

**UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA**

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES**



**AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS IN  
MILITARY OPERATIONAL READINESS: A CASE OF THE BOTSWANA  
DEFENCE FORCE**

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**APPROVAL PAGE**

This research essay has been examined and approved as meeting the required standards of the University of Botswana for partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Defence and Strategic Studies.

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## STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This research essay to the best of my knowledge and belief contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree in any University. Furthermore, it is the belief of the author that no material previously published or written by another person is contained in this study except where due reference has been made in the text.

Signed.....

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## ABSTRACT

Occupational stressors exist in every organisation though their degree may vary from one individual and occupation to another respectively. Some stressors are common to all occupations whereas some are unique to specific occupation. Although stress affects all organisations, it affects military more because of the critical environment in which they operate. This phenomenon of occupational stress which is more pronounced in the military, impact on military operational readiness. Research has shown that occupational stress in the military is not just limited to high intensity conflicts in which killing and life threatening situations occur frequently but also modern military operations such as peace enforcing, peace supporting and humanitarian operations have also proven to be stressful.

Since Botswana Defence Force (BDF) is exposed to the modern military operations, it is evident that they experience operational and non-operational stress which need to be addressed because it affects their operational readiness. Therefore, this study analysed the effects of occupational stress to military operational readiness in the Botswana Defence Force and the extent to which Botswana Defence Force personnel are affected. It is evident from this that the sources of occupational stress in the BDF among others include but not limited to; work overload, role ambiguity, work relationships, danger and isolation. This occupational stress has adverse effects to military operational readiness in the BDF because it leads to poor work performance, lack of interest in the job and low morale. Furthermore, these effects of occupational stress have been evidenced by the incidences and accidents that BDF has experienced.

The study concluded that mitigating against these effects requires stress coping strategies or stress management interventions. However, stress coping strategies or interventions available in the organisation are focused on targeting the individual as opposed to the work environment which gives temporary coping measure. Even though it is difficult for an organisation like the BDF or any other military to change because it has a strong tradition where each job is role based and highly dependent on hierarchy, it is the recommendation of this study that BDF should adopt job re-design and organisational change as the ultimate approaches to stress management because they focus in removing the sources of problems in the work environment instead of leaving or expecting an individual to deal with it alone. This is because it is evident that targeted

interventions should be both for the institution and the individual in order to improve military operational readiness. Additionally, the BDF should foster as part of stress intervention management, an awareness of mental health in the military, in order to reduce the stigma of suffering from occupational stress. With these interventions military operational readiness in the BDF can be kept at optimal levels.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Since the 1980s occupational stress has been identified as one of the leading health problems adversely affecting employee's performance in many organisations in both developed and developing countries (Quick and Henderson, 2016). To Sudhakar et al (2017), occupational stress has become a key concern for Human Resource (HR) practitioners in today's competitive business environment. Occupational stress becomes a serious concern for HR scholars and practitioners because of a wide variety of work place conditions such as work overload, organisational change, role ambiguity and role conflict which are often regarded as occupational stressors (Young, 2013).

Occupational stressors exist in every organisation though their degree may vary from one individual and occupation to another respectively (Cooper, 2005). Some stressors are common to all occupations whereas some are unique to specific occupation (Sharma, 2015); thus specific stressors must be explored to manage stress in any occupation.

Although stress affects all organisations, it affects military more because of the critical environment in which they operate, for example; rigid hierarchy, heightened competition and the ever-present possibility of changes occurring against the individual's wishes (Grant, 2015). The soldier performance, despite these challenges, is critical because it is an indispensable component of national security in any country.

Grant (2015) posits that military is an element of instruments of national power and it is the means to a state survival. As the earliest traditionally recognised form of national security, military implies the capability of a nation to defend itself or deter adversary aggression. Alternatively, military security implies the capability of a nation to enforce its policy choices by use of military force. Therefore, as a philosophy of maintaining stable nation state, military personnel should always be operationally ready to be deployed and be operationally effective in the deployment zones. Military operational readiness depends on various factors ranging from group morale, psychological attributes, collective efficacy, general physical capacity of a unit

(leadership, operational tactical planning and execution, logistics, intelligence) and a host of other factors as critical for military operational performance (Tucker et al, 2005).

This research seeks to analyse the effects of occupational stress on military operational readiness and the extent to which Botswana Defence Force (BDF) military personnel is affected and its readiness to deal with consequences of occupational stress on the performance of the BDF. The focus of the research is on Botswana Defence Force military as a case study in the security sector in Botswana.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Few researchers would dispute the effects of stress on workplace functioning. Occupational stress has been associated with general declines in health, increased use of alcohol and illegal drugs, emotional exhaustion, impaired decision making and many other physiological, cognitive, social, emotional, and performance problems (Brooks and Greenberg, 2017). This indicates that within any workplace there are certain stressors which can affect psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction and job performance of the employees. Furthermore, it is evident that stress and psychological pressure are common characteristics of contemporary societies, and responsible for a wide range of mental and physical illnesses (Tucker et al, 2005).

In addition, the most salient is fatigue (due to stress) which has also been a featured issue in industrial research since the turn of the century. The British Industrial Fatigue Research Board (1918) in Harm et al, (2013) provided early insights on fatigue, which proved influential to psychological well-being with respect to disciplines such as occupational medicine, industrial hygiene and systems safety. Hancock and Desmond (2001) also highlighted that human performance response is greatly affected and blurred when individuals act under stress and are fatigued.

This suggests that the negative outcome of fatigue undermines every aspect of human capability from decision making abilities to alertness. As a result, accidents are most likely to occur when employees are most tired. Employees in increasing numbers are claiming that stress in the work place has caused them some form of disability. A study by the United States (US) National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI 1984) for example indicated that claims involving mental disorders caused by stress accounted for nearly 11% of all occupational claims between

1980 and 1982. However, despite the increased recognition of stress as an occupational health problem the appreciation of its effects is far from complete (Hurrell et al. 1988).

Military organisations are not immune to the above phenomenon. American Psychological Association Annual report of 2018 cited by Kensing K (2019), posits that military jobs are ranked as the most stressful occupation in the US for the year 2017. A variety of factors including physical danger, long periods away from home and physical demands were implicated in the ranking. The U.S. army Mental Health Adversary Team (MHAT-5, 2008) substantiate through their studies that, this phenomenon of occupational stress which is more pronounced in the military, impact on military operational readiness.

In the same vein, Northern Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO, 2007), after conducting their research on their armed forces on Stress and Psychological Support in Modern Military Operations, indicated that occupational stress in the military is not just limited to high intensity conflicts in which killing and life threatening situations occur frequently (Cuvelier and Berg, 2008). Modern military operations such as peace enforcing, peace supporting and humanitarian operations have also proven to be stressful. Forced neutrality and non-intervention, witnessing atrocities, culture shock, separation from one's family, existential questions induced by the situation are all elements that can disrupt the normal psychological functioning of the individual. This does not only affect the operational effectiveness and mental well-being of the individual during the operation, it also affects family, social and work reintegration and attitudes towards the organisation following the operation (Cuvelier and Berg, 2008).

Furthermore, Sakshi Sharma, (2015) noted in his study of occupational stress in the Indian army that lack of control at work, role conflict, inadequate awareness about the profession, workload and job pressure and indifferent organisational attitude are the major occupational stressors in the Indian army that reduces operational readiness.

In Africa, a study conducted by Van Dyk, (2009) on South African National Defence Force (SANDF), found that military deployments to include peacekeeping operations are stressful from the beginning of planning to the deployment areas citing the environment as the main cause and this reduces operational readiness.

In Botswana, Young (2013) identified through their study that members of the Botswana Defence Force were exposed to the situations in a military context as well as their personal lives, which caused them stress. The study found that military forces experienced operational and non-operational stress which needed to be addressed because it affected their operational readiness.

This research, seeks to analyse effects of occupational stress on military operational readiness in Botswana Defence Force personnel. The evidence highlighted above indicates that occupational stress exists across the spectrum in the military in all regions of the globe. Along with this stress, military operational readiness is affected. It is therefore essential to analyse the effects of occupational stress in organisations particularly the military and the impact of that to military operational readiness.

Botswana Defence Force (BDF) as a military organisation has over the years deployed its personnel in various operational missions. After its establishment in April 1977 by an Act of Parliament called the BDF ACT No. 13 of 1977 (Henk, 2004), BDF personnel have been deployed in international missions such as United Nations peacekeeping operations and various continuous domestic operations such as anti-poaching activities, disaster preparations to mention but a few.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The phenomenon of occupational stress has impact on military operational readiness as studies in the American Armed Forces have shown (MHAT-5, 2008). Similarly, in European Armies studies indicate that modern military operations such as peace enforcement, peace support, humanitarian operations and other non-deployment operations have also proven to be stressful and affect the operational effectiveness and mental well-being of the individual during operations (Brooks and Greenberg, 2017). On the same note Sakshi Sharma, (2015) found that occupational stressors in the Indian army affect military operational readiness. The same view is held by Van Dyk, (2009) who also highlighted through the studies conducted in the SANDF that military operations were found to be stressful.

The above illustration indicates that military operations in other armies around the world are negatively affected by occupational stress. Occupational stress has been associated with general declines in health, increased use of alcohol and illegal drugs, emotional exhaustion, impaired

decision making and many other physiological, cognitive, social, emotional problems which consequently affect organisational performance. Since it has been documented that Botswana Defence Force undertakes more or less the same modern military operations as other armies around the world (Young et al, 2011), it is inferred that BDF's operational readiness is negatively affected. To illustrate the extent of this problem, it is imperative to make an analysis on the effects of occupational stress on BDF's operational readiness. Furthermore, the unavailability of literature on the effects of occupational stress pertaining to Botswana Defence Force makes it interesting to find out through analysis if similar situations as in other armies, exists for the BDF. It is against this background that BDF has been selected for the case study.

#### **1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to analyse the effects of occupational stress on military operational readiness with particular focus on the BDF and the extent to which Botswana Defence Force personnel may be affected by stress so as to come up with possible recommendations.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The purpose of this study is to analyse the effects of stress on military operational readiness and the extent to which personnel is affected by stress. The following questions have been formulated to address this problem:

- a. What are the causes of stress in the work environment?
- b. What are the effects of occupational stress on military operational readiness?
- c. How is occupational stress managed?

#### **1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

In line with the research questions, the objectives of the study are:

- a. To identify the causes of occupational stress in the military work environment.
- b. To ascertain and analyse the effects of occupational stress on military operational readiness.
- c. To determine the measures of managing stress.

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Despite the discourse on military operational readiness, research indicates that the impact of occupational stress on the continued well-being of an individual is nowhere as pronounced as it is when the individual is Armed Forces personnel (Tucker et al, 2005). The environment in the Armed Forces jeopardises operational readiness as the prolonged periods of separation from family, the threat to life, the imminence of physical danger, the likelihood of the loss of a close colleague, makes it inherently stressful. This study is important at two levels: theory and practice. These benefits at these levels are discussed in detail below.

