

**CHALLENGES FACING MARRIED COUPLES
IN THE DEPLOYING UNITS OF SOUTH
AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE**

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ABSTRACT

Military families are often forced to adjust to changes imposed by military demands. These demands often deprive the soldier of the opportunity of attending to personal and family relationships and responsibilities. Military demands often require the soldier to be away from their families.

Deployment is one of the major factors that require changes in the family functioning. The changes brought by deployment often cause stress to the family members. The impact of stress experienced is often determined by the family's preparedness for separation and/or the life cycle of that particular family as it is believed that young couples and families with young children are more vulnerable to deployment stress. Prolonged and enforced military separations have a profound impact on military families. Military families, unlike civilian families, often share the same characteristics as they are often exposed to the same vulnerabilities. Characteristics of the life style of military families include risk of injury or death of the soldier in the course of his/her duty and periodic separation of the soldier from the rest of his family.

Many studies revealed that military families are vulnerable to stress as a result of military demands. This resulted to number of programmes designed to help military families cope better with the stress. Social work officers in the military units are behind the implementation of these programmes. Deployment resilience seminars are one of these programmes designed to help the soldier and his family to survive during the deployment period. This study, amongst other objectives, evaluates the effectiveness of those programmes rendered to soldiers and their families.

The study revealed that military families are exposed to a great deal of stress as a result of military demands. The impact of separation due to deployment has a direct effect on children, mothers and fathers. Although there was no interviews done with children the information obtained from the parents showed that children are also the hardest hit in the process. It has been proved, for example by Rosenfeld et al (1973) that the absence of father in the child is often detrimental to the child's development. There were many similarities between wives and husbands experiences to challenges of separation due to deployments. These include the loneliness, boredom, sexual frustration, separation etc. However it was interesting to find that the couples also acknowledged the benefits of separation due to deployment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I salute the military families who share their lives with the South African National Defence Force. I pay tribute to those patriotic soldiers who serve their country with zeal and dedication. I know the conditions that these courageous heroes are experiencing in the deployment areas, as I have been with them in deployments. I thank all those who participated in this study for their valuable information including those who helped me in completing this research.

God bless you all.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the impact of deployment on married members of the deploying units of the South African National Defence Force. The 9 South African Infantry Battalion (9 SAI Bn) based Eersterivier/Khayelitsha has been identified for this study. This unit is made up of Africans and Coloureds as the majority. It has been noticeable from the researcher's casework that most of these people struggle to strike a balance between family responsibility and work demands, like deployments. The geographical area of the 9 SAI, where most members come from, falls in the category of working class. The poor economic circumstances of these members often leave them with no option but to put their marriage relationships at high risk, where a member will have to choose work over his or her family. The economic pressure that most of these members experience, often forces them to voluntarily leave their families for long periods through deployment. Although deployment is part of infantry life, in most cases, soldiers volunteer to be deployed with the intention of earning more money.

The population, from which the sample was drawn, mainly consisted of people who come from the working class group that is characterised by impoverishment. The culture of this particular group is also very patriarchal, where women (wives) are disempowered and have to be dependent on their husbands. The adjustment of this particular population to the military is also something that needs to be explored. Africans, for example, are tied to their places of origin and feel obliged by their culture to keep regular contact with their families of origin. The military life often requires members to relocate frequently. This is something that is often found difficult by both husband and wife as the couple rely on their relatives for the survival of their marriage. The family institution and extended family in this context plays a very important role in terms of giving support to one member, especially when the other spouse is deployed.

This study is both salutogenic and pathogenic. This means that it focuses both on problems and solutions. The study aims at exploring alternatives in order to minimise the impact of some of the stressful experiences that are involved. The following issues will be investigated:

- a. Availability and effectiveness of support network systems;
- b. Problems experienced as a result of the absence of the spouse during deployment. Issues like emotional and material support will be investigated;
- c. Impact to the family structure in terms of roles of mother and father. Parents will be investigated, as well as influences on developmental stages of children;
- d. Coping mechanism used by both military families and the soldiers. Defence mechanisms engaged in during deployment, like extra marital affairs or drug abuse, will be explored;
- e. Depression and its consequences will also be investigated;
- f. The impact deployment has on the children; and
- g. The helpfulness of existing resources in the Defence Force.

The topic has been selected because the issues mentioned above play a major role in influencing the impact of support services on the soldiers and their dependants. The researcher's direct involvement with the military gave him an impression that military families are often exposed to unique stresses that are mostly different to civilian families. This is due to unique military demands. This conclusion was drawn from the researcher's experience as a social worker in the military. It was observed that there was a trend of cases that were presenting family dysfunctional problems. Most of these cases often end up in family breakdown e.g. divorce, separation or family dysfunctioning between the couples. Family dysfunction has been common in the military families and has been observed in families through unstable relationships between family members, including children. The problems in the family also manifest in behavioural problems in the child or children. Family dysfunction is also characterized by disengagement, over involvement, or enmeshed relationships between family members. The causes of these problems have been linked to

military demands.

Military demands include all those unique demands that the military places on its employees as compared to other civilian employees. This includes absolute submissiveness to authority, something that often results in internalised frustrations. Some of these demands include frequent relocations, and being on standby for 48 hours. This causes instability in the family functioning. The children and wives are the hardest hit in the process, as they have to bear with the soldiers' work. Deployment is one of these demands and is the focus of this research.

The researcher's work as an occupational social worker, is to give support services to soldiers and their families. The researcher's interest was drawn to couple therapy because he has handled many cases in this regard. It is therefore very important to understand the stressors that the soldiers and their families are facing. The rationale behind this is to minimise those stresses in a preventative way, by bringing awareness to the organisation and to all stakeholders. This will also inform our intervention approach to military families. Soldiers are there to protect the country's borders and its resources, and to maintain internal stability. It would be disastrous to deprive these people the support they deserve by neglecting their fundamental needs, including the needs of their families. These are the patriots who serve their country with courage, loyalty and honour. The soldiers' low morale due to the neglect of their needs is also something that needs to be addressed. Low morale in a workplace negatively affects the quality of work performance. This also involves the deliberate neglect of work ethics and rules. These are the concerns that led to the undertaking of this study to investigate the underlying issues involved.

The study investigated the implication of deployment for couples in the South African National Defence Force. The research sample was drawn from 9 South African Infantry Battalion. The 9 S.A. Infantry Battalion is an army unit and one of the South African National Defence Force's four arms of service. The other three are the Navy, Air Force and the South African Military Health Service. The infantry battalion is responsible for fighting and patrolling duties that are operated on the ground, unlike Air Force and Navy. Deployment is one of the unit's tasks. The research looked at the challenges facing married couples in the

deploying units of SANDF. This was done by first reviewing related literature that deals with deployment and separation. Secondly, the sample was drawn from all married couples in 9 S.A. Infantry Battalion. Couples were interviewed on individual bases using a qualitative methodology, as explained in the research method. Thirdly, the information obtained from the research participants was analysed and a research report was compiled. The information gathered from this study will help to develop programmes that will be used to help families affected by deployment. The following three issues were fundamental for this study:

- a. Impact of deployment to the family functioning;
- b. Challenges facing the career couples during deployment; and
- c. Effectiveness of the resources utilised by military families during deployment.

There is unique terminology used in the Defence Force which is often known only to the members of the organisation. The research report also consists of some terminologies that are explained below:

1.1 Definition of terms

Company: Terminology used in the infantry unit to define big sections that are responsible for combat duties. A company consists of 141 members, and is divided into subsections called platoons.

Deployment: Detachment of a company to carry combat duties outside its geographical base.

Resilience: Is the capacity to maintain competent functioning in the face of life stressors (Kaplan, Turner, Norman, and Stillson, 1996:158).

Separation: Arrangements by which a husband and wife remain married but live apart.

Military Infantry unit: A unit that is made up of mostly fighting soldiers that operates on the ground.

Military Officer: A person commissioned to hold a position of authority or trust within the armed services.

Non Commissioned Officer: This means soldiers that do have a rank but are not commissioned by the state president as in the case of an officer.

Rifleman/Private: This refers to a troop or a member who does not have a military rank.

Officer Commanding: An officer who is appointed to take charge of the whole unit/battalion.

Dependant: This is applicable to a soldier's wife and children or minors that are registered in his medical aid scheme administered by the military.

Debriefing: Exercise done at the conclusion of an experiment, a complete disclosure to the subjects of full details of the experimental process, including the reasons for any emotional manipulation or deception. Debriefing is an ethical responsibility of the experimenter if deception or induced stress constitutes part of the experimental design. The term has its roots in military jargon (Longman, 1984).

The researcher was interested to find out about the impact of these issues to military families. This was done by first reviewing the relevant literature based on military families. The following chapter reviews the literature related to the topic of this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to Literature Review

In his first month in the military base, the researcher attended an Officer Commanding's meeting. After the meeting the Officer Commanding played a videocassette of World War 1. Before he played the cassette, he had told them that a soldier is a tool in the hand of the politician. Whether one likes that or not, it is a fact. This statement and what was showed in the video cassette made the researcher think more about the stressful demands that the soldiers and their families experience as a result of being manipulated by the politicians. This chapter identifies and discuss what other studies have discovered about challenges facing the military families.

2.2 Review of the literature

A number of studies have made in-depth research into the stress caused to military families through deployment. Knox and Price (1997) reported that the military demands that the service member's first priority be combat readiness. Their family affairs are regarded as subordinate to this. Military spouses are expected to conform to the military expectations. This has proven to be very difficult to achieve among today's young recruits and their families. They further mention that the commandant of the Marine Corps, whose goal is to fight and win while suffering as few casualties as possible, recently banned the recruitment of married men in the Corps because they believed that many young Marines were distracted from their duties by family responsibilities. This shows that family needs and their existence are often ignored and come least in the priorities of the military. Their roles, which inevitably influence the soldier's performance at work, are also not acknowledged. On the other hand, studies have demonstrated that military spouses make an important contribution to performance, readiness, and retention of the active duty and reserve military member.

The military career makes unique demands on its employees. It places huge demands on families and strains the couple's relationship. These demands also influence the parental roles

of the spouses towards the children. Sekaran's study (1986) revealed that a mother's over-involvement and a father's under-involvement with their children influence the behaviour of the children. The children, generally, look to their mothers for help as they grow up and seldom reach out to their fathers. This also confirms the sex role of raising children, though it is often detrimental to the development of the children. Many theories have proved the negative impact caused by the father's absence in the development of the child. Fatherless children suffer from these possible long-term effects: delinquency, poor school performance, failure of sexual and social development or incapacity to form stable relationships in adult life. Sekaran (1986) also reported that in the process, the mothers experience excessive fatigue, emotional depletion, and feelings of guilt whenever they cannot meet their children's demands.

