
Barracks and Deviance: Associations Between Organisational and Socio- Demographic Factors and Violent Tendencies Among Conscripts

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Purpose:

Although international research has examined links between military service, social control, peer influence, and deviant behaviour, less is known about violence in compulsory military settings apart from Western volunteer-force contexts. To address this gap, the study considers violent tendencies among Iranian conscripts in mandatory basic combat training and the extent to which socio-demographic background and barracks conditions are associated with violence as a security-relevant institutional harm.

Design/Methods/Approach:

Drawing on social bond theory and differential association theory, the study investigates both pre-service socialisation factors and in-service organisational conditions. Applying cluster random sampling, data were collected in 2025 through structured Likert-scale questionnaires from 541 conscripts. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test whether organisational predictors explained additional variance in violence as a security-relevant institutional harm after accounting for socio-demographic factors.

Findings:

Socio-demographic predictors explained most of the variance in violent tendencies. Deviant peer affiliation was the strongest positive correlate, while parental attachment was protective. Among barracks-related variables, only relations with fellow conscripts were significantly and inversely associated with violence. Organisational factors added a small, albeit statistically significant amount of explanatory power beyond socio-demographic predictors.

Originality/Value:

The study contributes evidence from an underrepresented Global South conscription context and extends international research on military deviance by showing that violence in mandatory service is primarily shaped by pre-service peer and family bonds, whereas the social climate of a recruit's immediate barracks holds additional, yet more limited explanatory value. In compulsory military settings, peer networks, family attachment, and informal social control are revealed to be important in violence prevention.

Keywords: Mandatory military service, military barracks, institutional violence, organisational factors, barracks social climate

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Vojašnice in odklonskost: povezave med organizacijskimi in sociodemografskimi dejavniki ter nasilnimi nagnjenji med vojaškimi obvezniki

Namen prispevka:

Čeprav so mednarodne raziskave že preučevale povezave med vojaško službo, družbenim nadzorom, vplivom vrstnikov in odklonskim vedenjem, je manj znanega o nasilju v okoljih obveznega služenja vojaškega roka izven zahodnih kontekstov prostovoljne vojaške službe. Za zapolnitev vrzeli ta študija preučuje nasilna nagnjenja med iranskimi vojaškimi obvezniki med obveznim osnovnim bojnim usposabljanjem ter ocenjuje, kako so sociodemografsko ozadje in razmere v vojašnicah povezani z nasiljem, kot varnostno relevantno institucionalno škodo.

Metode:

Izhajajoč iz teorije družbenih vezi in teorije diferencialne asociacije študija preučuje tako predslužbene socializacijske dejavnike kot organizacijske razmere med služenjem vojaškega roka. Z uporabo naključnega vzorčenja po skupinah so bili leta 2025 zbrani podatki od 541 vojaških obveznikov s strukturiranimi vprašalniki Likertove lestvice. Za preverjanje dodatnega prispevka organizacijskih napovednikov nad sociodemografskimi dejavniki je bila uporabljena hierarhična multipla regresija.

Ugotovitve:

Sociodemografski napovedniki so pojasnili večino variance nasilnih nagnjenj. Pripadnost odklonskim vrstniškim skupinam je bila najmočnejši pozitivni korelat, medtem ko je bila navezanost na starše varovalni dejavnik. Med dejavniki, povezanimi z vojašnicami, so ostali statistično značilno in negativno povezani z nasiljem le odnosi z drugimi vojaškimi obvezniki. Organizacijski dejavniki so dodali majhen, vendar statistično značilen delež pojasnjevalne moči nad sociodemografskimi napovedniki.

Izvirnost/pomembnost prispevka:

Študija prispeva dokaze iz premalo zastopane konteksta obveznega služenja vojaškega roka na globalnem jugu ter širi mednarodne raziskave o vojaški odklonskosti, ko pokaže, da nasilje pri obveznem služenju vojaškega roka primarno oblikujejo predslužbene vrstniške in družinske vezi, medtem ko neposredna socialna klima v vojašnici zagotavlja dodaten, vendar bolj omejen pojasnjevalni pomen. Ugotovitve poudarjajo pomen vrstniških vezi, družinske navezanosti in neformalnega družbenega nadzora pri preprečevanju nasilja v okoljih obveznega služenja vojaškega roka.

Ključne besede: obvezno služenje vojaškega roka, vojašnice, institucionalno nasilje, organizacijski dejavniki, socialna klima v vojašnicah

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1 INTRODUCTION

The impact of military environments on individual deviance and violence has been examined from several perspectives, yet the issue remains contested. Some scholars argue that exposure to military settings may increase deviant and violent behaviour. In this perspective, military institutions may contribute to the internalisation and normalisation of violent norms among conscripts (Baaz & Stern, 2009).

A conscript's initial military experience and transition to barracks life may involve a range of challenges, notably sudden and substantial changes in their environment. Psychological pressure and inadequate management may cause deviant tendencies to grow among conscripts (Agid et al., 2000; Bahmani et al., 2018; Friedman et al., 1994; Novaco & Robinson, 1984; Schmitz et al., 2012; Sims et al., 2019). Further, strict organisational authoritarianism and highly disciplined military settings may suppress emotional expression, expose conscripts to psychological distress, and increase their propensity for violent and aggressive behaviour (Nematshahi et al., 2020). Social environments are associated with their own cultural norms, values, and behavioural expectations, and in this way specific normative patterns are defined and imposed on individuals (Mahdavi Damghani et al., 2023). Military environments and barracks are no exception; depending on their social climate, they come with particular cultural codes, institutionalised values, and norms-based expectations that can lead conscripts to abandon previous norms and internalise new ones. Also shaped by institutional pressure, this transition may be a cause of growing psychological and behavioural deviance among soldiers (Hurjui & Ticsan, 2013). A few scholars contend that exposure to military environments might not just frame violence as excusable or natural, but also internalise it as appealing, intriguing, or even enjoyable, especially among young people and adolescents (Weierstall et al., 2013).