Although there are volumes of research work available in the domain of occupational stress, there is lack of empirical research on the BDF, so it is important to study the phenomenon with special consideration to the Botswana Defence Force. Theoretically, the research study will be useful in closing the existing gap in the available literature as pertains to the Botswana Defence Force and assist in further research on the effects of occupational stress to military operational readiness beyond Botswana.

In practical terms, the study anticipates benefits to the practitioners or policy makers to understand the effects of occupational stress to military operational readiness and to determine the measures of managing stress through informed policies. This study will only concentrate on BDF and not include other security organs due to time constraints. The study is not representative of the whole security sector but it is hoped that the selected sample (case study) will provide insight into the nature and effects of occupational stress towards military operational readiness experienced by Botswana Defence Force and the security sector personnel across the spectrum.

## **1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY**

The research will cover only BDF as one player in the security sector. This alone already constitutes a limitation because the BDF only represent a portion of the security sector which in the end does not reflect a universal picture of the entire security sector. Furthermore, only secondary data will be relied upon in the research essay since it is a challenge to collect data from security agencies due to their nature. This limits the study in terms of getting firsthand



information from the primary sources. The other main constraint of this project is lack of time due to work commitments.

## **1.9 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The research is based on the analysis of the effects of occupational stress on military operational readiness focused on BDF, a security sector in Botswana. Desk top research or secondary data will be collected and analysed. Generalization of the results, conclusion and recommendations of the research may apply to the whole organisation.

## **1.10 METHODOLOGY**

The study below briefly introduces the methodology so as to understand the objectives and research questions of this study. The methodology employed in the current study will be further discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Cooper and Schindler, (2003) posits that methodology explains how the research problem will be investigated and why particular methods and techniques would be used. In other words, the researcher simply wants to tell the reader how the research was conducted. This study will adopt a case study methodology and use qualitative research designs based on a desk top research to analyse the existing data from literature. Furthermore, as a research method, case studies claim to offer a richness and depth of information not usually offered by other methods (Cropley, 2015). In addition, it should be noted that case studies can be used with both qualitative and quantitative data (Eisenhardt, 1989). To explore the research questions, exploratory research design will be most useful as it is qualitative in nature (Mason, 2002).

To gather relevant information about the effects of occupational stress in BDF, secondary sources of information will be used. For these sources, data will be collected from books, scholarly journal articles and newspapers of which the information consists of what other researchers have done before. Cropley, (2015) is in consent with this approach as he emphasises that it is possible to carry out qualitative research without actually collecting any new data at all and this is done by taking over narratives that already exist.

Data collected through literature will be analysed and interpreted to get an insight of the real problem. Content analysis which is the frequently used form of analysis in qualitative research

will be used in analyzing the data. This method is used to analyse text data (Mason, 2002). Conclusions made will be based on the comprehensive analysis of the secondary data in relation to the research questions and objectives.

### **1.11 SUMMARY**

Occupational stress has long been identified as one of the top ten occupational health problems adversely influencing performance of employees within organisations since the 1980s. In today's competitive environment, occupational stress has become a vital discourse in the field of human resource for organisations. Military organisations are not immune to the phenomenon. In their quest to provide national security, military personnel are faced with various environmental challenges during their deployments. Personnel deployed in operational missions (including peacekeeping) are primarily involved in the control of fear and fear-related thoughts in order to maintain operational effectiveness. The outcome is fatigue and eventually occupational stress is realized affecting military operational readiness as evidenced by studies carried out. In an effort to analyse the effects of occupational stress on BDF operational readiness, qualitative research method will be used. Secondary data will be collected through literature and then analysed using content analysis method.

### **1.12 CLASSIFICATION OF CHAPTERS**

The rest of the study will follow the following structure:

#### **Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the existing literature on the effects of occupational stress on military operational readiness i.e. identifying what other researchers have done by searching information from books and journals.

#### **Chapter 3**

This chapter covers the methodology and the design of the research study that will be used including the sources of information, methods of data collection and methods of data analysis.

#### **Chapter 4**

This chapter deals with the analysis of the data collected.

## **Chapter 5**

Chapter 5 covers the conclusions and recommendations of this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reviews the extant literature around occupational stress. Before we focus on Occupational stress it is important to define stress in depth which is offered in section 2.1.1 followed by occupational stress definition in section 2.1.2. Furthermore, for broader understanding of stress section 2.1.3 will discuss the nature of stress followed by measurement of stress on section 2.1.4. The focus on these two sections is placed on conceptualization of stress in the work environment (both civil and military). Because the research focuses on occupational stress in the military, a discussion on the sources of stress in the operational environment is offered in section 2.2. Next, section 2.3 pays particular attention to the effects of occupational stress on the personnel, thereby assessing the impact of such to the military operational readiness. With specific focus on how individuals can cope with occupational stress, section 2.4 considers occupational stress coping strategies. In section 2.5, the focus is placed on the measures that can be taken to manage stress in the work environment. Finally, a summary of key aspects of this chapter is offered in chapter 2.6.

Driskell and Salas (1996), are of the assertion that the impact of stress on performance is greater now than in any human history. However, it is unfortunate because stress will always be part of human existence. To paraphrase the “father of stress”, (Selye, 1976), stress is an unavoidable consequence of life, and therefore an unavoidable consequence of organisations (Richardson and Rothstein, 2008).

##### **2.1.1 DEFINITIONS OF STRESS**

There is no consensus on the definition of stress in the wider literature. Harvey and Brown (2001) for example define stress as the interaction between the individual and the environment characterized by emotional strain affecting a person’s physical and mental condition. They further maintain that stress refers to emotional, depersonalization and reduced performance that can occur among individuals who work extensively with other people or have social impairment.

However, Smither (1998) suggest otherwise by perceiving stress as a physiological response by an individual to demands made by the conditions in the environment. Smither (1998)'s definition considers both conditions in the environment that causes stress as well as characteristics of the individual who may experience stress.

To Tucker et al, (2005) stress is a consequence of or a general response to an action or situation that places special physiological or psychological demands, or both, on an individual. This definition includes both physiological and psychological responses unlike Smither (1998) definition. Tucker et al's definition suggests that stress is an internal experience that generates a psychological or physiological imbalance within an individual that results from factors in the external environment.

On the other hand, Kahn and Byosiere (1992) define stress by adopting an example from an engineering perspective to define the stress. They illustrate that stress draws from the analogy of physical force where external pressure is exerted on a person which in turn results in tension and strain. They further suggest that within certain limits people are able to deal with this pressure and adapt to the situation and be able to recover when the stressful period is over. This is analogous to the bending and springing back of a metal bar from engineering perspective. When pressure is too large, the bar will bend so much that it cannot return to its original position anymore (Fontana, 1989). The limiting value to which the system can no longer adapt is dependent upon the quality of the metal and its condition. Relating this to physiological and psychological concepts people feel pressured in organisations due to the nature and conditions of work. An individual's adaptability is determined by personal characteristics (quality of the metal) e.g. his/her stress tolerance and also by the environment.

There are those who criticize the above definitions. For example, Schuler (1980) indicates that there is no opportunity or positivity in defining stress above. Instead, Schular (1980) highlight that stress should be defined as a condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, a constraint or demand to be/have/do what is desirable where the successful resolution is uncertain yet highly valued by the individual. He argues that stress is those pressures of the environment as they are experienced by the person and represented in his consciousness. Further, Schuler suggest that stress is the subjective experience of the following factors; stressor and strain.

In order to further understand Schuler's definition of stress Kahn et al. (1964) and Eden (1982) briefly differentiate between the two important concepts of stressors and strains. The term stressor refers to the objective stress that is those objective characteristics of the environment that impinge on the perceptual and cognitive processes of normal individuals. These events are verifiable independently of the individual's consciousness and experience or as Barling et al (2005) highlights; stressors are stress producing environmental circumstances or stress producing events and conditions. Strain is an individual's maladjustive psychological and physiological response to stress (Eden, 1982).

Besides the differences in stress definitions as advanced by (Harvey and Brown, (2001); Smither; (1998); Tucker et al, (2005), Kahn and Byosiere, (1992) and Schuler, (1980), it is important to note that the above definitions are based on the stimulus by the environment, the response of an individual or the relationship between the person and the environment even though they vary in the extent of the emphasis. The definitions further indicate that stress is an environmental concept. Lazarus and Folkman (1984), provides a much encompassing definition of stress in view of this study. They posit that stress is a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her well-being. Abstracted from this meaning by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress can be contextualized as a process by which certain environmental demands awaken an appraisal process in which perceived demand exceed resources and results in undesirable psychological, social, behavioral and physiological outcomes. This definition covers all the aspects in the definitions of stress as posited by different scholars above. The term stress in this study will be used as defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984).

To qualify the interest of the study based on the definition above, this paper will primarily be interested in the negative consequences of stress though noting that there is an ideal level of stress required to enhance performance and effective functioning. The ideal-level of stress that enhances performance is of less interest for the current purpose of the study than the negative impact of stress.

### **2.1.2 Occupational Stress Definition**

Due to the fact that stress is an environmental concept, Richardson and Rothstein (2008) highlight that those individuals accomplishing specific roles and duties in the work environment

face stress in organisations. They continue to point out that in every step of daily life stress can be termed occupational stress, organisational stress, or job/work stress and both can be used interchangeably. Dollard et al, (2003) is in consensus as they also suggest that work stress, job stress and occupational stress are often used interchangeably. On that note, Richard and Rothstein, (2008) defines occupational stress as the adaptive reaction to external conditions that cause physical, psychological and behavioural irregularities. Khan et al, (2013) agrees with Richard and Rothstein (2008) as they postulate that occupational stress comprises of environmental factors such as poor working conditions that are associated with a particular job, politics, economics and technology. This suggests that occupational or work-related stress is the response that people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities which challenge their ability to cope.

On contrary, Newman and Beehr (1979) define job stress as a situation wherein job-related factors interact with the worker to change his/her psychological and/or physiological condition such that the person is forced to deviate from normal functioning, whilst Beheshtifar and Nazarian (2013) define occupational stress as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them. Sharma (2012) describes occupational stress as a combination of various job-related stressors which could influence employee performance and wellbeing. The aforementioned definitions and descriptions of Khan et al, Sharma and Richardson and Rothstein indicate that occupational stress is an environmental and relational concept which resonates well with the earlier adopted definition of stress by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Therefore, for the purpose of this study occupational stress description will be used as suggested by Sharma (2015).

