops before and after the survey might be another consideration for future studies.

**References**

L Chappelle, Wayne & D McDonald, Kent & Prince, Lillian & Goodman, Tanya & Ray-Sannerud, Bobbie & Thompson, William. (2014). Symptoms of Psychological Distress and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in United States Air Force "Drone" Operators. *Military medicine*. 179. 63-70. doi:10.7205/MILMED-D-13-00501.