

THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL FITNESS ON BURNOUT AND ORGANIZATIONAL  
COMMITMENT IN HIGH-STRESS ENVIRONMENTS

by

Amy McDonald Stevens

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

March 2023

THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL FITNESS ON BURNOUT AND ORGANIZATIONAL  
COMMITMENT IN HIGH-STRESS ENVIRONMENTS

by

Amy McDonald Stevens

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

March 2023

APPROVED BY:

---

Jennifer Geyer, PhD, Committee Chair

---

Natalie Hamrick, PhD, Committee Member

## ABSTRACT

This quantitative study examined the relationships between burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment in National Guard servicemembers. Recent deployments and chronic stressors have resulted in an emergence of mental health concerns, burnout, and turnover intentions in this population. Research has indicated that elements of spirituality address these concerns and suggest that more spiritual individuals are more resilient, less susceptible to burnout, and find positive meaning in work. This study examined these variables using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), the Organizational Commitment Scale (Meyer & Allen, 1997), and the SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale (Alexander et al., 2020). Correlations were used to analyze relationships between burnout and both organizational commitment and spiritual fitness, and linear multiple regression was used to examine whether spiritual fitness moderated the burnout-organizational commitment relationship. The results confirmed the hypotheses that burnout would be inversely associated with organizational commitment ( $r=-0.21, p>0.01$ ) and that spiritual fitness would be inversely associated with burnout ( $r=-0.16, p>0.05$ ). Regression results demonstrated that the total spiritual fitness score was not a moderator of the burnout-organizational commitment relationship ( $\beta=0.11, p=0.35$ ). But a subscale of spiritual fitness, Service and Sacrifice for the Greater Good (SSGG), or “horizontal spirituality,” did moderate this relationship, such that those high in SSGG maintained organizational commitment levels even when burnout was high ( $\beta=0.20, p=0.05$ ). The SSGG commitment to selfless service, altruism, and a common mission aligns with both biblical and theoretical ideas on meaning, purpose, and sacrifice and was relevant for both theist and non-theist individuals in this study. These findings

suggest that spiritual fitness could be a cognitive resource for making sense of stressors, and fostering these elements of horizontal spirituality in the workplace could potentially reduce turnover, impact burnout, and enhance organizational commitment.

*Keywords:* burnout, organizational commitment, National Guard, spiritual fitness, occupational stress, sacrificial service, turnover intention

**Copyright Page**

Copyright © 2023. Amy Stevens. All rights reserved. Liberty University has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the University.

## Dedication

This manuscript is dedicated to my father, James McDonald, whose passion for education, faith in God, and uncompromising support for me and my potential will forever encourage me. Though he did not live to see this dissertation completed, his excitement and encouragement for the first phases of the process kept me focused and engaged for the duration of the endeavor. His favorite scripture, Psalm 118:24 has kept me on track when things became difficult, as “This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it” (*English Standard Version*, 2001).

I am grateful for his life, support, and love.

This is for you, Dad.

## **Acknowledgments**

I have been blessed with tremendous support during this educational journey. My Liberty University professors for my master's and Ph.D. coursework challenged and inspired me. I am incredibly grateful for my dissertation committee, including Dr. Jennifer Geyer, who entered this project with me and maintained an encouraging and supportive environment throughout the process, and Dr. Natalie Hamrick, whose brilliance in research methods, statistics, and mentoring were invaluable.

Above all, I would like to thank my sons, J.P. and Hunter, who have encouraged their mom throughout this journey, and my husband, Brian, whose unwavering support, love, and sacrifice has made the attainment of this goal possible.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Dedication</b> .....   | <b>vi</b>   |
| <b>Acknowledgments</b> .....  | <b>vii</b>  |
| <b>List of Tables</b> .....   | <b>xii</b>  |
| <b>List of Figures</b> .....  | <b>xiii</b> |
| <b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY</b> .....                   | <b>1</b>    |
| Background .....  | 2           |
| Occupational Stress and Burnout .....                               | 3           |
| Role of Burnout in Organizational Commitment .....                  | 4           |
| The Role of Spiritual Fitness .....                                 | 5           |
| Biblical Foundation .....   | 6           |
| Problem Statement .....   | 7           |
| Purpose of the Study .....  | 9           |
| Research Question(s) and Hypotheses .....                           | 9           |
| Research Questions .....  | 9           |
| Hypotheses .....  | 10          |
| Assumptions and Limitations of the Study .....                      | 11          |
| Theoretical Foundations of the Study .....                          | 13          |
| The Search for Meaning and Purpose .....                            | 13          |
| Transactional Theory and Cognitive Appraisal .....                  | 14          |
| Theories of Sense-Making .....                                      | 15          |
| Job Burnout Theory and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model ..... | 17          |
| Definition of Terms .....   | 19          |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Significance of the Study .....                                      | 19        |
| Summary .....  | 20        |
| <b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>                            | <b>22</b> |
| Overview.....  | 22        |
| Description of Search Strategy .....                                 | 22        |
| Review of Literature .....   | 24        |
| Introduction.....  | 24        |
| The Unique Stressors of National Guard Servicemembers .....          | 26        |
| Burnout as a Measure of Occupational Stress .....                    | 27        |
| Role of Burnout in Organizational Commitment.....                    | 29        |
| Role of Spirituality for Individual and Occupational Stressors ..... | 31        |
| Spirituality in the Military Servicemember .....                     | 33        |
| Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study.....                          | 35        |
| The Search for Meaning and Purpose.....                              | 35        |
| Transactional Theory and Cognitive Appraisal .....                   | 37        |
| Theories of Sense-Making .....                                       | 38        |
| Job Burnout Theory and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model.....   | 39        |
| Biblical Foundations of the Study.....                               | 41        |
| Biblical Approach to Burnout in Individuals.....                     | 42        |
| Biblical Organizational Commitment.....                              | 43        |
| Biblical Perspective on Spiritual Fitness .....                      | 44        |
| Summary.....   | 47        |
| <b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD.....</b>                               | <b>49</b> |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Overview.....  | 49        |
| Research Questions and Hypotheses .....                          | 50        |
| <i>Research Questions</i> .....                                  | 50        |
| <i>Hypotheses</i> .....  | 50        |
| Research Design.....   | 50        |
| Participants.....  | 51        |
| Study Procedures .....   | 53        |
| Instrumentation and Measurement.....                             | 53        |
| The Maslach Burnout Inventory .....                              | 54        |
| The SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale .....                          | 55        |
| The Meyer and Allen (1997) Organizational Commitment Scale ..... | 57        |
| Operationalization of Variables .....                            | 59        |
| Data Analysis .....  | 59        |
| Delimitations, Assumptions, and Limitations.....                 | 60        |
| Summary .....  | 62        |
| <b>CHAPTER 4: RESULTS .....</b>                                  | <b>64</b> |
| Overview.....  | 64        |
| Research Question(s) and Hypotheses.....                         | 64        |
| Research Questions.....  | 64        |
| Hypotheses .....   | 64        |
| Descriptive Results .....  | 65        |
| Study Findings .....   | 65        |
| Data Preparation and Assumption Testing .....                    | 65        |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Data Analysis .....   | 70        |
| Summary .....   | 75        |
| <b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION .....</b>                                      | <b>76</b> |
| Overview.....   | 76        |
| Summary of Findings.....  | 76        |
| Discussion of Findings.....   | 77        |
| Relationship With Models of Burnout and Organizational Commitment ..... | 78        |
| Relationship with Spirituality in the Workplace.....                    | 79        |
| Implications.....   | 82        |
| Recommendations for Future Research .....                               | 86        |
| Summary .....   | 87        |
| <b>REFERENCES .....</b>   | <b>89</b> |
| APPENDIX A: IRB-APPROVED RECRUITING MATERIALS.....                      | 108       |
| APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT.....                                       | 110       |
| APPENDIX C: SURVEY INSTRUMENTS .....                                    | 112       |

### List of Tables

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Table 1.</b> Sociodemographic Characteristics of Survey Participants .....  | 66 |
| <b>Table 2.</b> Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables.....  | 70 |
| <b>Table 3.</b> Linear Regression Coefficients for Spiritual Fitness' Moderation of the Burnout-<br>Organizational Commitment Relationship ..... | 72 |
| <b>Table 4.</b> Linear Regression Coefficients for SSGG's Moderation of the Burnout-<br>Organizational Commitment Relationship .....             | 73 |

### List of Figures

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Figure 1.</b> Hypothesized Relationships Between Study Variables .....   | 10 |
| <b>Figure 2.</b> Histogram of Regression Residuals.....   | 68 |
| <b>Figure 3.</b> Scatterplot of Regression Predicted Standardized Vs. Regression Residuals<br>.....                         | 69 |
| <b>Figure 4.</b> Q-Q Plot of Expected Vs. Observed Values in Total OC .....   | 69 |
| <b>Figure 5.</b> Moderation Relationship Between Burnout and Organizational Commitment in<br>High and Low SSGG Groups ..... | 74 |

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### **Introduction**

Today's workplaces have become increasingly challenging for workers in terms of the chronic stress they create (Aliem & Hashish, 2021), and two-thirds of adults identified work as a significant source of stress (Tamers et al., 2020). High-stress work environments are a concern for worker health and for organizations, as occupational stress has been shown to contribute to declines in decision making effectiveness (Norris, et al., 2020; Verhage et al., 2018), physical health and well-being (Wild et al., 2020), and cognitive functioning (Forte et al., 2021) across occupations and industries. Research has also shown that chronic stress is linked with poor mental health, increases in negative health behaviors, and has been associated with poor job performance (Hassard, et al., 2018; Tamers et al., 2020). Taken together, these negative impacts of stressful work environments demonstrate a need for additional exploration of how organizations maintain a healthy workforce in stressful conditions. This examination is an important one for both worker health and organizational longevity concerns (Ledesma, 2014; Vanhove, et al., 2016).

The current study was designed to examine this type of high-stress environment by examining the role of spiritual fitness on burnout and organizational commitment within the National Guard servicemember population. Research has demonstrated that job stressors in the military community present concerns for the organization in both recruiting and retention of personnel and that high turnover is a concern for the military at large (DiRenzo et al., 2022; Griffith, 2021). Research has also demonstrated that concerns are warranted regarding the impact of occupational stressors on individual

well-being (Rahman & Cachia, 2021; Tamers et al., 2020). One specific line of research has examined burnout in the military as an outcome of occupational stress and has demonstrated that it is related to both mental health and turnover intention (Archer & Alagaraja, 2021). Because both organizational commitment and burnout are linked to turnover intention and burnout to organizational commitment, further research on additional variables that influence these relationships have been called for in the literature (Archer & Alagaraja, 2021; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Santoso et al., 2018; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). One such variable is spiritual fitness, which has recently demonstrated positive effects on mental health of servicemembers and is considered a vital part of the development and maintenance of a healthy fighting force (Koenig, 2022; Thomas et al., 2018). It is in this context that the current study was conducted to examine the relationships between burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment in the National Guard.

### **Background**

The military has been examined in past research, and stress studies have been done in the context of typical active-duty military forces. According to Catignani et al. (2021), little attention has been given to reserve forces in comparison to active duty, despite their importance to the military. Some researchers have acknowledged the challenges that prolonged service engagements, deployments, and stressors, such as that experienced by National Guard units, have presented (Griffith, 2021). According to researchers, the reserve components who were once seen as a strategic backup for larger wars are now seen as a part of the total force and are therefore utilized more frequently and across more varied situations (Gazit et al., 2021; Griffith & Ben-Ari, 2021). These

forces have been utilized for security missions locally and abroad, for border control situations, disaster relief, and COVID-related missions, along with regular combat deployments in recent wars (Catignani et al., 2021). These repeated activations create operational stressors that have been shown to relate to many undesirable health outcomes and are unique for the National Guard, as compared to other types of military service (Reger, 2021; Smith et al., 2015).

Research has also indicated that mental health concerns related to National Guard and reserve components differ from active duty, and that higher rates of suicide (Smith et al., 2015) and psychiatric problems exist in these groups (Hoopsick et al., 2021; Hourani et al., 2020). The transition to and from active duty impacts social, career, financial, and family aspects for the National Guard soldiers, combining stressors that exist for active duty and civilian workers (Gutierrez et al., 2021; Reger, 2021). Gazit et al. (2021) suggest that the “split identity” that this population experiences can impact their mental vulnerability in both of their worlds (p.618). Koenig’s (2022) research highlighted negative outcomes for active-duty warfighters after returning to civilian life, and because the National Guard soldiers do this repeatedly, these mental health concerns are important for both the servicemember and the organization to navigate.

### **Occupational Stress and Burnout**

Burnout is one measure that can be used in assessing the effects of occupational stress, as these variables have been linked in past research (Archer & Alagaraja, 2021; Tamers et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019). While job stress and job burnout may appear to be similar, researchers have identified that they are distinct constructs (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Job stress is often defined in research as a feeling of tension, stress, and

strain (Lambert et al., 2018). Burnout characteristics go beyond these feelings and include outcomes such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, lack of personal accomplishment, feeling worn out, and feeling overextended (Meng et al., 2019). These physical and mental health symptoms can cause difficulties in functioning and lead to increased healthcare needs, absenteeism, and turnover (Archer & Alagaraja, 2021). In the military community, recent research has found that job pressure is a significant predictor of burnout, and that it is more strongly associated with nontraumatic aspects of the job, such as frustrations and exhaustion, versus combat trauma (Smith et al., 2015). Burnout has also been linked to PTSD, psychological distress, and suicidal ideation (Bryant-Lees et al., 2021). Occupational stress has been identified as a key contributor to all three components of burnout identified by Maslach and Jackson (1981), including decreased professional efficacy, and higher levels of cynicism and emotional exhaustion (Bryant-Lees et al., 2021).

### **Role of Burnout in Organizational Commitment**

Organizational commitment can be viewed as the strength of an individual's attachment and involvement with the organization, which leads to effort and identification with the organization (DiRenzo et al., 2022). Organizational commitment is a predictor of turnover intention, and burnout has specifically been linked to higher turnover in the military (Archer & Alagaraja, 2021). The existing literature consistently demonstrates that organizational commitment decreases turnover intention, and burnout increases it across industries and jobs (Santoso et al., 2018). Findings demonstrate that burnout is impacted by factors that include various job aspects, including stress, involvement, and satisfaction (Lambert et al., 2018), which are also related to

organizational commitment (Paul, et al., 2020). Findings in each area demonstrate that more research is needed to fully understand the interactions of these variables and how additional constructs affect organizational outcomes.

### **The Role of Spiritual Fitness**

One such additional construct could be spiritual fitness. This term is familiar in the military and has been a part of a comprehensive soldier fitness definition utilized in U.S. Army training for several decades (Pargament & Sweeney, 2011). Spirituality has been associated with positive outcomes when faced with stress and trauma in military environments, and military leadership has acknowledged the role of spiritual motivation in morality, ethics, and valor during battles. Though the military is comprised of individuals from many different faith backgrounds or no faith background, Pargament and Sweeney (2011) define spiritual fitness as the ability to identify one's core purpose, meaning, and direction in life, accessing this in times of struggle, and experiencing connectedness with this resource and the world. This definition aligns with the diversity of the military and allows for both traditional faith and religious spirituality, along with a conceptualization of spirituality that is more humanistic.

Over the past decade, spiritual fitness has become an important construct in measuring human performance optimization and is considered a vital part of the development and maintenance of a healthy fighting force (Koenig, 2022; Thomas et al., 2018). Research supports this idea, as spirituality has been shown to be a resilience factor for military servicemembers experiencing mental health concerns, without tying the term to a specific religious practice (Muse et al., 2019).

## **Biblical Foundation**

From an individual perspective, protection from stress or burnout allows humans to deal with change, crises, or difficult circumstances, or in a biblical context, to experience healing and victory. This is described in 2 Corinthians 4: 8-9, which says, “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). In the chaos of this fallen world, hope exists, and biblical hope allows one to move through difficulties that scripture says will arise. This is not left unclear in John 16:33, which says, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (*English Standard Version*, 2001).

From an organizational perspective, a biblical approach can see employees, servicemembers, or workers through the lens of Hebrews 13:17, where organizational leaders are watching over the souls of those in their care. Biblically, though organizations did not exist in the form present today, there were organizational parallels where practical support and help were provided during times of stress for an individual worker. Moses received support when he was overwhelmed by his task, overworked, and shouldering a broken judging process alone. This example of burnout is depicted in Exodus 18: 17-19, where Jethro says to Moses, “What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). Likewise, God also answered Moses in this manner, saying, “I will take some of the Spirit that is on

you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Numbers 11:17).

Though organizational commitment is a business term and one used in industrial and organizational psychology, the concept is also prevalent in the Bible. Work is a topic that is woven throughout the Bible and that is equated with worship and God’s glory. Colossians 3:17 says, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). According to Clinton et al. (2001), for most people today, work is not building a tabernacle or working in a church. However, work done honorably for the Lord and with an understanding that His purpose is carried out through workplaces allows for setbacks and stressors to be put into a manageable context. This link to organizational commitment can be seen as an expression of perseverance and covenant commitment that is modeled in scripture.

For the purposes of this study, the concept of spiritual fitness can be equated to spiritual maturity. Throughout scripture the Lord provides rest for our souls (Matthew 11:28), provides guidance on waiting for the Lord when dealing with chronic stress (Isaiah 40:31) and directs us to Jesus for restorative power to overcome situations and circumstances (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Romans 8:6). These concepts of spiritual maturity all comprise elements of spiritual fitness, a key component examined in the current study.

### **Problem Statement**

Research has demonstrated that high-stress work environments are a risk factor for negative mental health outcomes for individuals and a risk for the organization in terms of retention and commitment (Aliem & Hashish, 2021; Hassard et al., 2018;

Norris et al., 2020; Paul et al., 2020; Tamers et al., 2020.) This is especially true for National Guard units who transition rapidly to and from active duty and domestic life, unlike other groups in the military or civilian sectors. These unique transitions may be contributors to increases in stress-related mental health concerns, such as burnout and suicidal ideation (Gutierrez et al., 2021; Hoopsick et al., 2021). Burnout has specifically been linked to mental health symptoms, difficulties functioning, increased absenteeism, and turnover (Archer & Alagaraja, 2021; Listopad et al., 2021a). In the military, it has been linked to job pressure (Mann & Brinkley, 2021; Smith et al., 2015) and has been shown to relate to post-traumatic stress disorder, psychological distress, and suicidal ideation (Bryant-Lees et al., 2021) as well as organizational commitment (Listopad et al., 2021a). Since job stress is a primary influencer of organizational commitment and turnover intention (Abdelmoteleb, 2019), in addition to negative mental health outcomes, such as burnout (Archer & Alagaraja, 2021), research is needed in these areas to identify how best to mitigate the deleterious effects of occupational stressors (Listopad et al., 2021a).

Spirituality has been one variable examined in research as a potential resource in dealing with occupational stress and burnout (Listopad et al., 2021a.; Wu et al., 2019). The military recognizes spirituality as a valuable resource with beneficial outcomes for mental health and operational readiness (Sims & Adler, 2017). While difficulties and complexities exist in operationalizing the word spirituality, spiritual fitness is a term that has arisen within the military community to address some concerns (Koenig, 2022). Spiritual fitness recognizes both theistic and non-theistic spirituality and has been defined as the ability to identify one's core purpose, meaning, and direction in life,

accessing this in time of struggle, and experiencing connectedness with this resource and the world (Pargament & Sweeney, 2011).

The concepts of burnout, organizational commitment, and spiritual fitness have been demonstrated to be important constructs in the military but have had little attention in the National Guard population. The current study examined burnout and organizational commitment in the National Guard, using spiritual fitness as a potential moderating variable. Spiritual fitness allows for both horizontal spirituality, including connectedness and meaning/purpose, and vertical spirituality, which refers to connection to the divine to be measured; reflecting the diversity of the military (Alexander et al., 2020; Gutierrez et al., 2021). The expectation was that spiritual fitness would moderate the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment, and that spiritual fitness would have an inverse relationship with burnout, thereby providing a potential path for both well-being and organizational commitment interventions. By understanding these variables, training can be developed to impact the health, well-being, organizational longevity, and souls of those working in high-stress environments.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationships between burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment in National Guard servicemembers.