### **2.1.3 Nature of Stress**

Among the various dimensions of occupational stress, the most important of them are work characteristics, organisational environment and psychological/behavioural characteristics of an individual (Beheshtifar and Nazarian, 2013). Although the word stress has negative connotations to an individual Mlangeni, (2017) warns that stress reactions are not necessarily harmful and that they are inevitable, since to be alive is comparable to responding to stress. In fact, a certain level of stress is necessary for motivation, growth, development and change, which is called eustress. Individuals who view stress in a positive light are able to view the stressor as manageable, and

they apply personal resources such as hope and meaningfulness to the situation (Adegoke, 2014). This is agreed to by Moorhead and Griffin, (2004) who describes eustress as the pleasurable stress that accompanies positive events. It can then be argued that when a soldier experiences a particular stressor in the work environment, he or she may view it as manageable and apply alternative methods to turn the negative stressor around; hence, may be operationally ready.

However, unwanted hard to manage stressors are harmful and can lead to distress (strain) (Moorhead and Griffin, 2004). This is when an employee experiences negative stress, he or she tends to be ineffective at work as he or she will experience negative emotions and apply ineffective methods (such as drinking, smoking, taking drugs) to seek release (Mlangeni, 2017). Therefore, distress is the unpleasant stress that accompanies negative events. In this case it is without doubt that soldiers who view stressors as negative will be clouded with anxiety and fail to cope with the environment, hence their military operational readiness will be affected.

Cooper (2005) asserts that stress can be conceptualized in three ways, that is; stress as a response, stress as a stimulus and stress as a transaction.

### **2.1.3.1 Stress as a Response**

Sometimes stress refers to how we respond to situations. The phrase ‘being wound up’ is a perfect description of how stress can occur as a product of the ways in which we react to people and to circumstances (Cooper, 2005). The response approach focuses much on the consequences of stress and less on its nature. Furthermore, Selye, (1956) in Hooker, (2001) indicate that response approach was conceptualized as stress related illness. The focus was medical as it was characterized by loss of appetite, motivation, weight and strength (Hooker, 2001).

Response was based on three stages as described by Selye (1956) in his notion of general adaptation syndrome (GAS) theory in terms of stress related illness (Young, 2013). First is the alarm stage where the body responds to the shock in which defence mechanisms are activated to form resistance. Second, is the resistance to the continued stressors in response to repel the shock. Third, if the stressor is persistent or too intense for an extended period, the energy runs out and the body cannot adapt, thus exhaustion, collapse or death occur. Dollard et al, (2005) disagrees with Selye (1956)’s idea of GAS because of their medical focus. They posit that the response based approach do not appear to consider environmental factors in the stress process. In



essence, there has been ignorance to stimulus dimension of stress. This resulted in the formulation of stimulus based approach which identifies events that might cause stress.

### **2.1.3.2 Stress as a Stimulus**

This view sees stress as something that happens to us, perhaps arising from having a highly stressful job, or being put under pressure by not having time to complete tasks. Events and circumstances conspire to cause feelings of tension that can be interpreted as stress (Cooper, 2005). This approach is aimed at identifying sources of stress in the work place. Greenberg, (2007) argues that this was inadequate since the approach only concentrated on measures of environmental conditions. They posited that individual differences play a role in tolerance levels of stress. Two people exposed to exactly the same situations or stressors might react in a completely different way (Greenberg, 2007). This is why Lazarus and Folkman (1984) are of the view that there is no way a criterion can be used to describe a situation as stressful in generic terms except for the individual who is exposed to that event. Nevertheless, stimulus is helpful in identifying common stressors that might affect the majority of the workforce in organizational context (Kang, 2005). With the aforesaid argument, Kang, (2005) is of the view that stress involves both stimulus and a response in relation to each other and it is this relational nature of stress that should be focused on. Taking the argument further Niven and Robinson in support of Kang, (2005) posits that job stress should be viewed as a transaction.

### **2.1.3.3 Stress as a Transaction**

To Niven and Robinson (1994), stress can be both stimulus and a response. Often, people become so tired that they worry about whether they can do their job properly. On the other hand, having to perform a particularly demanding task can cause tiredness. The two statements above show that there is a transaction between people and their environments resulting in each affecting and being affected by each other. This approach is based on the process of identification and availability of coping resources in an individual to deal with the threat or challenge (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The point here is that stress is an ongoing process that involves individuals transacting with their environment, decoding these challenges and trying to cope with them. Jex, (1992) highlights that the transactional approach implies that stress is neither in an individual or the environment rather in the relationship between the two. In further agreement Beheshtifar and Nazarian, (2013) highlights that among the various dimensions of occupational stress, the most

important of them are work characteristics, organisational environment and psychological/behavioural characteristics of an individual. Following this approach of stress process, it can be conceptualized by this study that occupational stress is a transactional process. Understanding of occupational stress will be based on a transactional perspective. This support the adopted definition of occupational stress for this study in which earlier on Khan et al, Sharma and Richardson and Rothstein outlined that occupational stress is an environmental and relational concept.

#### **2.1.4 Measurement of Stress**

To Harvey (1999), stress can be measured by either objective or subjective means. These approaches to measurement of stress are briefly discussed below.

##### **2.1.4.1 Objective Measure**

Objective means including physiological measures (such as blood pressures or heart rate) and organisational outcomes (such as sick leaves or absenteeism without leave) (Harvey, 1999). These are objective measures only to the extent that the effects are assumed to be a direct result of stress. However, it is argued that measures of potential stress such as hypertension development are affected by other factors than stress (e.g. family or genetic factors or smoking) (Beehr, 1995). This argument reduces the reliability of the results or objectivity.

In the military, as posited by Harvey (1999), occupational stress can be measured indirectly through job performance, sick leave, levels of alcohol consumption, absenteeism and discipline levels. These assume that the same kind of malfunctioning is occurring due to stress and they make a link between stress and performance (Harvey, 1999).

##### **2.1.4.2 Subjective Measure**

Stress is a subjective discourse as earlier asserted in the definitions. Therefore, it is important that individual' experience be taken into consideration together with the psychological or transactional approach of stress. The two main methods of measuring stress subjectively are by interview or by self-administered questionnaires (Harvey, 1999). However, Beehr (1995) is of the view that the use of questionnaires as measurement of stress is open to fake responses which reduces results reliability but Harvey, (1999) propound that subjective measurement remains

popular in the study of stress because of the importance of obtaining individual's perceptions and experiences first hand.

## **2.2 SOURCES OF STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE**

The uncertain and competitive work environment that characterises modern life has led to stress becoming an integral part of people's lives (Sharma, 2015). The origins of employee stress cannot be attributed to one domain only as it can originate from an individual's work life, personal life or the interaction between the two (Luthans, 2002). To Adegoke (2014), stress in the workplace occurs when employees are presented with job demands which challenge their ability to cope as those demands might not match skills and capabilities that an employee has. Kang (2005) propounds the view that occupational stressors exist in every organisation, however the degree of their influence, varies from occupation to occupation and from individual to individual, as what causes stress to one person may be a motivation to the other person. Tucker et al. (2005) noted that when a person in the work environment experiences stress, it influences his or her wellbeing and also becomes part of that person's work context in the end affecting their performance.

Research indicates that a wide variety of work place conditions causes stress, strain or pressure that are associated with a wide range of physical and psychological ill health problems (Sunderland and Cooper, 2000). As Beheshtifar and Nazarian (2013) expressed, several work related factors that contribute to occupational stress include role overload, organisational change, role conflict and role ambiguity. These factors are considered by individuals as subjective or objective (Beheshtifar and Nazarian, 2013). Cristo and Pienaar (2006) argued that the causes of occupational stress include perceived loss of job, and security, sitting for long periods of time or heavy lifting, lack of safety, complexity of repetitiveness and lack of autonomy in the job. In addition, they state that lack of resources and equipment, work schedules (such as working late shifts or overtime) and organisational climate are considered as contributors to employee stress. This notion is further supported by Sunderland and Cooper (2000) who found that common causes associated with stress also include work overload, organisational change, role ambiguity and role conflict, and relations with others.

Similarly, stressors in the military environment can be powerful and unrelenting (Young et al, 2011). This is also echoed by Tucker et al, (2005) who earlier in Chapter 1 highlighted that the

impact of occupational stress on the continued well-being of an individual is nowhere as pronounced as it is when the individual is Armed Forces personnel. Occupational stress in the military is multidimensional as it affects soldiers socially, mentally, emotionally and spiritually (Bartone, 2005). The frequent deployment of troops creates change in focus and this places more demands on the personnel. It further increases the workload as such deployments call for regular pre-deployment trainings to enhance operational readiness. Moreover, the deployments cause family separations, which have been identified as a stressor by Bartone, (2006) and Young, (2013). This therefore, adversely influences employees' performance within an organisation. Additionally, occupational stress arising out of routine military work environment is found to have significant negative impact on the mental health of military personnel (Pflanz, 2001). Of importance is that the military operational readiness depends largely on the resilience of service members, military units and the environment it operates in (Pflanz, 2002).

Military Operational Readiness is defined by Philips, (2006) in Young (2013), as a psychological part and condition of a soldier's amount of commitment to and determination in achieving an objective or performance of military duties. It is the function of the ability of a person to perform his or her full duty. On the contrary Hooker (1998) defines it as a combination of generalship, leadership, operational and tactical planning and execution, logistics, intelligence and a host of other factors as critical for combat performance. From the two definitions aspects of combat readiness can be identified. On one hand there is a psychosocial dimension (psychological attributes) and on the other hand, a material dimensions (e.g. the number of tanks and their serviceability, the availability of ammunition). In the context of this study, military operational readiness will be defined as Philips, (2006) posits. Additionally, combat readiness, unit readiness and operational readiness will be used interchangeably as they have the same commonalities. Kruys (2000), maintain that the terms are very often used to mean the same thing.

Due to the identified challenges earlier on which have the potential to become stressors for soldiers who take part in military operations, operational readiness is affected, hence Tucker et al, (2005) suggest that sufficient focus should be placed on understanding stressors within the work environment.

There is an extensive literature on the stressors in the military environment or sources of stress. Not implying that others are not important, this research will focus in particular on the stressors

identified by De Bruin and Taylor, (2005) because they heavily overlap with stressors found in more traditional work settings (Campbell and Nobel, 2009). They include among others Role ambiguity, Work-overload, Work Relationships, Work-home interface/Isolation and Danger. The stressors identified by De Bruin and Taylor (2005) are explored below as they are applicable and may be relevant and active in a military operational environment of soldiers.

### **2.2.1 Work overload**

Schultz and Schultz, (1998) define work overload as too much work to perform in the time available or work that is too difficult to perform. On a similar note De Bruin and Taylor, (2005) posits that work-overload refers to the amount of stress experienced by individuals due to the perception that they are unable to cope or be productive with the amount of work allocated to them. For Schultz and Schultz, (1998) there are two types of work overload: Quantitative overload which is the condition of having too much work to do in the time available while Qualitative overload involves work that is too difficult. Work-overload is an obvious source of stress and the key factor seems to be the degrees of control workers have over the rate which they work rather than the amount of work itself because having insufficient ability to perform a job is stressful (Tucker et al, 2006). Hurrell et al. (1988) agrees with the above and go on further to say that it is necessary to understand that the impact of new technology can affect overload and that the pressure of both qualitative and quantitative overload can result in the need to work excessive hours which is an additional source of stress. Furthermore, research on work-overload has found that it relates to all three types of strains – psychological, physical, and behavioral (Spector, 1996).