The partner that remains behind (most often wives) experience much stress, derived from too much responsibility of being in charge of the family and also dealing with her own feelings of loss. "Common subjective complaints of wives dealing with military induced family separation include loneliness, lack of companionship, problems making decisions alone, lack of adequate social outlets, problems in disciplining children, problems handling finances and the feeling that the military is unconcerned about their well-being" (Garret et al 1976: 276). It is very sad that the wives must go through this process especially when they feel that the military is unconcerned about their well-being. The destructiveness of the military to the family institution derives from this perception. In some instances, for example, the military does not provide the opportunity to prepare the dependants for separation so that the wife is enabled to deal with the above problems. The soldier is sometimes given very short notice, for example, 48 hours to go away for long periods.

The conditions are worse where there are children involved, as the wife's responsibility becomes too much. It is expected that wives will experience much strain resulting from role overload and expansion of their roles. The wives may feel out of control, entrapped in vicious cycles of events. A number of women reported to the social work office that they found themselves playing both a father and mother role concurrently when their husbands are deployed. These women often complain about stress as a result of facing huge

responsibilities. It is understandable that there is no way the mother can suddenly become father to the children. However, it is unfortunate that children present with many behaviour problems once the mother shows a lack of confidence in her parental role. Other studies for example mentioned that it is normal for children to exhibit some emotional reactions to their father's absence, such as anxiety, anger, sadness, resentment, and fear. Hunter (1976) mentioned that children exhibit more behavioural and emotional problems when the mother has difficulty managing daily activities and has a low sense of personal independence. Hunter (1976) further mentions that children do best when mothers express a positive attitude about the separation, are satisfied with marriage before the separation and have internal coping skills to deal with separation. The latter is often possible when there is adequate preparation for the separation. At present this seem to be lacking. Besides the wives experiencing too much responsibility, other studies mention that there is grief for loss of the husband's companionship. Hunter (1982) argues that the sudden loss of the husband's companionship is a contributing factor in various emotional reactions.

2.3 Impact of Separation

Logan (1987) mentioned that men who deploy for regular periods might never achieve adequate levels of family adjustment. The family relationship is negatively affected and this creates an unstable family structure. "Recurring father absence often leads to a sense of artificiality and a chronic sense of fragmentation in the family and an ever-present threat to family stability" (Hunter 1982: 29). This puts a lot of strain on the family members, including the children.

According to Hunter (1982) family separation has frequently been viewed as a crisis that can lead to physical illness in family members. Since separation is viewed as loss there is a lot of grief, especially by the wives and children, as if the husband/father died. Bermudes, (1973) and Stratton (1978) both reported that the wife of a serviceman often experiences a similar process, showing the various stage of shock, emotional release, withdrawal, anger and depression just as the recently widowed woman does. Decker (1978) argues that the sudden loss of the husband's companionship is a contributing factor in various emotional reactions,

such as boredom, anxiety, anger, guilt feelings and sexual frustration.

Separation refers to the psychological process of differentiation, the setting apart of one being from another. Separation has never been viewed as a pleasant process, particularly because of the fears of the unknown i.e. new adjustments. The separation process can also potentially evoke previous traumas, including unresolved early childhood object relations. The individual's reaction to separation is mainly influenced by one's previous experiences. The coherency of self-structure according to self-psychology often guarantees survival of an individual during these periods of separation. The continuous damages caused by routine separation to a fragmented, fragile self often results in individuals falling apart. Divorce, marital problems, physical and psychiatric illness are the symptoms of this. Incidents of alcohol abuse, or sudden psychiatric illness have been reported with people who are faced with separation. Cases of psychiatric illness noticed with deployment have also been reported as well.

Studies done with military families affected by Operation Desert Storm (1991) reported that separation presents stresses that result in psychosocial, behavioural, and physical symptoms. The family's inability to cope successfully with the separation is recognised as a significant problem by both the families and the military organisation. The study further mentions that separation entails three stages: preparation, survival and reunion. The study also mentioned that during separation, adults most often present with the symptoms of depression and may present with complaints of anger, intolerance of children, fears of their deployed spouse, or even fears of infidelity. In Table I for, instance, Blount et al (1992) mentioned possible depressive symptoms that are presented by the wives.

TABLE I
DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS

Guilt	Loneliness
Sleep disturbances	Appetite
Boredom	Crying
Helplessness	Anxiety
Fatigue	Weight changes
Headaches	Menstrual changes
Libido loss	Suicidal ideation
Low self esteem	Hopelessness
Poor concentration	Sadness
Slowed activity	

(Bount et al., 1992: 77)

The impact of separation has also been reported with children of military families. "Young children frequently feel responsible for the deployed parent's absence and that it happened because of something the child did. Loss of one parent through deployment can lead to fears that the other parent will also be lost and no one will take care of the children" (Blount et al., 1992: 77). The symptoms presented by children as mentioned in Table II shows that children are also the hardest hit by separation due to deployment.

Separation is also viewed as necessary and therefore positive for growth. Blois (1967) explains it much better in his theory about integrational separation-individuation. The successful complete process of separation results in the establishment of the individual's true identity, separate from one's partner. This is justified by the fact that the individual is striving toward self-actualisation or self-realization. Adler, Horney and Fromm in Hunter (1982) expand on this by mentioning that man has the desire to develop his potentialities and become a decent human being. Separations due to deployment provide the opportunity for partners to realise their individual potential. Self-differentiation is a process that requires individuals to separate emotionally.

TABLE II
DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS OF CHILDREN

Abdominal pain	Appetite changes
Indigestion	Speech problems
Enuresis	Encopresis
Nightmares	Headaches
Pavor nocturnes	Bruxism
Nervous "tics"	Separation anxiety
School phobia	Impulsivity
Accidents	Sleeping with parent
Frequent awakening	Grade drop-off
Disciplinary problems	Fatigue
Hyperactivity	Irritability

(Blount et al., 1992: 77)

Separation due to deployment results in emotional cut-off between family members, and this provides opportunity for differentiation of self. The effective management of separation depends on individuals' emotional maturity level or cohesive self-structure. Bowen (1971) distinguished between the "solid self" and the "pseudoself". Solid self, for instance, provides a strong resilience to separation. The solid self according to Bowen (1971) is composed of ingrained, rational principles that evolve gradually and change as an individual learns from life experiences. He further mentioned that because the solid self is rational and intrinsic, it does not submit to outside pressure. The pseudoself on the other hand is the opposite of solid self. Bowen (1971) summarise this in Table III.

TABLE III
COMPARISON OF PSEUDOSELF AND SOLID SELF

High differentiation of self (Solid self)	Low differentiation (Pseudoself)
Self-directed	Automatic responses
Objective reactions	Subjective reactions
Rational	Emotional dependence
Flexible	Low self-identity
High self-identity	High vulnerability to stress
Good coping skills	High incidence of illness
Low incidence of illness	Prone to recurrent crisis

(Bowen, 1971: 42)

The above shows that it is important for partners to develop the solid self. Solid self also guarantees good resilience during separation. It is also envisaged that separation due to deployment can provide opportunity for partners to acquire a solid self. The accomplishment of solid self is also very important and beneficiary to the family unit, as it will provide strength to the family functioning. "Family strengths are those relationship patterns, interpersonal skills and competencies, and social and psychological characteristics, which create a sense of positive family identity, promote satisfying and fulfilling interaction among family members, encourage the development of the potential of the family group and individual family members, and contribute to the family's ability to deal effectively with stress and crises" (Trivette et al 1990: 17).

The soldiers are often exposed to strange environments during deployment. This requires better skills for survival. This is the period when people become creative and untapped the inner resources. "No matter how harsh an environment, how it may test the mettle of its inhabitants, it can also be understood as a potentially lush topography of resources and possibilities" (Saleebey 1997: 15). Saleebey (1997) further mention that every individual has strengths.

2.3.1 Dual-Career Couples. Deployment also has a negative impact on dual career couples. “In the case of dual-career families, the conflict that exists between the pursuits of individual goals and family togetherness can serve as impediments to the realization of both. A military career requires that it takes precedence over family goals” (Hunter 1982:32). It has become a norm that a non-military spouse, which often is the wife, assumes the full responsibility of house wife and sacrifices her interests in the corporate world. Hunter (1982) claims that when the non-military spouse has a career that is perceived by him or her as being of equal importance to the military career of the spouse, family crises may occur. Couples often find it very difficult to strike the balance in this regard, as in most cases insufficient salaries earned by a soldier do not meet the family needs. The situations also perpetuate impoverishment in the low-income families headed by non-commissioned officers or privates. Salaries earned by low-ranking soldiers have been inadequate to meet financial needs. The privates, for instance, earn R33 300 per annum, and most of them still carry financial responsibilities to their families of origin, as is the case with most Africans. As far as career is concerned, Hunter (1982) also report that the military man is less likely to object to mobility, since moving means but one more step up the success ladder of his career. Hunter (1982) also makes an interesting remark, that because of the long separation, wives often discovered they really were capable, independent persons who could make decisions for the family.

2.3.2 Role of wife. Deployment affects family roles and is particularly stressful for wives who have to do role rotation. Stoddard and Cabanillas (1976) show that sociologists have described three general types of wife roles for women in our society i.e. the housewife, the companion, and the complementary role. These authors further mentioned that:

- a. The first type is the housewife. She fulfils one role, wherein, either by choice or lack of interest, the wife is totally isolated from her husband’s world of work;
- b. The second type of role is the companion wife role. The wife’s behaviours and

actions are modified and controlled, not by any spousal agreement, but is instead dictated by the husband's employer and his occupational needs; and

- c. The third type of wife role, the complementary role, is that of the woman who fully participates in the duties and activities surrounding her husband's formal occupation. According to Stoddard and Cabanillas (1976) this third type wife's role seems to be more suitable for the military wife, since it responds to the organisation's needs, rather than to her own personal or family needs, as far as military demands are concerned.

2.4 Challenges of Separation

A conclusion can be drawn from different authors on this subject, that adequate preparation is imperative when the military family is faced with separation. The emotional feelings of separation need to be dealt with appropriately before and after deployment. Frances and Gale (1976) for example mentioned that immediately prior to separation, the family members sometimes adapt a "short timer" attitude to lessen the trauma of separating from the loved ones. Van Breda (1995) also mentioned that the pre-deployment phase seems characterised by marital conflict, anxiety and sadness or depression. Van Breda (1995) further mentioned that many couples seem withdrawn from each other just prior to the actual separation. These behaviours are used as a preparation for the inevitable separation that the couple is facing, and is used as a means of making parting much easier.