### **Research Question(s) and Hypotheses**

#### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What is the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment in National Guard servicemembers?

RQ2: What is the relationship between spiritual fitness and burnout in National Guard servicemembers?

RQ3: Do spiritual fitness levels change the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment in this population?

### Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Burnout will be negatively correlated with organizational commitment.

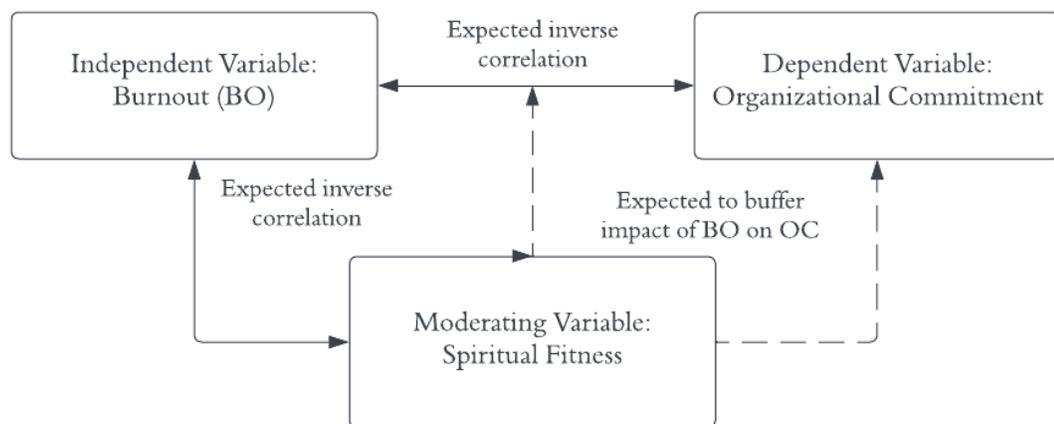
Hypothesis 2: Spiritual fitness will be negatively correlated with burnout.

Hypothesis 3: Spiritual fitness will moderate the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment, such that more spiritually fit individuals have a greater organizational commitment regardless of burnout levels.

A model of the hypothesized relationships between study variables is depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Hypothesized Relationships between Study Variables*



### **Assumptions and Limitations of the Study**

Various delimitations, assumptions, and limitations existed in the study. One delimitation in the study design was the choice of population. The National Guard was examined in the study, which has been identified in research as a unique population that is distinct from other military or civilian populations (Reger, 2021; Smith et al., 2015). Because of this delimitation, caution should be used in generalizing findings to any other groups outside of the National Guard.

Assumptions were also made in the design of this study, regarding stress levels and about burnout as a construct. The first assumption is that the National Guard soldier is in a high-stress environment. While much evidence exists to demonstrate the stressors that are present in the lives of the deployed National Guard soldier (Catignani et al., 2021; DiRenzo et al., 2022; Griffith, 2021; Gutierrez et al., 2021; Koenig, 2022; Reger, 2021; Smith et al., 2015), a measure was not included in this study to assess stress specifically in each individual. The assessment of burnout also assumes that the tool used is measuring occupational burnout, versus a mental health concern that could be preexisting or exacerbating the level of burnout reported (Diehle et al., 2019). Listopad et al. (2021b) identified that burnout is related to forty variables in the existing literature and has been shown to have significant overlap with mental health concerns such as depression. Using the results of this study to diagnose would therefore be inappropriate, though relationships between the constructs can still provide valuable information in the occupational context.

There were also several challenges that surfaced during the study. Recent negative media attention limited access to specific units and seemed to contribute to

hesitancy in participation by the servicemembers. Because the topic was centered on stress and burnout, there could have been challenges in getting feedback from those experiencing these characteristics. This could have led to responses that were not representative of the sample, as responses may have been skewed by participants who are successfully managing stress. The tendency of the National Guard to survey their servicemembers has also caused survey fatigue, which could have limited participation by some groups or units.

Two of the three measures in this study were validated scales that have been widely used in psychological research. These include the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) and the Organizational Commitment Scale (Meyer & Allen, 1997). One measure, however, the SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale (Alexander et al., 2020) is a newly developed tool for the military environment. Though validated in recent studies for the Special Forces community, the use of this measure outside of the Special Forces community is identified as a potential limitation. The measure includes elements of what is referred to as vertical and horizontal spirituality, with horizontal spirituality including connectedness and meaning/purpose, and vertical spirituality referring to connection to the divine (Alexander et al., 2020; Gutierrez et al., 2021). These terms are not as common in existing research; therefore, the constructs were identified as potentially more difficult to separate in the written analysis than in more widely used measures. The interpretation of findings may also be impacted by the lack of prior research to support the findings of this study.

Finally, using any self-report assessments creates the opportunity for response bias. This may be more concerning for military personnel who do not want their stress or burnout levels known, and who may have concerns about the confidentiality of the data.

### **Theoretical Foundations of the Study**

The theoretical foundations of the proposed study are those theories that have demonstrated relevance to the concepts of burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment. Either through a focus on meaning and purpose, cognitive appraisal, or by enhancing available resources to deal with stressors, each of the theories provide a backdrop for the variables in the proposed study. Because occupational stressors are inherently present in the environment under study, these theoretical approaches help explain relationships and potential solutions to the stressors.

### **The Search for Meaning and Purpose**

Koenig (2022), for example, found that meaning and purpose can be powerful motivators for those in the military community, and that it can be derived from both religious and non-religious sources. For instance, Bury (2017) found that Reservists who joined the military for patriotic, service-oriented, and meaning-filled reasons were more likely to stay and volunteer than those who joined for money or material benefits. Since meaning continues to arise in the literature on organizational commitment (Kraimer et al., 2022), spirituality is one area under examination by researchers as a provider of this type of meaning (Krauss & Silver, 2021).

The aspects of meaningfulness that spirituality and faith provide have been associated with low levels of burnout, stress, and promote well-being and work engagement (Listopad et al., 2021a). In addition, research by DiRenzo et al. (2022)

indicated that military organizations should foster the sense of purpose and meaningfulness of work to offset the high turnover currently present for this group; benefitting both the individual and the organization.

Meaning and purpose are used frequently in connection to one another in the military literature cited thus far, particularly in the measurement of spiritual fitness (Alexander et al., 2020). These terms are not necessarily interchangeable; however, as meaning making could be relevant to a specific instance or event, and an individual's attempt to understand what God is doing in that specific situation. Purpose is a broader concept that pertains to one's calling or placement in the world. In the literature on spiritual fitness and military mental health; however, they are often used together and are both included in the measurement tool used in this study (Alexander et al., 2020; Krauss & Silver, 2021).

### **Transactional Theory and Cognitive Appraisal**

Another aspect of meaning can be understood in terms of transactional theory, originally discussed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and highlighted in work by Bliese et al. (2017). Transactional theory was based on understanding stress and well-being by examining how an individual cognitively appraised a stressor and situation. Primary appraisal determines whether there is threat or harm in a stressor, and secondary appraisal is focused on coping or managing the stressor. Managing the transactions between stressor and behavior becomes the distinguishing factor in how people cope with the same stressor in diverse ways.

Kraimer et al. (2022) used transactional stress theory tenets in their research on the impact of global work demands on employees. The cognitive appraisal in their view,

is a mediating process that the individual creates to categorize the stressor as either a hindrance or a challenge. In their research, this categorization is related to the outcome for the individual and the organization. Demands that were perceived as debilitating or exhausting were related to burnout, while those viewed as challenging and exciting were not. Sun et al. (2018) also embraced this concept and examined nurses' cognitive reappraisals of emotional and stressful events in the context of burnout. Their findings indicated that when appraising stressful events as positive opportunities, the nurse responses were negatively associated with burnout. Conversely, those who ruminated or suppressed emotions showed results that were positively associated with burnout.

Gerich and Weber (2020) also evaluated challenge and hindrance appraisal processes and how these relate to individual and organizational outcomes. Their research was based on both transactional stress theory, where they assumed that the intensity of work demands increased psychological strain and burnout, and cognitive appraisal theory, which suggests that outcomes are mediated by the individual appraisal of the stressor. Their findings supported the concept that individual evaluation of the demand or stressor is a key mediating path for the outcome of psychological strain or burnout. They identified that additional job or individual resources should be evaluated in research, to examine their effects on the job stressors experienced by the individual. The current study used the concept of spiritual fitness as a potential worldview lens through which the individual appraises occupational stressors.

### **Theories of Sense-Making**

In a related vein, theories of sensemaking have recently been examined in research as important influences on human and organizational behavior (Van der Merwe

et al., 2020). As is done in transactional and cognitive appraisal theories, sensemaking is a cognitive process that helps individuals to structure, understand, and explain what is potentially unpredictable, uncertain, or stressful. In the field of organizational resilience, an understanding of sensemaking allows leaders to identify and train individuals with tools to enhance this process and to prepare them for extreme events or situations. Research has demonstrated that individuals search for meaning in adverse conditions (Esteves et al., 2018), and the outcome of this process can affect organizational commitment over time (Flynn et al., 2021; Wing et al., 2018). Using this example, spiritually fit leaders could use spiritual solutions and content to reduce or offset occupational stressors and help employees deal with extreme circumstances.

The vertical and horizontal aspects of spiritual fitness, as defined in the SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale (Alexander et al., 2020), have elements that relate to both appraisal theory and theories of sense-making, which have been linked to resilience and successful adaptation in adverse environments (Shelton et al., 2020). Vertical spirituality includes a personal commitment to a higher power, which has been shown to correlate with positive religious coping and positive reframing and decision-making in times of crisis (Alexander et al., 2020). This positive reframing allows servicemembers to make sense of situations and to appraise circumstances in the context of their religious beliefs, thereby providing meaning, purpose, or personal orientation (Krauss & Silver, 2021; Thomas et al., 2018). Horizontal spirituality includes commitment to selfless service, altruism, and a common mission, which have also been shown to have positive correlations to positive reframing and meaning making in adverse conditions (Alexander et al., 2020). These elements are consistent with research that has demonstrated the

significance of a sense-making process in emotional stability (Paul et al., 2020), decision-making in crisis (Al-Dabbagh, 2020), and in dealing with stressful or difficult events (Tabibnia & Radecki, 2018). Spiritual fitness, when seen through this lens, could be an important cognitive resource for those in chronically stressful environments and workplaces.

### **Job Burnout Theory and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model**

According to research on job burnout theory, continuous exposure to job stressors leads to emotional depletion. As a response to feeling depleted, characteristics such as cynicism, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization occur (Lizano et al., 2019). The outcomes from these experiences have been linked to the individual impacts of burnout, depression, physical ailments, and sleep disturbances. Job burnout has also been linked to decreased organizational commitment, which is explained by researchers in terms of the job demands- resources (JD-R) model. Research has found that chronic stressors and demands on workers lead to exhaustion, depletion, and burnout, but this can be mitigated by appropriate individual or organizational resources (Listopad et al., 2021b).

Lambert et al. (2018) expand the discussion on burnout using the JD-R model to suggest that job stress is in itself a demand, which leads to psychological strain, which leads to negative outcomes. What these specific stressors, strains, and outcomes are vary widely by individuals and their values. When valued resources appear to be missing, circumstances are appraised as demands. Using this model in the context of the current study, the strain and stressors prevalent in the National Guard environment, combined with personal and individual strains, create the environment for burnout to occur. In the

JD-R model, the availability of resources that the individual values then become a pertinent part of their personal workplace and stress management strategy.

Spirituality can be seen as a valuable individual resource in this model, as it has been negatively correlated to job burnout (Listopad et al., 2021a) and has been shown to contribute to positive organizational outcomes (Muse et al., 2019). However, according to Lizano et al. (2019), it has been studied rarely in the organizational literature. The current study worked to develop this concept by seeking to identify the impact that spiritual fitness has on both the individual, in terms of burnout, and the organization, in terms of commitment, to contribute to the existing literature in this area. Understanding how these constructs interact and impact both the individual under stress and the organization was the aim of this study.

The biblical foundations for this study include elements of spiritual maturity, rest, waiting on the Lord, finding the lesson or growth opportunity God presents, and seeking Jesus in times of stress. Each of these elements is woven throughout scripture, with many models and examples presented in both Old and New Testament passages. Burnout can be demonstrated through the life and work of Moses (Exodus 18:17-19), and Elijah (1 Kings 19: 1-19), and to Jesus himself (Matthew 11: 28-30) who needed help and refreshment when overworked (*English Standard Version*, 2001).

Organizational commitment, when viewed as a covenant commitment, is evidenced through the life of Daniel and his friends, who strived to work with excellence, even though captives in a foreign land. Spiritual fitness or spiritual maturity is the overall message of the Bible, with the direction to wait on the Lord (Isaiah 40:31) and to be “spiritually minded” for “life and peace” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Romans 8:6).

The concepts in the proposed study of avoiding burnout, committing to work, embracing God's plan for personal growth, and seeking the Lord are biblically based and key to the soul care of individuals in stressful environments.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following is a list of definitions of terms that were used in this study:

**Burnout** – Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment in response to occupational stressors (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Meng et al., 2019).

**Organizational Commitment** – Organizational commitment is the strength of an individual's attachment and involvement with the organization, which leads to effort and identification with the organization (DiRenzo et al., 2022).

**Spiritual Fitness** – Spiritual fitness is the ability to identify one's core purpose, meaning, and direction in life, accessing this in times of struggle, and experiencing connectedness with this resource and the world (Pargament & Sweeney, 2011).

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because of the unique population, the variables under examination, and the potential impact on future training. This study focuses specifically on the National Guard, who are unique in comparison to active-duty or civilian personnel, and where few studies examine well-being and organizational outcomes. The transition to and from active duty impacts social, career, financial, and family aspects for the National Guard soldiers, combining stressors that exist for active duty and civilian workers (Gutierrez et al., 2021; Reger, 2021). By examining this population, specific interventions can be developed that are relevant and applicable to their unique situation.

Likewise, the hope was that the results of this study could provide insights for others studying the National Guard as a unique segment of the military.

Recent National Guard activations have resulted in the emergence of significant mental health concerns, increased suicidal ideation, and turnover intentions in this population, which have been linked to occupational stress (Bryant-Lees et al., 2021). By examining how burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment relate to one another and interact, the findings of this study could contribute to enhanced mental health awareness or care for these servicemembers, thereby impacting the health, well-being, organizational longevity, and the souls of those in their care.

### **Summary**

How people working in high-stress environments maintain personal well-being and continue to work with the organization are important concerns across a variety of fields. This study was conducted to identify relationships between burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment in the National Guard, a unique branch of the military with high levels of stress. Because of the prevalence of mental health concerns, increased suicidal ideation, and turnover intentions in this population, this study is timely in working to identify potential influences, such as spiritual fitness, which could mitigate these negative outcomes. The hope is that the results of this study could be used to positively impact not only the National Guard and the individuals within, but other workers in high-stress environments.

The study focused not only on elements of servicemember well-being and commitment, but soul care, which can be linked to leadership mandates in scripture, such as 1 Peter 5, which says to “Shepherd the flock of God that is among you” (*English*

*Standard Version*, 2011). Hebrews 13:17 also makes it noticeably clear that leaders are “Keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account” (*English Standard Version*, 2011). By presenting tools for spiritually dealing with chronic stressors, more workers and soldiers can be impacted personally, organizationally, and eternally.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Overview**

To examine the impact of spiritual fitness on burnout and organizational commitment in high-stress environments, a thorough literature review on these constructs will be presented. The following section will identify the search strategy employed and will discuss the existing understandings about the effects of occupational stress, burnout, organizational commitment, and spiritual fitness, as they have been studied to date in a variety of populations. Discussion throughout this section will also demonstrate how these concepts apply to the National Guard environment, and why this population differs from civilian or active-duty military populations. Finally, the biblical foundations for this proposal will be presented, with each construct examined through the lens of Scripture.

Throughout this literature review section, constructs will be discussed and the specific operational definitions for the cited research will be made clear. Attention will be given to challenges inherent in some of the operational definitions, and how the proposed study intends to address these concerns. Finally, this section will point out where gaps exist in the research regarding the National Guard, the relationships between variables, or in their implementation in the workplace.

### **Description of Search Strategy**

The articles and references included in this proposal were acquired primarily through the Jerry Falwell Library at Liberty University, which linked to multiple databases. The various databases utilized for this proposal included ProQuest, APA PsychNET, EBSCO, JSTOR, SAGE Premier, ScienceDirect, Routledge, Springer,

Wiley, Taylor and Francis Online, CrossMark, MDPI, and Emerald Publishing, which were all used in gathering information on the relevant constructs. The search strategy limited articles to those that were written since 2018, were peer-reviewed, were in the English language, and had the complete article available to view and download. Once articles were read and included in the review, their references were used to locate and include additional relevant articles. Seminal works in the field or work done by key researchers were added, many of which were published before 2018. These older resources were deemed important to the theoretical foundation, measurement strategy, or operationalization of terms for the proposed study. Words used in the database searches included ‘burnout’, ‘burnout in the National Guard’, ‘military burnout’, ‘military organizational commitment’, ‘burnout and organizational commitment’, ‘spirituality and burnout’, ‘spirituality, burnout, and turnover intention’, ‘spiritual fitness’, ‘work commitment’, ‘occupational stress’, ‘organizational resilience’, ‘stress in the workplace’, ‘workplace spirituality’, and ‘stress in the military’. These terms were used alone and in conjunction with one another, with multiple combinations in addition to those provided.

For articles that were unavailable in this library and set of databases, external resources were used to purchase significant items from the *Journal of Special Operations Medicine*, to ensure that the latest and most pertinent information was in use for this review. Because the term ‘spiritual fitness’ is relatively new, these resources were necessary and added to the understanding of the construct.

Biblical research was conducted by searches on Bible Gateway by topic, use of commentaries and life application bibles, and study with theology experts available to

the researcher. Specific examination of concepts of burnout, organizational commitment, and spiritual maturity were investigated, though the biblical words varied from these more current terms. Biblical terms reviewed and included in searches were ‘rest,’ ‘work,’ ‘refreshing,’ and ‘leader.’ *The Care and Counsel Bible* was used extensively in the development of the biblical foundations section of this proposal (Clinton et al., 2001). Word studies, commentaries, summaries, theme articles, personality profiles, and introductions to current topics were provided throughout this resource. These resources were geared toward psychology professionals and counselors, bringing insight into the biblical foundation for the psychological terms used in the literature review.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Introduction**

The review of literature for this proposal includes background information on the population, the constructs, and discusses gaps in existing research. The context for the study on the examination of burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment is based on concerns about the negative impacts of occupational stress on individuals and organizations (Rahman & Cachia, 2021; Tamers et al., 2020). Research indicates that occupational stress continues to be a hazard for today’s workers (Aliem & Hashish, 2021; Tamers et al., 2020) and that both individually and organizationally, the impacts of high- stress work environments are concerning in terms of decision-making effectiveness, cognitive functioning, and overall mental health and well-being across occupations and industries (Forte et al., 2021; Norris, et al., 2020; Verhage et al., 2018; Wild et al., 2020). These negative outcomes have also been shown to relate to organizational concerns such as job performance (Hassard, et al., 2018; Tamers et al.,

2020). From both the individual and organizational perspective, high-stress workplaces are a key area for examination.

Research has been conducted on stress, resilience, mental health effects of stressful workplaces, and many other subtopics that relate to worker well-being, organizational resilience, and organizational commitment. Bliese et al. (2017) reviewed this empirical research on stress and well-being over a one-hundred-year period (1917-2017) and found that historical events, technological changes, changes in the demographic of the workforce, changes in work patterns, work/family conflict, and workload increases all provide a backdrop for the workplace stressors prevalent today. The research demonstrates that stressors include political, economic, societal, and technological aspects that impact individuals both personally and professionally. Most recently, research is acknowledging the blurring of work boundaries, increased work tensions, and prevalence of burnout as more significant concerns.