Soldiers have to deal with multidimensional tasks which sometimes require them to apply skills that they have not developed properly (Mlangeni, 2017). This may lead to them being unable to cope with the volume of work assigned. In addition, in the operational environment, soldiers workload stress could surface as a result of the demands that have been placed on the soldier because they have to adjust to new responsibilities without being given sufficient time to prepare for it. Some of those tasks as observed by Young, (2013) from their study at the Botswana Defence Force are long work hours or days during deployments and high frequency of duration and pace of deployments. Furthermore, it has been observed that soldiers face a climate of increasing work demands coupled with declining resources as the nature of military work has

expanded with the addition of multiple new tasks and responsibilities, and these contribute to experiences of negative occupational stress (Tucker et al, 2005). Pflanz, (2001) agrees with the observation by highlighting that in instances where employees are unable to cope with work demands, they experience high levels of negative stress and this affect performance or operational readiness.

### **2.2.2 Role Ambiguity**

Another source of stress is role ambiguity. Spector (1996) defines role ambiguity as the extent to which employees are unclear about their job functions and responsibilities whilst Schultz and Schultz (1998) see role ambiguity as a situation that arises when job responsibilities are unstructured or poorly defined. The above can be stressful on the employee because he/she will not be sure of what is expected or even what to do. Hurrell et al. (1988) stresses the above points by stating that stress arising from unclear goals or objectives ultimately leads to job dissatisfaction, lack of confidence, a lowered sense of self-esteem, low motivation at work and this leads to poor work performance.

The same applies to military context. According to De Bruin and Taylor, (2005) role ambiguity may refer to the quantum of stress felt by an individual due to unclear specifications or constant change regarding the end state, duties and constraints that define the individual's job. In addition, unclearly defined missions, unclear command or leadership structure, unclear rules of engagement and contradictory missions can be stressful to soldiers because of that ambiguity (Bartone, 2006).

When soldiers enter into a peace support mission, their role is to create a conducive environment for re-building (Young et al, 2011). They are prohibited from using force unless confronted with the threat. However, there are cases where these soldiers are ambushed by the same people they are feeding and helping and this derails their mission which leads to ambiguity resulting in stressful situations (Nash, 2007). Additionally, Sharma, (2015) posit that in military deployments such as peace support operations, role ambiguity may manifest in duties, authority, relationships with multinational forces, local authority, international agencies and laws of the country. In essence this will mean the operational environment has high levels of ambiguity and this should be a concern for soldiers as high role ambiguity is associated with high occupational stress.

In fact, Choudhury (2013) cautions that when employees experience high levels of role ambiguity they tend to seek damaging stress coping strategies such as alcohol or drugs. In addition, people with more role ambiguity are more likely to incur injury at work and burnout thus compromising operational readiness (Driskel and Salas, 1996).

### **2.2.3 Work Relationships**

De Bruin & Taylor, (2005) propounds that work relationships refer to the stress experienced as a result of having poor interpersonal relationships with colleagues and superiors as well as being subjected to interpersonal abuse. As Dollard et al (2003) posits, working relations are not always smooth mainly because co-workers and superiors can be a major source of stress. Aamodt (1999) is of the same view with the assertion that, it is important to understand that stress is associated with conflict, working with difficult people, dealing with angry customers and feeling that you are not being treated fairly in the work environment.

However, supportive relationships at the workplace are important as they affect the employee well-being (Mlangeni, 2017). Furthermore, Hurrell et al. (1988) highlights that poor working relationships among co-workers in an organisation is a potential source of stress at work and goes on to say that supportive social relationships with peer, supervisors and subordinates at work is less likely to create the interpersonal pressures associated with rivalry, office politics and competition.

Poor working relationship has a great implication for soldiers because their tasks require them to work in teams. Good relationships among soldiers could aid them perform their tasks as they look upon each other for protection in the always volatile operational environment (Mlangeni, 2017). Moreover, Hooker (2001) suggested that social support in the form of group cohesion, interpersonal trust and liking for a supervisor is associated with decreased levels of perceived job strain and better health. On the other hand, non-supportive behaviour from colleagues appears to contribute significantly to feelings of job pressure (Hooker, 2001). Driskell and Salas, (1996) concurs with Hooker as they noted that it is critically important to have good relationships with colleagues in the military because hostility may only be a serious stressor in the military operation and impede performance thus affect operational readiness.

#### **2.2.4 Danger**

The detrimental effect of danger has been noted in the military operational environment where tasks related to decision making and job performance were degraded because of stressful nature of danger (Driskell and Salas, 1996). Driskell and Salas, (1996) further posit that the reason that threat or danger is so stressful is that it represents the ultimate loss of control over one's fate and this leads to helplessness. In the uncertain military environment which is characterized by insecurities of whether an adversary is there or not, a soldier will feel endangered as they feel they cannot fight back and they become susceptible to fear (Young et al, 2011). This in addition, causes psychological stressors and impact negatively on the soldier's control of the situation and this further induces negative emotions of frustration and anxiety leading to performance decrements, reduced motivation and memory decrement (Young et al, (2011); Driskell and Salas, (1996).

Empirical evidence shows that personnel deployed in combat and non-combat missions (to include peace support operations) are primarily involved in the control of fear or fear related thoughts in order to maintain operational effectiveness (Megan and Donald, 2013; Brooks and Greenberg, 2017). This is because the uncertain/ambiguous environment brings with it deficiencies caused by the psychological stressors that include attentional lapses, narrowing of perceptual focus, short-term memory deficiency, and partial information processing, which can contribute to errors in judgement and performance (Megan and Donald, 2013). Of course one may argue that there are modern high-tech improvements in military equipment, but humans remain the essential element in military operations and are required to maintain emotive, reasoning, and behavioral control to guarantee their own safety, the safety of their mates, and to maximize operational effectiveness (Grant, 2015). This account indicates that decision making will be affected thus reduction in operational effectiveness of a soldier and operational readiness will be compromised.

#### **2.2.5 Work Home-Interface/Isolation**

Managing the interface between one's job and various roles and responsibilities off the job is another potential source of strain (Hooker, 2001). This have become increasingly important for employees, families and organisations with less time for family responsibilities and obligations creating stress on the home-work interface (Mlangeni, 2017). To De Bruin and Taylor, (2005)



the importance of getting the job done has consumed or takes all the peoples time thus causing work-family conflict. This mainly is caused by the culture and the environment of an organisation which ultimately determines the expectation around the role of an employee.

It has been suggested that military culture interferes with family functioning (Military Health and Advisory Team (MHAT) – 5, 2008). As recognised earlier by Mlangeni, (2017) the life of a soldier is not stagnant as there are constant changes in which military deployments or operations are most of the time sudden and unexpected. This in the end conflicts with activities that were supposed to happen in the family at that particular time.

Moreover, Young (2013) also recognised that the most stressful experience of soldiers is being away from family from whom they get social and emotional support. Social support enhances a sense of belonging and has been shown to be a useful coping strategy. Being away from home can leave a soldier socially isolated and lonely especially if the deployment is in remote areas, where there is foreign culture and language with no proper communication tools (Bartone, 2005). This situation, as Bartone continues, affects the soldiers' well-being and their job performance. On contrary, Nash (2007), argues that although soldiers may feel lonely and isolated in operational deployments, they are still confined with their fellow mates from which they can get support. However, the support they get from military can have the opposite effect mainly due to the fact that in operations, they have to share all the available spaces and equipment leaving total absence of privacy and personal space which can be stressful to those who are not used to cramped environment (Bartone, 2005).

Furthermore, Work home-interface/isolation is a precursor of high psychological strain and is thought to put individuals in a state where their mental resources are threatened and depleted, leading to a possible decrease in their well-being (Nash, 2007). Separation from family is routinely listed as one of the top stressors for soldiers (e.g. worrying about family members' health and safety and being concerned about spouse fidelity) thus affect their emotional well-being (MHAT-5, 2008). In fact, it has been suggested that married soldiers are almost twice as likely to report that family matters at home have caused them significant stress and have made it difficult for them to do their jobs. In general, service members finding themselves in distant operational relationships with their family members upon return home from deployment are considered likely to experience difficulty recovering from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

(Harms, 2013). On these grounds, one could argue that the inability of soldiers to strike a balance between their demanding work schedules and their family could have a negative effect on their psychological wellbeing and affect military operational readiness.

## **2.3 EFFECTS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS**

As argued earlier, organisational stress is a major problem in organisations. Similarly, occupational stress can be a major problem in military operational readiness (Young, 2013). If the stress is positive, the results may be more energy, eagerness and motivation. With personnel affected negatively, how we respond to stress can have devastating consequences. Identically, the consequences on individuals will have a direct negative impact on the operational readiness of the organisation (Mlangeni, 2017). With the above assertion, the effects of work stress will leave the organisation being not operationally ready as occupational stress may lead to some of the following as identified by Harvey, (1999), Hooker, (2001) and Sharma, (2015):

### **2.3.1 Poor Work Performance**

If stressors found in military contexts can reduce operational effectiveness as seen by Megan and Donald (2013), in which it includes impairment such as attention lapses, narrowing of perceptual focus, short-term memory impairment, and biased information processing, which separately and in combination can contribute to errors in judgment and performance, then in essence there will be poor work performance. This suggests that laid down operational procedures cannot be adhered to by stressed individuals. These may result in accidents during trainings and lack of focus (Bartone, 2005).

The effect is mainly due to burnout which Schultz and Schultz (1998) define as a condition of job stress that results from overwork. To Moorhead and Griffin (2004), burnout is a general feeling of exhaustion that develops when an individual simultaneously experiences too much pressure and has too few sources of satisfaction. The quality of employees' work that is burnout deteriorates but not necessarily the quantity because the individual is in a distressed psychological state and working for the sake of working (Spector, 1996). This is an indication that burnout is a chronic process, involving exhaustion at physical, emotional and cognitive level, leading to reduced involvement in job, especially by individuals who are highly involved in their work (Sharma, 2015). Therefore, having that effect of burnout leads to poor work

performance and it cannot be said a military unit is operationally ready having such individuals. This suggestion is supported by Driskel and Salas (1996), who asserted that people especially those with more role ambiguity are more likely to incur injury at work and burnout thus compromising operational readiness.

