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Research Journal

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MILITARY FAMILIES UNDER STRESS: CHALLENGES OF FREQUENT DEPLOYMENT ON CHILDREN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the lengthy and multiple combat deployments of in-service members have posed multiple challenges for the Indian military children and families who are residing at the base along with the service members. Studies shows that service members experience significant stress during deployment along with it they also experience mental health problems. Service members, however, are not the only ones affected by deployment. Many have spouses, children, and other family members. Family members may also experience significant stress related to deployment. There are many instances where in the military children and families have shown great capacity for resilience and adaptation. The continuous need to reorganize daily life has consequences for all members of the military family. Compared to



Civilian counterpart the Children and adolescents in military families are believed to experience high levels of Socio-psycho issues particularly because of frequent moves. Frequent deployments have impacted both positively and negatively on the part of the children academic setting. The present article throws light on some of the challenges which the military children are facing.

KEYWORDS: Military families, Children, Deployments, Education and Service members.

INTRODUCTION: Today's military family faces a lifestyle with more frequent deployments.

Moving and resettlement of families are now an ever present part of military life. Deployment of service member to areas where war is taking place is extremely stressful to the soldier's family. The major worry is obviously the safety of the service member while deployed into a life threatening environment. Prolonged deployment and frequent moves are two of the best-known features of military life; In-service and war-related deployments challenge families in many ways, both positive and negative. Longer deployments test the personal, social, and economic coping resources of military

families at home. The worry and uncertainty associated with combat deployments provoke anxiety.

Sociologically military as an institution is defined as gendered institution, military safeguards the society from internal and external threats, and while fulfilling these prerequisites they come across many hurdles. Separation from the family due to the call of military duty has been a necessary evil of soldier's life. These prolonged and frequent separations not only impact a soldier's life significantly but also affect their parents, wives and children, who are manning the home front in a varied manner.

Typically the military families enjoy a better social and economic status when service members are serving in the armed forces. The service members accompanied by the families are provided with residential quarters at the regimental bases. They

are also extended with various other facilities like schooling for children, access to family welfare centres, canteen and ration facilities, 24/7 MI (Medical inspection) rooms, banks, ATM's and other necessary amenities. The families at the regimental bases are more stable due to high vigilance, as well the families build healthy relations with neighbours and they continue living without any tensions or hurdles. The same facilities are available to the service member and his family members when they get transferred to some other regions. These amenities continue up to the retirement of service members or in some cases; it may also get discontinued due to unfortunate circumstances such as the death of a service member in the line of duty.

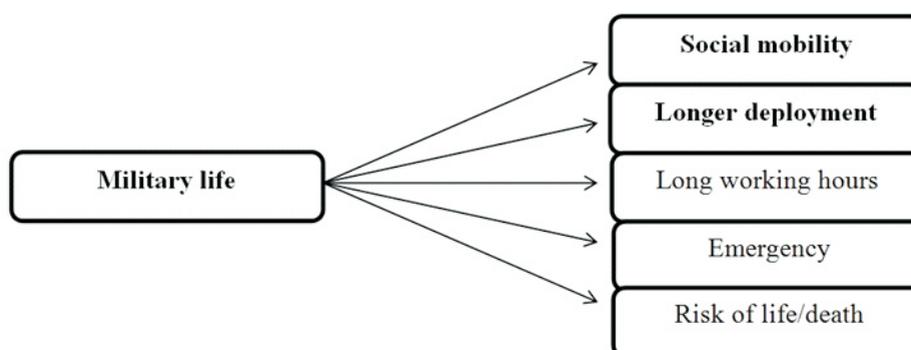
The actual life-changing experiences are felt by the military families when they move out of military life to the civilian life. It leads to changes in their communities, schools, peer groups, social relationships and other activities, even the welfare benefits gets limited. This is the stage of transformation which majority of the military families face. Studies show that at initial stages majority of the retired military personnel and their families face a severe problem of socialisation with civilian lifestyle, as they were much attached to the military way of life. In the perspective of the above discussion, the researcher made an attempt to examine the impact of deployment on military families especially towards challenges faced by children in military families.