Much work has been done in high-stress work environments such as the field of nursing and the first responder communities to understand how people operating in high-stress environments maintain resilience and cope (Wu et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019). Police officers are one demographic that has been studied previously, with findings indicating that the chronic and acute stress that occur on a regular basis in their occupation are related to negative outcomes such as burnout and absenteeism (Perez-Floriano & Gonzalez, 2019; Verhage et al., 2018). These researchers examined the physical, emotional, behavioral, and psychological consequences of continuous stressors and highlighted concerns in this context. Sun et al. (2018) studied nurses and the relationship of chronic stressors to burnout. Their findings indicated that those reporting

chronically stressful environments were more likely to report that they were experiencing burnout. These findings are consistent across industries; however, research has not yet tied the concerns about occupational stress directly to the National Guard (Meng et al., 2019; Shelton et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019). This was the population examined in this study.

### **The Unique Stressors of National Guard Servicemembers**

Research has demonstrated that job stressors in the military community present concerns for the organization in both recruiting and retention of personnel, and that high turnover is a concern for the military at large (DiRenzo et al., 2022; Griffith, 2021). According to Flood and Keegan (2022), 87% of military personnel surveyed by the Department of Defense indicated that they experienced stress as a result of their work, and studies have demonstrated the cognitive impact of this stress in this population. The impact of these occupational stressors on the mental readiness and mental health of the servicemembers has been identified as an area of paramount importance to military leaders (Koenig, 2022).

As discussed in previous sections, the military has been examined in past research, though the focus has predominantly been on active-duty personnel versus those serving in reserve components of the military, despite the significance of the reserve units to the overall fighting force (Catignani et al., 2021). The National Guard is most like reserve components of the military, though they have some differences in their purpose and operational requirements that differentiate the two entities. Reserve components respond only to federal activations, while the National Guard respond to both federal and state activations. This additional element adds the likelihood for more

frequent and unpredictable activations, along with different rules for each type of service in terms of pay, benefits, reporting structures, and other key elements of the workplace. Research has demonstrated that these additional stressors are unique for the National Guard, as compared to other types of military service (Reger, 2021; Smith et al., 2015). The transition to and from active duty impacts social, career, financial, and family aspects for the National Guard soldiers, combining stressors that exist for active duty and civilian workers (Gutierrez et al., 2021; Reger, 2021). For the purposes of this study, literature related to active-duty military, reserve components, and the National Guard were all included.

The literature consistently demonstrates that across industries and fields, the negative impacts of stressful work environments set the stage for additional exploration of how people operating in stressful environments build resilience and cope (Shelton et al., 2020). It is particularly concerning for National Guard servicemembers, and few studies exist that consider the unique aspects of this population.

### **Burnout as a Measure of Occupational Stress**

Occupational stress can be examined through the construct of burnout, as these variables have been linked in past research (Archer & Alagaraja, 2021; Tamers, et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019). The CDC and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health have issued guidance for organizational change and stress management interventions to offset this prevalent concern, as research suggests that workplaces will continue to create more intense stressors for workers (Listopad et al., 2021a; Tamers et al., 2020). According to Shelton et al. (2020), unprecedented changes in political, environmental, and societal arenas have impacted the way people work and have created

environments of uncertainty, which leads to stress and burnout. Intense pressures, shift work, large workloads, and no time for relaxation are present in more occupations today and are key factors contributing to burnout (Zhang et al., 2019).

This work is consistent with preeminent research on burnout done by Maslach and Jackson (1981), who found that burnout has significant consequences for individuals and organizations. These consequences include decreased quality of work, increased turnover, absenteeism, increased personal distress, increased use of drugs and alcohol, and marital and family problems. According to Edu-Valsania et al. (2022), the World Health Organization has recently included burnout as a recognized syndrome resulting from these types of psychosocial occupational hazards.

Burnout has also been linked to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychological distress, and suicidal ideation, and occupational stress has been identified as a key contributor to these outcomes (Bryant-Lees et al., 2021). Mann and Brinkley (2021) identified loss of control as one occupational factor that can contribute to burnout in the reserve military. As civilians, control over decisions about daily schedules, project management, and free time exists, but this control disappears when activated for military duty. The loss of control of these elements, along with the loss of control in their civilian world while they are absent from it, creates stress that leads to physiological, psychological, and psychosocial concerns that may not apply to active-duty military or civilian populations who navigate only one of these areas at a time.

In the military community specifically, recent research has also found that job pressure is a significant predictor of burnout, and some interesting findings have surfaced. Smith et al. (2015) found that burnout is more strongly associated with

nontraumatic aspects of the job, such as frustrations and exhaustion, versus combat trauma. Other research has also highlighted this finding and found that both reduced individual health and organizational outcomes, including burnout, were likely when reservists were faced with repetitive, unclear, or purposeless tasks (Mann & Brinkley, 2021). These suggest that while combat trauma does contribute to many mental health concerns (Muse et al., 2019), other aspects of the peacetime workplace should be considered. The National Guard servicemembers can experience both combat and local operations in a brief period, which could create an environment for burnout. By experiencing stressors such as moving to and from locations, waiting for direction or orders, or when in uncertain environments, this group is consistently in environments that are ripe for burnout (Mann & Brinkley, 2021).

Much research has demonstrated that burnout is a key concern for mental health and turnover intention of military servicemembers, and it is an area that is currently fragmented and lacking in strategies to minimize its effects (Archer & Alagaraja, 2021). These concerns set the stage for additional research on burnout and the impact it has on individuals and organizations. The occupational stressors that affect these mental health issues, burnout, and well-being also play a role in organizational commitment, which will be reviewed in the next section.

### **Role of Burnout in Organizational Commitment**

As defined in previous sections, organizational commitment can be viewed as the strength of an individual's attachment and involvement with the organization, which leads to effort and identification with the organization (DiRenzo et al., 2022). Both organizational commitment and burnout have been found to predict turnover intention in

the military and across multiple industries (Archer & Alagaraja, 2021; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Santoso et al., 2018; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Burnout has consistently been linked with increases in turnover, and organizational commitment with decreases in turnover across industries and occupations (Santoso et al., 2018).

Additional variables have been examined in the literature that change the relationship between occupational stress, burnout, and organizational commitment. Griffith (2021) examined reserve servicemembers and determined that variables such as general life stability and satisfaction were associated with military organizational commitment, but personal difficulties and stressors were linked to turnover intention. Likewise, Listopad et al. (2021a) identified organizational factors such as high workload, low control, high demands, and role ambiguity as organizational precursors to burnout, therefore impacting organizational commitment.

Research has tied many factors to organizational commitment, including both individual and organizational factors. While this makes it difficult to tease out specific factors that relate to these primary variables under examination, the research tends to identify either a specific type of organizational commitment, or general organizational commitment when reporting results. Often, these studies discuss the variables in terms of the three types of organizational commitment defined by Allen and Meyer (1990). The first type, affective commitment, results from an emotional attachment to the organization and includes the desire to serve and do well for the organization. The second is deemed continuance commitment, which is based on fear of losing benefits, fear of finding something comparable, or simply the difficulty of changing environments. Finally, the third type of commitment is normative commitment, which

arises from beliefs about responsibilities to the organization, obligations, or loyalties to the organization. Allen and Meyer (1990) simplify this further by stating that those with strong affective commitment want to stay, those with a strong continuance commitment need to stay, and those with a strong normative commitment stay because they ought to stay. While some studies have identified specific variables and their relationship with one of the types of organizational commitment, general organizational commitment, according to Meyer and Allen (1997), combines these areas to provide a full picture. Many researchers use this model, as it considers the cognitive, emotional, social, and higher order aspects of organizational commitment that can capture the thought process of the individual (Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

The literature consistently states that more research is needed to fully understand the interactions of differing variables on organizational outcomes. Because both organizational commitment and burnout are linked to turnover intention and burnout to organizational commitment, further research on additional variables that influence these relationships has been called for in the literature (Archer & Alagaraja, 2021; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Santoso et al., 2018; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). The current study examined spiritual fitness as one potential factor in influencing burnout and organizational commitment.

### **Role of Spirituality for Individual and Occupational Stressors**

Before delving into the relatively new concept of spiritual fitness, a more general examination of literature on spirituality was conducted, as it has been examined as a factor in burnout and organizational commitment. Spirituality has been identified in research as a contributor to overall resilience and coping in stressful environments and

circumstances and has been examined in the occupational context (Ai et al., 2021; Cherry et al., 2018; Sisto et al., 2019). Fox et al. (2018), for example, found that spiritual people are more optimistic, resilient, and use more adaptive coping strategies when facing stressful circumstances. This concept of coping with stress through spirituality has been studied in the field of health research, and tools have been developed to examine many facets of spirituality and coping. Daily rituals, finding meaning and purpose, and support and commitment from church have been identified as factors that provide coping resources when dealing with stressors (John E. Fetzer Institute, 1999). The Christian faith has specifically been linked to resilient coping through the process of finding meaning and purpose in God (Campbell & Bauer, 2021), and workplace spirituality has been examined as a practice in supporting the beneficial effects from a variety of faith backgrounds while reducing the impacts of occupational stress (Dal Corso et al., 2020; Loo, 2017).

Many religious teachings encourage dedication and perseverance at work, and religious involvement has been linked to work satisfaction and other positive organizational outcomes (Koenig, 2022). Research on spiritual awareness in the workplace has also shown that meaning, purpose, and community are important variables to workers in maintaining health and well-being and positive organizational outcomes (Farmer et al., 2019; Guillen et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2019). Research has indicated that more spiritual or religious individuals are more resilient, less susceptible to burnout, and find positive meaning in work (Listopad et al., 2021a). Research has identified that when spirituality is accessed as a coping mechanism for nurses, there is a

significant reduction in stress, burnout, and turnover intention, and an increase in finding positive meaning in their work (Murphy et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2019).

### **Spirituality in the Military Servicemember**

As discussed in the previous section, research on spirituality has demonstrated that relationships exist with the constructs in the current study, but the studies vary in how they define terms and operationalize the constructs. Workplace spirituality, spiritual coping, religious coping, spiritual well-being, spiritual climate, and other terms are often used interchangeably in capturing the essence of the “spiritual” construct under investigation. Koenig (2008) described these overlapping constructs in an evaluation of commonly used measures of religiosity and spirituality. He found that frequently used measures of spirituality also contained many character traits and elements of good mental health that confounded the results of these measures. Since his work in 2008, new tools have been developed to address these concerns and will be discussed through the remainder of the literature review.

While operational definitions for spirituality differ significantly in the cited research, the military community recognizes the concepts as important for the health and resilience of servicemembers (Abraham et al., 2018; Muse et al., 2019; Pargament & Sweeney, 2011; Thomas et al., 2018). Spiritual health is included as one of the five dimensions of strength incorporated into existing military training, due to the beneficial outcomes for mental health and operational readiness demonstrated in past research (Sims & Adler, 2017). For example, Kick and McNitt (2016) identified that spiritual belief is instrumental in the health of those already experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or when initially facing existential threats, both of which are relevant

for military servicemembers. Multiple branches of the military use the term “spiritual readiness,” and the U.S. Army defines this as “the ability to endure and overcome difficulties through finding meaning in our life experiences” (Borgeson, 2021, p.1). Other branches of the military also use these elements, but include verbiage that acknowledges connection to divine, participation in faith activities, and sacrifice for others. According to Worthington and Deuster (2018), spirituality is recognized as a vital component in maintaining soldier readiness but remains under-researched and poorly understood. More fully defining spirituality in a way that is measurable and meaningful in the National Guard was a goal of the current study.

### ***Spiritual Fitness***

As mentioned in previous sections, spiritual fitness is one way that spirituality can be assessed in the military community in a manner that includes the diversity of faith backgrounds inherently present in this population (Pargament & Sweeney, 2011). Their definition of spiritual fitness is centered around the ability to identify one’s core purpose, meaning, and direction in life, accessing this in times of struggle, and experiencing connectedness with this resource and the world. Thomas et al. (2018) identifies spiritual fitness as a practical issue for the military, to ensure that training and developmental opportunities exist to enhance the biopsychosocial benefits associated with this practice. These researchers believe that culturally competent spiritual fitness programs for the military are key in improving mental health and sustainability. Research supports this idea, as spirituality has been shown to be a resilience factor for military members experiencing mental health concerns, without tying the term to a specific religious practice (Muse et al., 2019).

Findings that are specific to the military and the concept of spiritual fitness address this variation in spirituality definitions by including both vertical and horizontal aspects of spirituality to be as broad as possible for the diversity of the military. Vertical spirituality refers to the connection to the divine, while horizontal spirituality includes aspects of connectedness to others and the establishment of meaning or purpose (Alexander et al., 2020; Krauss & Silver, 2021). The vertical and horizontal aspects of spiritual fitness capture the nuances of both spiritual approaches and other theoretical foundations, which lead to the literature on the theoretical underpinnings for the current study.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study**

#### ***The Search for Meaning and Purpose***

The vertical and horizontal aspects of spiritual fitness, as discussed previously, have elements that relate to both appraisal theory and theories of sense-making, which have been linked to resilience and successful adaptation in adverse environments (Shelton et al., 2020). Research demonstrates that a sense-making process is significant in emotional stability (Paul et al., 2020), decision-making in crisis (Al-Dabbagh, 2020), and dealing with stressful or difficult events (Tabibnia & Radecki, 2018). Spirituality can be seen through this lens, and additional insights into the theoretical background for this statement will be provided in this section.

Research demonstrates that individuals search for meaning in adverse conditions, such as chronically stressful environments (Esteves et al., 2018), and that this can affect organizational commitment over time (Flynn et al., 2021; Wing et al., 2018). The aspects of meaningfulness that spirituality and faith provide have been associated with

low levels of burnout and stress and promote well-being and work engagement (Listopad et al., 2021a). Koenig (2022) indicated that there is an overlap in concepts related to meaning-making with spiritual or religious constructs, as well as in the concept of human flourishing. Koenig believes that the lack of meaning and purpose is an underlying factor in some of the mental health concerns experienced by those in stressful environments. His research demonstrates that religious or spiritual involvement significantly impacts human flourishing and that these dynamics apply to life both inside and outside of military duty. In addition, research by DiRenzo et al. (2022) indicated that military organizations should foster a sense of purpose and meaningfulness of work to offset the high turnover currently present for this group, benefitting both the individual and the organization.

Likewise, in a well-referenced report on tools for measuring religiousness and spirituality, Pargament (John E. Fetzer Institute, 1999) discusses that many scales include meaning and purpose, but they are not clear in distinguishing between these concepts and do often overlap. He references thought leaders who linked meaning to mental health, such as Viktor Frankl, who believed that meaning was a characteristic that impacted physical and mental health if unfulfilled and was a critical function of religion. Other references included existing scales that measure purpose in life, each of which also captures aspects of meaning and relates to spiritual concepts. Religion and spirituality are inherently confounded by these concepts in their measurement, according to Pargament (John E. Fetzer Institute, 1999). The measurement tools that were used in the current study accounted for some of this differentiation in the design and

interpretation that will allow for a separation of theist and non-theist meaning attribution (Alexander et al., 2020; Krauss & Silver, 2021).

By examining spiritual fitness, burnout, and organizational commitment together in this context, this study was positioned to develop new understandings regarding the relationship between these variables. By clearly defining and examining spiritual fitness, as defined by Alexander et al. (2020), this study sought to identify a potential new component that would be relevant to the National Guard. Understanding how these constructs interact and impact both the individual under stress and the organization was the aim of this study.

### ***Transactional Theory and Cognitive Appraisal***

Transactional theory and the associated cognitive appraisal process for labeling stress is another useful theory for understanding the experience of the military servicemember (Flood & Keegan, 2022). Transactional theory has been used to describe processes of resilience and adaptation to stress in the military environment, as the stressors are present for the individual, but the individual response to stress is what determines the outcome for that person. When stressors are appraised as exceeding their personal resources, then that stressor can endanger the individual in terms of their mental health, job performance, or other cognitive or behavioral outcomes. According to the original theory proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the subjective appraisal of stress occurs with a primary appraisal, which determines if there is a potential threat, and a secondary appraisal, which identifies if the individual has the capacity to manage and cope with the situation. To the extent that positive outcomes can result from the situation, the individual appraises it as a challenge. According to Flood and Keegan

(2022), the original forms of coping in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) work were either deemed problem-focused or emotion-focused coping and resulted from the cognitive appraisal process.

More recently, however, meaning-focused coping has arisen in the literature and involves the use of values, beliefs, and existential goals to understand and cope with stressful situations (Flood & Keegan, 2022). According to Etchin et al. (2019), this type of appraisal and meaning-focused coping is based on beliefs, which may be either individual or collective lenses that shape the meaning of the event and, therefore, the response to it. Meaning-based coping, in their view, can prompt spiritual approaches and positive reinterpretation of the event and may act as a buffer against negative stress reactions.

### ***Theories of Sense-Making***

The concept of sense-making is related to the transactional stress model and the act of cognitive appraisal and has been examined extensively in the context of crisis management and organizational resilience (Sahay & Dwyer, 2021; Van der Merwe et al., 2020). The theory of sense-making has recently been studied in COVID-19 responses in nursing by Sahay and Dwyer (2021). Because an unusual or crisis environment requires adaptation, individuals may take potential threats and turn them into challenge opportunities, may change the way a crisis is evaluated or described, or take action to make their roles more meaningful in the current circumstance. This is a form of stress management where plans to cope with the situation are formulated, and this sense-making action allows for the reduction of ambiguity, uncertainty, or fear around a situation. Sahay and Dwyer (2021) refer to this as "cognitive crafting," which

occurs when a change in perception brings meaning to a situation (p. 549). Using spiritual fitness as an example of a narrative to use in sensemaking and cognitive crafting could be beneficial in dealing with stressors or extreme circumstances that are inherently present in the environment of the National Guard servicemember. This theoretical understanding was one driver for the current study.

### ***Job Burnout Theory and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model***

Also focused on the management of occupational stress is the work on job burnout theory and the associated job demands-resources (JD-R) model. According to Xie et al. (2021), in this model, job demands include physical, social, and organizational aspects of the job that require sustained effort, which can lead to psychological overload, fatigue, or exhaustion. Job resources are those things that allow individuals to cope, maintain health, and achieve goals while mitigating the psychological costs associated with the demands. Burnout can be viewed in this model as an outcome of excessive job demands with insufficient or depleted resources. Xie et al. (2021) cited research indicating that positive relationships exist between job demands, burnout, and turnover, while a negative relationship exists between job resources and burnout. According to Perez-Floriano and Gonzalez (2019), those in dangerous occupations, such as police or military, will have additional stressors that are unique to this environment and affect their ability to balance occupational demands with resources.

To illustrate this concept, Hu et al. (2017) examined the relationship between job demands and resources in Chinese nurses and police officers. Using the JD-R theory as a backdrop, the researchers assumed that adequate resources provide the satisfaction of psychological needs in response to stressors. The enhancement of psychological needs

leads to healthy functioning, and when these needs are not fulfilled, lead to negative outcomes such as high blood pressure, fatigue, energy depletion, burnout, and decreased organizational commitment. Their study confirmed that both increasing job demands and decreasing job resources related to burnout. Chronic exposure to low resources in high-demand environments, in their model, was linked to significant increases in burnout.

The current study examined spiritual fitness as a potential resource for individuals dealing with occupational stress. Research has demonstrated an inverse relationship between spirituality and job burnout, has identified stress-buffering effects of spirituality and belief, and has shown that spirituality provides a path for identifying the meaningfulness of work (Listopad et al., 2021a). One interesting finding highlighted by Lizano et al. (2019), however, indicated that job burnout was less impacted by individual resources, such as spirituality, work engagement, self-esteem, or other personal characteristics, and more impacted by organizational characteristics, such as workload. Esteves et al. (2018), however, found that when individual spirituality imbues work with meaning, organizational commitment increases through the aspect of dedication. Their findings also demonstrate that individuals who see their work as a calling had greater career commitment, job satisfaction, organizational duty, and other positive organizational outcomes. Whether the calling is interpreted as from God or from another source, however, remains difficult to examine in research.

As evidenced in the previous sections, there are many areas of overlap in potential theoretical backgrounds and in probable outcomes from the current study. The balance between what is individually based and what is organizationally based is not yet

definitive in the research. The current study was designed to further develop this concept by seeking to identify the impact that spiritual fitness has on both the individual, in terms of burnout, and the organization, in terms of commitment, to contribute to the existing literature in this area.