### **2.3.2 Lack of Interest on the Job**

If an organisation has depressed, burnout and poor turnout of its personnel due to work stress, it will be operationally affected substantially due to lack of interest in doing their job (Hourani, 2006). This is because all stressful effects are interrelated and subsequently lead to lack of productivity. This phenomenon can affect the military operational readiness if large numbers show that a lot of unit personnel are no longer interested in doing their job. The indicators of this effect are absenteeism and high turnover. Absenteeism according to Hourani (2006), is a common response mechanism adopted by workers to cope with stress.

Generally, Absenteeism and turnover resulting in loss of productivity and subsequently readiness are highest during times of burnout and increase stress as employees struggle to deal with physical and emotional ailments (Aamodt, 1999). Furthermore, employees suffering from burnout become less energetic and less interested in their jobs Schultz and Schultz (1998). It is given that stress must be responsible for absenteeism and turnover (Hourani, 2006).

Similarly, depression cause individuals to miss work and lose focus, and both are relatively common in the military population as compared to the rest of society. For leaders, it can mean faulty decision-making or disruptions in working relationships as people become irritable and hard to get along with (Quick and Henderson, 2016). An example can be given of a leader who may start missing deadlines or taking longer breaks, and an employee who may withdraw psychologically by easing to care about the organisation and the job. It can therefore be inferred from this discourse that a decline in readiness would ensue from continued mental health-related personnel costs because fewer service members would be operationally ready and deployable due to lack of interest on the job (Grant, 2015).

### **2.3.3 Low Morale**

The morale of the employees is the measurement of their well-ness in the military (Hourani, 2006). It is a degree in which an employee feels good about their work and the related

environment. Morale is the mental and emotional condition (as of enthusiasm, confidence, or loyalty) of an individual or group with regard to the function or tasks at hand (Harvey, 1999). The higher the morale means less casualties of occupational stress. Working together as a unit or having unit cohesion and support on each other is very important in determining the morale. If there is high morale among the military force or among the troops there will be less likelihood of having a larger number suffering from stress casualties (Mlangeni, 2017). Therefore, morale has psychological influence in the state of troops who serve within a unit. An example on the effect of morale on military operational readiness is highlighted by Greenberg (2007) about the Falklands war, where morale was very high and the stress casualty was in the region of 4%. However, the Malta campaign of 1942 was associated with low morale in the British troops and this resulted in the stress casualty being substantially estimated at 25% of the deployed force. Arguably, this is a clear indication that morale has a direct impact on the operational readiness of the organisation.

Work stress is an occupational hazard in the military (Young, 2013) and if not addressed, it can lead to military operational readiness being affected. That stress is a significant determinant of performance, emotional wellbeing, and other work outcomes in military settings is not in dispute (Harms, 2013). Many research studies have shown that occupational stressors have negative effects on individual wellbeing as it is strongly related to job burnout, depression, general psychological stress and physical health symptoms (Adegoke 2014).

The well-being of service members affects military operational readiness because any failure to meet physical and mental health standards results in fewer deployable or operational troops (Grant, 2015). However, these standards can be hard to enforce when diagnostic, detection and mitigation capabilities are lacking (Nash, 2007). A situation where those experiencing behavioral, emotional, physiological health difficulties remain part of the workforce without diagnosis and without receiving the care they need will affect performance and operational readiness in a compromising way (Grant, 2015). Therefore, the success of any military depends largely on the soldier's ability to identify, understand and cope with various stressors.

## **2.4 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS COPING STRATEGIES**

Coping is a deliberate effort by individuals to solve personal problems in order to bring stress to a tolerable level (Young, 2013). In the military context, soldiers cope better in predicted stressful

situations as their pre-deployment training is designed to give strategies for survival and resilience which is done through simulations and rehearsals (Hooker, 2001). An example of this situation is the Botswana Defence Force who deploy in anti-poaching areas where there are dangerous animals, in this instance, soldiers have to know how to respond when confronted by these animals (Young, 2013). Mophuting (2007 cited in Young, 2013), expressed that the soldiers are equipped with survival skills and knowledge making use of natural resources. This forms successful coping strategies resulting in maximized resilience to stress effects that is induced by danger (Mlangeni, 2017). Harvey (1999) identified suppression, social support and physical exercise coping strategies which highlight the range of those that are commonly used and they are discussed below.

#### **2.4.1 Suppression**

Suppression refers to attempts to repress stressful situations, generally by self-correcting behaviours or not addressing the problem (Hooker, 2001). It is suggested that suppression is likely to be more effective in situations where people have little or no control (Harvey, 1999).

Sunderland and Cooper (2000) holds that in suppression coping strategy, there is adaptive and maladaptive way of avoiding stress but cautions that maladaptive way could be destructive as it includes excessive use of alcohol and drugs. Therefore, they have found the adaptive significance of suppression as a correct coping mechanism.

However, Harvey, (1999) suggest that suppression is associated with lower levels of experienced distress or it may under report symptoms that are experienced. Nevertheless, it has been reported of reduction of stress during combat or operational tours and the suggestion was that soldiers could use suppression as a defence mechanism against stress related environments to maintain normal functioning (Hourani, 2006). These processes of suppression have been found to be capable of controlling stress responses for a longer time after the military operations (combat or non-combat) (Hourani, 2006) but on the down side, this is why it could partly explain the delayed occurrence of PTSD.

#### **2.4.2 Social Support**

Social support can be defined as the support accessible to an individual when needed in the form of relationships to individuals, groups or the community (Harvey, 1999). Social support allows

an individual to believe that he/she is cared for, esteemed and valued and belongs to a network of communication (Sunderland and Cooper, 2000). Harvey (1999) suggested that social support does not only enhance the well-being of an individual, but that the absence of social support is in itself a stressor.

Nash (2007), insists that the support and care an individual gets from other people can help make stress more bearable. In that sense it can be suggested that social support may be an effective way/strategy for individuals to cope under stress, by seeking for advice and talking over possible actions. This is supported by Bartone, (2006) who maintains the same notion that seeking support from others is considered to be one of the most effective coping strategies. Support influences coping by lifting an individual's mood, morale and assisting in cognitive reappraisal (Harms, 2013). Indeed, Lazarus and Folkman, (1984) found social support to be more salient to morale, health and social adjustment than the frequency and severity of the stressor itself.

### **2.4.3 Physical Exercise**

Harvey, (1999) reports that, physical activity and exercise significantly contribute to an individual's sense of well-being. It has been found in the study of stress and well-being that negative effects of stress on health declined as exercise levels increased (Pflanz, 2002). Tucker et al, (2005) concur by suggesting that feelings of mastery, control and self-efficacy increase with exercise, and that these affect well-being in a positive way. In civilian organisations where physical fitness programmes have been provided for workers, an improvement was found in their well-being as measured by lower sick leaves and absenteeism (Tucker et al, 2005).

The military places a high value on physical fitness, although there is a large range of fitness levels within the army (Harvey, 1999). Bartone, (2006) posits that physical exercise can enhance hardiness which was found to be a measure of protection among army personnel mobilized for the Persian Gulf War. Hardiness instills endurance, firmness, stamina and forcefulness to individuals thus making the personnel to face challenges related to good health with further improved performance under stressful conditions (Young, 2013). It helps individuals to have a buffering effect on the stress symptoms and adapt to stressful conditions despite the high levels of stress by primarily being resilient (Bartone, 2006). This coping strategy is applicable to operational and non-operational military personnel since it fulfils social and recreational

activities which bring in cohesion and ultimately the network of support is widened to improve their well-being (Sunderland and Cooper, 2000).

The selection of coping strategy is subject to individual characteristics, the environment and the sources of stress which calls for other types of coping methods to address the fluid operational environment. Young et al, (2011) warns that it is important to note that coping strategies are temporary measures to assist a person to control stress symptoms. They cannot take stress away, instead sources of stress in the work place should be identified and managed (Harvey, 1999). In supporting this account, Beehr, (1995) posit that programmes targeting individual employees which are available at work to help individuals cope with stress are inadequate in the sense that they are only for the individual and leaves the organisation out. This means the sources of stress will always remain unabated.

## **2.5 MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS**

Young (2013) highlights that stress management is a tool which enables a person to cope with stress. It is suggested by Harvey, (1999) that there are a number of stress management approaches. On that note, Newman and Beehr (1979) posit a three dimensional model of stress management focusing on intervention on the individual, individual/organisational interface and organisational focus. In the same vain, Hurrel et al, (1988) classify stress management interventions first as primary interventions which are concerned with prevention; for example, exposure to hazards by design of the work place or generalized stress management training. Second, secondary interventions which are based upon management and group problem solving, in order to help the organisation have the ability to recognise and deal with problems as they arise (timely reaction). Lastly, tertiary interventions which are concerned with dealing with the effects of stress on individuals and help them cope. The latter three which encompass the three dimensional model of stress management are discussed below.

### **2.5.1 Primary Intervention**

Hurrel et al, (1988) came to a conclusion that job redesign and organisational change is the ultimately preferred approaches to stress management, reason being that they focus on dealing or removing the sources of problems in the work environment instead of leaving or expecting an individual to deal with it alone. Beehr, (1995) holds the same view in that if workers have

control over the work process and their participation in decision making is increased, this will result in significant reductions in role ambiguity and role conflict thus eliminating some stressors.

However, this can be difficult for many organisations to change, particularly those with strong tradition of which the military falls, where each job is role based and highly dependent on hierarchy. This means organizationally targeted interventions in these kinds of institutions are used to a lesser extent as compared to individually targeted ones but ideally, stress management interventions should incorporate the response within an organisation perspective (Harvey, 1999). Beerh, (1995) concluded that organisational causes of stress are largely ignored, maybe because they are difficult to address but cautioned that individually targeted treatments do not change the cause of the problem instead it only deals with the symptoms.

### **2.5.2 Secondary Intervention**

Literature shows that most stress management interventions are individually focused; they are concerned with changing the worker as opposed to the work itself (Beehr, 1995). According to Harvey, (1999) there are a number of approaches that this stress management intervention can take:

- a) Personal skills (for example; time management, assertiveness). Anger reduction interventions (for example; use of relaxation training)
- b) Cognitive behavioural techniques (emotional intelligence; such as anger control and stress inoculation)
- c) Educational. It involves a holistic overview of stress, its sources, effects and stress management strategies. Psychological debriefing following traumatic incidents are emphasized. In addition, re-adjustment following a completion of military tour is necessary for re-integration. For this to be achieved, awareness of stress is needed in all military personnel, especially those in leadership positions. This is why the organisation should provide education on stress throughout the work cycle (Beerh, 1995).

Harvey, (1999) believes there are strong indications that these programmes are effective in reducing psychological and physical symptoms of strain during or after the intervention. Outcomes associated with this intervention have also been found to be concerned with decreased burnout and absenteeism, and improved productivity and performance thus improved military



operational readiness (Hourani, 2006). Even so, of concern as earlier highlighted is that this approach places stress problem responsibility on an individual by providing necessary techniques and skills to cope with stress.