The Family as a vital social organisation is the one which produces such courageous soldiers. In the context, the Service members are not the only ones affected by deployment. Many have spouses, children, and other family members. Family members may also experience significant stress related to deployment. There are many instances wherein the military children and families have shown great capacity for resilience and adaptation. The continuous need to reorganize daily life has consequences for all members of the military family. Compared to Civilian counterpart the Children and adolescents in military families are believed to experience high levels of Socio-psycho issues particularly because of frequent moves.

MILITARY ASPECTS OF THE SERVICE MEMBER

Figure 1 below shows military aspects of service member wherein social mobility, longer deployment, long working hours, emergency and risk of life is ever present phenomenon of the military service members. The military's demands include the risk of injury or death, whether during training, while operating military equipment, or in wartime deployment; separations from family; frequent moves; living in foreign countries; long and unpredictable duty hours; pressure to conform to high standards of behaviour; and a male-oriented culture.

Figure 1: Military aspects of the service member



MILITARY AND FAMILY

Mady Segal (1974) suggests that both the military and the family are "greedy" institutions, in that both require intense commitment, time, and energy while seeking to limit participants' other roles. According to Moskos (1977) the wife and the military family are part of the military community. Private life is not separate from military life. The serviceman, his partner, and the children are involved in all kinds of military activities. Parmer (2001) the armed forces of different countries vary in the degree of greediness and there are of course also variations in greediness over time. In times and places where tradition prevails greediness is higher. Very high scoring on traditionalism is India.

In contrast to civilian families, who generally relocate through choice, military personnel move because they are required to do so. Nevertheless, they are generally furnished with an instant life which gives them a degree of

continuity in their career. On the other hand, the military wife moves to support her husband which results in a considerable upheaval in her lifestyle.

Figure 2: Challenges of deployment on military families

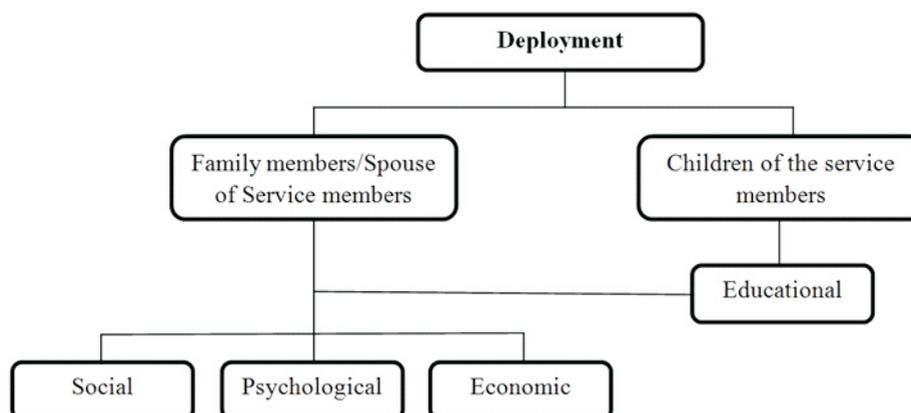


Figure 2 shows effects of deployment on military families, deployments challenge families in many ways, both positive and negative. Longer deployments test the dependents socially and economically and also make them psychologically weak and results in anxiety.

Burrell (2006) Moving in military families is associated with many negative outcomes including decreased marital satisfaction, financial hardship, disruptions in spousal employment, and reduced social support. However, moving can be a positive experience. It offers opportunities for travel, new experiences, and career growth for the military member. McFarlane (2009) deployment is associated with the relocation of the military member in response to an operational mission; family members may or may not move in response. Regardless of whether member deployment leads to residence relocation and school transition for military children, stress, disruption, and developmental challenges may result.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study has set out the following objectives:

- ✦ To highlight the socio-economic condition of the military Children/Families at base.
- ✦ The study sought to analyse the challenges of deployment on education of military Children.

METHODOLOGY

The present article is both descriptive and exploratory in nature. The universe of the present study consists of Military families at Bangalore Parachute regiment training centre (PRTC) Base campus. The study is limited to the military families of service members who are serving in Indian Armed Forces. The children in these military families constitute the sample frame for the study.