### **Biblical Foundations of the Study**

The goals of the current study also included the desire for a biblical understanding of burnout and the impact that it has on the individual and the organization. Biblically, though organizations did not exist in the form present today, there were organizational parallels present in the lives of those referenced in both the Old and New Testaments. In the book of Exodus, Jethro becomes a key mentor for Moses, when he was overwhelmed by his task, overworked, and shouldering a broken judging process alone. Jethro saw organizational solutions to the burnout that Moses was experiencing, including delegation, and restructuring the judging system. In Exodus 18:17-19, Jethro says to Moses, “What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). This management example is one that organizations can use to identify those who may be overloaded by work stressors.

Likewise, God also intervened with Moses saying, “I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Numbers 11:17). God often provided wise guides, helpers, and leaders to keep one person from overdoing and set a precedent for believers in this context. Wise organizations today,

who acknowledge the impact of stress on their teams and employees, are acting biblically when creating responses and interventions.

### **Biblical Approach to Burnout in Individuals**

Although the word “burnout” is not present in the Bible, there are numerous examples and passages that address the underlying mechanisms of burnout. The definition in use in this study includes themes of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, lack of personal accomplishment, feeling worn out, and feeling overextended (Meng et al., 2019), all of which have corresponding terms in the Bible. For the purposes of this research, burnout in the occupational context was examined, and biblical accounts also exist that acknowledge this type of burnout.

The prophet Elijah could be viewed as a biblical example of one who is burned out from the work put upon him (Pingleton, 2001). Though Elijah witnessed a tremendous victory and miraculous intervention from God in his dealing with the prophets of Baal, this was followed by an extreme low point where Elijah prayed that he might die (*English Standard Version*, 2001, 1 Kings 19: 1-19). Elijah was described as one who was a candidate for burnout, emotionally exhausted, feeling lack of personal accomplishment, and wanting to quit his work and his life. In this dark place and situation, God reached out to Elijah to heal his mind, heart, and body from the effects of the stress and anguish he had endured. He was supernaturally fed, replenished, and encouraged through God’s “still small voice” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, 1 Kings 19:12). This example is one that demonstrates God’s interest in individual needs, his loving manner of healing, and how burnout was acknowledged and addressed through Elijah.

## **Biblical Organizational Commitment**

Though organizational commitment is a business term and one used in industrial and organizational psychology, the concept is also prevalent in the Bible. Biblical organizational commitment can also be seen as an expression of perseverance when serving where God has called. Christian commitment is a topic in the Bible that can relate to organizational commitment in the context of covenant commitment. The concept of a covenant is seen throughout scripture and is used as a promise that has value to both parties. A value placed on a relationship (such as marital commitment) or a promise to the Lord (such as sacrificial acts in the Old Testament) is prevalent in the Bible. This concept was examined in the context of organizational commitment in the reserve military forces by Gazit et al. (2021), who identified the “military covenant” as inclusive of psychological contracts, expectations for treatment, and role identity in the workplace (p. 625). The researchers found that reserve soldiers appeared to transmit values between their two worlds: soldier and civilian.

The values inherent in this covenant perspective on organizational commitment can be exemplified by Hebrews 13:17, which says, “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account” (*New International Version*, 2011). This approach to organizational commitment as a value is one that was examined in the current study. This is an example of treating work as described in Colossians 3: 23-24, which says, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (*New International Version*, 2011). This study was designed to examine if

those who are spiritually fit might approach organizational commitment as a value, regardless of personal burnout, and therefore have a stronger covenant-based level of organizational commitment.

### **Biblical Perspective on Spiritual Fitness**

Spiritual fitness, though not a term used in the Bible, is the heart of what the Bible talks about in terms of spiritual maturity. Though the tool used to assess spiritual fitness in the current research was designed to speak to those who are believers and who are not, the concept remains a biblical one. By examining what the Bible says about self-care, trust in the Lord, and spiritual maturity, parallels can be drawn with the purpose of the current study.

Throughout scripture, the Lord provides rest for our souls, which is an antidote to burnout. Jesus says in Matthew 11: 28-30, “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). Jesus also modeled healthy habits in terms of rest and refreshment during times of stress. These New Testament examples are consistent with Old Testament scriptures as well, such as Exodus 20:8-11, where it says, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it, you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days, the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (*New*

*International Version*, 2011). These examples indicate that biblically, burnout was a concern, and spiritual health through rest and refreshment was the solution.

The concept of waiting for the Lord is also prevalent throughout the Bible and is one that has applications when dealing with chronic stress. Isaiah 40:31 says, “But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). Clinton et al. (2001) stated that life circumstances and situations could cause overwhelming feelings and a sense of powerlessness. Christian spirituality, however, connects the believer to Jesus and the restorative power to overcome situations and circumstances. Romans 8:6 says, “For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). Fostering this life and peace in high-stress work environments represents a biblical approach to organizational health.

The concept of waiting on the Lord can also be expanded to reflect the Christian perspective and belief that God’s goodness can be trusted. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (*New International Version*, 2011). This type of mature outlook aligns with Hebrews 11:1, which also provides a clear description of this type of faith and says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (*New International Version*, 2011). When behaving as described in Proverbs 3:5-6, which says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your

paths,” those with spiritual maturity can rest while trusting, hoping, and waiting on the Lord (*English Standard Version*, 2011).

Part of the theoretical foundation for the current study was the concept of meaning making, which can also be viewed as a biblical concept when combined with the aspects of trusting and waiting on the Lord. Romans 5:3-4 says, “Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, character, and hope” (*New International Version*, 2011). Likewise, 2 Corinthians 4: 17-18 sheds further light on this idea, saying, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (*New Internal Version*, 2011). This type of appraisal of life circumstances by aligning with biblical meaning making exemplifies the mature believer, who believes the words of Romans 8:28, which says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (*New International Version*, 2011).

A biblical example of this type of spiritual maturity is Daniel. Daniel was captured and brought into Babylon to serve the King, along with Judah’s most promising young men. While they were pressed to adapt to lifestyles that dishonored God, Daniel and his friends had the spiritual wisdom and maturity to adapt or to stand firm. Their courage, faithfulness, trust in the Lord, and commitment allowed them to succeed through their stressors and trials. They also strived to work with excellence even in this difficult circumstance and displayed what could today be referred to as spiritual maturity and organizational commitment. These concepts of spiritual maturity, which include

trusting the Lord, waiting on the Lord, and committing to Him, all comprise elements of spiritual fitness that were included in the current study.

### **Summary**

The review of literature and the biblical research on the topics of burnout, organizational commitment, and spiritual fitness can be linked by the common thread of occupational stressors and their effects on worker well-being. Research has consistently demonstrated that chronic stressors in workplaces create challenges for individual health (Aliem & Hashish, 2021; Rahman & Cachia, 2021; Tamers et al., 2020) and for organizational outcomes (Hassard et al., 2018; Paul et al., 2020). Burnout has specifically been linked to occupational stress and has been shown to cause physical and mental health symptoms, difficulties functioning, increases absenteeism, and turnover (Archer & Alagaraja, 2021; Listopad et al., 2021a). In the military population specifically, burnout has been linked to job pressure (Mann & Brinkley, 2021; Smith et al., 2015) and has shown to relate to post traumatic stress disorder, psychological distress, and suicidal ideation (Bryant-Lees et al., 2021) as well as organizational commitment (Listopad et al., 2021a).

Spirituality has been examined in research as a potential resource in dealing with occupational stress and burnout (Listopad et al., 2021a.; Wu et al., 2019). In the military, spirituality is recognized as a valuable resource with beneficial outcomes for mental health and operational readiness (Sims & Adler, 2017). Spiritual fitness has recently been identified in research as an important construct in measuring human performance optimization and is recognized as an important biopsychosocial element for improving mental health and sustainability (Thomas et al., 2018). By viewing spiritual fitness

through the lenses of seeking meaning and purpose, transactional theory, cognitive appraisal theories, theories of sensemaking, and the JD-R model, the links to organizational commitment presented an interesting path for the current study to examine.

Biblically, the current study has sound foundational support, as scripture demonstrates that there will be tribulations and troubles in the chaos of this fallen world and provides many examples of overcoming worldly stressors through reliance on God. Burnout in the lives of Moses and Elijah and the organizational solutions provided by Jethro and by God demonstrates how spiritual fitness (maturity) can be a solution for individuals and leaders dealing with organizational stressors and the associated effects. These concepts of spiritual fitness, burnout, and organizational commitment were examined in the current study to assess the impact of high-stress environments on the individuals within the National Guard community.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

### Overview

As discussed thus far, research has demonstrated that job stressors in the military community present concerns for the organization in terms of both well-being of workers and recruiting and retention of personnel (DiRenzo et al., 2022; Griffith, 2021).

Negative impacts of stressful work environments set the stage for additional exploration of how organizations maintain a healthy workforce and thrive. In the current study, these concepts were examined through the constructs of burnout, organizational commitment, and spiritual fitness.

Specifically, the purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationships between burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment in current and former National Guard servicemembers. The primary aim of the study was to determine if this high-stress population demonstrated a relationship between burnout and organizational commitment and if spiritual fitness moderated this relationship such that more spiritually fit individuals had a greater organizational commitment regardless of burnout levels.

This chapter will describe the research questions and hypotheses driving the study and present the research design. Study participants will be described, along with details regarding the tools that were used to measure the variables under study. In addition, a clear description of the operationalization of these variables, the strategy for data analysis, and the delimitations, assumptions, and limitations will be reviewed and included in this section.

## **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What is the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment in National Guard servicemembers?

RQ2: What is the relationship between spiritual fitness and burnout in National Guard servicemembers?

RQ3: Do spiritual fitness levels change the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment in this population?

### **Hypotheses**

Hypothesis 1: Burnout will be negatively correlated with organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 2: Spiritual fitness will be negatively correlated with burnout.

Hypothesis 3: Spiritual fitness will moderate the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment, such that more spiritually fit individuals have a greater organizational commitment regardless of burnout levels.

## **Research Design**

This study was conducted using a non-experimental correlational research design. This type of research design explores bivariate relationships, multiple relationships, and predictions among the variables (Martin & Bridgmon, 2012). This design allowed for relationships between burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment to be identified. A cross-sectional quantitative survey was used, employing non-probability convenience sampling within the National Guard. Demographic data was collected from participants, including age, rank, gender, ethnicity, time in service,

and religious affiliation. Pearson's Product Moment correlation analyses were conducted with the expectation that burnout would be negatively correlated with organizational commitment and spiritual fitness would be negatively correlated with burnout.

Data was then analyzed using a linear multiple regression analysis. This analysis was used to assess the relationship of the two predictor variables, burnout and spiritual fitness, on organizational commitment. According to Martin and Bridgmon (2012), this analysis demonstrates how each variable impacts the dependent variable (organizational commitment), such that the portion of variance associated with each can be separated and compared. This analysis also demonstrates the main effects of the two independent variables, burnout and spiritual fitness, on the dependent variable, organizational commitment, as well as the interaction effects between the variables.

The expectation was that spiritual fitness would moderate the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment and that higher spiritual fitness scores would predict greater organizational commitment, regardless of burnout level. As burnout increases, increases in spiritual fitness were expected to be associated with increased organizational commitment. Because a moderating variable influences or changes the relationship between two other variables, this study design supported the goal of the hypotheses. This design was consistent with other research examining moderating variables and the impacts of burnout, stress, and spiritual interventions (Garcia-Izquierdo et al., 2018; Kent et al., 2021).

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were current or former National Guard servicemembers. The uniqueness of the National Guard population has been highlighted

in several sections thus far, and the Texas component specifically has deployed over 34,000 soldiers and airmen overseas. Of these same servicemembers, thousands have been activated for border missions, COVID-related missions, and natural disasters, often moving back and forth from these environments. A large number of Texas National Guard servicemembers are currently serving on a politically volatile mission at the Texas border (“Boots at the Border: Examining the National Guard Deployment to the Southwest Border”, 2020) and have recently been highlighted in the media due to suicides, turnover, and policy concerns. These stressors warrant attention to the well-being and organizational commitment of this population. Research indicates that burnout is a concern for the reserve military and that this population is unique in comparison to the active-duty military (Reger, 2021; Smith et al., 2015).

This population was accessible via personal contacts in the executive offices of the Texas National Guard due to previous work and experience with soldiers and families. IRB permission was obtained to distribute surveys to this identified population through their personal email and social media channels.

The target number of participants for this study was identified to be 115, exceeding the G\*Power recommended participant quantity for bivariate correlations and multiple regression analyses. Based on a priori power analysis in G\*Power for the desired effect and sample sizes, at least 74 participants were required to obtain a proper sample size for a desired effect of 0.15 and an alpha of 0.05 for the regression analysis. The bivariate correlation (one-tailed) required at least 111 participants to achieve the desired effect of 0.30, representing a moderate effect (Kang, 2021).

## **Study Procedures**

Research surveys in this population are commonly distributed via email by unit commanders, behavioral health channels, or executive levels in various departments of the Texas National Guard. In this case, due to recent negative media attention, this particular distribution channel withdrew approval, and the surveys were distributed only through personal emails, personal contacts, and social media channels. Once this change to the original study design was made and approved by the Liberty University IRB, the recruiting email and social media posts were crafted to link to a web survey supported by SurveyMonkey, and small cards were handed out to personal contacts directing them to the same site (Appendix A). The initial email or website linked directly to an informed consent segment that required agreement to enter the survey. This segment stressed the voluntary nature of participation, provided the aims of the study, and informed participants that they could leave the study at any time, and their data would not be included. Statements regarding confidentiality were included in this segment as well, and this survey had no link to any personally identifiable information. The informed consent statement is provided in Appendix B.

The survey for this study included three components, which are described in the following section. The average completion time for completing the surveys was 11 minutes.

## **Instrumentation and Measurement**

Previously validated survey instruments were used to measure the variables in this study. Burnout was measured with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Spiritual fitness was measured with the SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale

(Alexander et al., 2020). Organizational commitment was measured with Meyer and Allen's (1997) Organizational Commitment Scale. Two of the full scales are included in Appendix C, with the Maslach Burnout Inventory only presenting a sample, per their licensing requirement and copyright restrictions.

### **The Maslach Burnout Inventory**

The Maslach Burnout Inventory, or MBI (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), is a scale that has been widely used in psychological research and has been found to be reliable, valid, and easy to use. The scale measures burnout syndrome, which includes the characteristics of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. The MBI contains a total of sixteen statements consisting of the three subscales. A seven-point Likert-like scale is used to measure a continuum of time, where 0 = "Never", 3 = "A Few Times Per Month", and 6 = "Always", to gauge the frequency of feelings the individual experiences as they relate to each statement. Each scale is scored by calculating the mean of all items on the scale. Scales are scored such that higher scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales, and lower scores on the personal accomplishment subscale, indicate more burnout symptoms (Brady et al., 2020). Interpretation of the scores can be made by using the three scales combined (Garcia-Izquierdo et al., 2018), or examining each subscale separately (Smith et al., 2015).

Data provided by Maslach and Jackson (1981) include internal consistency, test-re-test reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity information. Internal consistency for the MBI was measured by Cronbach's alpha, which yielded coefficients of 0.83 and 0.84 for the original 25-item scale. Test-retest reliability coefficients for the

MBI ranged from 0.60 to 0.82. Convergent validity was demonstrated through correlations with behavioral ratings provided by a friend or co-worker, with certain job characteristics that are known to contribute to burnout, and to outcome measures previously shown to relate to burnout. Discriminant validity was demonstrated by comparing burnout ratings to other psychological constructs that could be confounded with burnout, such as job dissatisfaction, and the constructs were deemed to be unique.

More recent research using the MBI has also established good reliability for the measure in studies that are like the current study. Zhang et al. (2019) found a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86 in their study of nurses and the impact of burnout on intention to leave. Likewise, Meng et al. (2019) found Cronbach's alpha values between 0.90 and 0.92 on all three subscales of the MBI in their study on civil servants and the impact of burnout on organizational commitment. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.85, which is consistent with previous research (Meng et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) is only available for purchase and is not offered for widespread use. For the purposes of this research, 150 licenses were purchased for online distribution using an education discount.

### **The SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale**

The SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale was created by Alexander et al. (2020) to address gaps in existing measures for spiritual fitness and performance as defined by the military. The scale includes three subscales: Personal Connection to a Higher Power (PCHP), Service and Sacrifice for the Greater Good (SSGG), and Pursuing Meaning, Purpose, and Value (PMPV). These three subscales capture the aspects of vertical and

horizontal spirituality as discussed previously and relate to the theoretical foundations of the current study.

The PCHP subscale consists of seven questions and an atheist screening question to ensure that the data is not skewed by those who are non-theistic. The PCHP scale was validated in two studies and obtained a 0.95 Cronbach's omega and a 0.97 using Cronbach's alpha. The SSGG subscale contained five items and was validated at 0.73 using Cronbach's omega and 0.87 using Cronbach's alpha. The PPMV also contained five items and was validated at 0.88 using Cronbach's omega and 0.93 with Cronbach's alpha (Alexander et al., 2020). The Cronbach's alpha for the present study was 0.92 for the overall scale, 0.96 for the PCHP subscale, 0.83 for the PMPV subscale, and 0.71 for the SSGG subscale, which is similar to the reliability coefficients reported by Alexander et al. (2020).

Alexander et al. (2020) also compared the subscale results with other psychosocial outcomes and found that there were positive relationships with all scales to coping, and weak relationships with mental health concerns such as depression and anxiety. The PCHP subscale correlated with positive religious coping (0.65), positive reframing (0.33), stress-related growth (0.43) and life meaning (0.46), all of which are areas that measure spirituality as it relates to the theoretical foundation of this proposed study. The PMPV also correlated with life meaning (0.78), quality of life (0.51), resilience (0.34), and coping styles such as religious coping (0.39) and positive reframing (0.33). The SSGG had strong correlations with positive reframing (0.46) and positive religious coping (0.40). The overall scale was examined for social desirability bias, and only weak or null correlations emerged.

The items in the SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale (Alexander et al., 2020) are presented as a five-point Likert scale, where: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Neutral = 2, Disagree = 1, and Strongly Disagree = 0. For the PCHP Scale, a column is added that states, “The assumptions behind this question are not consistent with my world views” (Alexander et al., 2020). This statement allows for the non-theist to be identified, and per the scale authors, the data is treated differently. For the purposes of the current study, the data for the PCHP scale was only used if the respondent indicated a belief in a higher power. According to Alexander (2020), the scale takes approximately seven minutes to administer. By taking the mean of the responses, a score is produced for analysis. Higher scores indicate stronger spiritual identification and interest (Alexander, 2020).

The scale has recently been used by other researchers, and Koenig (2022) indicates that the scale is beneficial in identifying psychological and spiritual concerns that interfere with readiness for duty. The results from the scale have also demonstrated value in informing interventions by chaplains or other health professionals (Alexander & Deuster, 2021).

### **The Meyer and Allen (1997) Organizational Commitment Scale**

The Allen and Meyer (1990) Organizational Commitment Scale is an eighteen-item scale with employee responses obtained using a seven-point Likert-type scale. For this scale, employees rate on a continuum with 1 = Strongly Disagree, through 7 = Strongly Agree. The scale contains three subscales measuring three types of organizational commitment described in earlier sections of the proposal: affective, normative, and continuance commitment. According to Fields (2012), affective

commitment identifies the employee's emotional attachment and identification with the organization. Normative commitment refers to socialization pressures and the feeling that one should stay with the organization. Continuance commitment is based on lack of options, or the impression that the costs are too high to leave the organization.

All three scales were used in the current study but were modified slightly to fit the National Guard. For example, continuance commitment statements refer to a desire to leave the organization immediately, which for any military service, is not feasible due to enlistment terms. For these statements, the wording was altered slightly so that the word "now" was removed. The statement, "It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to," was revised to say, "It would be very hard for me to leave my organization after my enlistment, even if I wanted to." This variation has not been examined in existing research, so results in this area will be discussed with the change noted. Fields (2012) noted that these organizational commitment measures have been modified to substitute general terms with workplace names or professions, where appropriate, so the concept of adjusting to the population under study has been implemented before in past research.