### **2.5.3 Tertiary Intervention**

This involves providing support and assistance to individuals once they have mental health problem (Harvey, 1999). This assistance will commonly be Employee Assistance Programmes (EPAs) in which maladaptive interventions like alcohol are targeted Bartone, (2005).

According to Pflanz, (2002) counselling is also part of these programmes which helps employees to cope with their personal and work lives better. Pflanz (2002) further stresses that counselling is not an organisational level intervention and this means organisational sources of stress are unlikely to be affected by counselling. This notion is confirmed by Cooper (2005) who found that personal that went for counselling treatment showed improvements in their mental health and reduced sick leaves within the organisation but found no change in job satisfaction or sources of stress and organisational commitment. The conclusion is that counselling is effective in helping individuals but does not have a measurable impact at the organisational level. Therefore, it should not be done in isolation from the job characteristics as earlier indicated by Beerh, (1995).

Other interventions which are part of the Employee Assistance Programmes include but not limited to, treatment of PTSD, Cognitive-behavioural treatment and biochemical treatment (Harvey, 1999). Of note is that these are also targeted to individuals not the organisation.

Notably, it is equally important as part of intervention to foster an awareness of mental health issues in the military, in order to reduce the stigma of suffering from occupational stress (Young, 2013). This can holistically be of success if a control cycle is formulated with regards to stress management by accepting that employees are experiencing stress at work, identifying sources of stress, assessing risk to health by experience of stress, designing of control strategies, implementing and evaluation of the effects of those strategies (De Bruin and Taylor, 2005). With the above interventions military operational readiness can be kept at optimal levels (Pflanz, 2002).

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

This account has brought into perspective the subject of stress in as far as its definition is concerned. Stress reactions are not necessarily harmful, but how people respond to stress can have devastating consequences which affect individual physical, behavioural and psychological well-being. It is interesting to note that from the literature, several work related factors from the operational environment contribute to occupational stress. In particular, occupational stress in the military operational environment is multidimensional. This can be accounted from the various sources of stress which include among others role ambiguity, work-overload, work relationships, work-home interface/isolation and danger all emanating from the deployments the military undertakes. If not addressed, organizational consequence of too much stress can translate into poor work performance and affect military operational readiness. Since military operational readiness largely depends on the resilience of service members, coping strategies and stress management highlights the interventions that can improve the well-being of an individual. However, most stress management interventions are individually focused and concerned with changing the employee as opposed to the work environment.

The next chapter describes the research methodology of this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The discussions in Chapters 1 and 2, have shown that the phenomenon of occupational stress has adverse impact on military operational readiness across the world. It is also evident that military personnel are repeatedly exposed to stressful operational environment and incidents. In spite of these developments the extant literature indicates that military operational readiness is an important factor in military forces since the military is a means to state survival (Grant, 2015). Hence, failure to manage these occupational stresses could have a negative effect on employees' well-being and ultimately operational readiness.

This Chapter serves to present and justify methodologies and methods adopted in this study in order to analyse the effects of occupational stress in military operational readiness. In-line with the research questions and objectives, this chapter mainly discusses the research approach and procedures adopted for this study. The scope of this chapter is articulated as follows: Section 3.2 distinguishes between qualitative and quantitative research approaches and further justifies the adoption of qualitative research approach for this study. The next section 3.3 outlines the research design with particular attention on the case study method employed in this study. In section 3.4, data collection methods used in this study are discussed. Data analysis is offered in section 3.5. Ethical considerations for this study are presented in section 3.6 and section 3.7 summarises Chapter 3.

#### **3.2 METHODOLOGY**

According to Cooper and Schindler (2003), methodology explains how the research problem will be investigated and why particular methods and techniques would be used. In other words, the researcher simply wants to tell the reader how the research was approached. To Almeida et al, (2017), methodology is a tool of fundamental importance for the knowledge of the methods that are used in the elaboration of a document such as a manuscript, dissertation or any work of completing a university course. On that note, Flanagan (2013) suggests that research methodology is the most powerful tool to explore new theories and perform their empirical validation. In relation to research methodology approaches, Molefhe, (2011); Almeida et al, (2017) posits that the two main approaches in research commonly used are qualitative and

quantitative. Before justifying the adopted methodology, it is important to briefly discuss both the two main approaches for broader understanding.

Quantitative research approach deals with numbers and anything that is measurable in a systematic way with emphasises on the quantity of things, like how many are they and statistical patterns and their analysis involving counting and quantifying items to draw a conclusion (Langos, 2014). To Aimeida et al, (2017), quantitative research focuses on objectivity and is especially appropriate when there is the possibility of collecting quantifiable measures of variables and inferences from samples of a population. Furthermore, Aimeida et al, (2017) posit that quantitative research adopts structured procedures and formal instruments for data collection in large populations. The data are collected objectively and systematically. In doing so, quantitative research excludes questions of a moral or ethical nature that cannot be settled by an application of facts (Molefhe, 2011). Although quantitative method can cover large populations, the down side of this method is that it has a lower flexibility and exploratory analysis (Aimeida et al, 2017). This makes it to ignore the differences between natural and social world by failing to understand meanings that are brought to social life (Silverman, 2000 cited in Molefhe, 2011).

On the other side, there is qualitative research approach. Qualitative research unlike quantitative research is not concerned with numerical representativity, but with the deepening of understanding of a given problem (Mason, 2002). The objective of the qualitative methodology is to produce in-depth and illustrative information in order to understand the various dimensions of the problem under analysis (Aimeida et al, 2017). Qualitative research is therefore concerned with aspects of reality that cannot be quantified, focusing on the understanding and explanation of the dynamics of social relations.

Dooly and Moore, (2017) articulate that the value of qualitative research lies in helping the researcher to ascertain people's experiences through their exploration in a social environment. Furthermore, qualitative research provides rich and meaningful insights into the phenomenon being studied and helps in giving audience to the less articulated knowledge embedded in human experience. In exploring human experiences, it helps in understanding the reasons behind the behaviour and meanings surrounded in those experiences (Dooly and Moore, 2017).

The other main characteristic of qualitative research is that it is mostly appropriate for small samples, while its outcomes are not measurable and quantifiable, its basic advantage, which also

constitutes its basic difference with quantitative research, is that it offers a complete description and analysis of a research subject, without limiting the scope of the research and the nature of participant's responses (Addo, 2014).

However, on the down side, the effectiveness of qualitative research is heavily based on the skills and abilities of researchers, while the outcomes may not be perceived as reliable because they mostly come from researcher's personal judgments and interpretations (Mason, 2002). Furthermore, because it is more appropriate for small samples it is also risky for the results of qualitative research to be generalized (Mlangeni, 2017).

Although the two research approaches differ in their application, it is important to understand that neither of the approaches is better than the other. The suitability of the approach used is determined by the nature, context and purpose of the research study (Mlangeni, 2017).

In this study the methodology adopted is qualitative research approach. The analysis of the effects of occupational stress in military operational readiness, consistent with the objectives, can be addressed through qualitative research approach. Dooley and Moore, (2017) suggest that one cannot measure what is like to live with or experience emotional distress with a tape measure, although various attempts to develop scales to measure this sort of phenomenon have been made. Dealing with personal investigations that involves influence of the environment are skills that are not possible to investigate with structured instruments. To understand the real focus of inquiry, concern should be with aspects of reality that cannot be quantified, focusing on the understanding and explanation of the dynamics of social relations in context approach. This helps explore human experiences in order to understand the reasons behind the behaviour. The above assertions are in-line with qualitative research hence the study adopts the method.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

To Babbie and Mouton (2012), a research design is a plan or blueprint, which is used by the researcher to conduct the research process in order to expand knowledge and understanding and to solve the research problem. The research design focuses on the logic of research as it allows the researcher to gather evidence about desired knowledge. Coetzee and Schreuder (2010) shares similar sentiments maintaining that, a research design is the overall structure that the researcher follows when conducting a study. Thus, a research design can be seen as the strategy which is

used by the researcher to address the research questions and objectives by laying out what data is required, what methods are going to be used to collect and analyse this data (Cropley, 2015).

Different design logics are used for different types of study; as such, there are various approaches to research design which are generally classified under survey, experiment and case study research designs (Tharenou et al, 2007). For the purposes of this study, the researcher will use case study research design and will justify its appropriateness as the three designs are briefly discussed below.

### **3.3.1 Experimental Design**

Experimental research is any research conducted with a scientific approach, where a set of variables are kept constant while the other set of variables are being measured as the subject of experiment (Kirk, 2007). An experimental design identifies the independent, dependent variables and indicates the way in which the randomization and statistical aspects of an experiment are to be carried out. Kirk further highlights that the primary goal of an experimental design is to establish a causal connection between the independent and dependent variables. This is where there is time priority in a causal relationship (cause precedes effect), there is consistency in a causal relationship (a cause will always lead to the same effect), and the magnitude of the correlation is great.

To Morrison and Ross, (2003) the classic experimental design specifies an experimental group and a control group. The independent variable is administered to the experimental group and not to the control group and both groups are measured on the same dependent variable. With this high degree of control, it is the best method available to researchers who want to investigate causality. However, such strict control has associated with it its own problems. Because of the degree of control necessary naturalism is sometimes reduced. And some authors argue that naturalism is a necessary condition for generalization (Validity) (Morrison and Ross, 2003). Furthermore, the lack of validity (external) means that it is frequently difficult to transfer the findings of such studies in a credible way to the world outside the laboratory (Cropley, 2005). Moreover, experimental research is associated with quantitative research methods (Beaumont, 2009). This tells us that some research problems cannot be studied using an experiment because of ethical reasons. Thus, for this study, experimental design is not suitable as there is no group to control and ethics are a necessity since the study is of social context.

### **3.3.2 Survey Design**

Glasow, (2015) considers survey research as a social scientific research that focuses on people, the vital facts of people and their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivations and behaviour. Glasow (2015) further went on to identify three distinguishing characteristics of survey research. First, survey research is used to quantitatively describe specific aspects of a given population. These aspects often involve examining the relationships among variables. Second, the data required for survey research are collected from people and are therefore, subjective unlike experimental design which is objective. Finally, survey research uses a selected portion of the population from which the findings can later be generalized back to the population. Further, it mainly relies in the collection of primary data.

Although the findings of survey design can be generalized, the method has some limitations which bring its generalizability into question. Some of those limitations according to Babbie and Mouton, (2012) are that respondents may not be fully aware of their reasons for any given answer because of lack of memory on the subject or even boredom. Additionally, respondents may not feel encouraged to provide accurate and honest answers. Survey research is prone to researcher error where assumptions are made about the sample that may not be accurate. Furthermore, in survey research, independent and dependent variables are used to define the scope of study but cannot be explicitly controlled by the researcher. Unlike an experimental design a survey is less able to make strong causal inferences, hence, cause – effect is lacking. The interpretation is usually correlational in nature (Tharenou et al, 2007). The aim of survey is to assess the extent of the relationships between the independent variables and dependent variables without providing the insight of the investigation.