Conversely, some studies suggest that military service may play a constructive role in lowering social and behavioural deviance (such as delinquency, violence and aggression). The described potential effect is often attributed to the structured and disciplined nature of military life, the cultivation of a sense of responsibility,

the reinforcement of social bonds, and the provision of educational and occupational opportunities for soldiers. By introducing routines and discipline, military service can bring individuals with unstable family or social backgrounds into a more structured and orderly environment. Group work can also foster a sense of belonging and strengthen bonds among group members, which may enhance social control and hinder the emergence of deviant behaviour (Bouffard, 2003; Kelty et al., 2010; Orak & Walker, 2021). Resilience training has also been shown to improve mental health and help soldiers regulate aggressive impulses more effectively (Bahmani et al., 2018). However, other scholars argue that the impact of barracks and military environments is not consistent and depends on factors such as the characteristics of individual soldiers, and their economic and social backgrounds, together with the broader historical and institutional context (Bouffard, 2005; Craig & Connell, 2015; Salvatore & Taniguchi, 2021).

Moreover, the nature of military service itself may influence the normative tendencies of conscripts. The consequences of conscripted vs voluntary military service vary by their impact on soldiers' behavioural health (Bouffard, 2005; Gvozdeva, 2024).

In Iran, military service is a compulsory legal obligation for male citizens from the age of 18, with the duration of necessary service determined by the Public Military Service Law and related regulations (Public Military Service Law of Iran, 1984, Arts. 2 and 4). The obligation is regarded as part of men's social and defensive duty, and failure to complete it may lead to several restrictions, including limits on international travel, the issuing of a passport, university enrolment, and employment opportunities. In contrast, in countries like the United Kingdom there is no conscription or legal requirement for military service, and the armed forces operate as a professional volunteer force (House of Commons Library, 2026).

This difference reflects two distinct approaches to the recruitment and organisation of military personnel, as well as the wider role of the military in society. It therefore reveals the importance of independently investigating the experiences and consequences of compulsory military service. Considering these fundamental differences, and focusing on the impact of various factors on deviant behaviours among Iranian conscripts, the presented study is essential and holds potential to fill a significant gap in the literature.

While military conscription is not typically regarded as a criminal justice institution, it operates as a state-run disciplinary setting where violence, harassment, and coercive peer dynamics can generate harms that are routinely managed through formal and informal governance mechanisms. Understanding violence in compulsory service hence speaks to broader criminological concerns with institutional harms, social control, and the regulation of conflict in closed settings. Conscription contexts in the Global South remain underrepresented in mainstream criminological evidence; by concentrating on Iranian basic training barracks, this study broadens knowledge of violence, governance, and prevention in state institutions by providing evidence from a non-Western setting.

In this article, the relationships between organisational and socio-demographic variables and violence as a form of behavioural deviance are analysed with the aim of informing practical strategies for reducing violence and

improving the psychological and social well-being of conscripts. The findings may help policymakers and military service administrators design more effective prevention programmes, and contribute to criminological research on the socio-cultural roots of deviant behaviour.

1.1 Theoretical Background

The study presented in this article is grounded in an integrated criminological and sociological framework that links violent tendencies among conscripts to both pre-service socialisation factors and in-service barracks conditions. Rather than relying on a single theory, complementary theoretical perspectives are used to explain why some conscripts may be more vulnerable to violent/deviant behaviour during compulsory military service.

First, social bond theory suggests that deviant behaviour becomes more likely when individuals' bonds to conventional social institutions are weakened. In this study, parental attachment and educational level are treated as indicators of such conventional bonds. Strong attachment to parents may discourage violent behaviour because individuals remain emotionally connected to family expectations and may avoid actions that could damage these relationships. Similarly, educational commitment may operate as a form of social investment that strengthens self-regulation and conformity (Cassino & Rogers, 2016; Siegel, 2019).

Second, differential association theory emphasises that deviant behaviour is learned through interactions with others. This perspective is especially relevant to deviant peer affiliation. Conscripts who were exposed to deviant peer networks before entering military service may have already internalised norms that tolerate aggression, rule-breaking, or violence. At the same time, relations with fellow conscripts at the barracks may either reinforce or reduce violent tendencies subject to whether the peer climate is hostile, humiliating, supportive, or cohesive (Goff & Gilbert, 2017).

Third, strain theory provides a basis for understanding the role of economic status. From this perspective, economic disadvantage may generate frustration, perceived injustice, and blocked opportunities, which can boost the likelihood of aggressive or violent responses. In a military context, such background pressures may be intensified by the sudden transition to barracks life and the restrictions associated with compulsory service (Siegel, 2019).

Fourth, labelling theory helps explain how interpersonal treatment within institutional settings may affect deviant tendencies. Deviance is not only a property of behaviour itself, and thus may also be influenced by social reactions, definitions, and labels attached to individuals. In barracks settings, humiliation, verbal abuse or negative treatment by superiors or fellow conscripts may impact how individuals perceive themselves and their within-group position. Such experiences might fuel resentment, weaken institutional attachment, and lead to violent reactions (Santos et al., 2022).

Fifth, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is useful for interpreting the organisational conditions of barracks life since in this perspective unmet basic and psychosocial

needs may affect well-being and behavioural adjustment. Access to adequate welfare services, healthcare, sanitation, rest, and basic facilities may thus influence conscripts' psychological stability. When conscripts' basic needs are not adequately met, they might experience frustration and distress, which can make them more vulnerable to deviant behaviour (Harun et al., 2024).