The Cronbach's alpha values found by Allen and Meyer (1990) for the original version of the scale demonstrated that the Affective Commitment Scale was 0.87, the Continuance Commitment Scale was 0.75, and the Normative Commitment Scale was 0.79. According to Allen and Meyer (1990), the three components can be reliably measured and represent different emotional antecedents for organizational commitment. For the purposes of this study, the revised version will be used, which minimized the number of statements to eighteen, with six statements per type of commitment (Meyer &

Allen, 1997). Cronbach's alpha values have been shown to range between 0.65 and 0.88 for the entire revised scale combined (Fields, 2012). In the current study, responses were combined into one organizational commitment score by taking the mean of the responses, after reverse coding when appropriate, as the total score, and each separate scale was also computed. Higher scores indicate a stronger level of organizational commitment. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the combined scale used in this study was 0.76, which is consistent with previous research (Fields, 2012).

### **Operationalization of Variables**

**Burnout** – This variable is an interval variable and was measured by total mean score on the Maslach Burnout Inventory along with subscale mean scores for Emotional Exhaustion, Cynicism, and Professional Efficacy (Maslach & Jackson, 1981)

**Spiritual Fitness** – This variable is an interval variable and was measured by total mean score on the SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale and mean scores for PMPV, PCHP (representing Vertical Spirituality), and SSGG (representing Horizontal Spirituality), which are components of spiritual fitness (Alexander et al., 2020).

**Organizational Commitment**- This variable is an interval variable and was measured by total mean score on the Organizational Commitment Scale, along with mean subscale scores for Affective, Normative, and Continuance organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

### **Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS version 28 to explore bivariate relationships and multiple relationships and predictions among variables. Pearson's Product moment correlation coefficients and multiple regression analyses were used to

examine the relationships between each variable and the other to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment. The strength of the correlation coefficient can be interpreted as low ( $< \pm.39$ ), moderate (between  $\pm.40$  and  $\pm.69$ ), or large ( $> \pm.70$ ) (Martin & Bridgmon, 2012).

Multiple regression analyses revealed if the predictor variables, burnout, and spiritual fitness, differed in their ability to predict organizational commitment, as described previously in this section. The combination of analyses demonstrates how these relationships predict organizational commitment; and provides insight into changes in the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment when spiritual fitness is introduced. This analysis allows the portion of variance associated with some variables to emerge, while others are held constant (Martin & Bridgmon, 2012). Descriptive statistics are presented in Chapter 4.

### **Delimitations, Assumptions, and Limitations**

As presented in the introduction of this paper, there are various delimitations, assumptions, and limitations that exist in the current study. The use of the National Guard as the study population is one delimitation, as it has been identified in research as a unique population that is distinct from other military or civilian populations (Reger, 2021; Smith et al., 2015). Because of this delimitation, caution should be used in generalizing findings to any other groups outside of the National Guard servicemember population.

Assumptions were also made in the design of this study, regarding stress levels and about burnout as a construct. As mentioned in Chapter 1, there is no measure for stress included in this study, although evidence exists to demonstrate that the National

Guard servicemember is in a high-stress environment, (Catignani et al., 2021; DiRenzo et al., 2022; Griffith, 2021; Gutierrez et al., 2021; Koenig, 2022; Reger, 2021; Smith et al., 2015). The assessment of burnout also assumes that the tool used is measuring occupational burnout, versus a mental health concern that could overlap with burnout (Diehle et al., 2019; Listopad et al., 2021b). In addition, using any self-report assessment creates the opportunity for response bias. This may be more concerning for military personnel who do not want their stress or burnout levels known, and who may have concerns about the confidentiality of the data.

There were also several challenges and potential limitations that surfaced during the study that will be covered in detail in Chapter 5. Recent negative media attention caused the approval process to be more cumbersome than in the past, turnover in the executive levels of the National Guard impacted access, and survey fatigue for the servicemembers were all elements that could have impacted the results of the study. In addition, changes in the level of access to the activated units changed the population under examination.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the measurement tools used in the study could impact generalization of the results, and the SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale specifically should be interpreted with caution. Though validated in recent studies for the Special Forces community, the use of this measure outside of the Special Forces community could be a potential limitation. The measure includes elements of what is referred to as vertical and horizontal spirituality, with horizontal spirituality including connectedness and meaning/purpose, and vertical spirituality referring to connection to the divine (Alexander et al., 2020; Gutierrez et al., 2021). These terms are not as common in

existing research; therefore, the constructs may be more difficult to separate in the analysis than in more widely used measures. In addition, the SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale (Alexander et al., 2020) is not designed as a workplace tool, as are the other measures in the study, but measures an individual's general approach to life. By applying findings to the concept of organizational commitment, the study is using the scale in a novel way, and results should be interpreted considering this limitation.

### **Summary**

The current study examined the relationships between burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment in Texas National Guard servicemembers, many of whom have been involuntary activated for local or overseas missions. Research has demonstrated that job stressors in the military community present concerns for the organization in terms of both well-being for servicemembers and in recruiting and retention of personnel (DiRenzo et al., 2022; Griffith, 2021). Recent National Guard activations and chronic stressors have resulted in an emergence of significant mental health concerns, increased suicidal ideation, burnout, and turnover intentions in this population (Gutierrez et al., 2021; Hoopsick et al., 2021; Reger, 2021; Smith et al., 2015).

Research has indicated that elements of spirituality address these concerns, and findings suggest that more spiritual or religious individuals are more resilient, less susceptible to burnout, and find positive meaning in work (Listopad et al., 2021a). The current study examined these variables using a survey comprised of validated measures of burnout and organizational commitment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Meyer & Allen, 1997) and the recently developed SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale (Alexander et al.,

2020). Pearson's Product moment correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between variables. Data was then analyzed using multiple regression analysis to examine if spiritual fitness moderated the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment. The expectation was that higher spiritual fitness scores would be negatively correlated with burnout, and predict organizational commitment, regardless of burnout level. Through examination of spiritual fitness and its relationship to burnout and organizational commitment, this study was designed to uncover relationships that could lead to training that could impact the health, well-being, organizational longevity, and souls of those working in high-stress environments.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Overview

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationships between burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment in current and former National Guard servicemembers. The primary aim of the study was to determine if this high-stress population demonstrated a relationship between burnout and organizational commitment and if spiritual fitness moderated this relationship such that more spiritually fit individuals had a greater organizational commitment regardless of burnout levels.

This chapter will review the research questions, hypotheses, and data collection process that guided the study. Also included in this chapter are the descriptive statistics to define and describe the population under study and the results from the correlational and multiple regression analyses.

### Research Question(s) and Hypotheses

#### Research Questions

RQ1: What is the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment in National Guard servicemembers?

RQ2: What is the relationship between spiritual fitness and burnout in National Guard servicemembers?

RQ3: Do spiritual fitness levels change the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment in this population?

#### Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Burnout will be negatively correlated with organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 2: Spiritual fitness will be negatively correlated with burnout.

Hypothesis 3: Spiritual fitness will moderate the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment, such that more spiritually fit individuals have a greater organizational commitment regardless of burnout levels.

### **Descriptive Results**

The study sample included a total of 150 responses from individuals who are currently serving or have served in the National Guard. Of these respondents, the majority were between the ages of 40-54 (40.7%), male (62%), White or Caucasian (56%), Christian (Protestant: 32%, Catholic: 27%), enlisted (49%), have served overseas (78%), and have served on a stateside deployment or activation (82.3%: 21.8% one activation, 40.1% activated 2-3 times, and 19% activated  $\geq 4$  times), demonstrating the volatile nature of National Guard service. See Table 1 for a breakdown of the sample descriptive statistics.

### **Study Findings**

#### **Data Preparation and Assumption Testing**

The data from 150 completed surveys were extracted from the Survey Monkey platform into IBM SPSS version 28, reverse coded according to the instructions for each of the three surveys and checked for missing data, univariate outliers, and multivariate outliers. Missing data were examined as outlined by Cook (2021), and the missing values were replaced using the mean score for the participant on the relevant scale when there was less than 10% of data missing. When more than this was missing, the missing data were coded as system missing and the linear regression pairwise deletion function

was used, as according to Cook (2021), this allows for all available variables and cases to be determined and used in the SPSS calculations.

**Table 1**

*Sociodemographic Characteristics of Survey Participants*

| Sample Characteristic |   | <i>n</i> | %    |
|-----------------------|---|----------|------|
| Age                   | 18-24                                     | 13       | 8.7  |
|                       | 25-39                                     | 51       | 34.0 |
|                       | 40-54                                     | 61       | 40.7 |
|                       | 55+                                       | 21       | 14.0 |
|                       | Missing                                   | 4        | 2.7  |
| Gender                | Male                                      | 93       | 62.0 |
|                       | Female                                    | 52       | 34.7 |
|                       | Missing                                   | 4        | 2.7  |
| Ethnicity             | White or Caucasian                        | 84       | 56.0 |
|                       | Black or African American                 | 18       | 12.0 |
|                       | Hispanic or Latino                        | 23       | 15.3 |
|                       | Asian or Asian American                   | 15       | 10.0 |
|                       | American Indian or Alaska Native          | 1        | 0.7  |
|                       | Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | 3        | 2.0  |
|                       | Another race                              | 3        | 2.0  |
|                       | Missing                                   | 3        | 2.0  |
| Religion              | Protestant                                | 47       | 31.3 |
|                       | Catholic                                  | 40       | 26.7 |
|                       | Jewish                                    | 7        | 4.7  |
|                       | Muslim                                    | 9        | 6.0  |
|                       | Mormon                                    | 2        | 1.3  |
|                       | Other Religion                            | 18       | 12.0 |
|                       | Unaffiliated                              | 14       | 9.3  |
|                       | Atheist                                   | 11       | 7.3  |
|                       | Missing                                   | 2        | 1.3  |
| Service rank          | Enlisted                                  | 72       | 48.0 |
|                       | Officer                                   | 42       | 28.0 |
|                       | Both                                      | 33       | 22.0 |
|                       | Missing                                   | 3        | 2.0  |
| Overseas service      | Yes                                       | 117      | 78.0 |
|                       | No  | 28       | 18.7 |
|                       | Missing                                   | 5        | 3.3  |
| U.S. Activations      | Never                                     | 26       | 17.3 |
|                       | 1 time                                    | 32       | 21.3 |
|                       | 2-3 times                                 | 60       | 40.0 |
|                       | 4 or more times                           | 29       | 19.3 |
|                       | Missing                                   | 3        | 2.0  |

Univariate outliers were determined by computing the Mahalanobis distances for each question and comparing this data to the recommended value of  $\pm 3.29$ . Multivariate outliers were assessed by examining z scores in comparison to a chi-square value of 5.9914, as outlined by Martin and Bridgmon (2012), and calculated using a statistics website by Soper (2023), using 2 degrees of freedom to reflect the number of predictor variables and a p-value of 0.05. No univariate outliers surfaced, and four multivariate outliers were identified using these methods. Of the outliers, one was found to have large amounts of missing data, two were found to have extreme scores but viable in terms of the pattern of scores, and only one appeared to be completely random. A test was conducted to remove the missing and random scores to determine if they were impacting the regression outcome significantly and was found to not be significantly impacting the outcome of the analyses (Berchtold, 2019). After these reviews, all 150 surveys remained viable and were included in the analysis by SPSS.

The resulting 150 surveys exceeded the number of responses required based on a priori power analysis in G\*Power for the desired effect and sample sizes. According to G\*Power calculations, at least 74 participants were required to obtain a proper sample size for a desired effect of 0.15 and an alpha of 0.05 for the regression analysis. The bivariate correlation (one-tailed) required at least 111 participants to achieve the desired effect of 0.30, representing a moderate effect (Kang, 2021).

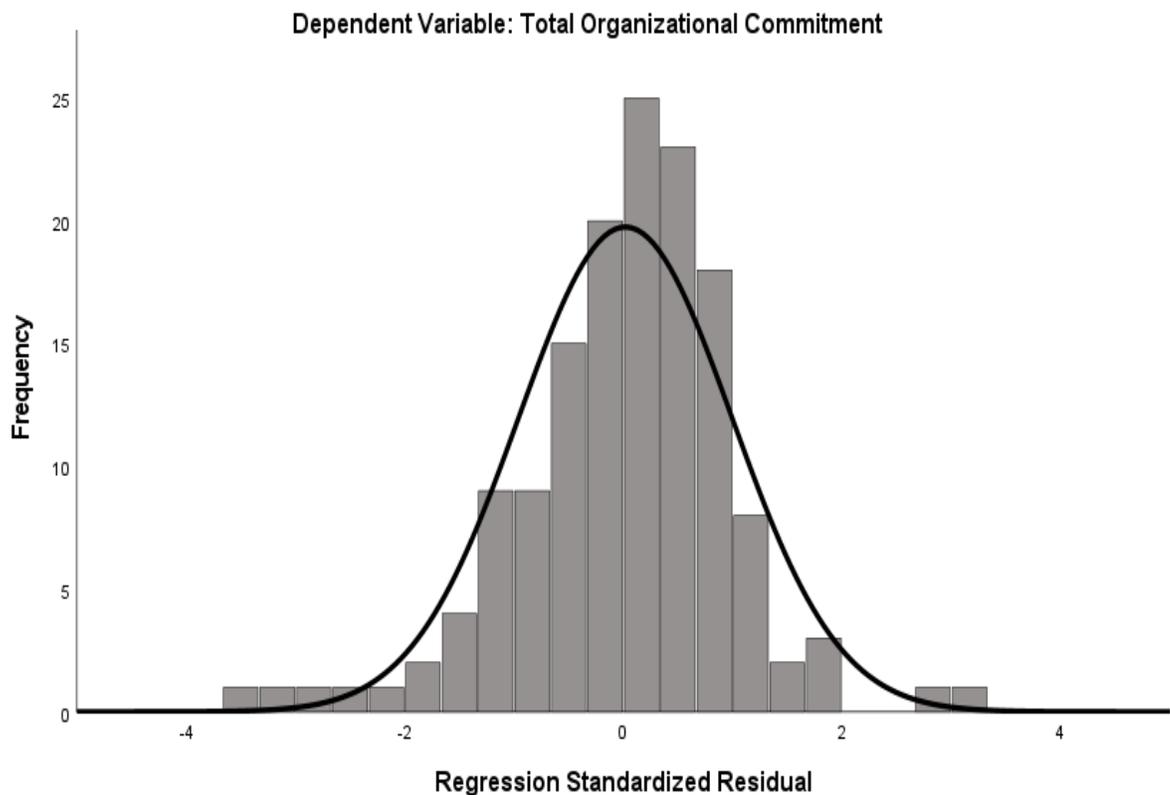
Data were also examined for normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity per Martin and Bridgmon's (2012) direction on testing parametric assumptions. Histograms, Scatterplots, and Q-Q plots indicated normality in the residuals of the data set, as depicted in Figures 2, 3, and 4. Collinearity tolerance was

near or at 1.00, indicating a viable data set. All 150 completed responses were sufficient to be used in the correlation and regression analyses to follow in this chapter.

The mean scores for each study variable, including total scores and subscale scores, are included in Table 2. Each of the primary study variables had good internal reliability, as indicated by Cronbach's alphas  $\geq 0.75$  (see Table 2). One low Cronbach's alpha value will be discussed in Chapter 5 as it applies to the interpretation of the results.

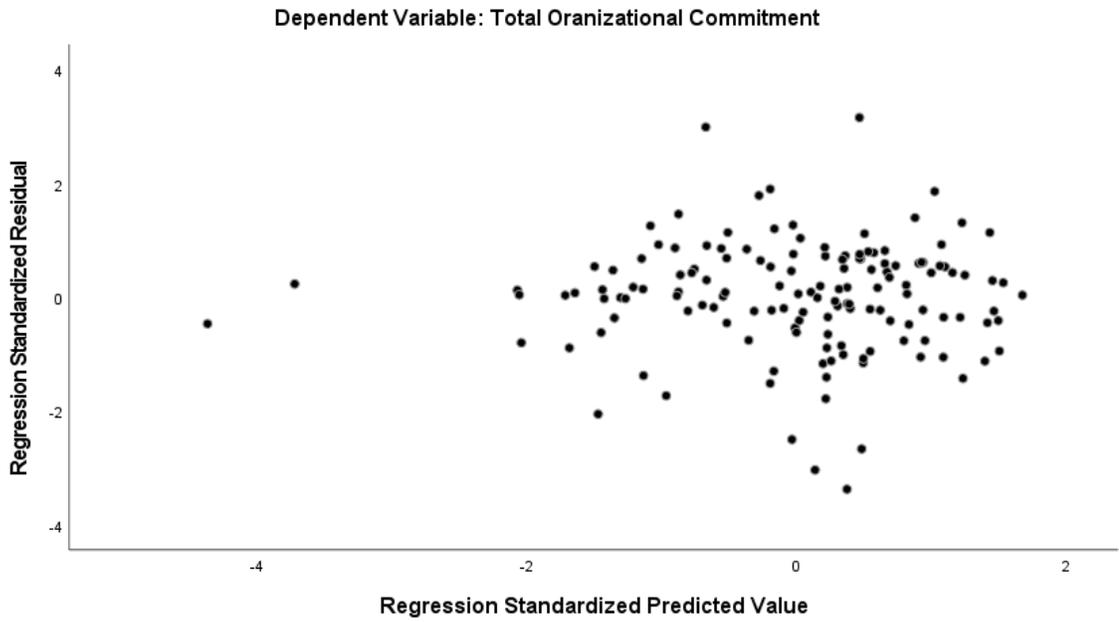
## Figure 2

*Histogram of Regression Residuals*



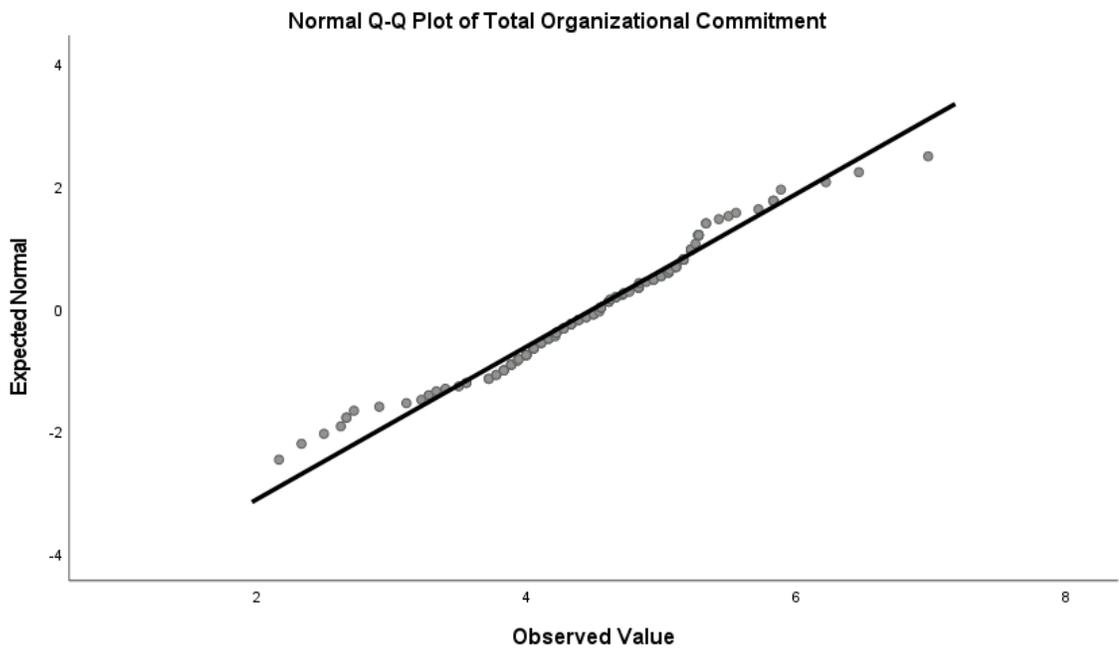
**Figure 3**

*Scatterplot of Regression Predicted Standardized Versus Regression Residuals*



**Figure 4**

*Q-Q plot of Expected Versus Observed Values in Total Organizational Commitment*



## Data Analysis

Each of the three hypotheses supporting the three research questions was examined, and the findings of the study indicated mixed support for the hypotheses driving the study. Appropriate figures and tables are included within each section to illustrate the findings. Descriptive statistics for all study variables are included in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables*

| Scale                                 | M    | SD   | Range     | Cronbach's $\alpha$ |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|-----------|---------------------|
| Organizational Commitment             | 4.51 | 0.80 | 2.17-6.98 | 0.75                |
| Affective Organizational Commitment   | 4.64 | 1.21 | 2.00-7.00 | 0.72                |
| Normative Organizational Commitment   | 4.58 | 0.80 | 2.50-7.00 | 0.26                |
| Continuance Organizational Commitment | 4.30 | 1.49 | 1.00-7.00 | 0.88                |
| Burnout                               | 2.58 | 1.03 | 0.19-5.25 | 0.85                |
| Burnout-Emotional Exhaustion          | 3.10 | 1.66 | 0.00-6.00 | 0.92                |
| Burnout-Cynicism                      | 2.85 | 1.65 | 0.00-6.00 | 0.88                |
| Burnout-Professional Efficacy         | 1.88 | 1.44 | 0.00-6.00 | 0.91                |
| Spiritual Fitness                     | 4.15 | 0.66 | 1.00-5.00 | 0.92                |
| Personal Connection to a Higher Power | 4.47 | 0.57 | 2.63-5.00 | 0.96                |
| Sacrifice for the Greater Good        | 4.12 | 0.72 | 1.00-5.00 | 0.71                |
| Pursuing Meaning, Purpose, Values     | 4.08 | 0.74 | 1.00-5.00 | 0.83                |

***Research Question #1***

RQ1: What is the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment in National Guard servicemembers?