Logan (1987) also discovered that women tend to feel angry and resentful of the husband abandonment, while men tend to feel guilty about their own abandonment of their wives. The children also feel abandoned and not loved by their fathers. Other studies reported that wives experience markedly more actual illnesses (Snyder 1978), clinical levels of depression (Berkman, Marsella and Finney, 1977), intensification of problems (Becker, 1978), and feelings of loneliness, worry, sadness and anxiety (Wexler and McGrath, 1991). Den Dulk (1980) also mentioned that many wives must also deal with the emotional upheaval due to the sexual and emotional loss during the separation, or there may be questions about the spouse's

faithfulness while away.

Men, like women, also experienced a lot of stress as a result of leaving their families. Beside the work stress and environmental stress of adjusting in the deployment area, men experience a guilt-ridden stress of abandoning their dependants. The study conducted in 1992 by the Institute of Maritime Medicine revealed that men tend to worry about their families and experience the alienation of being cut-off from significant relationships. Rosenfeld, Rosenstein and Raab (1973) noted that they have to start from scratch to build relationships with their children when they come back from deployment. Routine deployment is perceived to be extremely detrimental to the child-father relationship. Men are also concerned about the family's ability to cope for most part of the separation. Hunter (1982) for instance mentioned that "younger and less mature" men are more concerned than the older men, about their family's ability to cope in their absence.

Separation due to deployment is often experienced as loss between partners. "Since loss and separation are facts of life, it should again be emphasized that the grieving process in reaction to that loss is necessary and normal" (Hunter 1982:65). Stratton (1978) further mentioned that loss is a reality and coping with that loss is a growth-producing experience. There are various ways that can be used to cope with loss caused by separation. Hunter (1982) suggests that family members should be urged to express their feelings to others in similar circumstances, to understanding friends, to professional counsellors or to clergymen. The sharing of emotions, whether positive or negative is considered essential for coping. "Each family member should be given "permission" to come to his/her own conclusions about the missing member's status and to develop his/her method of coping with stressful situations" (Hunter 1982: 70).

Military families use different ways to cope with separation. Hunter (1982) noted that the wives reported that their religious convictions had been very helpful to them in coping with the extended absence of their husbands. Religions are acknowledged as a support network for the wives. "It has been noted that submariner wives who grew up with a religious background and who had continued to exercise an active faith, actually adjusted better to repetitive

separations than did those wives without a religious background" (Bermudes, 1977 in Hunter 1982:22). This author further mentions that women found their faith supported them and provided strength to cope with loss of a family member.

There are distinctive mechanisms used to cope with separation during deployment. It was noticed in the caseload that some individuals resort to excessive use of alcohol when experiencing the emotional stresses of deployment. Alcohol has been used as a remedy to defocus from the stress of separation. "Boredom, loneliness, changing roles, depression, resentment, nervousness, and an attempt to forget troubles have all been cited as reasons for wives' resorting to alcohol for problem solutions" (Hunter 1982: 26). The excessive use of alcohol in the military is also attributed to easy accessibility and low cost for military members. Research done by Hunter and Segal (1976) showed that there is a whole range of coping abilities. "Although the older, more mature, more intelligent, more highly educated, committed individual is likely to cope better, personality factors definitely enter into the ability to cope..." (Hunter 1982: 60).

Both soldiers and their families are always exposed to stressful situations throughout the process of the soldier's employment. Being a soldier according to what was said in the beginning, means acting on the instructions given by the superiors without questioning them. Feelings and emotions are not taken into consideration, since soldiers are utilised as tools. Knox and Price (1997) mention that the consequence is a continual struggle between meeting combat-readiness requirements and family support programmes. This struggle normally falls on the installation commander, who like all service members, owes first allegiance to the mission and not family well-being. Conditions like this are likely to cause dissatisfaction to both the soldier and his family; and thus present the organisation as negligent to the military family's welfare. Sekaran (1986)' s study also revealed that dissatisfaction experienced at workplace, difficulties coping with frequent travel, relocation dilemmas, and several other work-related frustrations exacerbate the tension at work.

Linguist et al (1952) argues that separation due to deployment has been linked to various problems for military families. Depression and other mood disorders, along with sexual

frustration have frequently been associated with deployment. Other stressors as mentioned by Van Breda (1998) include frequent geographical transfers and isolation from the broader community. These frequent geographical transfers affect the whole family in terms of adjustment, and establishment of new social networks. This also has a detrimental effect on the children's schooling. Lewis and Cooper (1989) argue that when people feel torn between the needs of children and the demands of work, the subsequent conflict can be very distressing. Work and family compete for scarce time and energy. The military career is one of the careers that puts too much stress onto the family functioning.

A study was conducted by the U.S Army Research Institute for Behavioural and Social Science and the U.S Army Medical Research Unit in 1996, to study the spouses of American soldiers in Europe, who were currently serving in Bosnia as part of the NATO peacekeeping mission Operation Joint Endeavour. Some of the things that were revealed by this study consisted of sadness, loneliness, and sleep problems, trouble getting going and concentrating, everything is effort and inability to "shake the blues" (Stretch et al 1996: 72-78). These emotional problems experienced by the spouses are ignored and bypassed by the military demands.

Gomel (1995) conducted another study on African American families. In her study Gomel (1995) focussed on coping mechanisms used by families. She argues that there are several characteristics of African American families and communities that serve as a coping resource in times of distress. These include distinct kinship structures and bonds, spiritual beliefs, and flexible family roles. Co-residential arrangements amongst black families often involve multigenerational and collateral relatives, who function as a major source of social support. Such support systems provide emotional support, instrumental help, childcare, child socialisation, financial support, child rearing advice and even informal adoption of children. The African culture of ubuntu allows this and as a result it is easy to see this as one of the best coping mechanisms under the circumstances.

It is in the best interest of this research to come up with alternatives in addressing the problem experienced by the African military families. The social work profession is a practical

profession that does not just want to understand things, but to improve or change them. It is also the mission of the military social worker to address operational issues such as separation, deployment, performance, morale etc. The reviewed literature has given the researcher direction and confidence to undertake this study. It has also been noticed that Hunter (1982) has done an extensive study on the impact of military to the families which was found very relevant to the study. The following chapter will present the method that was used for this study.

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CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter was important because it provides guidelines for the things that needed to be researched. This chapter deals with method that was used to research the issues highlighted in the previous chapter. These include method of gathering information, sampling, method of analysing data, ethical issues, role of the researcher and limitations.

3.2 Method of gathering information

The research used the qualitative methodology based on the interview guide. An interview guide according to Patton (1982), is a list of questions or issues that should be explored in the course of an interview. An interview guide is prepared in order to make sure that basically the same information is obtained from a number of people by covering the same topic. It has been chosen because it provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. The interview guide serves as a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered. The researcher was precisely interested in methods that would stimulate respondents and allow them to express themselves in full terms. The qualitative methodology used in this research worked very well as it provided a free flow of information. This method also allows individual perspectives and experiences to emerge. Interviews were used to collect data in the following manner.

- ❖ **Interview schedules.** An interview schedule was developed and used for interviewing the subjects. Questions did not need to be answered in a particular sequence, but the method served as a kind of control to cover relevant subjects. The advantage is to stimulate discussion while data is obtained more systematically. This ensures that unforeseen data is not excluded. See appendix A for the interview schedule.
- ❖ **Duration of the interview.** The researcher tried not to let the interview exceed 60

minutes. The interviews were held in the unit for those who were at work during the interviews and those who could not come to the unit were visited in their residential settings. Sixty minutes was spent with each partner. This is believed to have a positive influence and to encourage co-operation. However, opportunity was given to members who wanted to add information at a later stage. The first five minutes was spent on an introduction. This involved discussing the contract about the expectation and rules of the research. Ethics of the research were explained to the respondents, including the right not to participate or disclose information. The introduction also focused on empowering the participants regarding their rights to secrecy and voluntary disclosure of the information. Explanation of the benefits both for the participant, the organisation and the researcher were discussed with them.

- ❖ **Demographics.** The research accommodated all ages. The research participants were married and living with their partners in the Western Cape area. All ages were included because it was difficult to find enough participants, as most of the members' wives are not living in the Western Cape area. In addition, there are no married females deployed to the unit. Therefore, all male participants were soldiers, and the wives were the dependants. The military rank was also not used as a criterion in order to accommodate anyone who is willing to participate. This worked very well as the majority of participants were non-commissioned officers. As a result, there was no problem in the analyses of the data since the members mostly shared the same background in terms of educational level, salaries and life experiences.

The research intended to explore the impact of deployment in the family functioning by looking in the issues of deployment, separation and resilience as discussed in the previous chapter.

3.3 Sampling

The 9 South African Infantry Battalion army unit was identified as a population for this study because it is more accessible to the researcher. Van Breda (1995) conducted a similar study.

His study was carried out in a navy unit at Simon's Town and was specifically about emotional cycles of deployment. Van Breda's sample was based mainly on the white population in the navy unit. This research is going to focus on challenges facing infantry soldiers and their families. The subjects were coloureds and Africans. Therefore this is not a duplication of van Breda's work.

A random stratified sample was used where twenty married individuals were selected from the deploying companies of the unit that are living with their wives in the geographical area of the unit i.e. Khayelitsha and Eersterivier area. The selection of members who are living in the geographical area of the unit has been made for both the researcher and subjects' convenience in terms of accessibility. The couple must have been living together prior to deployment.

3.4 Method of analysing data

Part of the data collection was to visit the deployed members at Kruger National Park where they have been deployed to guard the borders that separate South Africa and Mozambique.

The couple was separated for the interview to avoid intimidation and to allow for free expression. It was envisaged that partners would feel uncomfortable to talk about sensitive issues in front of one another, especially issues of sexuality. A partner for instance might not want the other partner to know some of the other things that she or he does in order to cope with separation. Separating the partners allowed disclosure and this was valuable for the research. The partners were assured that the information will not be shared with their partners and their names will not be mentioned in the report. Subjects were approached to make participation voluntary.

Since the researcher was doing a quantitative and qualitative research, data was analysed during the course of the research process. The research was looking for patterns and themes. Inconsistencies and contradiction were identified in the process of interview. Each question was given a theme. Responses to the same question were grouped together. The data was first

transcribed verbatim. After that, it was coded and themes and patterns that qualify were identified.

Information obtained from the wives was categorised separately from the information obtained from the husbands. Comparison between the two was made in the discussion of the findings.

The responses on deployment, separation and resilience were presented in numbers. The responses were categorised as positive, negative and unsure. This was followed by the presentation of different themes that was summarised from the responses. The responses on the support services were only presented as part of participants' recommendations and suggestions. This was applied to both husband's and wives' responses.