The researcher sought to take only those adolescent children who were attaining their secondary education during the time of the study. That is the children who were studying in Class IX to Class XII were taken into consideration who were aged between 15 yrs to 18 yrs, as this age group is considered to be the age of opportunity. Wherein the children can speak the reality and truth. Purposive sampling techniques were used to select the respondents. For the present study a total of 90 military children were selected who were studying in Class IX to Class XII.

Table 1: Classification of Sample

Sl. No.	Particulars	Frequency
1.	Total Military children at PRTC base campus	275
2.	Military children studying in Class VII and below	120
3.	Military children studying in Class IX to Class XII	90
4.	Contacts could not be established	65

The above table shows the classification of the samples. Table shows that overall 275 military children were residing at PRTC base campus, among which 120 of them were studying in Class VII and below, 90 of them, were studying in Class IX to Class XII. Moreover, contacts could not be established with 65 of the military children as few were not available and few were toddlers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1.SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

Personal profile and respondent's family profile throws light on socio-economic conditions of a group or society, which is one of the most significant aspects in sociological studies. It provides the proper perspective of social origin and economic status of the respondents. The status of the individual in the socio-economic structure can be treated as base, through which the direction and magnitude of the change can be measured. Under the Socio-economic condition of the respondents few of the below mentioned variables were taken into consideration which was felt necessary by the researcher such as Age, Gender, Caste, Education, type of school, Nativity and Income group.

Table 2: Socio-Economic Background of the Respondents.

	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Age of the Respondent	15-16 Yrs.	57	63.3
	17-18 Yrs.	33	36.7
	Total	90	100.0
Gender of the Respondent	Female	28	31.1
	Male	62	68.9
	Total	90	100.0
Domicile of the Respondent	Resident of Karnataka	09	10.0
	Outside Karnataka	81	90.0
	Total	90	100.0
Caste of the Respondent	General	23	25.6
	OBC	42	46.7
	SC/ST	16	17.7
	Others	09	10.0
	Total	90	100.0
Respondents Economic Status	Low Income group	15	16.7
	Middle Income group	55	61.1
	High Income group	20	22.2
	Total	90	100.0
Education level of the Respondent	IX Class	27	30.0
	X Class	30	33.3
	XI Class	13	14.5
	XII Class	20	22.2
	Total	90	100.0
School of the Respondent	Kendriya Vidyalaya	72	80.0
	Private School/College	15	16.7
	Government School/College	03	3.3
	Total	90	100.0

The Socio economic profile of the respondents shows that majority 63.3 percent of the respondents were in the age group of 15 to 16 Yrs. About the gender classification majority 68.9 percent of the respondents were Male. As military as a occupation is characterised by frequent deployment thus, it is concurrent to the result showing that 90.0 percent of the respondents were non-resident of Karnataka whereas the rest 10.0 percent of the respondents were domicile of Karnataka but they belonged to other districts of Karnataka. The caste background of the respondents shows that majority 46.7 percent of the respondents belonged to OBC whereas 25.6 percent of the respondents were from general category.

Respondent’s economic status shows that majority 61.1 percent of the respondents belonged to middle income group whose monthly family income was between 15000 to 25000. The education level of the respondents clearly indicates that 33.3 and 22.2 percent of the respondents were in class Xth and XIIth who had their board exams. The type of school of the respondents shows that 80.0 percent of the respondents were admitted in Kendriya Vidyalaya and about 16.7 percent of the respondents were attaining their education at private school/colleges.

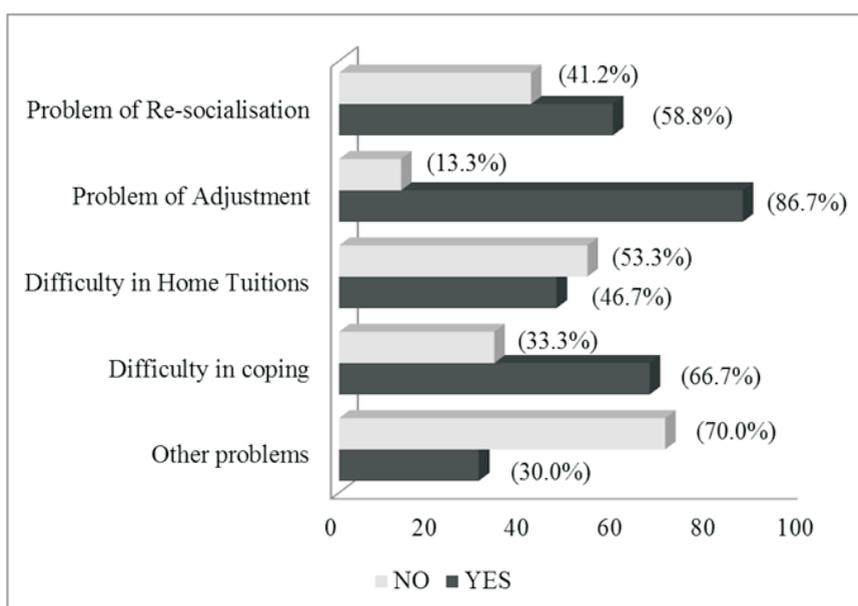
2. DEPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION OF MILITARY CHILDREN