**Hypothesis 1: Burnout will be negatively correlated with organizational commitment.**

A Pearson's Correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between BO, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) and OC, as measured by Meyer and Allen's (1997) Organizational Commitment Scale. The hypothesis was supported, as higher levels of total burnout were associated with lower total organizational commitment ( $r = -0.21, p < 0.01$ , one-tailed).

***Research Question #2***

RQ2: What is the relationship between spiritual fitness and burnout in National Guard servicemembers?

**Hypothesis 2: Spiritual fitness will be negatively correlated with burnout.**

A Pearson's Correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between BO, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) and Spiritual Fitness (SF), as measured by the SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale (Alexander et al., 2020). The hypothesis was supported, as higher levels of total spiritual fitness were associated with lower total burnout ( $r = -0.16, p < 0.05$ , one-tailed).

***Research Question #3***

RQ3: Do spiritual fitness levels change the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment in this population?

**Hypothesis 3: Spiritual fitness will moderate the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment, such that more spiritually fit individuals have a greater organizational commitment regardless of burnout levels.**

Multiple linear regression was used to test if the interaction term for spiritual fitness and burnout predicted organizational commitment. The overall regression was statistically significant ( $r=0.40$ ,  $F(3,143)=13.48$ ,  $p<.01$ ), but the interaction term between spiritual fitness and burnout was not a significant predictor of Total OC ( $\beta=0.11$ ,  $p=0.35$ ) as demonstrated in Table 3.

A post hoc analysis was performed to determine if there was a moderating effect when using the SF subscales.

**Table 3**

*Linear Regression Coefficients for Spiritual Fitness' Moderation of the Burnout-Organizational Commitment Relationship*

| Model                     | Unstandardized Coefficients |           | Standardized Coefficients |          | Collinearity Statistics |           |        |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|----------|-------------------------|-----------|--------|
|                           | <i>B</i>                    | <i>SE</i> | Beta                      | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i>                | Tolerance | VIF    |
| 1 (Constant)              | 4.031                       | 1.426     |                           | 2.827    | 0.005                   |           |        |
| Total BO                  | -0.604                      | 0.507     | -0.751                    | -1.192   | 0.235                   | 0.014     | 72.851 |
| Total SF                  | 0.209                       | 0.324     | 0.171                     | 0.645    | 0.520                   | 0.078     | 12.878 |
| Interaction Term<br>SF BO | 0.109                       | 0.116     | 0.603                     | 0.940    | 0.349                   | 0.013     | 75.451 |

*Note.* Dependent Variable: Total Organizational Commitment. BO=Burnout, SF=Spiritual Fitness.

Of the subscales examined, including PCHP (representing vertical spirituality, as defined by Alexander et al., 2020), PMPV, and SSGG (representing horizontal

spirituality, as defined by Alexander et al., 2020), only the overall regression model for the subscale variable SSGG, or Horizontal Spirituality was found to have a moderation effect on the relationship between Total OC and Total BO ( $r=0.48$ ,  $F_{(3,140)}=13.552$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The Interaction term between SSGG and Total BO was a significant predictor of OC ( $\beta=0.20$ ,  $p=0.05$ ), supporting the moderation hypothesis, as demonstrated in Table 4. The interaction terms for PCHP with Total BO ( $\beta=-0.27$ ,  $p=0.07$ ) and PMPV with Total BO ( $\beta=0.11$ ,  $p=0.25$ ) did not significantly predict OC.

**Table 4**

*Linear Regression Coefficients for SSGG's Moderation of the Burnout-Organizational Commitment Relationship*

| Model                    | Unstandardized Coefficients |           | Standardized Coefficients | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | Collinearity Statistics |        |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|----------|----------|-------------------------|--------|
|                          | <i>B</i>                    | <i>SE</i> | Beta                      |          |          | Tolerance               | VIF    |
| 1 (Constant)             | 5.261                       | 1.221     |                           | 4.309    | <.001    |                         |        |
| Total BO                 | -0.993                      | 0.443     | -0.751                    | -2.240   | 0.027    | 0.014                   | 72.851 |
| Total SSGG               | -0.073                      | 0.277     | 0.171                     | -0.264   | 0.792    | 0.078                   | 12.878 |
| Interaction Term SSGG_BO | 0.201                       | 0.102     | 0.603                     | 1.978    | 0.050    | 0.013                   | 75.451 |

*Note.* Dependent Variable: Total Organizational Commitment. BO=Burnout, SSGG=Service and Sacrifice for the Greater Good

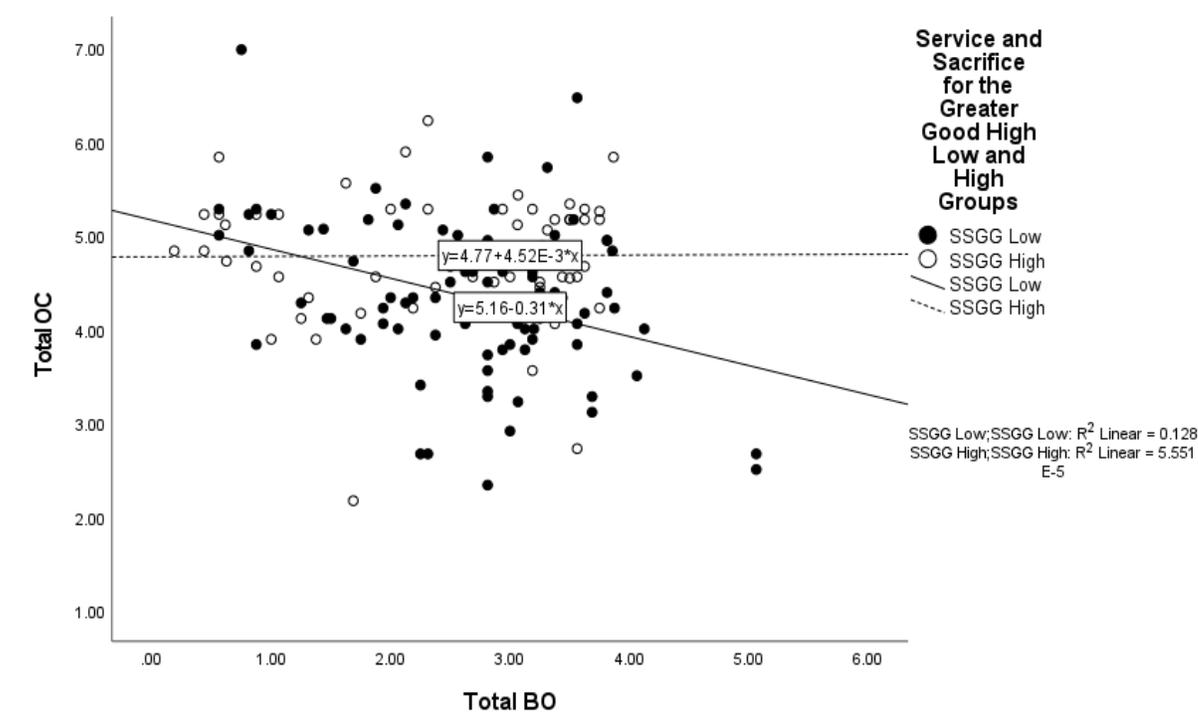
To further refine this relationship and test the moderation hypothesis, a scatterplot was created to depict the interaction between OC and BO using SSGG as a potential moderating variable. SSGG was divided into high and low categories, using the median response as the cutoff point to distinguish between the two categories. Figure 5

depicts the scatterplot for the relationship between Total OC and Total Burnout and the interaction with High and Low SSGG groups.

The regression models and the scatterplot demonstrate that the moderation hypothesis is supported through the subscale variable SSGG (representing Horizontal Spirituality), which was shown to moderate the relationship between BO and OC, such that OC remains the same for those high in SSGG even when BO is high. This finding will be discussed further in Chapter 5 as research findings, implications, and suggestions for future research are discussed considering these results.

**Figure 5**

*Moderation Relationship Between BO and OC in High and Low SSGG Groups*



### Summary

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine relationships between burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment in current and former National Guard servicemembers. The hypotheses included (1) the expectation that burnout would be negatively correlated with organizational commitment, (2) spiritual fitness would be negatively correlated with burnout, and (3) that spiritual fitness would moderate the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment, such that those who demonstrate greater spiritual fitness will have higher organizational commitment, regardless of burnout levels. Using 150 completed surveys, the first hypothesis was supported by a significant inverse correlation between burnout and organizational commitment. The second hypothesis was also supported by a significant negative correlation between burnout and spiritual fitness. Finally, the regression analyses conducted for the predicted moderation BO-OC relationship was partially supported through subscale variable SSGG, representing Horizontal Spirituality, but not with the total SF score, as predicted. These findings will be discussed in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### Overview

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationships between burnout, spiritual fitness, and organizational commitment in current and former National Guard servicemembers. The primary aim of the study was to determine if this high-stress population demonstrated a relationship between burnout and organizational commitment, and if spiritual fitness moderated this relationship such that more spiritually fit individuals had a greater organizational commitment regardless of burnout levels. Recent National Guard activations and stressors have created environments where significant mental health concerns, burnout, and turnover has been widespread. This study was designed to uncover potential relationships that could be helpful in the creation of programs or coaching to mitigate these negative outcomes and impact emotional and spiritual well-being and organizational commitment for those working in high-stress environments such as the National Guard.

This chapter will provide a summary of findings, discuss how the findings relate to existing research and provide a biblical interpretation of the study outcomes. Implications and limitations of the study will be discussed in detail in this section, and recommendations for future research will be made based on this information.

### Summary of Findings

The hypotheses driving the study included (1) the expectation that burnout would be negatively correlated with organizational commitment, that (2) spiritual fitness would be negatively correlated with burnout, and (3) that spiritual fitness would moderate the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment, such that those who

demonstrate greater spiritual fitness will have higher organizational commitment, regardless of burnout levels. Using 150 completed surveys from current or former National Guard servicemembers, the first hypothesis was supported by a significant inverse correlation between burnout and organizational commitment, demonstrating that as burnout increases, organizational commitment decreases. The second hypothesis was also supported by a significant inverse correlation between burnout and spiritual fitness, indicating that higher levels of spiritual fitness are associated with lower levels of burnout. Finally, the regression analyses conducted for the predicted moderation relationship were only partially supported, as total spiritual fitness did not moderate the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment, as predicted. However, the spiritual fitness subscale variable measuring Service and Sacrifice for the Greater Good, a component of spiritual fitness representing Alexander et al.'s (2020) description of Horizontal Spirituality, did moderate the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment, providing partial support for the moderation hypothesis.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of the study regarding the inverse association between organizational commitment and burnout were consistent with existing literature on these variables. Job burnout has been linked to decreased organizational commitment in military populations by Archer and Alagaraja (2021), and across industries and job roles, research consistently demonstrates that organizational commitment decreases turnover intention, and burnout increases it (Santoso et al., 2018). This study replicated these findings by demonstrating that the same relationship exists for the National Guard population, a group that has not frequently been studied exclusively and where

prolonged service engagements, deployments, and stressors have demonstrated negative effects on the individual and organization (Catignani et al., 2021; Griffith, 2021).

### **Relationship With Models of Burnout and Organizational Commitment**

As discussed in Chapter 2, research on burnout and organizational commitment has been explained using several models, including the job demands-resources model (JD-R). The JD-R model assumes that burnout occurs when an individual's resources for managing stressors are depleted, and that burnout can be mitigated by appropriate individual or organizational resources (Listopad et al., 2021b). When valued resources appear to be missing, according to Hu et al. (2017), then the stage is set for burnout to occur, and when resources are chronically low, burnout is increased, and work engagement is decreased. According to this JD-R model, the availability of resources becomes part of a workplace and stress management strategy. Both the individual and organization can bring resources to bear on this model, and based on the findings of the current study, elements of spiritual fitness could be beneficial for both parties when viewed as a valuable resource in high-stress environments.

The findings of the current study also relate to other theories discussed in Chapter 2, including Transactional Theory and theories of Cognitive Appraisal. These approaches assume that the way an individual assigns meaning to a stressor determines the level of burnout for that individual (Gerich & Weber, 2020; Kraimer et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2018). When using the Spiritual Fitness subscale Service and Sacrifice for the Greater Good (SSGG) in this context, it is possible that individuals high in this variable assign meaning during hard times to the fact that they are serving others, are supposed to sacrifice, and are contributing to the greater good, which could reduce the effects of

occupational stress and keep them from experiencing reduced organizational commitment, as was demonstrated in the moderation analysis. Individuals high in SSGG did maintain their level of organizational commitment even when burnout was high.

This spiritual fitness subscale factor, SSGG, makes up what Alexander et al. (2020) refer to as horizontal spirituality, which includes a commitment to selfless service, altruism, and a common mission, which have also been shown to have positive correlations to meaning-making in adverse conditions (Alexander et al., 2020). The SSGG element of spiritual fitness has also been shown by Alexander et al. (2020) to have strong correlations with positive reframing ( $r = 0.46$ ) and positive religious coping ( $r = 0.40$ ). These characteristics could be related to the outcome of this study, whereby individuals higher in spiritual fitness were able to make sense of their stressors in a healthy way, reducing burnout and increasing their commitment to the organization.

Spiritual fitness, and particularly the element of Horizontal Spirituality, when seen through this lens, could be an important cognitive resource for those in chronically stressful environments and workplaces. Horizontal spirituality includes both theistic and non-theistic elements of spirituality, which is an important inclusion in any military setting where many religious backgrounds and experiences exist within the organization.

### **Relationship with Spirituality in the Workplace**

The discussion of spiritual fitness coordinates well with research on spiritual awareness in the workplace, which has also shown that meaning, purpose, and community are important variables to workers in maintaining health, well-being, and positive organizational outcomes, apart from any specific religious practice (Farmer et al., 2019; Guillen et al., 2015; Sapta et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2019). For example,

Esteves et al. (2018) found that when individual spirituality imbues work with meaning, organizational commitment increases, which could relate to the SSGG findings in this study, where the elements of service and sacrifice provide meaning to the individual. Their findings also demonstrate that individuals who see their work as a calling had greater career commitment, job satisfaction, organizational duty, and other positive organizational outcomes.

In research in the public works sector, for example, Farmer et al. (2019) found that meaning in the form of helping others and focusing on the greater good made employees go beyond minimum expectations in their work, created a more positive community, and increased organizational belonging. This spiritual sense of purpose was something that was individually present, but organizationally trained with good results. Aligning these past findings with the findings of this study, elements of Horizontal Spirituality in the form of SSGG could be a beneficial focus for organizations.

The element of self-sacrifice is one that is captured in the essence of Horizontal Spirituality and in the subscale SSGG. Self-sacrifice in the workplace was examined by Giacomelli et al. (2022), who studied self-sacrifice and organizational commitment in the context of public service, healthcare, and nonprofit employees. Their research found that the more motivated a person is to serve society, the more organizational commitment and job satisfaction they experience. This aligns with findings in the current study that showed that SSGG changed the relationship with burnout and organizational commitment, even when burnout was high.

### **Biblical Perspective on Findings**

Biblically, organizational commitment can be seen as an expression of perseverance when serving where God has called and in the context of covenant commitment. This study was designed to examine if those who are spiritually fit might approach organizational commitment as a value, regardless of personal burnout, and therefore have a stronger covenant-based level of organizational commitment.

The concept of a covenant is seen throughout scripture and is used as a promise that has value to both parties. This concept was examined in the context of organizational commitment in the reserve military forces by Gazit et al. (2021), who identified the “military covenant” as inclusive of psychological contracts, expectations for treatment, and role identity in the workplace (p. 625). In relation to the study findings, the concept of Sacrifice and Service to the Greater Good could be seen as part of the identity of the individual that comes from their identity in Christ or could be a type of sacrificial covenant that one makes based on their faith.

A look at contemporary self-sacrifice was conducted by Gil-Gimeno and Capdequi (2021), who highlighted themes of sacrificial service to others, which they believe tied to the idea of the sacredness of the person. They identified self-sacrifice as a “meaningful part of human culture” and demonstrated that Jesus was the ultimate embodiment of an example of self-sacrifice for the greater good (p. 2).

Service for the greater good is a key element in the scriptures, as believers are to see others as better than themselves and are to emulate the example of Christ. In Philippians 2:4-8, believers are directed to:

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but

also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (*English Standard Version*, 2001).

This ultimate example of humble sacrifice for others is one that is often displayed in the military servicemember, where elements of John 15:12-13 are woven through military statements and creeds. This scripture says, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). This ability to sacrifice for others through obedience is one that likely leads to peace, which influences burnout, and through which organizational commitment is strengthened. The findings of this study could be demonstrating this type of biblical approach to spiritual fitness, which is demonstrated in this study through the subscale of Service and Sacrifice for the Greater Good (SSGG).

### **Implications**

The study findings illustrate several areas where organizations could influence burnout or organizational commitment through their actions or inactions. This idea aligns with recent changes by the World Health Organization, which has announced that employee burnout is an organizational issue, with organizational responsibility, versus a personal issue, as older organizational management literature would have suggested (Wu et al., 2022). This discussion is in the best interest of the organization, as the study findings

suggest that decreasing burnout may increase organizational commitment, that increasing spiritual fitness may decrease burnout, and that some elements of spiritual fitness (SSGG) may stabilize organizational commitment even when burnout is present.

First, organizations can be aware of the resources or hindrances they are placing upon employees or servicemembers. While self-sacrifice is often presented in a positive light, Giacomelli et al. (2022) identified some drawbacks and concerns for those high in this tendency. In their research, they identified that individuals high in self-sacrifice motivation could struggle when faced with procedural frustrations and red tape, which aligns with research by Smith et al. (2015), who discussed that burnout is more likely associated with nontraumatic aspects of the military job, such as frustrations and exhaustion, versus combat trauma. Likewise, Lizano et al. (2019) indicated that job burnout was less impacted by individual characteristics and was more influenced by organizational characteristics, such as workload. By understanding these elements of resource management as they relate to burnout and organizational commitment, leaders can work to ensure that their teams do not have to experience unnecessary struggles to do their jobs.

Second, organizations can lead by addressing elements of spiritual fitness as they relate to employee well-being. As it relates to the SSGG or Horizontal Spirituality component of this study, some concerns brought up by Giacomelli et al. (2022) are relevant for managers. These include what they call the “dark side” of self-sacrificial individuals, where their own resources can be exhausted, and they can become burned out. In the military specifically, Alexander (2020) suggests that the results of the SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale be used for coaching purposes and optimizing

individual performance. This suggestion would entail a closer look at individual employee or servicemember spiritual well-being by organizations. This balance seems relevant to the purpose of the current study, but data was not collected to identify or support any conclusions in this area.