Finally, Farrington's Integrated Cognitive Antisocial Potential framework provides a broader developmental perspective. In his framework, relatively stable long-term influences, such as family attachment, peer background, education, and economic conditions are distinguished from more immediate situational factors, such as barracks climate, welfare conditions, and interpersonal relations during service (van der Laan et al., 2017). This distinction supports the two-block structure of the present study: socio-demographic and pre-service factors are first considered before turning to organisational and barracks-related factors.

Accordingly, the theoretical framework of the study assumes that violent tendencies among conscripts are shaped by both background characteristics and institutional conditions. Socio-demographic factors may represent longer-term socialisation influences, whereas organisational factors may represent immediate contextual conditions within the barracks. The described combined framework justifies the use of hierarchical multiple regression to examine whether barracks-related factors explain additional variance in violence beyond socio-demographic predictors.

1.2 Organisational Factors

In this study, organisational variables include superiors' behaviour, interpersonal relations with fellow conscripts, coupled with the quality of welfare services and access to healthcare facilities at military bases. These variables may have a significant effect on the psychological and behavioural well-being of conscripts. For instance, inappropriate treatment by superior officers or peers may be associated with greater violence (Nematshahi et al., 2020). Humiliation by commanders or fellow soldiers may intensify aggressive and violent tendencies among conscripts (Goldman, 2008; Oravec, 2020; Walker & Knauer, 2011). The inability to establish constructive and friendly relationships with peers inside the barracks can also be a cause for elevated levels of violence (Bumby & Hansen, 1997; Huang et al., 2021; Richardson & Barnum, 2010). Inadequate welfare and healthcare services in military environments might also foster feelings of rejection and frustration, which can contribute to higher levels of deviant behaviour among soldiers (Harun et al., 2024).

However, the impact of military service on conscripts is not necessarily negative. Military units that provide a supportive atmosphere characterised by respectful treatment, sufficient welfare provisions, and appropriate medical care may have a positive impact on the normative development of conscripts. Group cohesion and solidarity within military units can promote normative behaviour (Charleson, 2020; Russell et al., 2016), while high levels of social support may function as a protective factor against behavioural deviance (Griffith, 2012; Nock et al., 2013; Nosratabadi et al., 2017).

1.3 Socio-demographic Factors

In addition to organisational factors, socio-demographic factors may act as key predictors of deviant behaviour among conscripts since they are rooted in personal and social contexts outside the barracks. In this study, five socio-demographic factors are examined: age, educational level, parental attachment, economic status, and deviant peer affiliation.

Age is considered an important factor influencing individuals' susceptibility to psychological and behavioural deviance. During emerging adulthood, usually defined as ages 18 to 29, age may play a substantial role in normative behaviour (Weierstall et al., 2013). Prior studies also stress that the period between ages 18 and 25 is a high-risk stage in which individuals may be more likely to engage in deviant behaviour (Mahdavi Damghani et al., 2025; Marsh et al., 2007; Siegel, 2019). Educational level is also significantly related to normative well-being since a stronger commitment to educational responsibilities can play an important role in social control (Siegel, 2019). Individuals with higher levels of education tend to spend more time engaged with academic pursuits, which may serve as a form of social investment that contributes to behavioural regulation (Cassino & Rogers, 2016). Stronger educational commitment and involvement are also associated with more informed decision-making and better behavioural control, which may lower violent behaviour (Brookmeyer et al., 2006; Chen & Astor, 2011; Hajiamini et al., 2011; Mahdavi Damghani et al., 2024).

Parental attachment is another socio-demographic factor that may hold a significant protective role against deviant behaviour. Attachment refers to the emotional bond, affection, and sensitivity that individuals feel toward others. Institutions such as the family, peer groups, and schools are important domains in which attachment develops. Among these domains, attachment to parents is considered particularly influential (Siegel, 2019). Strong parental attachment may function as a protective shield against deviant behaviours, including violence, because individuals may be deterred by the possibility of disappointing their parents or losing their support (Biju, 2024; Chen et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2024; Manouchehri et al., 2024; Menard & Grotper, 2011; Trinkner et al., 2012).

Economic status is another influential variable affecting normative behaviour, especially among youth and military conscripts (Burdick, 2014; Kohrt et al., 2016; Nock et al., 2013). Poor economic conditions may create barriers to meeting fundamental needs. Such conditions can impose psychological and social pressure on conscripts and intensify their perceived inability to achieve economic goals through legitimate means, which may lead to frustration, humiliation, and perceived injustice. These conditions may generate responses like anger, aggression, and violent behaviour. At the same time, declining economic resources and limited social opportunities can weaken social cohesion and make deviant conduct more likely. Poor economic conditions may thus be meaningfully linked to increased levels of violence (Hipp, 2011; Peguero & Hong, 2020; Stansfield et al., 2017; Wicaksono, 2019).

According to prominent behavioural theorists, human behaviour, including crime and deviance, has cultural and learned foundations and is acquired via interactions with others. Peer groups represent one of the most influential social

units in which individuals learn both positive and negative norms and values (Goff & Gilbert, 2017). Peer groups outside the military can consequently have varying impacts: association with peers who hold negative cultural values can intensify deviance, whereas interaction with prosocial peers can reduce tendencies toward violence, aggression, or misconduct (Farrell et al., 2017; González-Hernández et al., 2024; Kennedy et al., 2020; Kurniawan et al., 2024; Mahdavi Damghani et al., 2023; Sarwanto, 2023; Tufail & Ashfaq, 2024).