As alluded to above, survey design collects primary data whilst this study relies on secondary data (because of limited time, cost and the challenge to collect primary data from security agencies due to classifications of information). Furthermore, the lack of insight of the investigation into the phenomena will not suit the context analysis concerned in this topic due to lack of cause -effect. Therefore, survey design will not be suitable for this study.

### 3.3.3 Case Study Design

Arthur Cropley, (2015) asserts that the case study strategy is a written description of a problem or a situation. It presents small group of problems or focus on a particular issue. A case study is preferred when researcher has little control on events (Cropley, 2015). To Odoh and Chinedum (2014) case study can be defined as the background, development, current condition and environmental interaction of one or more individuals, groups, communities or organisations that are observed, recorded and analyzed for stages of patterns in relation to internal and external influences. Becker (1977) views a case study as a design that comes from a tradition of medical and psychological research when it refers to edited analysis of an individual that explains the dynamics and pathology of a given disease.

With the above definitions in context, case study design involves studying a small number of cases in great depth in the expectation that this gives deep insights into the process in all cases, the focus is on understanding the full scope of the problem rather than quantifying the problem. Arguably, qualitative research is a necessary precursor for quantitative research unless the scope of the problem is already well understood. The design exposes that one can properly acquire knowledge of a phenomenon from an intensive exploration of a sample case; the survey method does not tell you how the present depends on the past but the case study does (Yazan, 2015).

Moore and Dooley, (2017) posit that case study research, through reports of past studies, allows the exploration and understanding of complex issues. Through case study methods, a researcher is able to go beyond the quantitative statistical results and understand the behavioural conditions through the actor's perspective. Zainel, (2007) indicates that case study can include both quantitative and qualitative data, by doing so, it helps explain both the process and outcome of a phenomenon through complete observation, reconstruction and analysis of the cases under investigation.

Furthermore, there are a number of positives for using a case study; First, the examination of the data is most often conducted within the context of its use (Yin, 1984), that is, within the situation in which the activity takes place. A case study might be interested, for example, in the process by which a subject comprehends an authentic text. To explore the strategies, the reader uses, the researcher must observe the subject within their environment, such as reading in classroom or



reading for leisure. This would contrast with experiment, for instance, which deliberately isolates a phenomenon from its context, focusing on a limited number of variables (Zainel, 2007).

Second, variations in terms of intrinsic, instrumental and collective approaches to case studies allow for both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data as already indicated by Zainel (2007). Some longitudinal studies of individual subjects rely on qualitative data from journal writings which give descriptive accounts of behaviour (Yin, 1984). On the other hand, there are also a number of case studies which seek evidence from both numerical and categorical responses of individual subjects. While Yazan, (2015) cautions researchers not to confuse case studies with qualitative research, he also notes that case studies can be based entirely on quantitative evidence. However, case studies allows for using existing data (secondary data) and Cropley, (2015) assert that although it represents a relatively unusual approach, it is possible to carry out qualitative research without actually collecting any new data at all.

Third, the detailed qualitative accounts often produced in case studies not only help to explore or describe the data in real-life environment, but also help to explain the complexities of real life situations which may not be captured through experimental or survey research. A case study of reading strategies used by an individual subject, for instance, can give access to not only the numerical information concerning the strategies used, but also the reasons for strategy use and how the strategies are used in relation to other strategies (Yin, 1984; Yazan, 2015).

Despite these advantages, case studies have received criticisms. Yin (1984) discusses three types of arguments against case study research. First, case studies are often accused of lack of rigor. Yin (1984) notes that too many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy, and has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions.

Second, case studies provide very little basis for scientific generalization since they use a small number of subjects, some conducted with only one subject. To Almeida et al. (2017) and Yazan (2015), however, parameter establishment and objective setting of the research are far more important in case study method than a big sample size.

Third, case studies are often labelled as being too long, difficult to conduct and producing a massive amount of documentation (Yin, 1984). In particular, case studies of longitudinal nature

can produce a great deal of data over a period of time. The danger comes when this data are not managed and organized systematically.

In light of the above, and in spite of the disadvantages, the case study design meets conditions for the study at hand. The topic itself is a case study, the design allows for use of secondary data and it gives deep insights into the process focusing on understanding the full scope of the problem, rather than quantifying the problem. Therefore, case study design is suitable for this study and is adopted.

### **3.3.4 Selection of a Case Study/Unit of Analysis**

Selection of a case study is based on the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis is the major entity that is being analyzed in a study. It is the ‘what or who’ that is being studied (Yazan, 2015). In social science research, typical units of analysis include individuals, groups, organizations and social artifacts. Yin (2003) cited in Molefhe (2011) outlines that among the critical considerations in determining the unit of analysis in a case study research are the research questions. Below the research questions were restated:

- a. What are the causes of stress in the work environment?
- b. What are the effects of occupational stress on military operational readiness?
- c. How is occupational stress managed?

Thus, Effects of occupational stress and military operational readiness are the units of analysis under study and the research site is Botswana Defence Force. In light of the above, Botswana Defence Force is discussed below.

#### **3.3.4.1 Botswana Defence Force**

BDF as a military organization has over the years deployed its personnel in various missions. After its establishment in April 1977 by an Act of Parliament called the ‘BDF ACT No. 13 of 1977, BDF personnel have been deployed in various missions (Kenosi, 2015). Young et al, (2011) and Sekgwama, (2012) corroborate Kenosi (2015) in positing that BDF personnel have been deployed in international missions such as United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations, domestic operations such as anti-poaching operations, border deployments and disaster reliefs.

In peace keeping operations, BDF has been a regular contributor to United Nations missions. The BDF previously had its personnel serving on an African Union Liaison Mission in Ethiopia/Eritrea and military observers in Darfur, Sudan (Government Portal, 2011). First in 1992-1993, a BDF contingent participated in 'Operation Restore Hope'- a United States led coalition of forces to restore peace in Somalia, second, in 1993-1994 - a team of BDF officers participated in a UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda as observers. The same year, BDF troops participated in a UN peacekeeping operation in Mozambique, lastly, 1998 - BDF participated in 'Operation BOLEAS' a SADC military intervention in Lesotho (Henk, 2004). These military undertakings add to the likelihood that BDF soldiers will experience stress during their tours because in military deployments such as peacekeeping operations, role ambiguity may manifest in duties, authority, relationships with multinational forces, local authority, international agencies and laws of the country. In essence this will mean the operational environment has high levels of ambiguity and this should be a concern for soldiers as high role ambiguity is associated with high occupational stress (Sharma, 2015). In addition, people with more role ambiguity are more likely to incur injury at work and burnout thus compromising operational readiness (Driskel and Salas, 1996).

Apart from being deployed in peace support operations, a political decision was taken to deploy the BDF in anti-poaching operations in assistance to the Department of Wildlife and National Parks dating back from the mid-80s (Henk, 2007; Kenosi, 2015). The anti-poaching operational environment is characterized by insecurities due to the dangerous animals that soldiers cannot fight back and they become susceptible to fear (Young et al, 2011). Incidences of losing colleagues during these operations happen, particularly when soldiers are in the harbour at night. Recently on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2018, a BDF soldier was trampled to death by an elephant during the night while in operation in northern Botswana (Mmegi, 2018). Similarly, BDF press statement quoted in Mmegi announced that another soldier died from an elephant attack on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2018 (Mmegi online, 2018). This makes other soldiers feel endangered and in addition, causes psychological stressors that impact negatively on the soldier's control of the situation and further induces frustration leading to performance decrement (Driskell and Salas, 1996). Besides danger from animals, BDF soldiers face threats from the poachers themselves. At least one poacher was shot and killed by the Botswana Defence Force in a contact which drove several others across the border between Botswana and Zimbabwe (eNCA, 2011). The engagement involving killings

induces the combat environment and soldiers encounter the distinct stressors associated with warfighting (Like prolonged exposure to an intense environment where there is threat to life) hence fear related thoughts which leads to stress reactions such as fatigue, slower reaction times, indecision, disconnection from one's surroundings and inability to prioritize, resulting in reduced operational efficiency (Cambell and Nobel, 2009; Brooks and Greenberg, 2017).

In an endeavor to aid civil authority, BDF deploys in domestic support operations (Government Portal, 2011). First in 1995, BDF undertook rescue missions during floods that hit major parts of the country, secondly, in 1996, BDF deployed soldiers and equipment at Sua Pan in 'Operation Save Sua' to save the berm wall of Botswana Ash (Botash) plant which was being threatened by heavy floods. The soldiers laid 90,000 sandbags and 12,000 tires in the operation, third, in the floods that hit Ramotswa and its surrounding areas in February 2006, BDF teams carried out relentless rescue missions and saved hundreds of lives, lastly in 2009, BDF provided assistance during the flooding that affected a large community around the Kasane area (Government Portal, 2011). These are multidimensional tasks which require soldiers to apply skills they have not developed. Workload stress could surface because of the demand placed on the soldiers (Mlangeni, 2017).

Not only does the BDF assist in natural disasters but also support the Botswana Police in scuba diving salvage missions. In August 2012, the BDF recovered bodies of people who drowned in Gaborone dam (Mmegi, 2012), in 2014, the BDF scuba diving team recovered three bodies of drowned men who their canoe capsized in Lake Ngami (The Voice BW, 2014). Further, in December 2014, the BDF were involved in recovering yet another fatality from Lake Ngami (BOPA, 2014). The environment that scuba divers operate in is mostly infested with crocodiles and further, the scuba divers are exposed to human dead bodies every time they go into the mission. Traumatic exposure to death has been identified as a source of stress in the military operational environment (Brooks and Greenberg, 2017), in fact, psychological-environment stressors centers on observing and retrieving dead bodies (Campbell and Nobel, 2009). Additionally, there is constant danger involved in military scuba diving and the frequent or everyday operational activities in this environment consequently result in chronic stress (Dollard et al, 2003).

With the Units being deployed more often, it places more demands on troops because it calls for increased training and planning sessions which translates to more work load and increased pace of operation for soldiers (Young, 2013). The demands placed on the soldiers create work stress and fatigue sets in. The outcome of fatigue undermines human capability from decision making to alertness hence accidents are most likely to occur when employees are most tired. In July 2016 a BDF soldier died and two others were critical after an accident during a basic gunnery training course (BOPA, 2016). Moreover, other accidents in the Botswana Defence Force include air crashes. In October 2011, PC-7 trainers collided in midair, In June 2014, a Helicopter crashed during routine training, in February 2017, CASA 212-300 crashed soon after take-off and recently in April 2018, a BF-5 fighter jet crashed during a training mission (defenceweb, 2018).