Lastly, making work or service meaningful connects with the element of Service and Sacrifice for the Greater Good in the current study, and with previous research suggesting that a willingness to sacrifice is not necessarily compulsory in most organizations, as it is in the military environment, but can be fostered (Gazit et al., 2021). Koenig (2022) found that this is a powerful motivator that can be derived from both religious and non-religious sources and Bury (2017) found that Reservists who joined for patriotic and service-oriented reasons were more likely to stay with the organization. Specifically in the military, DiRenzo et al. (2022) recommend that leaders should foster this sense of meaning and purpose to offset high turnover intentions, which the results of this study would also indicate, through the aspect of spiritual fitness and SSGG.

### **Limitations**

Several delimitations and assumptions have been addressed in earlier chapters of this paper, including common concerns with self-reports and cross-sectional survey data, whereby response bias, concerns about confidentiality, or other issues could arise and influence results. Also discussed were concerns about the assumption that this population was under high levels of stress, and that any findings could be generalized beyond that of the National Guard, which has been demonstrated to be a specific and unique population.

An unexpected turnover in the executive levels of the National Guard took place while this study was in review with the Liberty University IRB, which changed some of the study parameters. Permission had previously been granted to use an activated unit for the study, but the new leadership removed all approvals for surveys. Because of this change, the study had to be conducted using only personal emails, personal Facebook accounts, and direct contact with individuals in the National Guard. Because the researcher is well-networked in this area, additional opportunities arose where some shared the link and invitation with others, which resulted in a number of surveys that exceeded what was planned for in the study. Because of the time delay, however, some of those participating in the survey were no longer serving in the National Guard and were not activated at the time. The verbiage was changed (with IRB approval) to allow current and former members of the National Guard to participate in the study. This likely diluted the power of the study, as the people in a volatile environment may have had differing ratings of burnout and organizational commitment than those who were no longer in those roles.

One limitation that should be discussed, which was not predicted, was the perception of organizational commitment in general, and specifically in the subscale of Normative Commitment, as described by Allen and Meyer (1990). The first and second types of organizational commitment, affective and continuance commitment, appeared to be relevant for the population of this study and had good Cronbach alpha values for reliability, with values of 0.72 and 0.88, respectively. Affective commitment results from an emotional attachment to the organization and includes the desire to serve and do well for the organization, and continuance commitment is based on fear of losing

benefits, fear of finding something comparable, or simply the difficulty of changing environments. The third type of commitment, however, normative commitment, arises from beliefs about responsibilities to the organization, obligations, or loyalties to the organization. The reliability of this scale in this study was extremely low, with a Cronbach alpha of 0.26. Because the population under study is enlisted for a certain period, this segment of the survey could have caused confusion, as feeling like one should stay or feeling loyal to the organization could have confounded the results, as they did not actually have a choice. Because the overall Organizational Commitment scores were still correlated in the expected direction for both of the first two hypotheses, the scale was used as part of the overall commitment score. It is possible, however, that eliminating that scale could have added power to the findings.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Recommendations for future research would first include studies that could correct some of the limitations presented in the previous section. Surveying an activated National Guard unit, who are under stress and away from home could result in a different outcome. Likewise, eliminating the normative commitment scale or rewording this part of the survey may result in stronger associations, as would the use of a different commitment scale for the National Guard servicemember.

Second, based on the results obtained regarding the subscale Sacrifice and Service for the Greater Good and the concept of Horizontal Spirituality, future research could identify if these characteristics are more pronounced in certain fields, such as the military, first responder, or healthcare communities naturally, and identify how this can be promoted or trained within an organization to decrease burnout and increase

organizational commitment. Saito et al. (2018), for example, propose that an organizational culture that fosters intrinsic and altruistic work values could be impactful for helping to find meaning and value in stressful work, but this has not yet been identified or defined. Therefore, no clear organizational initiatives have been developed as of yet to address this proposed approach.

Finally, identifying if the military concept of spiritual fitness translates to other professions would be an interesting line of research to further understand the impact of these variables on burnout and organizational commitment in high-stress environments. Research by Thomas et al. (2018) suggests that culturally competent spiritual fitness programs for the military are key to improving mental health and sustainability. Research supports this idea, as spirituality has been shown to be a resilience factor for military members experiencing mental health concerns without tying the term to a specific religious practice (Muse et al., 2019). How these impact other high-stress workplaces would be valuable lines of research to identify how to increase organizational commitment and decrease burnout in other populations.

### **Summary**

Recent National Guard activations and stressors have created environments where significant mental health concerns, burnout, and turnover have been widespread. The impact of these occupational stressors on the mental readiness and mental health of the servicemembers has been identified as an area of paramount importance to military leaders (Koenig, 2022). This study was designed to uncover potential relationships that could be helpful in the creation of programs or coaching to mitigate these negative outcomes of occupational stress and positively impact emotional and spiritual well-being

and organizational commitment for those working in high-stress environments such as the National Guard.

The importance of spiritual fitness in burnout and organizational commitment was demonstrated in this study, whereby inverse associations were found between burnout and organizational commitment and spiritual fitness and burnout. In addition, the moderation effect between SSGG and burnout stabilized organizational commitment even when burnout was present, suggesting that individuals high in this tendency could be using healthy means for making sense of stressors because of their commitment to selfless service, altruism, and a common mission. These ideas align with biblical concepts of meaning and sacrifice, theoretical concepts of cognitive appraisal, and JD-R and could be important for organizations to recognize and foster in order to enhance organizational commitment. By creating environments where elements of horizontal spirituality are valued and communicated, leaders can foster a collective sense of meaning and purpose to potentially improve employee health and offset high turnover intentions.

These findings contribute to the field by identifying spiritual factors impacting the National Guard servicemember health and organizational longevity, two areas of concern for this high-stress population. Because this population has not been studied as extensively as other branches of the military, the findings from this study bring a unique perspective that could be used to inform interventions or training conducted by chaplains or other health professionals (Alexander & Deuster, 2021). By presenting tools for spiritually dealing with chronic stressors individually and organizationally, more workers and soldiers can be impacted personally, organizationally, and eternally.

## REFERENCES

- Abdelmoteleb, S. A. (2019). A new look at the relationship between job stress and organizational commitment: A three-wave longitudinal study. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 34*(3), 321-336. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-018-9543-z>
- Abraham, P. A., Russell, D., Huffman, S., Deuster, P., & Gibbons, S. W. (2018). Army combat medic resilience: The process of forging loyalty. *Military Medicine, 183*(3/4), 364-370. <https://web-s-ebshost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=454757f3-a68b-4d84-9534-7626002203e3%40redis>
- Ai, A. L., Raney, A. A., & Paloutzian, R. F. (2021). Perceived spiritual support counteracts the traumatic impact of extreme disasters: Exploration of moderators. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, October 18, 2021. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0001133>
- Al-Dabbagh, Z. S. (2020). The role of decision-maker in crisis management: A qualitative study using grounded theory (COVID-19 pandemic crisis as a model). *Journal of Public Affairs, 20*(e2186), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2186>
- Alexander, D., & Deuster, P. (2021). Aligning and assessing core attributes of spiritual fitness for optimizing human performance. *Journal of Special Operations Medicine, 21*(1), 109-112. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33721317/>
- Alexander, D. W. (2020). Applications of the SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale: Program development and tailored coaching for optimized performance. *Journal of*

*Special Operations Medicine*, 20(3), 109-112.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32969013/>

Alexander, D. W., Abulhawa, Z., & Kazman, J. (2020). The SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale: Measuring “vertical” and “horizontal” spirituality in the human performance domain. *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 74(4), 269-279.

[https://journals-sagepub-](https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/1542305020967317)

[com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/1542305020967317](https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/1542305020967317)

Aliem, S. M. F., & Hashish, E. A. A. (2021). The relationship between transformational leadership practices of first-line nurse managers and nurses’ organizational resilience and job involvement: A structural equation model. *Worldviews on Evidence-Based Nursing*, 18(5), 273-282. [https://sigmapubs-onlinelibrary-wiley-](https://sigmapubs-onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1111/wvn.12535)

[com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1111/wvn.12535](https://sigmapubs-onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1111/wvn.12535)

Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 63, 1-18. [https://web-p-ebshost-](https://web-p-ebshost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=908cadf0-c223-4be6-aeb7-2eb239b01dfa%40redis)

[com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=908cadf0-c223-](https://web-p-ebshost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=908cadf0-c223-4be6-aeb7-2eb239b01dfa%40redis)

[4be6-aeb7-2eb239b01dfa%40redis](https://web-p-ebshost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=908cadf0-c223-4be6-aeb7-2eb239b01dfa%40redis)

[4be6-aeb7-2eb239b01dfa%40redis](https://web-p-ebshost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=908cadf0-c223-4be6-aeb7-2eb239b01dfa%40redis)

Archer, L. E., & Alagaraja, M. (2021). Examining burnout in the US military with a focus on US Air Force: A review of literature. *New Horizons in Adult Education & Human Resource Development*, 33(4), 17-32. [https://onlinelibrary-wiley-](https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1002/nha3.20331)

[com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1002/nha3.20331](https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1002/nha3.20331)

[com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1002/nha3.20331](https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1002/nha3.20331)

Berchtold, A. (2019). Treatment and reporting of item-level missing data in social

science research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 22(5),

431-439.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13645579.2018.1563978?journalCode=tsrm20>

Bliese, P. D., Edwards, J. R., & Sonnentag, S. (2017). Stress and well-being at work: A century of empirical trends reflecting theoretical and societal influences. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 102*(3), 389-402.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28125263/>

Boots at the border: Examining the National Guard deployment to the Southwest border. (2020). *Current Politics and Economics of the United States, Canada and Mexico, 22*(2), 217-292.

<http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fboots-at-border-examining-national-guard%2Fdocview%2F2475936907%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>

Borgeson, N. (2021). Holistic health and fitness: Building spiritual and mental resilience. <https://www.army.mil/article/243612/>

Brady, K. J. S., Ni, P., Sheldrick, R. C., Trockel, M. T., Shanafelt, T. D., Rowe, S. G., Schneider, J. I., & Kazis, L. E. (2020). Describing the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal accomplishment symptoms associated with Maslach Burnout Inventory subscale scores in U.S. physicians: An item response theory analysis. *Journal of Patient-Reported Outcomes, 4*(42), 1-14.

<https://jpro.springeropen.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s41687-020-00204-x.pdf>

Bryant-Lees, K. B., Martinez, R. N., Frise, A., Bryan, C. J., Goodman, T., Chappelle, W., & Thompson, W. (2021). Predictors and protective factors for suicide

- ideation across remotely piloted aircraft career fields. *Military Psychology*, 33(4), 228-239. <https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1080/08995605.2021.1902181>
- Bury, P. (2017). Recruitment and retention in British Army Reserve logistics units. *Armed Forces & Society*, 43(4), 608-631. <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/0095327X16657320>
- Campbell, C., & Bauer, S. (2021). Christian faith and resilience: Implications for social work practice. *Social Work & Christianity*, 48(1), 28-51. <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.3403/swc.v48i1.212>
- Catignani, S., Gazit, N., & Ben-Ari, E. (2021). Introduction to the new *Armed Forces & Society* forum on military reserves in the “new wars.” *Armed Forces & Society*, 47(4), 607-615. <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/0095327X21996220>
- Cherry, K. E., Sampson, L., Galea, S., Marks, L. D., Sanko, K. E., Nezat, P. F., & Baudoin, K. H. (2018). Spirituality, humor, and resilience after natural and technological disasters. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 50(5), 492-501. <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2110243885?pq-origsite=summon>
- Clinton, T., Pingleton, J., & Hindson, E. (Eds.). (2001). *The Care and counsel bible: Caring for people God's way*. Thomas Nelson.
- Cook, R. M. (2021). Addressing missing data in quantitative counseling research. *Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation*, 12(1), 43-53. doi:10.1080/21501378.2019.1011037.

Dal Corso, L., De Carlo, A., Carluccio, F., Colledani, D., & Falco, A. (2020). Employee burnout and positive dimensions of well-being: A latent workplace spirituality profile analysis. *PLoS ONE*, *15*(11), 1-17.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0242267>

Diehle, J., Williamson, V., & Greenberg, N. (2019). Out of sight out of mind: An examination of mental health problems in UK military reservists and veterans.

*Journal of Mental Health*, *12*, 1-6. <https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/09638237.2019.1581348?needAccess=true>

DiRenzo, M. S., Tosti-Kharas, J., & Powley, E. H. (2022). Called to serve: Exploring the relationship between career calling, career plateaus, and organizational commitment in the U.S. military. *Journal of Career Assessment*, *30*(1), 60-77.

[https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1177/10690727211011379?utm\\_source=summon&utm\\_medium=discovery-provider](https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1177/10690727211011379?utm_source=summon&utm_medium=discovery-provider)

Edu-Valsania, S., Laguia, A., & Moriano, J. A. (2022). Burnout: A review of theory and measurement. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*, 1-27.

<https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2627535277?pq-origsite=summon>

*English Standard Version Bible*. (2001). ESV Online. <https://esv.literalword.com/>

Esteves, T., Lopes, M. P., Germias, R. L., & Palma, P. J. (2018). Calling for leadership: leadership relation with worker's sense of calling. *Leadership & Organization*

- Development Journal*, 39(2), 248-260. <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2019298107?pq-origsite=summon>
- Etchin, A. G., Fonda, J. R., McGlinchey, R. E., & Howard, E. P. (2019). Toward a system theory of stress, resilience, and reintegration. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 43(1), 75-85. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31299688/>
- Farmer, M., Allen, S., Duncan, K., & Alagaraja, M. (2019). Workplace spirituality in the public sector: A study of US water and wastewater agencies. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 27(3), 441-457. <https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2253208351?pq-origsite=summon>
- Fields, D. L. (2012). *Taking the measure of work: A guide to validated scales for organizational research and diagnosis*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/taking-the-measure-of-work>
- Flood, A., & Keegan, R. J. (2022). Cognitive resilience to psychological stress in military personnel. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1-10. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.809003/full>
- Flynn, J. F., Bliese, P. D., Korsgaard, M. A., & Cannon, C. (2021). Tracking the process of resilience: How emotional stability and experience influence exhaustion and commitment trajectories. *Group & Organizational Management*, 46(4), 692-736. <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/10596011211027676>
- Forte, B., Morelli, M., & Casagrande, M. (2021). Heart rate variability and decision-making: Autonomic responses in making decisions. *Brain Sciences*, 11(243), 1-11. <https://web-b-ebsohost->

[com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=46bad230-674c-4290-9528-d915849315e7%40pdc-v-sessmgr02](https://com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=46bad230-674c-4290-9528-d915849315e7%40pdc-v-sessmgr02)

Fox, C., Webster, B. D., & Casper, W. C. (2018). Spirituality, psychological capital, and employee performance: An empirical examination. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 30(2), 194-213. [https://bi-gale-](https://bi-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/global/article/GALE%7CA545892001?u=vic_liberty&id=summon)

[com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/global/article/GALE%7CA545892001?u=vic\\_liberty&id=summon](https://com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/global/article/GALE%7CA545892001?u=vic_liberty&id=summon)

Garcia-Izquierdo, M., de Pedro, M. M., Rios-Risquez, M. I., & Sanchez, M. I. S. (2018). Resilience as a moderator of psychological health in situations of chronic stress (burnout) in a sample of hospital nurses. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 50(2),

228-236. [https://sigmapubs-onlinelibrary-wiley-](https://sigmapubs-onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1111/jnu.12367)

[com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1111/jnu.12367](https://com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1111/jnu.12367)

Gazit, N., Lomsky-Feder, E., & Ben Ari, E. (2021). Military covenants and contracts in motion: Reservists as transmigrants 10 years later. *Armed Forces & Society*, 47(4), 616-634. [https://journals-sagepub-](https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/0095327X20924034)

[com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/0095327X20924034](https://com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/0095327X20924034)

Gerich, J., & Weber, C. (2020). The ambivalent appraisal of job demands and the moderating role of job control and social support for burnout and job satisfaction. *Social Indicators Research*, 148, 251-280.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11205-019-02195-9>

Giacomelli, G., Vainieri, M., Garzi, R., & Zamaro, N. (2022). Organizational commitment across different institutional settings: How perceived procedural

constraints frustrate self-sacrifice. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 88(3), 702-720. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852320949629>

Gil-Gimeno, J., & Capdequi, C. S. (2021). The persistence of sacrifice as self-sacrifice and its contemporary embodiment in the 9/11 rescuers and COVID-19 healthcare professionals. (2021). *Religions*, 12(323), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12050323>

Griffith, J. (2021). War and commitment to military service: Deployment and combat experiences associated with retention among Army National Guard soldiers. *Armed Forces and Society*, 1-25. <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1177/0095327X211017281>

Griffith, J., & Ben-Ari, E. (2021). Reserve military service: A social constructionist perspective. *Armed Forces & Society*, 47(4), 635-660. <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/0095327X20917165>

Guillen, M., Ferrero, I., & Hoffman, W. M. (2015). The neglected ethical and spiritual motivations in the workplace. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 128, 803-816. <https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1681446310?pq-origsite=summon>

Gutierrez, I. A., Alders, E. A., Abulhawa, Z., & Deuster, P. A. (2021). VICTORS: A conceptual framework for implementing and measuring military spiritual fitness. *Military Behavioral Health*, 9(4), 375-389. <https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1080/21635781.2021.1895922>

Hassard, J., Teoh, K. R. H., Visockaite, G., Dewe, P., & Cox, T. (2018). The cost of work-related stress to society: A systematic review. *Journal of Occupational*

*Health Psychology*, 23(1), 1-17. <https://web-a-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=8e59b034-b87c-4849-bd09-2cfd4a25f45c%40sdc-v-sessmgr02>

Hoopsick, R. A., Homish, D. L., Collins, R. L., Nochajski, T. H., Read, J. P., Bartone, P. T., & Homish, G. G. (2021). Resilience to mental health problems and the role of deployment status among U.S. Army reserve and National Guard soldiers. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 56, 1299-1310. <https://web-p-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=3a124e23-c12d-47cb-96ff-7c6bdc22c590%40redis>

Hourani, L. L., Davila, M. I., Morgan, J., Meleth, S., Ramirez, D., Lewis, G., Kizakevich, P. N., Eckhoff, R., Morgan, T., Strange, L., Lane, M., Weimer, B., & Lewis, A. (2020). Mental health, stress, and resilience correlates of heart rate variability among military reservists, guardsmen, and first responders. *Physiology & Behavior*, 214, 1-10. <https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/science/article/pii/S0031938419306109?via%3Dihub>

Hu, Q., Schaufeli, W. B., & Taris, T. W. (2017). How are changes in exposure to job demands and job resources related to burnout and engagement? A longitudinal study among Chinese nurses and police officers. *Stress and Health*, 33, 631-644. <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1002/smi.2750>

John E. Fetzer Institute. (1999). *Multidimensional measurement of religiousness/spirituality for use in health research*. John E. Fetzer Institute.