3.5 Ethical Issues

Howard (1985) argues that the use of deception in psychological research is a good example of a problem with no clear solution. Knowledge of the above was used as a guide in this research. The respondents were approached personally or as groups for those who were visited in the deployment areas. However, the interviews were done per individual. It was explained to them that participation was voluntary. The whole process of the research was explained to them. They were told that they were going to be interviewed, that the information gathered from them would be analysed, and a report would be written. It was explained that the purpose of the research was in partial fulfilment of the academic requirements of this researcher's degree and that the University of Cape Town was supervising the research. The purpose of the research for the respondent and for the organisation was explained. The respondents were told that the research would provide them with an opportunity to express their feelings and views on deployment. It was explained that the organisation (SANDF) would benefit by gaining more understanding on the impact of deployment on its employees and their families. Respondents were also told that research findings would help social workers in the unit to design programmes for families affected by deployment.

The research principles were explained; they were informed that disclosure is voluntary and that they have the right to privacy. Respondents were encouraged to be assertive in terms of what they wanted to tell the researcher. They were told to inform the researcher if they did not want certain information to be recorded. Confidentiality was also explained to them; the respondents would remain anonymous and the information would not be shared between couples. This helped to put the respondents at ease. This also dealt with the issues of conformity to authority versus voluntary participation. The researcher was aware of his influence as an authority figure, since he is an officer. To counter this, the researcher decided to empower the respondents about their rights. It was also possible that the respondents would hesitate to express their feelings for fear of victimisation, or be shy to share the information with their partners. This was the reason why confidentiality was emphasized.

The respondents participated with enthusiasm and as a result interesting things were heard. Participants never showed any difficulties in relating to the researcher except those who spoke Afrikaans and had problems communicating in English. The researcher's style in using empathy and being non-judgmental helped to put the participants at ease. Debriefing was conducted after each interview as some of the issues disclosed evoked emotional reactions. Debriefing according to Howard (1985) is intended to make the experience of being a research subject rewarding and interesting.

3.6 Role of the researcher

The researcher was known to most of the research subjects, especially to the husbands, since he is the social worker in the unit. His good relationships with the husbands made it easy for him to be accepted by their wives. This relationship between the researcher and research subjects motivated respondents to be very open in terms of sharing their experiences. However, the interview questions evoked a lot of emotional reactions in other respondents. The situation required the researcher to demonstrate his therapeutic skills. This was done to provide containment and support. It was observed, for instance, that discussions about

separation evoked a lot of emotions in the research respondents. A number of wives, for example, tended to display angry facial expressions when expressing their feelings towards separation. The anger could be linked to the feelings of abandonment and rejection as the researcher's style of questioning exposed these feelings. The husbands on the other hand expressed a lot of guilt feelings for "abandoning" their families. The researcher noticed that there was too much blame from both husband and wives towards the organisation and to the legacy of apartheid, which perpetuated their impoverishment.

The researcher, as the representative of the organisation, felt that most of those feelings were projected on him. The researcher decided to attend to these feelings by inviting the people to express their feelings as much as possible, without being defensive. The researcher used empathy in order to show support to the respondents. The researcher also used generalising and normalising techniques to respond to the respondents' emotions. The researcher feels that he managed to handle the situation, as research participants felt relieved after they had spoken about their feelings.

3.7 Limitations

A number of problems emerged when the interviews were supposed to take place. Although there were enough people who indicated that they were willing to participate, the number decreased gradually during the process of the interviews. This was due to work demands and unanticipated work schedules. Others were unavailable due to transfers, detach duties, leave and work demands. If this was not the case, the sample would be more representative in terms of age and more couples could have been interviewed.

Due to the limited time and unavailability of research participants, many issues could not be covered in the research. The work schedules of soldiers made it very difficult to get hold of them, as a result the researcher had to utilise minimum time with the participants. However this has helped the researcher to be more specific in his interviews, and that resulted in specific responses. The language was also another problem for the researcher since some of the respondents were Afrikaans speaking. Such respondents were asked to write their

responses and the researcher had to use an interpreter to read them. The process had the potential for the loss of relevant and significant data.

The open-ended questioning style created potential for problems. Some respondents gave vast amount of information that was sometimes difficult to comprehend. Other people's responses were too vague and as a result the researcher was often tempted to put words in the respondent's mouth through clarifying, summarising and restating what they said.

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CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter presents demographic information. Wives and husband responses will be presented as descriptive data. Responses will be compared.

4.1 Wives. The number of wives that participated in the research was twenty. Fourteen wives were between twenty and thirty years of age, the rest were between thirty-one and thirty five years. There were thirteen wives who had children, two of these wives were pregnant.

Accommodation during deployment was as follows:

- a. Four wives indicated that they usually stay alone during deployment;
- b. Two wives indicated that they usually move to stay with family during the deployment period; and
- c. Fourteen wives stay in their own houses with their children.

4.2 Descriptive Data

Responses obtained from respondents were grouped according to different themes. After that they were categorised according to positive negative and unsure. This was done to both male and females responses. See appendix A, for the questions used. A table format was used for presentation of the data and numbers or scores were used to show how many people responded to each theme. This format was used to in the presentation of both wives and husband responses and also in the comparison of scores as demonstrated in Table IV to VII.

Table IV
Wives' responses

No.	Theme:	Positive	Negative	Unsure
01	Feelings to deployment	12	3	5
02	Attitude toward deployment	2	6	12
03	Feelings about separation	4	10	6
04	Impact of separation	4	9	7
05	Vulnerability	5	10	5
06	Coping with deployment	10	5	5
07	Children's reaction to deployment	7	10	3
08	Emotional processes	6	10	4
09	Handling of emotional process	7	4	9
10	Coping with separation	6	4	10
11	Handling of emotional frustrations	10	5	5
12	Availability of resources	18	1	1
13	Support network	16	3	1
14	Utilisation of social work services	4	10	6
15	Attitude toward organisation support services	5	5	10

The wives that were staying alone during the deployment showed more confidence and better coping skills. They are also the ones whose husbands have been deployed more than four times, and who have been in a marriage for more than five years. However, a minority of them expressed that they do not have alternatives, since they do not have relatives in the Western Cape area that they can stay with during the deployment period.

Those that have children found it much better to be with other people in the house, though some of them complained about the difficulties of being a single parent. Most of the complaints were about children who misbehave and take chances when the father is not around. The rest of the women decided to stay with the extended family or their family of origin, since they are afraid to stay alone in the house. They also found this a better way to survive during deployment.

4.3 Husbands. Twenty married males were interviewed. Twelve of them were between the ages of twenty and thirty. The rest were between thirty-one and thirty-five. There were twelve riflemen, five non commission-officers and three officers.

The scores were categorized under positive, negative and unsure response. Same themes used to wives were also used with husband and responses were categorized according to their themes. Table V consists of husbands' responses. Table VI that compares the scores between the wives and husbands' positive responses follows this. Table VII compares negative responses between wives and husbands' responses.

Table V
Husband's responses

No	Topic	Positive	Negative	Unsure
01	Feelings about deployment	16	3	1
02	Attitude toward deployment	16	4	0
03	Feeling about separation	3	10	7
04	Impact of separation	6	9	5
05	Vulnerability	9	9	2
06	Coping with deployment	11	2	7
07	Children's reaction to deployment	4	9	7
08	Emotional processes	7	10	3
09	Handling of emotional processes	10	5	5
10	Coping with separation	16	2	2
11	Handling of emotional frustrations	17	2	1
13	Utilisation of social work services	17	2	1
14	Support services	11	5	4
15	Attitude toward organisation support services	11	4	5

Question 12 on availability of resources was omitted since it was not applicable to males.

4.4 Comparison of scores between wives and husbands

Table VI
Positive results

No	Topic	Wives	Husbands	Unsure wives	Unsure Husbands
01	Feelings about deployment	12	16	5	1
02	Attitude toward deployment	3	16	13	0
03	Feelings about separation	4	3	6	7
04	Impact of separation	4	6	7	5
05	Vulnerability	5	9	5	2
06	Coping with deployment	10	12	5	8
07	Children's reaction to deployment	7	4	4	6
08	Emotional processes	6	7	4	3
09	Handling of emotional processes	7	10	9	5
10	Coping with separation	6	16	12	4
11	Handling of emotional frustrations	10	17	5	1
13	Support network	18	17	2	1
14	Utilisation of social work services	4	11	1	4
15	Attitude toward organisation support services	5	11	6	5

The above table shows that husbands function better in areas like feelings/attitudes toward deployment and impact of separation, than the wives as projected in the

scores. This shows that they have better coping mechanisms as compared to wives. The wives, on the other hand, were only better in the handling of children and in identifying support networks.

Table VII. Negative results

No	Topic	Wives	Husbands
01	Feelings about deployment	3	3
02	Attitude toward deployment	7	4
03	Feeling about separation	10	10
04	Impact of separation	9	9
05	Vulnerability	10	9
06	Coping with deployment	5	2
07	Children's reaction to deployment	10	8
08	Emotional processes	10	10
09	Handling of emotional processes	4	5
10	Coping with separation	4	4
11	Handling of emotional frustrations	5	3
13	Support network	3	3
14	Utilization of social work services	10	5
15	Attitude toward organisation support services	5	4

The above table reveals that wives were more negative about deployment than their husband,

as showed by the scores where women obtained high scores in most areas. The husbands were only better in the handling of emotional processes.

In addition to the interview schedule various themes were established from the respondents' responses for example finances, adventure and growth, emotional frustrations, mistrust etc.

4.5 Wives' positive responses to deployment

The following themes were identified from wives responses regarding deployment:

- ❖ **Finances.** The money received from deployment as part of deprivation allowances was the most common positive thing identified by all wives as compared to the husbands. This is reflected in table IV where they score less than husbands. Husbands identified other things, which they found positive about deployment, besides remuneration. The wives mentioned that deployment brings financial relief to them, as their husbands receive more money as an allowance when they are deployed. This was found to be the most common motivation for deployment, as these people are mostly dependent on their husbands' income. They mentioned that they manage to pay their debts as they often survive through borrowing money from micro loan lenders. Deployment is seen as a temporal opportunity to break the cycle of impoverishment, as these people struggle to make ends meet on a normal salary. The majority stated clearly that they live on the breadline and that deployment for them is a means of survival for the family.
- ❖ **Adventure and growth.** Most of the wives mentioned that deployment provides opportunities for their husbands to see other places. They identified this as one of the things that they find positive about deployment, although it was not they who were benefiting. They also mentioned that separation due to deployment provides them with an opportunity to grow as a person, independent of their partner. They stated that they learned a lot of skills on how to survive on their own. They also discovered some inner resources that would not have been discovered had they not been exposed to

difficult circumstances like deployment periods. Some wives saw separation due to deployments as providing their relationship break. They mentioned that this period strengthens the relationship as partners miss each other and start to realise how important they are to each other.