1.4 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

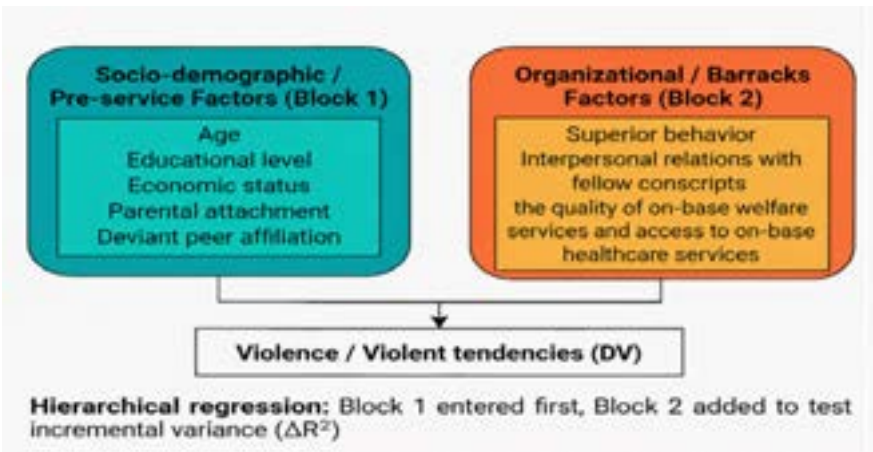
The conceptual model of the study distinguishes two sets of predictors of violent tendencies among Iranian conscripts undergoing basic combat training. The first set consists of socio-demographic/pre-service factors (Block 1), including age, educational level, economic status, parental attachment, and deviant peer affiliation. These factors represent relatively stable background characteristics and socialisation influences that come before entry to the barracks environment. The second set consists of organisational/barracks factors (Block 2), including superiors’ behaviour, interpersonal relations with fellow conscripts, the quality of on-base welfare services and access to on-base healthcare services. The mentioned factors capture key features of the immediate training environment and the social climate at military bases.

As shown in Figure 1, the model specifies direct associations between both blocks of predictors and the dependent variable. In the analytical strategy, hierarchical multiple regression first enters the Block-1 predictors and then adds the Block-2 predictors to assess whether organisational conditions provide incremental explanatory power beyond socio-demographic influences, as indicated by the change in explained variance (ΔR^2).

Based on the theoretical framework and the literature reviewed above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1. Deviant peer affiliation is positively associated with violent tendencies.
- H2. Parental attachment is negatively associated with violent tendencies.
- H3. Educational level is negatively associated with violent tendencies.

Figure 1:
Conceptual
framework of
the study



H4. Economic status is negatively associated with violent tendencies; namely, lower economic status is associated with higher levels of violence.

H5. Age is negatively associated with violent tendencies; namely, younger conscripts report higher levels of violence.

H6. Superiors' behaviour is negatively associated with violent tendencies.

H7. Interpersonal relations with fellow conscripts are negatively associated with violent tendencies.

H8. The quality of on-base welfare services is negatively associated with violent tendencies.

H9. Access to on-base healthcare services is negatively associated with violent tendencies.

H10. Organisational/barracks factors explain additional variance in violent tendencies after accounting for socio-demographic/pre-service factors; namely, adding Block 2 predictors produces a statistically significant increase in explained variance.

2 METHODS

2.1 Research Design, Sampling, and Data Collection

The statistical population of the study comprised conscripted soldiers undergoing basic combat training in selected barracks of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army. At the time the data were collected, all participants were actively completing their mandatory military service. The study used a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, with data being collected in 2025 by the principal researcher via structured, self-administered questionnaires. A cluster random sampling procedure was employed to improve the sample's representativeness. First, a list of military training centres affiliated with the four main branches of the Army was compiled. Selected training centres were then treated as sampling clusters. Within each barracks selected, conscripts were invited to participate in the study, and eligible participants completed the questionnaire individually. Based on Cochran's sample-size formula with a 5% margin of error, the minimum required sample size was 383; however, the final sample was increased to 541 conscripts to improve statistical precision.

The questionnaires were distributed and collected personally by the principal researcher. Participants completed the questionnaires privately and confidentially. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to decline to participate or to withdraw at any time without consequences. No identifying information, such as names, service numbers, telephone numbers, or personal identification codes, was collected.

2.2 Questionnaire Validity, Ethical Considerations, and Data Management

The questionnaire was developed in line with the study's objectives, conceptual framework, and variables included in the research model. Before the fieldwork, the face and content validity of the questionnaire were reviewed and confirmed by academic experts affiliated with the National Elites Foundation of Iran. A pilot test with 50 participants was also conducted to assess the internal consistency of the multi-item measures. The results indicated acceptable reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values above .70 for all multi-item scales.

All completed questionnaire forms and anonymised data files are retained by the principal researcher. Access to the data is restricted to the researcher. Where necessary and ethically appropriate, anonymised data may be made available upon reasonable request, subject to confidentiality and privacy considerations. Only aggregate results are reported in this article.

2.3 Measures

The questionnaire measured violence as an indicator of behavioural deviance, superiors' behaviour, relations with fellow conscripts, welfare services, healthcare and sanitation conditions, parental attachment, deviant peer affiliation, and socio-demographic background variables. All multi-item constructs were measured using a five-point, Likert response format. Scale scores were computed by summing or averaging item responses, with higher scores indicating greater levels of the relevant construct.

Violence was measured using a 10-item scale rated on a five-point, Likert response format, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The total score was from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating stronger violent tendencies. The scale included reverse-coded items to reduce response bias.

Age was measured in years, while highest educational qualification was self-reported. Economic status was captured through a composite index based on estimated residential property value, family vehicle ownership/type, and average monthly household income, with higher scores reflecting higher economic status.