Attaining Education is a fundamental right of an individual. The children in military families face many challenges in attaining education. The frequent deployments in military lifestyle negatively impact the education of the children. Break in academics, change of schools, discontinuity of education are the major challenges faced by them. Thus, to minimise frequent breaks in the children academics the government made provisions of Kendriya Vidyalaya. In these schools, the military children can get admitted in between of the academic year and continue their schooling without any disruptions.

Despite the provisions of Kendriya Vidyalaya in every corner of the country, military children had their own set of problems which are discussed in the below section. Some of the important problems are been discussed in this section such as:

- + Problem of re-socialisation at base campus
- + Problem of adjustment with new curriculum and teaching methods
- + Difficulty in availing Home tuitions
- + Difficulty in coping with new student and school environment
- + Other problems – dropout, break up in education and re-entry to the lower class

Figure 3: Problems of military children in attaining education due to deployment.



The data from the above figure clearly shows that the military children suffer various problems in the course of service member’s deployment.

- + Majority 58.8 percent of the respondents faced problem of Re-socialisation with the peer groups at school and

base campus.

- ✦ About 86.7 percent of the respondents faced problems of adjustment with new curriculum and also found difference in the teaching methods which were adopted at the new schools.
- ✦ Home tuitions were one of the major problems of the students who were heading towards board exams. In this case 46.7 percent of the students agreed that they found difficulty in finding the home tuitions as they lack information regarding this at their residential place.
- ✦ Difficulty in coping was found among the 66.7 percent of the respondents as they failed in coping with fellow classmates and new environment surrounding them. This also resulted negatively in their academics.
- ✦ Moreover 30.0 percent of the respondents had other problems which they had faced in course of the service members deployments these problems included dropout; break up in education and enrolment in the class which already they had passed.

DISCUSSIONS

Military children and families experience unique hardships. They move around the country repeatedly, and they must therefore adjust to new living environments, schools, and peer groups much more often than other children and families do. They live through repeated cycles of stressful separation and reunion. Many researchers have been done in the field of psychological conditions of the spouses and children's of military families who are facing deployments. Almost many studies have resulted in PTSD post-traumatic stress disorder, where the spouses and children's are the major sufferers which results in anxiety.

Members of military families are often separated from one another; children are forced to change schools frequently; and some families, particularly those of lower rank, may face financial problems. Members of the military usually have little choice about where they are stationed, which means that spouses and children cannot decide where to live and when to move. The stress that family members feel when their loved one (or loved ones, in the case of families with two military parents) is in harm's way can disrupt family routines, lead to conflict between parents, and cause worry and elevated distress. These are some of the instances where in the military children and families have shown great capacity for resilience and adaptation.

SUGGESTIONS

Looking into the results from the above interpretations few suggestions are given in this regard which will be helpful for the military children to attain a proper education during service member's deployments without any hurdles.

- ✦ Military as an institution should frame the deployments of service members in such a way which should not affect the academic records of the military children. The deployments can be forced during the long vacations or during the academic break holidays of the children so that they have more time to settle at new places.
- ✦ The Kendriya Vidyalaya should take up initiatives to designate counsellors particularly to attend those military families who are admitting their children at the mid of the academics.
- ✦ Thirdly, the Base units or regiments should take initiatives to identify the local home tutors and service providers which can help military children getting extra support to top their academic requirements.

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