- ❖ The reunion part of deployment was seen as very intimate and unifying between partners. They also mentioned that they enjoy hearing stories from their husbands about deployment. Only a few mentioned that deployment is good for the country, as the services provided by their husbands are helpful to the whole country. Border guard operations for example, are carried to prevent illegal immigrants from getting into or out of South African borders. They therefore provide safety to South African citizens.

4.6 Wives' negative responses to deployment

It was mentioned by the wives that their husbands' absence adds more responsibilities to them in terms of maintaining the house. The wives also mentioned that the family demands force them to sacrifice their careers in order to support their husbands' careers, by looking after the family while the husband is away due to deployment. Most of these responsibilities include raising children, looking after the husband's parents in cases where they are too old and sick. They appreciated the fact that they benefit in this by learning to be independent. They say they learn how to be in charge of the house and take decisions. However they mentioned that it became a problem when the husband returned, as they are forced to assume their submissive role again. The family has to go through this routine whenever there is a deployment. The wives complained that these frequent role changes create instability in the family functioning. The following themes were identified from wives' responses:

- ❖ **Exposure to danger.** There is fear of deployment dangers as their husband's duties expose them to a lot of danger e.g. apprehending criminals, border patrols, dealing with disaster incidents etc. Some expressed their concern about loss of lives from malaria and snakebites in the Kruger Park. A number of soldiers are often returned back due to sicknesses, for example Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, malaria, etc.

Both husbands and wives expressed their concerns about malaria for this particular deployment, as a couple of malaria victims had been hospitalised.

- ❖ **Emotional frustrations.** Feelings of abandonment were mentioned, especially for those who are pregnant. They mentioned that they find it very bitter when a child is born while the father is far away and comes back long after the child was born. This is very common with military families, who find it very unfortunate. Most of the wives mentioned that they experience separation anxieties and constant uneasiness throughout the period of deployment. They complained about the boredom that deployment brings. They also complained that this affects their sexual lives, as in most cases their level of libido decreases.
- ❖ **Mistrust.** Some wives mentioned that deployment creates a lot of mistrust in their relationships. They say they find it difficult to trust their husbands as far as extramarital affairs are concerned. They expressed their fear of getting sexually transmitted diseases as a result of this. As a result of separation, they believed they were exposed to HIV infection. Most wives also expressed the destructiveness of separation, which often results in misunderstanding between partners. The misunderstandings were identified as the causes of divorce or extra marital affairs in the marriage.
- ❖ **Security.** They also mentioned that the husband's absence in the house makes them feel very vulnerable to criminals, as the majority of them are living in the townships and informal settlements. The children's need for their father was also mentioned.

4.7 Wives' positive responses to separation

The following was identified from wives responses regarding separation:

- ❖ **Preparedness.** Most wives mentioned that they manage separation due to the fact that they were informed and prepared in the pre-marriage counselling about military

demands. They mentioned that the understanding of the reason for separation makes it easy for them to cope.

- ❖ **Internal inspiration.** Some wives mentioned that their belief in God is most comforting during separation, and they encourage themselves to be strong, so that they can support their husbands. Only a few of them appreciated the break from one another, which is provided by separation. They see this as an opportunity to evaluate their relationships in distance. They mentioned that this, in the end, strengthens their relationship.

4.8 Wives' negative responses to separation

The wives mentioned the following as their responses to separation:

- ❖ **Emotional stress.** All the wives mentioned that they experienced an excessive amount of stress in the early days of separation and few complained about sexual frustrations. They also complained about boredom, loneliness, depression, feelings of emptiness and need for comfort. Most of the wives complained about feelings of sadness. One wife mentioned, for instance, that she feels better after she cries. Another wife said that she sometimes bursts into tears, as she cannot hold herself in.
- ❖ **Parenting.** A few wives mentioned that they become short tempered and in most cases their parental skills are affected by their emotional feelings. They complained about the heavy burden of being a single parent. Most of them complained that children start to misbehave and take chances since the father is not there. They say that they find it very difficult and stressful to account for the father's absence to small children as they kept on enquiring why the father left home. The mother also mentioned that separation disturbs and damages relationships between the children and the father. They mentioned that their husbands have to rebuild the relationship with the child every time they return from deployment, and most children take time to welcome back their fathers. It was also mentioned that children feel depressed and sad

when their fathers are not around. The wives reported that children present with a lot of strange complaints, including physical illness. Some of the complaints involve phobias and the fear of going to school. Parents with young children between four and ten expressed that it is a huge challenge for them to comfort their children when the father is not around.

- ❖ **External locus of control.** Responses scored under unsure showed indifference in the wives feelings. They presented themselves as having no control over the situation. Those wives expressed that there is nothing they can do about deployment because it is their husband's job requirement. With regard to their feelings regarding separation due to deployment, they say they have to cope, because there is nothing they can do to avoid the situation. They said they do not have a choice, but bear with the circumstances. They mentioned that it was their husbands' job, and their feelings do not matter. This group of wives can be associated with a companion wife, as discussed in chapter one, who is likely to perform her duties perfunctorily.

4.9 Wives' positive responses to resilience

Most of the wives mentioned that they get support from their families and extended family during deployment. They also identified the church, street committees and friends as their support network. A few mentioned that they cope on their own or by keeping telephonic contact with their husband. Another wife mentioned that she deals with her sexual frustration by phoning her husband and making sexual jokes with him over the phone or writing intimate letters to the husband.

4.10 Wives' negative responses to resilience

Following themes were identified from wives responses regarding resilience:

- ❖ **Emotional stress.** Some wives mentioned that they feel emotionally overwhelmed to an extent that they cry. They mentioned that they experience a lack of comfort with

themselves, and feel helpless as a result. They also mentioned that everything in their lives becomes uncontrollable.

- ❖ **Relationship.** A few wives mention that their relationship with their husbands became conflicting during deployment, and this often resulted in family dysfunction or divorce as part of the vulnerabilities caused by deployment. They said that children became uncontrollable and everything became chaotic. These wives expressed feelings of powerlessness in these situations.
- ❖ **Parenting.** Both husbands and wives complained about the difficulties experienced in the care of children. The wives who have children mentioned that caring for young children adds another burden to them, as they struggle alone while the father is deployed. The wives complained about role overload and less time for themselves, as the conditions demand them to do everything in the house. Such demands include dealing with budgeting, child rearing, and for others, this includes the care of elderly in-laws.

4.11 Support Services

The wives were asked what they think needs to be done to improve the support given to families affected by deployment. They identified the following as options that can be used to make deployment more bearable:

- a. Social workers should keep regular contact with the soldier's dependents to ensure that emotional and other needs of soldiers' families are attended to.
- b. The soldier's family should be kept informed about what is going on in the deployment areas.
- c. There must be support groups for the wives of the soldiers.

- d. More social events for military families should be organised to familiarise the families with the organisation and to develop a positive attitude.
- e. Means should be made to provide safe accommodation for those who do not have accommodation of their own.
- f. Dependants should be afforded an opportunity to visit the soldiers in the deployment areas at least once per deployment.
- g. The organisation should acknowledge the problems of the people who cannot be deployed due to family problems. They should not put people under pressure to be deployed. The soldier's family problems should be seen as a priority.
- h. Deployment resilience seminars should be presented to the soldiers' dependants.
- i. The social worker should make sure that each and every person who is deployed is emotionally, psychologically, spiritually and physically ready.
- j. More explanation should be given to the dependants regarding deployment, as most of them do not understand why their husbands are being deployed.
- k. Financial allowances received during deployment should not be taxed as most soldiers incomes is insufficient to meet the needs of the family.

The wives were also asked to comment on the effectiveness of the support provided to them by the organisation, including social work services. They complained about the following:

- a. The deployment resilience programme presented by Social Work Department is not accessible to the wives since it is only presented to their husbands.
- b. The unit Sick Bay is not helpful when there is an emergency, especially with transport

in cases when someone is sick.

- c. Very little support from the organisation.

4.12 Husbands' positive responses to deployment

The husbands mentioned the following issues as positive regarding deployment:

- ❖ **Finances.** Like the wives, all husbands identified financial income received from deployment as the most positive thing. They mentioned that deployment improves their financial status and brings economic relief.
- ❖ **Adventure and growth.** All husbands appreciated the opportunity afforded by deployment to see places and countries that they would not be able to see without it. They also mentioned that they make new friends and learn about other people's cultures. To them this was viewed as an eye opener and also broadened their knowledge about life in general. Some of them mentioned that separation due to deployment is a learning process. They said the process gives one an opportunity to evaluate oneself, establish true identity, and also assess coping skills. A few of them mentioned that deployment provided them with an opportunity to put into practice what they have learned through their training. They found this very exciting as they could see the realities of being a soldier and admitted that such opportunities would not be presented had not they been deployed.

4.13 Husbands' negative responses to deployment

The following themes were identified from husbands' responses regarding deployment:

- ❖ **Duration of deployment.** All husbands complained about the long duration of deployment especially when it is extended without being consulted. They mentioned that they find it very difficult to cope with separation from their wives and children.

They all admitted that they miss their wives and children during deployment.

- ❖ **False promises.** Most of the husbands complained that the organisation often makes false promises regarding financial allowances. They complained that they are promised more money but received very little from what was promised. They also complained that it sometimes takes a long time before they receive their monies and this is frustrating.
- ❖ **Deployment stresses.** Some of them complained about dangers involved in the deployment areas, especially from malaria and wild animals, when they were deployed at the Kruger National Park. They also expressed their concerns about problems at home, where they cannot attend to them. They say they feel powerless and guilty when their wives inform them that there is a problem at home while they cannot attend to it. Some of them complained about lack of relaxation facilities like gymnasiums or time off. They say they feel disengaged from life and have to do a lot of readjustment when deployment is over.

4.14 Husbands' positive responses to separation

Preparedness. Most of the husbands mentioned that the separation process is more bearable when their families are prepared on time. They also mentioned that their wives cope because they informed them before they got married about the military demands. Some mentioned that mutual understanding between the spouses is very important. They also mentioned that deployment provides a break between partners to recharge, and also provides opportunity for individual growth.