Organisational factors included superiors' behaviour, relations with fellow conscripts, welfare services, and healthcare/sanitation conditions. Superiors' behaviour was measured using six items, relations with fellow conscripts using five items, welfare services through a multi-item scale covering core provisions such as food, leave routines, and dormitory phone access, and healthcare/sanitation conditions using five items, including cleanliness and access to showers and hot water. Socio-demographic psychosocial factors included parental attachment, measured using six items, and deviant peer exposure, measured using seven items. All multi-item scales used the same five-point, Likert format, with higher scores indicating greater levels of the measured construct.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics were first calculated for all study variables. Hierarchical multiple regression was then used to test the study hypotheses, with violence scores as the dependent variable.

In Block 1, socio-demographic and pre-service predictors, including age, educational level, economic status, parental attachment, and deviant peer affiliation, were entered to test the background-related hypotheses. In Block 2, organisational and barracks-related predictors, including superiors' behaviour, interpersonal relations with fellow conscripts, the quality of welfare services, and access to healthcare services, were added to test the organisational hypotheses and evaluate whether barracks conditions provide incremental explanatory power beyond socio-demographic factors.

The change in explained variance (ΔR^2) and the associated F-change test were used to assess the incremental contribution made by organisational predictors. Before the regression analysis, key assumptions were evaluated using diagnostic procedures. Residual plots were inspected to assess linearity and homoscedasticity, and tolerance and variance inflation factor values were examined to assess multicollinearity.

3 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this section, the descriptive statistics and regression results used to test the study hypotheses are reported. The main objective was to examine how socio-demographic variables (including age, education, economic status, parental attachment, deviant peer affiliation) and organisational variables (including superiors' behaviour, relationships with fellow conscripts, the quality of on-base welfare services and access to on-base healthcare services) are associated with violence among Iranian conscripts. In line with the conceptual framework and hypotheses (H1–H10), descriptive statistics are reported first, followed by the hierarchical multiple regression. Socio-demographic predictors were entered in Block 1, followed by organisational predictors in Block 2. H10 was evaluated using ΔR^2 and the F-change test. In this study, behavioural deviance was operationalised as violence; therefore, all inferential analyses treated violence scores as the dependent outcome.

Prior to inferential analysis, descriptive statistics were produced for all variables. Linear regression assumptions were evaluated using diagnostic procedures, including residual plots to assess linearity and homoscedasticity, and collinearity statistics, including tolerance and VIF, to assess multicollinearity. The diagnostic results did not indicate severe violations that would invalidate the regression results.

3.1 Violence

Violence was examined as the dependent variable. The total violence score ranged from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating stronger violent tendencies. The mean violence score in the full sample ($N = 541$) was 28.89, indicating a moderate overall

level of violence among the conscripts. For a descriptive interpretation, violence scores were categorised into three levels using equal-interval, cut-off points based on the possible score range: low violence = 10–23, moderate violence = 24–36, and high violence = 37–50. The distribution of violence levels is presented in Table 1.

Table 1:
Violence level
distribution

Violence level	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Low	210	38.8	38.8
Moderate	201	37.2	76.0
High	130	24.0	100.0
Total	541	100.0	

As shown in Table 1, most conscripts fell into the low-to-moderate violence categories, while approximately one-quarter reported high levels of violence. This distribution indicates meaningful variability in violent tendencies, providing a basis for examining explanatory factors in the regression models.

3.2 Hierarchical Multiple Regression

To test the study model, hierarchical multiple regression was conducted with violence as the dependent variable. In Model 1, socio-demographic predictors were entered. Model 1 was statistically significant, $F(5, 535) = 277.384, p < .001$, explaining 72.2% of the variance in violence ($R^2 = .722$; adjusted $R^2 = .719$).

In Model 2, organisational predictors were added to the socio-demographic predictors. Model 2 was statistically significant, $F(9, 531) = 161.585, p < .001$, explaining 73.3% of the variance in violence ($R^2 = .733$; adjusted $R^2 = .728$). The increase in explained variance from Model 1 to Model 2 was statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = .011$), indicating that organisational factors contributed a small, albeit statistically meaningful amount of incremental explanatory power on top of the socio-demographic variables.

Nevertheless, the relatively high explained variance should be interpreted with caution. It appears to be mostly driven by the strong association between deviant peer affiliation and violence, together with the protective association of parental attachment. Further, because all main variables were measured with self-report questionnaires at a single point in time, shared method variance may have contributed to the strength of the observed associations. This means the regression results should be understood as evidence of statistical association rather than causal prediction.

Table 2 summarises the overall model fit indices for each step of the hierarchical regression.

Model	Predictors entered	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	Age, Educational level, Economic status, Parental attachment, Deviant peer affiliation	.849	.722	.719	4.968
2	Model 1 + Superior behaviour, Quality of welfare services, Healthcare services, Interpersonal relations with fellow conscripts	.856	.733	.728	4.889

Table 2:
Hierarchical regression model summarizing predicting Violence

As displayed in Table 2, the socio-demographic block accounted for a substantial proportion of variance in violence, and organisational factors made a smaller additional contribution in the second step. To identify which predictors uniquely contributed to violence, Table 3 reports unstandardised coefficients (B), standardised coefficients (β), and significance levels for both models.

