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**The Effect of Army Support Services on Satisfaction with Army Life
Experienced by Partners of Service Personnel and
Their Subsequent Willingness to Remain within the Military Enclave**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts in Psychology at Massey University

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ABSTRACT

The present short-term study is a survey of the effect of Army support services on satisfaction with Army life as experienced by partners of service personnel and their subsequent willingness to remain within the military enclave. It aimed to elicit the personal perspective of partners on deployment issues, the efficacy of current Army support services, and attitudes to continuing an association with the Army. Participants were recruited from the families of those soldiers who had returned from peacekeeping deployments between January to July 2000. New Zealand Army Administration staff supplied a list of 317 addresses. Of these, 291 partners could be contacted by mail and subsequently 184 individuals returned a completed 16-page New Zealand Partner Support Survey (2000) questionnaire. This questionnaire elicited data about: socio-demographic characteristics; perceived support; Army support services; general issues; potential deployment problems; general health (GHQ-30); parenting issues and anecdotal narratives. Using quantitative methods the data was analyzed with an additional aim to collect data for a future longitudinal study on the retention of Army personnel. The participants' anecdotal narratives showed that deployments do impact the family and that family factors such as attitudes to Army lifestyle and support services do influence the soldiers' decision to remain in service. The study revealed that partners tend to mainly expect support from the Army with what they perceive is an Army related problem. These issues primarily concerned communication links with deployed partners and dissemination of information regarding soldiers.

Based on this evidence it is suggested that the Army consolidate current support services to establish positions of full-time, dedicated Information Officers. The main responsibility of this position would be to liase between the soldiers' families and the Army. From this short-term study it is apparent that the decision to remain in service can be influenced by the Army's demonstration that the soldiers' families are valued members of the Military community. The provision of a quality support service specifically tailored to meet the needs of those it purports to serve is tangible evidence of this regard.

Dedicated to all those who support the New Zealand Soldier

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GLOSSARY

Attrition

This refers to the loss of personnel during the first 5 years of service. Buddin (1981) noted that high levels of attrition are of concern to the army because they represent to the expenditure of resources with no appreciable return.

Capitalizing Army

When referring to New Zealand troops the term Army has been capitalized for two reasons. Firstly, it distinguishes the NZA from the defense force of other countries. Secondly, it is a mark of respect for the personnel who serve within the NZA.

Deployment problem

Any issue arising from a deployment that the stay-at-home partner judges to be of concern to them. For example: lack of information about their soldier-partner's safety.

Early career

Consists of the partners of soldiers who were either a Private or a Lance Corporal.

Formal source of support

Any Army service, or civilian organization, approached by the stay-at-home partner.

High GHQ-30 score

A high GHQ-30 score is a result of 10 or higher obtained by an individual when completing the GHQ-30 rating scale. A high score indicates a low general health status and implies the need for professional intervention.

Informal source of support

This refers to reliance on friends, family, or self.

Late career

Consists of Staff Sergeants, Warrant Officers, Majors, and Lieutenant Colonels.

Mid career

Consists of Corporals, Sergeants, Lieutenants, and Captains.

Percentage of problems resolved

The proportion of participants who indicated that they believe they have either solved or come to terms with a particular problem.

Potential deployment problems

Issues frequently mentioned as problems by individuals, but which are not necessarily of concern for every stay-at-home partner. For example: difficulties with offspring.

Readiness

This refers to the level of preparedness of troops to deploy on a mission. This concept includes being psychologically and physically equipped and organized to

move into theater. Making practical arrangements and coming to terms with leaving the home and family form an important part of ensuring peace of mind for soldiers deploying on active service.

Resolved

A deployment problem is perceived to have been resolved when the stay-at-home partner has indicated that a solution has been found or there has been acceptance of the situation so that it is no longer regarded as being a major issue of concern.

Retention

At regular intervals army personnel are required to decide whether to remain or leave the Service. When trained, experienced staff leave it costs a significant amount to replace them and their exit creates workforce management complications. Furthermore, a low rate of enlistment exacerbates the negative consequences of a low rate of retention (Vernez & Zellmann, 1987).

Unresolved

A deployment problem was regarded as unresolved when the stay-at-home partner indicated that there had been no satisfactory resolution of a major issue of concern.