4.15 Husbands' negative responses to separation

Most husbands mentioned that separation makes them feel powerless. They said that the emotions and the problems created by separation in their families become overwhelming for them, as they do not have skills to handle the process. They also mentioned that they worried

too much about their wives coping-mechanisms. They mentioned that they feel bad when they hear that children are asking their whereabouts, and are crying or are depressed as a result of the father's absence. A few mentioned sexual frustrations that tempted them to get involved with the local females in the deployment areas. The stress and depression experienced due to separation was also identified as one of the causes of alcohol abuse or excessive expenditure of finances.

4.16 Husbands' positive responses to resilience

Most of the husbands mentioned that they found it helpful to read a lot and keep contact with their wives. The following themes were established from husbands' responses:

- ❖ **External resources.** Most of the husbands identified friends, extended family, social workers and the Officer Commanding as their reliable sources of help. They said the availability of these resources makes them feel better and more secured. The neighbours and street committee were also identified as helpful resources.
- ❖ **Internal resources.** Some husbands mentioned that previous experience of separation makes it more bearable. They said the hope that they would return home strengthened them, and their positive attitude towards deployment made them feel at ease.

4.17 Husbands' negative responses to resilience

The following themes were identified from husbands' responses regarding resilience:

- ❖ **Learned helplessness.** Most of the husbands mentioned that they cope because they have to. They said they do not have any options but to bear with the situation. They mentioned that they feel very frustrated, but feel that there is nothing that they can do. It was very difficult to assess this group as they could not identify any specific skills or resources both internally and external that they rely on.

- ❖ **Emotional aspects.** All husbands mentioned that they feel frustrated and more stressed. They say they feel overwhelmed by their emotions and find the situation uncontrollable. Some mentioned that they switch off and defocus. Amongst these few, some mentioned that they feel sexually frustrated and even tempted to have extramarital affairs.

4.18 Support Services

The husbands were asked what they would do to improve the condition of deployment. The following was suggested:

- a. The social worker should ensure the safety of the dependants, and act as an enabler for resources;
- b. Regular contacts should be made by the social worker with the members' dependants to assess their families' situations;
- c. Deployed members must be regularly informed about their families and activities in their home units;
- d. Dependants must be afforded with an opportunity to visit their members in the deployment areas, so that they can know what type of work they are doing;
- e. There must be family days in the unit to encourage a positive attitude;
- f. Support groups for military families and social evenings must be established;
- g. Dependants must also be updated about what is going on in the deployment area. This can be done through magazines, bulletins, or announcements;
- h. There must be serviceable equipment for soldiers to carry out their duties;

- i. Safe accommodation should be provided for dependants who feel unsafe when the husband is deployed;
- j. Married soldiers should be given family responsibility leave once a month to visit their families;
- k. Sick Bay should be more helpful in times of crises; and
- l. Deployment resilience seminars must be presented to the dependants, including children.

The following complaints were heard from the husbands:

- a. Extensions of deployment duration when the members are supposed to go home;
- b. Inadequate support from the organisation;
- c. Negative attitude including racism from military personnel of the areas where members are deployed; and
- d. Long separation often leading to break down of families and relationship problems.

The scores recorded under “unsure” were based on responses where respondents were indecisive about their feelings. Some of the reasons for this was in the cases when the person assessed him/herself as in between, that is, not a yes or no answer but a perhaps response. In other circumstances, it is where people could not give their opinion but said that they had to face the conditions, as they did not have options.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Separation often places the military families at a high risk of experiencing crisis. Regular separation due to deployment exposes the military family to a lot of problems, including a dysfunctional family. However, this is often influenced by many factors, including duration of separation, the age of the spouse, previous experiences of separation, and availability of support systems.

“Many authors discuss role confusion, role conflict or frequent shift of roles in the military family, and the unfavourable results, particularly for the children” (Rozenzweig, Gampel and Dasberg 1981:96) The wives for instance, find themselves forced to take on their husband’s roles, in addition to their own, during periods of separation, which results in stress and resentment for many. They become self-reliant and independent, with higher levels of self-confidence. At the time of reunion the wives are actually the ones in control of the reintegration process and husbands often feel threatened by this as far as culture is concerned. This factor also tends to upset the balance of many marriages and creates power struggle problems.

It has been noticed by the researcher that members’ resilience is often determined by the individuals’ skills and experiences. This is also influenced by the members’ ability to utilise internal and external resources. These include social support (military, family, community, religious etc), resistance resources (economic, independence of spouse, flexibility, family communication) and organisation. The focus makes one and one’s family stronger and enable the military family to cope during difficult times.

The research was very interesting and a learning process, since it revealed a lot about challenges facing military families due to deployment. It was very interesting to hear the views from both combatant and non-combatant members in the sample. This has provided an opportunity to hear views from both sides and also to show recognition to non-combatant members i.e. wives and children. As mentioned in chapter one, the research was both pathogenic and salutogenic. This was achieved by focussing on both problems and solutions

at the same time. The research encouraged the research subjects to realise the positive factors involved in their 'miseries'. This also helped to empower the subjects with skills they could utilise in future, since the research brought insight into their lives.

The study revealed valuable information about deployment. The aim of the research was accomplished as most things it aimed to reveal as mentioned in chapter one were confirmed by the findings. This includes coping- mechanism, role of support system, and the impact of separation. Some of the negative things revealed by the findings are that deployment is characterised by anxiety, conflicts, depression, loneliness, relationship problems etc. There was also a general complaint about the ineffectiveness of the organisation's support to the dependants. This also includes social work support, which was seen as very minimal. This poses a challenge to the organisation to address those specific issues mentioned by the members. This also tells us that deployment preparation should be more holistic and inclusive; to make sure that both the member and his family are fully prepared for deployment. Inadequate preparations for deployment have resulted in multi-problems experienced by the military families that often break the families apart. Some of the problems directly affect the organisation, where a member has to be withdrawn from deployment and replaced. This costs, in terms of effort and states expenses.

It is also sad to realize that some families are involved in deployment only because of financial gain. This means that their involvement is based on sacrifice for survival since deployment is their source of income. This was common with the subject, as the majority of them fall in the working class category, and this is typical of infantry soldiers. It is very sad to listen to them when they explain that they have to risk their relationships with their wives and children because that is the only, temporal, way to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty. This means that there is a lot that our government needs to do to improve the economic conditions of the people through job creation, as most of the soldiers are responsible for their families and extended families. This is caused by the high rate of unemployment. It is common for a rifleman to be responsible for more than seven members of his family, including his own siblings. The organisation, including the social work office, needs to create more income generating projects for the member's dependants to reduce the load carried by

the members in supporting their families. This also includes the creation of promotional opportunities for members so as to improve their salaries.

The findings also revealed that continuous social work support is needed even after the deployment period, as reunion between couples, especially with children, is often more challenging and takes a long time. The reunion also involves role adjustment, as the husband comes to take the leadership position after he has been away for a long time. This period is often characterised by a lot of problems including resentment from children and role confusion between the wife and husband. Power struggle is also involved and the situation becomes very critical if it is not handled properly. The problem exists in the stage of handing and taking over. Rosenzweig, Gampel and Dasberg (1981) argue that role confusion; role conflict or frequent shift of roles in the military family creates unfavourable results, particularly for the children.

The research findings were found consistent with what other authors mentioned on challenges facing married couples in the military. As mentioned in the literature review, the military can be very destructive to family life. Knox and Price (1997) mention that service members owe first allegiance to the mission and not the family's well-being. The subjects mentioned how destructive the military is to the families. It was reported by them that deployment leads to a lot of marital problems and divorces. Most of the literature on family separation has addressed the deleterious impact it has on families. Wives who were interviewed reported an increased incidence of problems and an intensification of their severity. Hunter (1982) argues that the sudden loss of the husband's companionship is a contributing factor in various emotional reactions. Some of the emotional reactions that were identified by the wives are boredom, anxiety, anger, guilt feelings, sexual frustration, and loneliness. Others reported these reactions often cause short tempers and affect their parenting skills. The husbands also reported that some of the problems became so severe while they were not there, that when they returned home, they found the family or marriage had fallen apart. The deployment to others has left traumas because of the losses involved. Most unfortunately these families feel compelled to take the risk because of impoverishment. The impact of deployment to family functioning was also shown in the children.

Sekaran's (1986) study revealed that mothers' over involvement and the fathers' under involvement with their children influences the behaviour of the children. Both wives and husbands reported that their children act out a lot of the problems. Some mentioned that their children misbehave when the father is not around. Others mentioned that children become depressed and even cry because they want their father. Several authors have reported that the father's absence in the development of the child has a detrimental effect on the child's development. The children generally, look to their mothers for help as they grow up and seldom reach out to their fathers. Both husbands and wives reported that routine deployment disturbs the bonding between children and their fathers. As a result, the father has to build a relationship every time he returns from deployment. Some fathers reported that their children often resent them, and this is painful to them. The word "fatherless" as discussed in the literature review focuses interest on the children upon the possible long-term effects e.g. delinquency, poor school performance, failure of sexual and social development or incapacity to form stable relationships in adult life etc.

However, it is unfortunate that in most studies on military life, the impact felt by children is not emphasised. Hunter (1982) argues that their needs are inseparably intertwined with those of the parents; and the changes that confront them, will inevitably confront the children. It was also noticeable that women are the hardest hit, as reflected in the score tables of the findings. The scores showed that women are more dissatisfied and have negative attitudes towards deployment as compared to husbands. The above discussion shows that there are lots of challenges facing the military families e.g. parenting as mentioned.

5.1 Challenges facing couples in the deploying units

Challenges facing couples were identified in the responses and are discussed under different themes:

5.1.1 Parenting. The military wife has been expected to place her husband and the military's needs before her own or those of her children. The quality of military childcare has been relatively poor in comparison to civilian childcare. As mentioned by Hunter (1982), the

efforts of the military to enhance family adjustment will inevitably pay off in terms of child adjustment. One of the major problems facing military families during deployment is single parenting. Single mothers are forced to fill two roles simultaneously without support. During this study, it has been witnessed that too much stress to mothers leads to physical illnesses that are psychosomatic. Some mothers were admitted to 2 Military Hospital, including the psychiatric ward as a result of too much stress. Some have reported persistent headaches and children with behaviour problems. Decker (1978) also confirms that some of these spouses display symptoms of depression, present numerous psychosomatic complaints, and are referred to mental health professionals more frequently when their husbands or wives are away from home. As a result, some experience high levels of stress and become anxious and depressed. Maclanahan and Sanderfur (1994) noted that this result of inconsistent parenting affected the discipline and affection needed by the children.