[https://fetzer.org/sites/default/files/images/resources/attachment/%5bcurent-date:tiny%5d/Multidimensional\\_Measurement\\_of\\_Religiousness\\_Spirituality.pdf](https://fetzer.org/sites/default/files/images/resources/attachment/%5bcurent-date:tiny%5d/Multidimensional_Measurement_of_Religiousness_Spirituality.pdf)

- Kang, H. (2021). Sample size determination and power analysis using the G\*Power software. *Journal of Educational Evaluation for Health Professions*, 18(17), 1-12. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8441096/pdf/jeehp-18-17.pdf>
- Kent, B. V., Henderson, W. M., Bradshaw, M., Ellison, C. G., & Wright, B. R. E. (2021). Do daily spiritual experiences moderate the effect of stressors on psychological well-being? A smartphone-based experience sampling study of depressive symptoms and flourishing. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 31(2), 57-78. <https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/epub/10.1080/10508619.2020.1777766?needAccess=true>
- Kick, K. A., & McNitt, M. (2016). Trauma, spirituality, and mindfulness: Finding hope. *Social Work & Christianity*, 43(3), 97-108. <https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1814147606?pq-origsite=summon>
- Koenig, H. G. (2008). Concerns about measuring “spirituality” in research. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 196(5), 349-355. <https://oce-ovid-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/article/00005053-200805000-00001/HTML>
- Koenig, H. G. (2022). “Spiritual readiness” in the U. S. Military: A neglected component of warrior readiness. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 2022,1-17. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s10943-022-01563-z>

- Kraimer, M. L., Shaffer, M. A., Bollino, M. C., Charlier, S. D., & Wurtz, O. (2022). A transactional stress theory of global work demands: A challenge, hindrance, or both? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Advance Online Publication.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/apl0001009>
- Krauss, S., & Silver, C. F. (2021). The vertical and horizontal Spiritual Fitness Inventory and meaning in life in secular, Christian, and non-Christian samples. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 1-13.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2021.1965972>
- Lambert, E. G., Quereshi, H., Frank, J., Klahm, C., & Smith, B. (2018). Job stress, job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment and their associations with job burnout among Indian police officers: A research note. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 33, 85-89.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11896-017-9236-y>
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer Publishing Company, Inc., <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=423337>
- Ledesma, J. (2014). Conceptual frameworks and research models on resilience in leadership. *SAGE Open*, July-September, 1-8.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2158244014545464>
- Listopad, I. W., Esch, T., & Michaelsen, M. M. (2021a). An empirical investigation of the relationship between spirituality, work culture, and burnout: The need for an extended health and disease model. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 1-23.  
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.723884/full>

- Listopad, I. W., Michaelsen, M. M., Werdecker, L., & Esch, T. (2021b). Bio-psycho-socio-spirito-cultural factors of burnout: A systematic narrative review of the literature. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 1-23.  
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.722862/full>
- Lizano, E. L., Godoy, A. J., & Allen, N. A. (2019). Spirituality and worker well-being: Examining the relationship between spirituality, job burnout, and work engagement. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought, 38*(2), 197-216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15426432.2019.1577787>
- Loo, M. K. L. (2017). Spirituality in the workplace: Practices, challenges, and recommendations. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 45*(3), 182-204.  
<https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2085005114?pq-origsite=summon>
- Mann, G. J., & Brinkley, A. J. (2021). Life in the Army reserves- the balance of work, training, and physical activity: An ethnographic study. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 13*(6), 990-1005.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2020.1831579>
- Martin, W. E., & Bridgmon, K. D. (2012). *Quantitative and statistical research methods: From hypothesis to results*. Jossey-Bass.
- Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Occupational Behaviour, 2*, 99-113. <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1002/job.4030020205>
- Meng, H., Luo, Y., Huang, L., Wen, J., Ma, J., & Xi, J. (2019). On the relationships of resilience with organizational commitment and burnout: A social exchange

perspective. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23(15), 2231-2250. <https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/09585192.2017.1381136?needAccess=true>

Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1997). *Commitment in the workplace: Theory, research, and application*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452231556>

Murphy, J. M., Chin, E. D., Westlake, C. A., Asselin, M., & Brisbois, M. D. (2021).

Pediatric hematology/oncology nurse spirituality, stress, coping, spiritual well-being, and intent to leave: A mixed-method study. *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing*, 38(6), 349-363. [https://doi-](https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177%2F10434542211011061)

[org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177%2F10434542211011061](https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177%2F10434542211011061)

Muse, A., Lamson, A., & Cobb, E. (2019). The effects of spirituality, physical health, and social support on deployment stress and mental health outcomes. *Military Behavioral Health*, 7(1), 92-99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21635781.2018.1490226>

*New International Version Bible*. (2011). Biblica, Inc.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-International-Version-NIV-Bible/#booklist>

*New King James Version Bible*. (2001). Thomas Nelson. (Original work published 1982).

Norris, J. I., Casa de Calvo, M. P., & Mather, R. D. (2020). Managing an existential threat: How a global crisis contaminates organizational decision-making. *Management Decision*, 58(10), 2117-2138.

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/MD-08-2020-1034/full/pdf?title=managing-an-existential-threat-how-a-global-crisis-contaminates-organizational-decision-making>

Pargament, K. I., & Sweeney, P. J. (2011). Building spiritual fitness in the Army: An innovative approach to a vital aspect of human development. *American Psychologist*, 66(1), 58-64. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021657>

Paul, H., Budhwar, P., & Bamel, U. (2020). Linking organizational resilience and organizational commitment: Does happiness matter? *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*, 7(1), 21-37.  
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2533530229/fulltextPDF/4E67B2320C234111PQ/1?accountid=12085>

Perez-Floriano, L. R., & Gonzalez, J. A. (2019). When the going gets tough: A moderated mediated model of injury, job-related risks, stress, and police performance. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 27(4), 1239-1255.  
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2287028008/fulltextPDF/95372D027CFA4F6APQ/1?accountid=12085>

Pingleton, J. (2001). How to beat burnout. In Clinton, T., Pingleton, J., & Hindson, E. (Eds.). 2001. *The care and counsel bible: Caring for people God's way* (p.920-921). Thomas Nelson.

Rahman, S., & Cachia, M. (2021). Resilience and stress management amongst corporate security managers: A hybrid approach to thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 16(2), 299-314.

<https://www-emerald-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/insight/content/doi/10.1108/QROM-10-2019-1837/full/html>

Reger, G. M. (2021). Operational stress control during a pandemic: An Army National Guard perspective on lessons learned during the response to COVID-19. *Military Behavioral Health*, 9(1), 11-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21635781.2021.1904064>

Sahay, S., & Dwyer, M. (2021). Emergent organizing in crisis: US nurses' sensemaking and job crafting during COVID-19. *Management Communications Quarterly*, 35(4), 546-571. <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/08933189211034170>

Saito, Y., Igarashi, A., Noguchi-Watanabe, M., Takai, Y., & Yamamoto-Mitani, N. (2018). Work values and their association with burnout/work engagement among nurses in long-term care hospitals. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 26: 393– 402.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/jonm.12550>

Santoso, A. L., Sitompul, S. A., & Budiarmanto, A. (2018). Burnout, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research*, 13(1), 62-69.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.24052/JBRMR/V13IS01/ART-06>

Sapta, I. K. S., Rustiarini, N. W., Kusuma, I. G. A. E. T., & Astakoni, I. M. P. (2021). Spiritual leadership and organizational commitment: The mediation role of workplace spirituality. *Cogent Business & Management*, 8(1),1-15.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2021.1966865>

- Shelton, C. D., Hein, S., & Phipps, K. A. (2020). Resilience and spirituality: A mixed methods exploration of executive stress. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 28(2), 399-416. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/1934-8835.htm>.
- Sims, D. A., & Adler, A. B. (2017). Enhancing resilience in an operational unit. *Parameters*, 47(1), 83-91.  
<http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1926872802?accountid=12085>
- Sisto, A., Vicinanza, F., Campanozzi, L. L., Ricci, G., Tartaglini, D., & Tambone, V. (2019). Towards a transversal definition of resilience: A literature review. *Medicina*, 55(745), 1-22. <https://www.mdpi.com/1648-9144/55/11/745>
- Smith, H. A., Stephenson, J. A., Morrow, C. E., Haskell, J. S., Staal, M., Bryan, A. O., & Bryan, C. J. (2015). Factors associated with burnout among active duty versus National Guard/Reserve U.S. Air Force pararescuemen. *Military Behavioral Health*, 3(1), 5-13. <https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1080/21635781.2014.995245>
- Soper, D. (2023). *Calculator: Critical Chi-Square value*. DanielSoper.com.  
[www.danielsoper.com](http://www.danielsoper.com)
- Sun, J., Lin, P., Zhang, H., Li, J., & Cao, F. (2018). A non-linear relationship between the cumulative exposure to occupational stressors and nurse's burnout and the potentially emotion regulation factors. *Journal of Mental Health*, 27(5), 409-415.

<https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1080/09638237.2017.1385740>

Tabibnia, G., & Radecki, D. (2018). Resilience training that can change the brain.

*Consulting Psychology Journal Practice and Research*, 70(1), 59-88.

<https://web-a-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=9c52712c-8f86-40d4-bd88-018735a797e5%40sdc-v-sessmgr03>

Tamers, S. L., Streit, J. S., Pana-Cryan, R., Ray, T., Syron, L., Flynn, M. A., Castillo, D., Roth, G., Geraci, C., Guerin, R., Schulte, P., Henn, S., Change, C., Felnor, S., & Howard, J. (2020). Envisioning the future of work to safeguard the safety, health, and well-being of the workforce: A perspective from the CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 63, 1065-1084. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1002/ajim.23183>.

Thomas, K. H., McDaniel, J. T., Albright, D. L., Fletcher, K. L., & Koenig, H. G. (2018). Spiritual fitness for military veterans: A curriculum review and impact evaluation using the Duke Religion Index (DUREL). *Journal of Religion and Health*, 57, 1168-1178. <https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2015563077?pq-origsite=summon>

Van der Merwe, S. E., Biggs, R., & Preiser, R. (2020). Sensemaking as an approach for resilience assessment in an essential service organization. *Environment Systems and Decisions*, 40, 84-106. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10669-019-09743-1>

- Vanhove, A. J., Herian, M. N., Perez, A. L. U., Harms, P. D., & Lester, P. B. (2016). Can resilience be developed at work? A meta-analytic review of resilience-building programme effectiveness. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 89*, 278-307. <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1111/joop.12123>
- Verhage, A., Noppe, J., Feys, Y., & Ledegen, E. (2018). Force, stress, and decision-making within the Belgian police: The impact of stressful situations on police decision-making. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 33*, 345-357. <https://link-springer-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/article/10.1007/s11896-018-9262-4>
- Wild, J., El-Salahi, S., & Esposti, M. D. (2020). The effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving well-being and resilience and stress in first responders. *European Psychologist, 25*(4), 252-271. <https://web-a-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=3e13e835-0593-4432-8ccc-24b385bd88cd%40sdc-v-sessmgr01>
- Wing, T. A., Wong, Y. Y., Leung, K. M., & Chiu, S. M. (2018). Effectiveness of emotional fitness training in police. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 1*-16. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-018-9252-6>
- Worthington, D., & Deuster, P. A. (2018). Spiritual fitness: An essential component of human performance optimization. *Journal of Special Operations Medicine, 18*(1), 100-105. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29533442/>
- Wu, X., Hayter, M., Lee, A. J., Yuan, Y., Li, S., Bi, Y., Zhang, L., Cao, C., Gong, W., & Zhang, Y. (2019). Positive spiritual climate supports transformational leadership as means to reduce nursing burnout and intent to leave. *Journal of Nursing*

*Management*, 28, 804-813. <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1111/jonm.12994>

Wu, Y., Fu, Q., Akbar, S., Samad, S., Comite, U., Bucurean, M., & Badulescu, A. (2022). Reducing healthcare employees' burnout through ethical leadership: The role of altruism and motivation. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(20), 13102.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9603704/pdf/ijerph-19-13102.pdf>

Xie, X., Huang, C., Sheung, S. P., Zhou, Y., & Fang, J. (2021). Job demands and resources, burnout, and psychological distress of social workers in China: Moderation effects of gender and age. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 1-10.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.ezproxy.liberty.edu/pmc/articles/PMC8702995/pdf/fpsyg-12-741563.pdf>

Youssef, C. M., & Luthans, F. (2007). Positive organizational behavior in the workplace: The impact of hope, optimism, and resilience. *Journal of Management*, 33(5), 774-800. <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/abs/10.1177/0149206307305562>

Zhang, Y., Wu, X., Wan, X., Hayter, M., Wu, J., Master, S., Hu, Y., Yuan, Y., Liu, Y., Cao, C., & Gong, W. (2019). Relationship between burnout and intention to leave amongst clinical nurses: The role of spiritual climate. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 27, 1285-1293. <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1111/jonm.12810>

## APPENDIX A: IRB-APPROVED RECRUITING MATERIALS

### 1A. Recruitment Letter

Dear Servicemember,

As a graduate student in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to identify variables that can impact the mental health and well-being of National Guard servicemembers and can lead to new training in dealing with high-stress environments. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and have served in the National Guard. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a 3-part survey, which will take about 15 minutes to complete. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please **click here**.

A consent document is provided on the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Because participation is anonymous, you do not need to sign and return the consent document unless you would prefer to do so. After you have read the consent form, please click the button to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

### 2A. Recruitment Social Media

ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to identify variables that can impact the mental health and well-being of National Guard servicemembers and can lead to new training in dealing with high-stress environments. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and have served in the National Guard. Participants will be asked to complete a 3-part survey that can be completed in about 15 minutes. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, **please click here**. A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. Please review this page, and if you agree to participate, click the button to proceed to the survey.

### **3A. Recruitment Printed Business Card**

#### Invitation to Participate in a National Guard Well-Being Survey

I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to identify variables that can impact the mental health and well-being of National Guard servicemembers and can lead to new training in dealing with high-stress environments.

To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and have served in the National Guard.

If you agree, you will be asked to complete a 3-part survey that can be completed in less than 15 minutes. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NGResearch>. A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please review this page, and if you agree to participate, click the button to proceed to the survey.

## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

**Title of the Project:** The Role of Spiritual Fitness in Burnout and Organizational Commitment in High-Stress Environments

**Principal Investigator:** Amy Stevens, M.A., Graduate Student at Liberty University

### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be at least 18 years old and have served in the National Guard. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to examine the impact of stressful work environments on mental well-being and how this impacts an individual's commitment to the organization. Research has shown that National Guard servicemembers are at risk for many stress-related outcomes, such as burnout and psychological stress, which lead to mental health declines for the individual and turnover for the organization. By examining factors that support the servicemember under stress, new training can be developed to impact the health, well-being, and stress management skills of the servicemembers.

### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to complete a 3-part survey. This task will take no more than 15 minutes.

### How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include enhanced understanding and training for National Guard servicemembers that could impact their mental health, well-being, and stress management.

### What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

### How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous.

- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the National Guard. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Amy Stevens. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Jennifer Geyer, at [REDACTED].

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

#### **Your Consent**

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records/you can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

## APPENDIX C: SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

Allen and Meyer (1990) Organizational Commitment Scale, 2002 SAGE Publications; Adapted per Meyer and Allen (1997).

**Employee Responses are obtained on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1= Strongly Disagree and 7= Strongly Agree. Items denoted with (R) are reverse scored.**

**Participants will be asked to think specifically about the National Guard job when answering.**

1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
2. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
3. I do not feel like a part of the family at this organization. (R)
4. I do not feel emotionally attached to this organization. (R)
5. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
6. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to this organization. (R)
7. I do not feel any obligation to remain with this employer (R)
8. Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave this organization (R)
9. I would feel guilty if I left this organization now
10. This organization deserves my loyalty.
11. I would not leave this organization because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.
12. I owe a great deal to this organization.
13. It would be very hard for me to leave this organization after my enlistment even if I wanted to
14. Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave this organization
15. Right now, staying with this organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.
16. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.
17. One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives.
18. One of the main reasons I continue to work for this organization is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice- another organization may not match the overall benefits that I have here.

The SOCOM Spiritual Fitness Scale (Alexander et al., 2020)

**Employee Responses are obtained on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1= Strongly Disagree and 5= Strongly Agree. A portion of the scale contains the option “The assumptions behind this statement aren’t consistent with my world views”.**

Reflect on your attitudes, commitments, and beliefs and answer as accurately as possible.

1. I know what my life is about.
2. Human value and respect should be the greatest social value.
3. I’ve been able to find a sense of meaning in my life.
4. Looking at my life as a whole, things seem clear to me.
5. I believe strongly in humanity and the power of people.
6. I have a core set of beliefs, ethics, and values that give my life a sense of meaning and purpose.
7. I often think about a “grand plan” or process that human beings are a part of.
8. The greatest moral decision is doing the greatest good for human beings.
9. Being of service to others is an important source of meaning in my life.
10. I can find meaning and purpose in my everyday experiences.

The next set of statements reflects a commitment to God or a higher power. Even if you don’t think of yourself as religious, try to answer as accurately as possible. If you believe a statement doesn’t align with your belief system, then choose the option, “The assumptions behind this statement aren’t consistent with my world views”.

11. I believe in God or a higher power.
12. I feel God’s love for me.
13. I look to God for strength, support, and guidance.
14. I feel God’s presence.
15. I am grateful for all God has done for me.
16. God comforts and shelters me.
17. I’ve decided to place my life under God’s direction.
18. Religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life.

For use by Amy Stevens only. Received from Mind Garden, Inc. on June 14, 2022

**Permission for Amy Stevens to reproduce 150 copies  
within three years of June 14, 2022**

## **Maslach Burnout Inventory™**

### **Instruments and Scoring Keys**

#### **Includes MBI Forms:**

**Human Services - MBI-HSS**  
**Medical Personnel - MBI-HSS (MP)**  
**Educators - MBI-ES**  
**General - MBI-GS**  
**Students - MBI-GS (S)**

Christina Maslach  
Susan E. Jackson  
Michael P. Leiter  
Wilmar B. Schaufeli  
Richard L. Schwab

**Published by Mind Garden, Inc.**

info@mindgarden.com  
www.mindgarden.com

### **Important Note to Licensee**

If you have purchased a license to reproduce or administer a fixed number of copies of an existing Mind Garden instrument, manual, or workbook, you agree that it is your legal responsibility to compensate the copyright holder of this work — via payment to Mind Garden — for reproduction or administration in any medium. **Reproduction includes all forms of physical or electronic administration including online survey, handheld survey devices, etc.**

The copyright holder has agreed to grant a license to reproduce the specified number of copies of this document or instrument **within three years from the date of purchase.**

**You agree that you or a person in your organization will be assigned to track the number of reproductions or administrations and will be responsible for compensating Mind Garden for any reproductions or administrations in excess of the number purchased.**

*This instrument is covered by U.S. and international copyright laws. Any use of this instrument, in whole or in part, is subject to such laws and is expressly prohibited by the copyright holder. If you would like to request permission to use or reproduce the instrument, in whole or in part, contact Mind Garden, Inc.*

**MBI-General Survey:** Copyright ©1996 Wilmar B. Schaufeli, Michael P. Leiter, Christina Maslach & Susan E. Jackson.  
**MBI-Human Services Survey:** Copyright ©1981 Christina Maslach & Susan E. Jackson.  
**MBI-Educators Survey:** Copyright ©1986 Christina Maslach, Susan E. Jackson & Richard L. Schwab.  
All rights reserved in all media. Published by Mind Garden, Inc., [www.mindgarden.com](http://www.mindgarden.com)

For use by Amy Stevens only. Received from Mind Garden, Inc. on June 14, 2022

**For Dissertation and Thesis Appendices:**

You may not include an entire instrument in your thesis or dissertation, however you may use the three sample items specified by Mind Garden. Academic committees understand the requirements of copyright and are satisfied with sample items for appendices and tables. For customers needing permission to reproduce the three sample items in a thesis or dissertation, the following page includes the permission letter and reference information needed to satisfy the requirements of an academic committee.

To Whom It May Concern,

The above-named person has made a license purchase from Mind Garden, Inc. and has permission to administer the following copyrighted instrument up to that quantity purchased:

**Maslach Burnout Inventory forms: Human Services Survey, Human Services Survey for Medical Personnel, Educators Survey, General Survey, or General Survey for Students.**

The three sample items only from this instrument as specified below may be included in your thesis or dissertation. Any other use must receive prior written permission from Mind Garden. The entire instrument form may not be included or reproduced at any time in any other published material. Please understand that disclosing more than we have authorized will compromise the integrity and value of the test.

**MBI - General Survey - MBI-GS:**

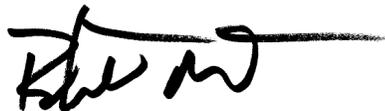
I feel emotionally drained from my work.

In my opinion, I am good at my job.

I doubt the significance of my work.

Copyright ©1996 Wilmar B. Schaufeli, Michael P. Leiter, Christina Maslach & Susan E. Jackson. All rights reserved in all media. Published by Mind Garden, Inc., [www.mindgarden.com](http://www.mindgarden.com)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Most', with a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

Robert Most  
Mind Garden, Inc.  
[www.mindgarden.com](http://www.mindgarden.com)