Predictor	Model 1 B	Model 1 SE	Model 1 β	Model 1 t	Model 1 p	Model 2 B	Model 2 SE	Model 2 β	Model 2 t	Model 2 p
Constant	23.393	2.718	*	8.607	<.001	25.994	2.798	-	9.290	<.001
Age	0.078	0.106	.029	0.733	.464	0.047	0.110	.017	0.429	.668
Education	-0.892	0.344	-.118	-2.593	.010	-0.490	0.358	-.065	-1.369	.171
Economic	0.038	0.072	.013	0.531	.596	-0.020	0.074	-.007	-0.268	.789
Attachment	-0.319	0.055	-.191	-5.834	<.001	-0.295	0.058	-.177	-5.121	<.001
Peer	0.747	0.041	.643	18.244	<.001	0.683	0.046	.588	14.693	<.001
Superior	-	-	-	-	-	0.092	0.062	.061	1.479	.140
Welfare	-	-	-	-	-	0.078	0.069	.048	1.134	.257
Healthcare	-	-	-	-	-	-0.011	0.085	-.007	-0.132	.895
Fellow conscripts	-	-	-	-	-	-0.308	0.079	-.204	-3.917	<.001

Table 3:
Regression coefficients predicting Violence

In the final model, deviant peer affiliation remained a significant positive predictor of violence, while parental attachment remained a significant protective predictor. Among organisational factors, only interpersonal relations with fellow conscripts retained a significant association with violence. Education was significant in Model 1 ($p = .010$), yet not in Model 2 ($p = .171$), suggesting that its unique effect did not remain after the organisational predictors were added.

Hypothesis H1 was supported: deviant peer affiliation showed a strong positive association with violence in the final model ($p < .001$). Hypothesis H2 was supported: parental attachment was inversely associated with violence ($p < .001$). Hypothesis H7 was supported: interpersonal relations with fellow conscripts were negatively associated with violence ($p < .001$). Hypothesis H10 was also supported: adding organisational predictors produced a statistically significant increase in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .011$, $p < .001$). By contrast, hypotheses H3–H6 and H8–H9 were not supported in the final model ($p > .05$); however, educational level (H3) was significant in Block 1 before the organisational variables were entered. Model fit improved modestly, yet significantly after organisational predictors were added: R^2 rose from .722 to .733 ($\Delta R^2 = .011$; F -change (4, 531) = 5.41; $p < .001$).

Collinearity diagnostics indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern (VIFs = 2.14–3.17; tolerance values > .30).

3.3 Key Predictors

As shown in Table 3, the predictors varied by both direction and relative strength in the final regression model. Based on the absolute values of the standardised coefficients, the strongest predictor was deviant peer affiliation ($\beta = .588$), followed by relations with fellow conscripts ($\beta = -.204$) and parental attachment ($\beta = -.177$). The remaining predictors had smaller and non-significant coefficients: educational level ($\beta = -.065$), superiors' behaviour ($\beta = .061$), welfare services ($\beta = .048$), age ($\beta = .017$), economic status ($\beta = -.007$) and healthcare services ($\beta = -.007$). This ranking indicates violence among conscripts was most strongly associated with peer-related and attachment-related mechanisms. Deviant peer affiliation was the dominant risk factor, suggesting that exposure to deviant peer norms may normalise aggression, weaken conventional behavioural restraints, and make it more likely that violence is viewed as an acceptable response to conflict. In comparison, parental attachment functioned as a protective factor, indicating that stronger emotional bonds with family may continue to operate as a form of informal social control even after conscripts have begun living in the barracks. Relations with fellow conscripts also had a protective association, suggesting that supportive peer relations inside the barracks may reduce tension, strengthen cohesion, and provide informal mechanisms for regulating conflict.

Overall, the ranking of predictors supports the study's integrated theoretical framework. Pre-service peer deviance and family attachment appear to represent stronger and more stable socialisation influences, while the immediate barracks peer climate provides an additional contextual influence. Formal organisational provisions, including welfare services, healthcare access, and superiors' behaviour, no longer held independent explanatory importance once these stronger peer and attachment mechanisms were considered.

4 DISCUSSION

The study examined how socio-demographic background and barracks-related organisational conditions are associated with violent tendencies among conscripts in a compulsory military-service context. Overall, the findings provide partial support for the conceptual framework. The pre-service socialisation pathway received the strongest empirical support: deviant peer affiliation was the strongest positive correlate of violence, while parental attachment had a protective association. Violent tendencies among conscripts are thus shown to be primarily shaped by social bonds and peer influences formed before or during the initial transition into military service, rather than by barracks conditions alone.

On top of the socio-demographic predictors, the organisational block added a small, yet statistically significant amount of explanatory power. However, among barracks-related variables, only relations with fellow conscripts remained significantly associated with violence after controls. The described pattern

indicates the informal social climate among conscripts might be more relevant to preventing violence than the formal provision of aspects like welfare services, healthcare access, or superiors' behaviour when stronger background predictors are considered. In this sense, the findings allow an integrated interpretation: relatively stable background factors, especially peer deviance and parental attachment, appear to explain most variation in violent tendencies, whereas the peer climate of one's immediate barracks provides an additional, yet more limited contextual influence. These results are consistent with literature suggesting that military and barracks environments can produce varied behavioural outcomes, ranging from adaptation and conformity to aggression and deviance, depending on both individual background and institutional conditions (Agid et al., 2000; Bahmani et al., 2018; Bouffard, 2003, 2005; Craig & Connell, 2015; Friedman et al., 1994; Gvozdeva, 2024; Hurjui & Ticsan, 2013; Kelty et al., 2010; Nematshahi et al., 2020; Novaco & Robinson, 1984; Orak & Walker, 2021; Salvatore & Taniguchi, 2021; Schmitz et al., 2012; Sims et al., 2019). The subsections below discuss these findings with respect to peer influence, family attachment, barracks climate, and the non-significant organisational predictors.