The above shows that deployment can be very destructive and damaging to the mother-child relationship. The strain that women experience due to role overload and expansion of their roles makes them feel out of control and entrapped in a vicious cycle of events. Most parents reported that they feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of looking after the children without help from their husbands. Mothers and children are the hardest hit in the situation, as is always the case whenever there is a social problem. Children have less access to parental resources as a result of absent fathers. It was mentioned by the respondents that children feel depressed and sad when their father is not around. They feel abandoned and betrayed, even if the decision for deployment was mutual. Children, unlike adults, do not verbalize their feelings and this makes it difficult to attend to them.

Other studies reported that symptoms frequently identified with children are abdominal complaints, followed by sleep disturbances, headaches, decreased physical activity, withdrawal, moodiness and fear of school. The research respondents also mentioned that sudden or long deployment with no visits in between is the most stressful for both children and mothers.

5.1.2 Impact on children. The majority of age groups who are at high risk of stress, are children between five and ten years. “Although it is normal for children to exhibit some emotional reactions to their father’s absence, such as anxiety, anger, sadness, resentment and fear, children exhibit more behavioural or emotional problems when the mother is having difficulty managing daily activities, is not involved in social activities and has a low sense of personal independence” (Hunter et al., 1976:227). It was noticed in this study that children do best when mothers express a positive attitude towards separation, are satisfied with the marriage before the separation, and have internal coping skills to deal with the separation. This shows that the children’s reaction to separation is often influenced by the mother’s reaction. Baker et al (1968) also mention that if the family is dysfunctional before the father’s departure, children may exhibit a more extreme emotional reaction of aggression, introversion, internalisation affect, helplessness, defensiveness and impulsiveness.

Sekaran (1986) also reported that in the process the mothers experience excessive fatigue, emotional depletion and feelings of guilt whenever they cannot meet their children’s demands. The process is worsened by the grief of loss of the father.

Single parenting as mentioned in chapter one, puts a lot of strain on wives as a result of role overload and expansion of their role. “The remaining spouse must fill a new role of single parent and must make decisions previously made by the departed spouse or shared by the two” (Blount et al., 1992: 77). These new responsibilities include dealing with finances and management of the house and children. Due to role overload, it is believed that, children might suffer, as they do not get enough attention from this single parent. Blount et al (1992) mention that increased responsibilities for the remaining parent may diminish the time available to spend with the children. The remaining parent becomes less able to nurture, support and discipline children. This shows that deployment impact on children’s development in a very negative way. In families with children, repeated parental absence has been linked to adverse consequences for the mental health of the remaining spouse and children.

5.1.3 Dual career couples. “In the case of dual-career families, the conflict that exists between the pursuits of individual goals and family togetherness can serve as impediments to the realisation of both” (Hunter et al., 1976: 32). It has been noticeable that most marriages that are at higher risk of breaking down amongst the population of this research are those where both partners are in careers. There are many dynamics involved in this; this population is predominantly black who still maintain the traditional, patriarchal way of life. The women are expected to look after the children, house and her parents-in-law. Career wives often do not fit in these circumstances and as a result such marriages do not last. Career women feel frustrated in such conditions, where they are asked to sacrifice their ambitions for the sake of military demands. Some divorce cases handled by the social work office are often precipitated by these career frustrations.

5.1.4 Relationships. Deployment often results in a poor relationship between married couples. Separation caused by deployment causes the military couple to face transience, which often results in fragmented and superficial relationships. Frances and Gale (1976) mentioned that immediately prior to separation, the family members may adopt a “short timer” attitude to lessen the trauma of separating from their loved ones. Military couples use different ways of dealing with this period prior to separation, for example, the couple may pick up fights between one another as a means of anticipating separation, or the husband will look forward to seeing new places and making new friends. The wife will look forward to having a break from the husband and being her own boss. Both wives and husbands reported that deployment provides the couple with a break from one another. This opportunity was viewed by a minority as strengthening the relationships, since the partners start to appreciate one another after a long period of separation.

Deployment also affects the sexual lives of the couples. Many couples reported sexual frustrations as a result of prolonged separation from their partners. Most husbands admitted the temptations to extra marital affairs to fulfil their sexual needs. As indicated in the demographics, the sample consists of youth i.e. ages between twenty and thirty-five. This is the sexually active stage, and is very challenging to the military families involved in deployments. The wives also complained about sexual frustration, as well as low libido.

Some wives have complained that deployment exposes them to sexually transmitted diseases. Generally, there has been a rapid spread of HIV by soldiers to their wives. The rate of infection has been very high with deployed members. Some cases have been reported where deployed members infected their wives with the autoimmune deficiency virus. On the other hand, a few cases have also been reported where the wives have been allegedly found involved in extra marital affairs in the absence of their husbands. It is assumed that this is common in the military.

5.1.5 Role of wife. The study showed that the wife has an important role to play in deployment. The wife's role in supporting the husband is very important for the success of deployment operations. The wives must fill a new role of single parent, and must make decisions previously made, either by the departed spouse, or shared by the two. Out of the three general types of wife roles identified by Stoddard and Cabanillas (1976), it is believed that the third type wife role is more desirable for the military life. This type is that of the woman who fully participates in the duties and activities surrounding her husband's formal occupation. This is justified in the findings, where some women mentioned that their feelings do not matter, as they feel that they must bear with their husbands' work demands. According to Hunter (1976) this third type role has been viewed as the most desirable one for the military wife to adhere to, since it responds to the organisation's needs rather than to her own personal or family needs.

5.1.6 Role conflict. "Marital problems may be caused by separation because of the inevitable changes in marital roles, which occur both for the opportunity for and the necessity to develop independence during the husband's absence" (Hunter et al., 1976: 13). It has been noticed that repeated separations lead to family adjustments and stresses that are disruptive to marital and family relationships. Other wives in the study report that separation due to deployment provides them with the opportunity to be in control of the house. Wives reported that they learn more skills on how to be in charge when the husband is away. They develop confidence as the time goes on, to an extent that they feel independent and more matured. At the time of reunion, these wives find it very difficult to revert from their role of being in charge, to the role of the subservient and compliant wife.

Role conflict is often observable during the reunion phase. "After reunion, the above manifestations may re-emerge or there may be complaints of sexual dysfunction, arguments about finances, spousal roles, and child discipline" (Blount et al., 1992: 77). The returning members resume old roles, for example, handling finances, child management and the remaining spouse is forced to hand over the powers. They mentioned that these constant changes are disruptive in their personal development. However, on the other hand the husbands reported that they often feel they have been left out. They feel unimportant and unneeded upon their return, since their roles within the family have been filled. Handing and taking over the process often disturbs the family homeostasis that the family has created during the husband's absence, and as a result the husbands often encounter a lot of resentment.

The wives and children's independence discovered during separation may be lost or assailed at reunion. Blount et al, (1992) mentions that new skills of spouses may not be appreciated as returning members resume old roles, for example, handling finances. It is further mentioned that children may view the returning parent as the return of unwanted discipline or curtailment of independence. In other families older children often assume the parental role, especially boys who may assume the father's role. This can also create a role conflict when the father returns home. The father may feel threatened by his own son.

5.1.7 Resilience. The survival and adjustment of the military family involved in deployment depends on the individual's resilience. Subjects who could identify both internal and external resilience sources were found to be living a stable life despite the circumstances, as compared to the rest. Some wives mentioned that they draw strength from within themselves by either referring to their past experiences on how they managed with separation, including early childhood experiences, or from their belief in God and His assuring presence in their lives.

The majority of both husbands and wives relied on external resources e.g. friends, extended family, church, and street committees. It was noticeable however, that most husbands also relied on the organisation's resources, specifically social work services, while very few wives

were utilising the social work services during deployment. There are many reasons for this. One of them is the fact that wives have no direct contact with the organisation, as compared to their husbands, who are the employees. This provides a challenge for both social workers and the unit's Public Representative Officers to market the organisation and its services to the military families. The second reason is the culture of this particular community, which is ubuntu. This is consistent with what was mentioned in the literature review. Gomel (1995) discovered in his study on African American families that most coping mechanisms for these communities include distinct kinship structures and bonds, spiritual beliefs and flexible family roles. Co-residential arrangements amongst black families often involve multigenerational and collateral relatives, who function as a major source of social support. The utilisation of street committees, social clubs, churches or friends was seen as the subject's creative substitution of kinship structures in cases where the couple is residing very far from their place of origin, as is the case with the military families in this study.

Families that have a history of poor adapting skills are at risk. It is mentioned by Blount et al (1992), for instance, that the families with poor pre-deployment attitudes, family conflicts, dysfunctional family relationships and poor communication are also at increased risk. However, families and individuals that can adapt well have more opportunity to pass through separation and reunion without severe dysfunction. Previous research has demonstrated that personality is an important factor in determining how individuals cope with stress. As mentioned in chapter one of the literature review, for instance, individuals who have a solid self survive much better.

The professional help and the resources can play a major role in minimising the damaging impact of separation. In fact, separation can provide an opportunity of dealing with unresolved early libidinal conflicts. The opportunity can provide the process of intergenerational separation-individuation as described by Blos (1967). This can lead to the accomplishment of mature self-identity independent from a partner, as in the separation between the infants' identity from that of its mother (object). It is interesting to discover that some couples were able to notice and appreciate this. The couples admitted that separation due to deployment has provided them with an opportunity to understand themselves, to form

complete self-identities and develop emotional maturity.

5.2 Opportunities Provided by Deployment

It was interesting to discover that there were positive things about deployment that are beneficial to both the soldier and his family. The deployment period can be viewed as another environment for both soldier and his family. They both need some skills in order to survive during this period. "No matter how harsh an environment, it can also be understood as potentially lush topography of resources and possibilities where people can grow in many aspects of life" (Saleebey 1997: 57). This was illustrated in the topic "adventure and growth" in the findings chapter. The wives for instance mentioned that separation due to deployment provides them with an opportunity to grow as a person, independent of their partner. They also stated that they learned some skills on how to survive on their own. The husbands appreciated the opportunity afforded by deployment to see places and countries that they would not be able to see without it. The couples were able to identify the positive things that they are benefiting from deployments. This means that deployment has a potential of empowering military families.

"Empowerment indicates the intent to, and the process of, assisting individuals, groups, families and communities to discover and expand the resources and tools within and around them" (Saleebey 1997: 57). In this instance deployment can enhance the couple's resilience. The wives for instance mentioned that the skills of survival that they learned during separation made them feel confident about themselves. The couples also mentioned that separation provided them an opportunity to discover their inner resources and also developed skills on how to utilize the resources around them.

"Resilience is the continuing growth and articulation of capacities, knowledge, insight, and virtues derived through meeting the demands and challenges of one's world..." (Saleebey 1997: 9). Separation due to deployment as mentioned by the couples plays a role in equipping them with skills to seize control over their lives. Some of the benefits of deployment include emotional maturity and financial growth.