4.1 Social Support, Barracks Climate, and Violence

A central claim in the literature on organisational influences is that the barracks climate, especially interpersonal treatment and social support, matters for behavioural regulation and deviance. Prior studies have linked humiliation, harsh treatment, and negative command climates to greater aggression and violent reactions (Goldman, 2008; Oravec, 2020; Walker & Knauer, 2011), while research on cohesion and social support indicates protective effects on adjustment and mental-health-related outcomes in military populations (Griffith, 2012; Nock et al., 2013; Nosratabadi et al., 2017; Russell et al., 2016; Charleson, 2020).

In the present study, the final regression model provides partial support for this broader 'social support' argument, but in a specific way: Relations with fellow conscripts (within-barracks peer relations) retained a unique inverse association with violence ($\beta = -.204, p < .001$), suggesting that cooperative, supportive and respectful relationships among servicemen may function as an informal social-control mechanism that lowers reactive aggression. This finding is consistent with work emphasising unit cohesion, social support, and group processes in reducing negative behavioural outcomes (Charleson, 2020; Griffith, 2012; Orak & Walker, 2021; Russell et al., 2016), yet it also resonates with broader psychosocial literature where social support buffers against distress and aggressive tendencies (Huang et al., 2021; Nock et al., 2013).

However, superiors' behaviour was not statistically significant in Model 2 ($p = .140$) after socio-demographic factors and other organisational factors were controlled. Although this does not contradict the literature on superiors' behaviour, it suggests that, in this dataset, the variance associated with superiors' behaviour could overlap with other dimensions of the barracks climate, especially the internal peer climate captured by relations with fellow conscripts, as well as with background factors. In other words, effects that appear theoretically important in

earlier studies of superiors' behaviour (Goldman, 2008; Oravec, 2020; Walker & Knauer, 2011) might not prove to be uniquely predictive when multiple related predictors are modelled simultaneously. The mentioned pattern is also compatible with interactionist perspectives inspired by Becker, which imply that, although interpersonal experiences can matter, their behavioural consequences are reliant on the broader relational context and how individuals interpret and internalise those experiences (Santos et al., 2022).

4.2 Welfare and Healthcare Services

The theoretical framework presented earlier drew on Maslow and Merton to argue that unmet needs and resource-related strain may increase aggression and deviance. Prior work has connected welfare service quality, stressors, and behavioural outcomes in military-related settings (Bahmani et al., 2018; Nematshahi et al., 2020; Nock et al., 2013), while the broader needs/strain literature suggests that deprivation and frustration can cause elevated aggression (Harun et al., 2024; Marsh et al., 2007; Siegel, 2019). In addition, some military-context studies treat welfare and healthcare provision as elements of the organisational climate influencing recruits' adjustment (Nematshahi et al., 2020; Sims et al., 2019).

In the presented analysis, welfare and healthcare services did not show statistically significant unique associations with violence in Model 2 ($p > .05$). Notwithstanding prior studies reporting associations between superiors' behaviour, welfare services, healthcare services, and aggressive outcomes, these variables were no longer individually significant in the multivariable model. Accordingly, their effects might be indirect, context-dependent, or shared with stronger predictors such as peer deviance and parental attachment. After socio-demographic predictors and interpersonal climate variables were also included in the model, the provision of welfare and healthcare services did not add independent explanatory power for violence. The mentioned result does not necessarily contradict Maslow's or Merton's theories conceptually and instead suggests that service-connected variables might influence violence indirectly, for example by way of stress, morale, or peer climate, or be less salient than psychosocial factors in explaining individual differences in self-reported violence at a given point in time. It is also plausible that service conditions operate as background constraints that most conscripts experience similarly, creating limited variability relative to interpersonal and socio-demographic predictors, and thereby weakening their statistical association in multivariable regression. Still, this interpretation is necessarily tentative because of the cross-sectional design and reliance on self-report data.

4.3 Socio-Demographic Factors and the Prominence of Peer Influence and Parental Attachment

A key claim in the literature incorporated in the study's theoretical framework is that long-term socialisation factors, including family attachment, peer influence, socio-economic background, and educational commitment, play a formative role in deviance and conformity. The findings support this expectation by showing that

socio-demographic and pre-service factors made up the dominant explanatory cluster, whereas barracks-related organisational conditions made only a smaller contextual contribution. The described pattern suggests that violent tendencies among conscripts are chiefly shaped by longer-term social bonds and peer influences, while within-barracks organisational conditions may operate more as immediate situational influences than as the main source of variation. This interpretation is compatible with developmental and life-course perspectives, notably the longer-term antisocial potential–shorter-term contextual trigger distinction (van der Laan et al., 2017).

As concerns the variables, deviant peer affiliation emerged as the strongest predictor of violence ($\beta = .588$ in Model 2), providing robust support for differential association and social learning perspectives that emphasise the transmission of norms and behavioural models through peer groups (Farrell et al., 2017; Goff & Gilbert, 2017; Kennedy et al., 2020; Kurniawan et al., 2024; Sarwanto, 2023; Tufail & Ashfaq, 2024). This finding is consistent with studies linking deviant peers to aggression and related problem behaviours (Chen & Astor, 2011; Menard & Grotzpet, 2011; Xie et al., 2024) and in line with Iranian and regional research discussing peer-group subcultures and violence-related tendencies (Habibi et al., 2017; Mahdavi Damghani et al., 2023). In short, the presented results clearly support the expectation that exposure to deviant peer norms is associated with higher violence among conscripts.

Parental attachment also retained a significant protective association ($\beta = -.177$), supporting social bond theory and the broader attachment literature indicating that stronger emotional bonds with parents and family can help lower deviant tendencies (Biju, 2024; Fathi Ashtiani & Sajadechi, 2022; Hajiamini et al., 2011; Jiang et al., 2024; Manouchehri et al., 2024; Menard & Grotzpet, 2011; Mirghafourvand et al., 2015; Trinkner et al., 2012). The finding is in harmony with the claim that family attachment forms a stable social-control mechanism which continues to impact behaviour even after individuals have entered a new institutional environment, such as the military.

In contrast, age and economic status were not statistically significant in Model 2, and educational level, even though significant in Model 1 ($\beta = -.118$, $p = .010$), was no longer significant after organisational predictors and other controls were added to Model 2 ($p = .171$). These non-confirmations suggest that, at least for this dataset, the effects of age, economic status and educational level may be weaker than anticipated, mediated by stronger predictors, especially deviant peer affiliation and parental attachment, or overlap with other variables that were included. This partly diverges from strands of the literature that accentuate emerging adulthood as a high-risk period (Kelty et al., 2010; Marsh et al., 2007; Siegel, 2019; Weierstall et al., 2013) and research linking economic disadvantage to deviance and violence (Burdick, 2014; Hipp, 2011; Kohrt et al., 2016; Peguero & Hong, 2020; Stansfield et al., 2017; Wicaksono, 2019). In any event, the findings suggest that, once the influence of deviant peers and attachment is accounted for, these structural/demographic predictors do not uniquely explain additional variance in violence scores.

Overall, the pattern of results, the strong socio-demographic block effects, notably Peer and Attachment, combined with a smaller albeit significant incremental role of the barracks social climate (interpersonal relations with fellow conscripts), is consistent with the integrated theoretical framework underpinning the study and with the broader literature that views military service as a context where both pre-service background factors and in-service relational environments jointly shape behavioural outcomes (Bouffard, 2003, 2005; Craig & Connell, 2015; Gvozdeva, 2024; Hurjui & Ticusan, 2013; Nematshahi et al., 2020; Orak & Walker, 2021; Salvatore & Taniguchi, 2021). The findings should also be interpreted in the light of research suggesting that in certain conditions military environments can normalise or intensify violent norms (Baaz & Stern, 2009; Weierstall et al., 2013), while structured environments can also foster conformity among some individuals (Bouffard, 2003; Kelty et al., 2010).

4.4 Limitations Related to Model Fit and Self-Report Data

Although the regression models explained a considerable proportion of variance in violent tendencies, the results should be interpreted with care. The relatively high R^2 may partly reflect the strength of theoretically related predictors, especially deviant peer affiliation and parental attachment. Still, it might also be influenced by common method bias because the dependent variable and all main predictors were measured using the same cross-sectional self-report questionnaire. Conceptual proximity between some constructs, in particular peer deviance, parental attachment, interpersonal relations, and violent tendencies, may also have increased the observed associations. The findings should therefore be regarded as evidence of statistical associations rather than causal effects. Future studies using longitudinal designs, behavioural records, peer or commander assessments, and mixed-method data could provide stronger evidence of temporal ordering and lower the risk of shared method variance.

4.5 Practical Implications

Even though causal claims are not warranted, the results suggest that violence prevention in basic training should prioritise peer environments and informal social control. Given the strong association between deviant peer networks and violence, training centres could adopt structured peer-group management strategies, such as monitored group allocation, peer mentoring for newcomers, and timely intervention in bullying or group-based intimidation. The protective association of parental attachment points to the value of predictable and safe family contact, including scheduled calls and leave routines, as a stabilising social bond during the transition into barracks life. Finally, since supportive relations among fellow conscripts were linked to lower violence, commanders could invest in cohesion-building routines, clear anti-humiliation norms, accessible reporting and mediation pathways, and conflict de-escalation practices. These measures are prevention-oriented and in harmony with the broader goal of reducing institutional harm in compulsory service settings.

5 CONCLUSION

The article examined the association between socio-demographic background, barracks-related organisational conditions, and violent tendencies among Iranian conscripts undergoing mandatory basic combat training. Violence in this context was shown to be most strongly shaped by pre-service and socio-demographic factors, especially deviant peer affiliation and parental attachment. Deviant peer affiliation was associated with higher violent tendencies, while parental attachment appeared to function as a protective social bond.

The presented study also shows that, while not irrelevant, the explanatory role of barracks conditions is more limited. Among organisational factors, relations with fellow conscripts were the most important contextual element, suggesting that the informal peer climate inside the barracks may influence the extent to which violent tendencies are reinforced or restrained. In contrast, the formal provision of organisational aspects such as welfare services, healthcare access, and superiors' behaviour did not independently explain violence once stronger background and peer-related factors were considered.

The biggest contribution of the study is its extension of research on military deviance and institutional violence to an underrepresented, compulsory-service context in the Global South. The findings indicate that violence prevention in conscript settings should not simply focus on formal command structures or material provisions, but also address peer networks, family attachment, unit cohesion, and informal social control. Programmes that reduce deviant peer influence, strengthen supportive relations among conscripts, and maintain safe channels of family contact may be of special relevance for lowering violence in basic training environments.

The fact that the study is based on cross-sectional self-report data means the findings should be interpreted as associations more than causal effects. Future research using longitudinal designs, behavioural records, interviews, or multi-source data could provide stronger evidence about how pre-service background factors and barracks-related social conditions interact over time to shape violent behaviour among conscripts.

Artificial Intelligence Disclosure Statement

The authors used ChatGPT and Grammarly only for language editing, grammar checking, and improving the clarity of certain sentences. These tools were not used to generate data, conduct statistical analyses, interpret the findings, or make substantive scholarly decisions. All of the AI-assisted text was reviewed, verified and approved by the authors, who take full responsibility for the content of the article.

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