5.2.1 Emotional maturity. The response given by other participants, especially those who were interviewed in the deployment areas is that separation due to deployment also provides them with an opportunity for self-actualisation and growth motivation. Adler, Horney and Fromm in Hunter (1982) view individuals as striving toward self-realisation or self-actualisation. They emphasised the more holistic, humanistic, and creative aspects of human behaviour, as well as the conscious strivings and rational capacities of the individual. According to Adler (1979), man has the capacity to grow and change, as well as the desire to develop his potentialities and become a decent human being.

As already mentioned, the subjects appreciated the opportunity for self identity and independence brought on by the separation. The challenges of deployment also encouraged the development and enhancement of resilience. Separation brought about the differentiation of self, emotional separation from the family of origin and the development of a unique self and healthy ego. The participant was able to identify personal growth from the process of separation. To them it was one of the greatest advantages that they could attribute to the deployment.

It was highly appreciated to notice the establishment of solid self versus pseudoself within those participants who were identifying the maturity growth provided by separation. The solid self is intrinsic, and does not submit easily to outside pressure, since it is internally directed, unlike the pseudoself. Participants with good resilience were identified with the solid self. Foley (1974) identify seven characteristics of the solid self i.e. self-directed, object reactions, rational, flexible, high self-identity, good coping skill, and lower incidence of illness. This group of people was identified with good resilience.

Interviewees saw deployment as providing an opportunity to discover oneself, and to develop true and genuine self-identity separate from one's partner. This process is called self-differentiation as discussed in the literature chapter. This processes also strengthened their marriages, as confirmed by some respondents. According to Duvall (1971), a comfortable balance of individual autonomy and integration forms the basis of a couple's successful

relationship. Pinderhughes (1983) mentions that fusion and poor differentiation render family members more vulnerable to conflict, enmeshments and power struggles. This is one of the bases for which separation due to deployment can be appreciated.

5.3 Summary of Findings

The research findings are appreciated since they reveal the realities of deployment from both the combatant and non-combatant point of view. This study was also found relevant and in line with other studies previously done by other researchers on the same topic. The study's relevance is also attributed to the fact that it deals with the local experiences of infantry soldiers and their lives. The research was also very specific in selecting the research population where infantry soldiers from a predominantly black group were selected for the research. The group mostly originate from the working class group and as a result are still burdened with their families of origin's financial responsibilities. This resulted in the better understanding of what determines voluntary employment. The reality is that this workforce mainly consists of people who, because of the high rate of unemployment, lack of career opportunities and impoverishment, decided to take what was available to them i.e. joining the army. This can be attributed to the history of South Africa, which created the disadvantaged communities that the majority of infantry soldiers come from. Therefore it is understandable when other interviewees said that they had to bear with the circumstances, because there is no alternative, since the husband's work is the family's source of income. It is on this understanding that that families affected by deployment need support. To say that these families must face the consequences of their choices, as military employment is voluntary, is unfair.

The research has revealed many interesting findings. As mentioned by van Breda (1996) in his study, the couples find it virtually impossible to achieve stability or adjustment either during separation or during reunion. The routine separation and continual adjustment create a lot of instability in the military couples and affects the developmental stages of children. Long separation also affects the relationship between the couples, which report many marital problems. The age of spouse, previous experiences about separation and good resilience also

had an influence.

The findings also revealed that there is no significant difference between husband and wives in all areas studied except on feelings and attitude on deployment, separation and utilisation of social work resources. The wives produced negative results on these three factors. This should be a focal point for any programme that will be formulated based on the research findings. The wife's attitude needs to change for the benefit of both their husband and the organisation. It also appeared that the wives play a significant role in the successes of deployment, as they provide the most valuable support to their husbands. It is unfortunate that the organisation does not acknowledge this in terms of family evening ceremonies, welcoming ceremonies for deploying members etc. where the wives would feel part of the units.

The findings provide the organisation with specific areas that need to be attended by the multiprofessional team in the military. There have been a lot of complaints from the wives for instance, about the poor provision or non-availability of services to them. The findings revealed that there is lot of neglect toward the dependants (wives and children). This calls for effective and creative use of resources, as this neglect can be attributed to the lack of resources and manpower experienced by the organisation. This study revealed that there is a lot that needs to be done to support military families during deployment. The following chapter identifies solutions to the problems raised by the study.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The research methodology used provided topics and subject areas within which the interviewer was free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. This technique managed to stimulate respondents and allowed them to express themselves fully.

The stratified random sampling employed in this study was aimed at establishing gender representative findings while at the same time keeping the focus of the research. The findings of the research can be applicable to other infantry battalions in South Africa, since they also consist of the same population that the research sample was drawn from. The similarities are that the majority of the workforce in the South African infantry battalions is black, especially in the deployed units.

The research findings can also be applicable to other forms of marital separation or impact of separation to the family functioning. Deployment involves separation, although the presence of risk due to the duties of a soldier makes it different to other forms of separation e.g. migrant labour, business commitment, parliamentary sittings, hospitalisation etc. The study has proved that separation brings instability and people react in different ways depending on the internal and external factors involved. It has also been revealed that a lot of challenges face married members in the deployed units.

6.1 Recommendations

The following issues as identified in the study need to be addressed to improve the conditions of military families:

- a. Members should be assured of mobility in their careers, the possibility of promotion and with that, the improvement of their salaries.
- b. The allowances received from deployment should not be taxed as deploying members

rely on this money to make their ends met.

- c. Skills training on financial management and budgeting should be provided to family members.
- d. Adequate remuneration for deployment should be equal to the sacrifice made by the soldier and his family.
- e. There should be separation and reunion seminars for military families facing routine deployments to promote marital stability and reduce attrition.
- f. Continuous support should be provided to the military families during and after deployment.
- g. There needs to be proactive identification of vulnerable families prior to deployment.
- h. Social work services and the military organisation should be marketed to military families, so as to build a positive attitude about the organisation.
- i. Military wives should be involved in the unit's projects and activities.
- j. Strengthening of the kinship structure and the utilisation of community resources should be encouraged.
- k. The SANDF should become family friendly.
- l. Avenues for families to connect with SANDF resources and to each other for information and mutual support should be provided.
- m. Families should be given full information about deployment and any changes that happen during deployment. Questions about deployment like when, where, how long

and why should be entertained.

- n. The dependants should be supported in terms of getting access to finances, legal problems, tax information, military administration and health care services.
- o. Mothers should be helped with parental skills presented by the social work office. They should be educated regarding what they need to expect during the different stages of deployment – pre-deployment, deployment and after deployment, and how they should deal with children. Blount et al, (1992) for example mention the following guidelines.
- Maintain rules
 - Do not relax discipline
 - Allow expression of feelings
 - Maintain routines
 - Keep them informed
 - Plan time for each child
- p. Children should be prepared for deployment by both parents before deployment. Fathers should keep regular contact with children by writing letters and telling stories including providing photos during deployment.
- q. Social workers should be proactive in terms of identifying families that are not coping with separation. This can be done through continuous assessment of families during the deployment period and the debriefing of families after deployment.

6.2 Recommendations for future study

The study was significant in the way that it provided a clear picture of what is experienced in deployment. The findings were consistent with other international studies. This means therefore that recommendations can be made based on these findings for relevant

projects/programmes that can be used to enhance the services provided to help military families cope with deployment.

However the study was not all-inclusive, as some of the issues were not emphasised. This creates an opportunity for further studies on the same topic. Challenges facing the deploying mothers are one of them. This was not possible with this study because there was not a sufficient number of mothers in the deploying strength of the unit. Another topic could be on challenges facing deploying single parents. It is imagined that the findings of these two topics would show some difference as compared to this study.

There are programmes that have already been formulated e.g. Deployment Resilience Seminars by Van Breda (1996). There is a need for programme evaluation research on that programme to evaluate its effectiveness and relevance to the present circumstances. It is envisaged that recommendations based on this research will enhance the conditions of military families.

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6.3 APPENDIX A

*Interview schedule.**1. Personal information. Marked by ticking inside the appropriate box*

a. Age. 20-30

31-35

36-45

b. Wife

Husband

c. Military rank:.....

d. How long have you been married to your partner?

e. Do you have children?

f(i) How many children do you?

(ii) How old are they?

2. Deployment:

a. How many times have you been deployed since January 2000?

b. Where do you stay when your partner is deployed?

c. With whom do you stay when your partner is deployed?

d. When was your last deployment?

- e. *How do you feel about deployment?*
- f. *What is the good thing about deployment?*
- g. *What is the worst thing about deployment?*

3. Separation:

- a. *How do you feel about separation caused by deployment?*
- b. *Are there any vulnerabilities that you experience as a result of your partner's absence e.g separation anxieties, sexual desires, boredom, etc?*
- c. *Where do you rate your coping level under the following?*
 - i. *not coping*
 - ii. *at least coping*
 - iii. *copied*
- d. *Can you describe to me what kind of emotional processes the family goes through a week prior to deployment?*

4. Resilience:

- a. *How does your family handle the emotional processes of separation that manifest in the last week prior to deployment?*
- b. *How do you cope with separation during deployment?*
- c. *How do you keep contact with your partner during deployment?*
- d. *How do you deal with emotional frustrations caused by your partner's absence e.g. sexual frustrations?*
- e. *Where do you go for help when experiencing technical problems in your house?*
- g. *What resources do you use in your community when experiencing a welfare problem e.g church, extended family, friends etc?*
- h. *How do you cope with the children when your partner is deployed?*
- i. *What support systems do you rely on most during deployment and why do you choose those particular resources?*

5. Support services:

- a. *Do you utilize social work services when experiencing a welfare problem during*

deployment?

b. Do you think that the deployment resilience seminars presented by social workers to the deploying members prepare the military families properly for deployment stresses?

c. What do you think need to be done by social workers to prepare the military families for deployment?

d. Can you comment on the support given by SANDF to its members and families during deployment?

e. What is your opinion about the involvement of married couples in the jobs that often separate them?

f. What do you think need to be done to improve the support given to members affected by deployment?

g. Is there anything you want to say which was not covered by the above questions regarding deployment experiences?

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5. Support services:

- a. Do you utilize social work services when experiencing a welfare problem during deployment?**
- b. Do you think that the deployment resilience seminars presented by social workers to the deploying members prepare the military families properly for deployment stresses?**
- c. What do you think need to be done by social workers to prepare the military families for deployment?**
- d. Can you comment on the support given by SANDF to its members and families during deployment?**
- e. What is your opinion about the involvement of married couples in the jobs that often separate them?**
- f. What do you think need to be done to improve the support given to members affected by deployment?**
- g. Is there anything you want to say which was not covered by the above questions regarding deployment experiences?**