In most of these crashes, fatalities were involved. In fact, Botswana Defence Force lost six personnel and nine aircrafts to air crashes over the last ten years (defenceweb, 2018). The accidents highlighted above, regardless of the causes, are traumatic events stressors (Campbell and Nobel, 2009). There is shock caused by the loss of a colleague. Mental stress emerges on individuals as a psychophysiological response to the situation (Campbell and Nobel, 2009). The well-ness of the soldiers is negatively impacted and morale (mental and emotional condition) which has a psychological influence deepens low degrading the operational readiness of the soldiers.

Above all, family separations are experienced due to operational deployments of which research has indicated is a recognised stressor (Bartone, 2006; Young, 2013). To Young, (2013) Botswana Defence Force deploys its troops more often which has change in focus and this places more demands on the personnel. It further increases the workload as such deployments call for regular pre-deployment trainings to enhance operational readiness. It is important to note that participation in military operations is potentially detrimental to mental health and well-being (psychological strains that the stressors create, such as feelings of isolation, confusion and ambiguity, powerlessness, boredom and threat/danger) and this has been recognised and documented to have negative effects on operational readiness (Cuvelier and Berg, 2008).

Considering the various occupational stressors discussed, it is arguable that soldier's constant exposure to stressors can be destructive to their well-being and thus affect their operational readiness. Even though soldiers are trained to deal with different situations, certain

circumstances create significant stressors which are complex to cope with (Hourani, 2006). The findings by Young, (2013) indicate that work-related factors are significant sources of stressors within the Botswana Defence Force which consequently affect operational readiness.

### **3.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

This section deals with data collection methods for this study. To yield data, a collection method or instrument has to be employed. De vause, (2009) assert that data for any research design can be collected with any data collection method. How data is collected is irrelevant to the logic of the design. Data collection methods are according to Cooper and Schindler, (2003) mainly categorized into quantitative and qualitative collection methods. This study is mainly concerned with qualitative data collection method but for the purpose of broader understanding, below the two are briefly discussed followed by the sources of data/information.

#### **3.4.1 Quantitative Data Collection Method**

The Quantitative data collection methods rely on random sampling and structured data collection instruments that fit diverse experiences into predetermined response categories. They produce results that are easy to summarize, compare and generalize (Rahi, 2007). To Addo, (2014), these methods are based on mathematical calculations in various formats and experiments. Furthermore, quantitative often provide a macro view which involve large samples because numeric and measured data is used to explain and establish correlation and causation. Cropely, (2015) suggest that quantitative methods are concerned with testing hypotheses derived from theory and being able to estimate the size of a phenomenon of interest. Depending on the research question, participants may be randomly assigned to different treatments. If this is not feasible, the researcher may collect data on participant and situational characteristics in order to statistically control their influence on the dependent, or outcome variable. Typical quantitative data gathering strategies include among others experiments, questionnaires, structured interviews (face to face, telephonically or mail) and surveys (Hancock, 1998). In fact, Almeida et al (2017) suggest that quantitative research methods hinge on primary data sources and collection strategies.

### **3.4.2 Qualitative Data Collection Methods**

On the contrary, qualitative data collection methods do not involve numbers or mathematical calculations. Qualitative methods are closely associated with words, sounds, feeling, emotions, colours and other elements that are non-quantifiable (Zainal, 2007). They are concerned with the interpretation of how people make sense of their experiences, lives and their structure of the world. Almeida et al' (2017) posits that qualitative methods aim to ensure greater level of depth of understanding of the phenomenon under study. They use exploratory designs which are mostly qualitative in nature. As purported by Creswel, (2003), they also use triangulation to increase the credibility of their findings which are often not generalizable to a specific population. To substitute the lack of generalizability, Addo, (2014) asserts that each case study produces a single piece of evidence that can be used to seek general patterns among different studies of the same issue. Qualitative research data could come from interviews, focus groups, observations or documents and they can use both primary and secondary data (existing data) (Creswel, 2003).

The choice between quantitative or qualitative methods of data collection depends on the area of the research and the nature of research aims and objectives. Various factors influence the choice of a data collection method: the questions to be investigated, resources available and timeline are some of the factors that can have influence. In this study, data collection method suitable is qualitative method which is mainly exploratory. The method is accommodative to the study because it allows for document review (secondary data) which is the main source of information for the study. With the assertion that it is possible to carry out qualitative research without actually collecting any new data at all (Cropley, 2015), desk search, newspapers, books, magazines and published journals were utilized as the data is readily available and easily accessible. Moreover, this study is concerned with in depth analysis of the phenomenon under study from the context view, not mathematical calculations which are more pronounced in quantitative methods. Therefore, qualitative data collection method is suitable for this study.

### **3.4.3 Sources of Data/Information**

As research is conducted, different sources of information are consulted. Generally, there are three types of data sources as in primary, secondary and tertiary sources (Rahi, 2017). This study

has adopted the use of secondary sources and it is justified in the brief discussions of the three sources below.

#### **3.4.3.1 Primary Sources**

Primary sources are original materials. They are from the time period involved and have not gone through analysis. Primary sources are original materials on which other research is based. These are the first hand sources of data gathered by the researcher themselves. They present original thinking, report a discovery, or share new information. These are usually sourced from; surveys, observation, questionnaire, experiments, interviews, to mention but a few. Primary sources are the most influencing technique in quantitative method (Rahi, 2017). Their advantage is that the data collected through this method is real time, the researcher is involved and they have more reliability and accuracy. However, using primary sources is expensive, time consuming and requires a longer time. Hence, these sources could not be used in this study.

#### **3.4.3.2 Secondary Sources**

Secondary sources unlike primary sources are interpretations and evaluations of primary sources. These are data collected by someone else earlier. Secondary sources are not evidence, but rather commentary on discussion of evidence. The data from these sources comprises of published research, media reports, internet material, journals to name but a few. The advantage of using these sources is that it is economical, quick and easy and takes a shorter time. Critics to these sources indicate less accuracy and reliability and may not be specific to the researcher's need. However, this study has adopted the use of secondary sources because of time due to work commitments. Furthermore, Cropley, (2015) asserts that it is possible to use secondary data conducting a qualitative research.

#### **3.4.3.3 Tertiary Sources**

Tertiary sources consist of information that is a refined and collected from primary and secondary sources. These sources may include almanacs or fact books, chronologies or timelines, dictionaries and encyclopedias, directories to name but a few. The sources are not credited to any particular author. Hence, the sources could not be used in this study.



### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

Moore and Dooly, (2017) describes data analysis as a systematic search for meaning; a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. They go on to posit that analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, comparison, and pattern finding (Moore and Dooly, 2017). To Yazan, (2015) data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read. In this study, qualitative data analysis methods of using non-numeric information like text documents, journals, newspapers and transcripts is adopted.

Kawulich (2004) suggest that there are many different technics of analyzing qualitative data. The way that a researcher chose to analyse data should stem from a combination of factors which include the research questions being asked, the theoretical foundation of the study and the appropriateness of the technique for making sense of the data (Yazan, 2015). Bernard (2000) cited in Kawulich, (2015) suggests several approaches to data analysis, including interpretive analysis, narrative and performance analysis, discourse analysis, grounded theory analysis, content analysis and cross-sectional analysis. The most common qualitative data analysis methods are the combination use of both content analysis and discourse analysis (Cropely, 2015). To determine their suitability to this study, below they are briefly discussed.

#### **3.5.1 Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis according to Mogashoa, (2014); Shanthi et al, (2015) is a qualitative method that has been adopted and developed by constructionists to analyse the construction of texts or utterances. It is a methodology for analyzing social phenomena that is qualitative, interpretive, and constructionist. In addition, discourse analysis when applied increases the understanding of human experience (Shanthi et al, 2015) and this is suitable for this study. Morgan (2010) describes discourse as a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning. Moreover, Shanthi et al, (2015) further suggest that discourse analysis is meant to provide a higher awareness of the hidden motivations

in others and ourselves and, therefore, enable us to solve concrete problems, not by providing clear answers, but by making researchers ask ontological and epistemological questions.

Thus, discourse analysis will not provide absolute answers to a specific problem, but enable us to understand the conditions behind a specific problem and make us realize that the essence of that problem and its resolution lie in its assumptions, the very assumptions that enable the existence of that problem. Discourse analysis can be applied to any text, that is, to any problem or situation and can provide a positive social psychological critique of any phenomenon under the observation of the researcher (Morgan, 2010). It can finally be suggested that discourse analysis is a broad term used to analyse written and spoken text of people's discourse (text and talk) in everyday social context. Hence, the use of discourse analysis in this study is suited.

### **3.5.2 Content Analysis**

Qualitative content analysis is one of numerous research methods used to analyze text data. The goal of content analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study. Qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (White and Marsh, 2006). Further, content analysis as viewed by Elo and Kygan (2008), as a systematic, rigorous approach to analyzing documents obtained or generated in the course of research.

According to Cropley, (2015), research using qualitative content analysis focuses on the characteristics of language as communication, with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text. Text data might be in verbal, print, or electronic form and might have been obtained from narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, print media such as articles, observations, focus groups, books, documents or manuals (Elo and Kynga, 2008).

Critics on this method posit that the challenge of this type of analysis is failing to develop a complete understanding of the context, thus failing to identify key categories. This can result in findings that do not accurately represent the data (validity) (Cropley, 2015).

In this study, this shortfall is complimented by the use of both content and discourse analysis. White and Marsh, (2006) argues that while discourse analysis and content analysis come from very different philosophical bases, they can be complementary because they are both interested

in exploring social reality. The same view is held by Elo and Kynga, (2008) who also posits that the differences in analysis of these methods mean that they provide alternative perspectives on the role of language in social sciences. In this regard, they are complementary in terms of what they reveal as a result of conflicting ontology and epistemology (Elo and Kynga, 2008). This conflict according to Elo and Kynga (2008) can be seen in the focus in content analysis on reliability and validity contrasting sharply with the focus on the interpretive accuracy and reflexive examination that characterizes discourse analysis. Thus the two methods are deemed to be suitable for this study.

### **3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical considerations are critical in a research (Roller, 2017). To Fouka and Mantzorou, (2011) ethics is the branch of philosophy which deals with the dynamics of decision making concerning what is right and wrong. Scientific research work, as all human activities, is governed by individual, community and social values. Research ethics involve requirements on daily work, the protection of dignity of subjects and the publication of the information in the research. It emphasizes the risk-benefit balance (Fouka and Mantzorou, 2011).

Equally important, a research in sensitive areas requires careful balancing of ethical principles so that collection of data can occur without harm or jeopardy to individual participants or security of information (Decker et al, 2011). It is with the above that the data used in this study was collected from open sources (data already in the public domain). No confidential military information was gathered that could result breach in security because the researcher took note of the sensitivity of the military and security matters. Additionally, this study acknowledged all the sources of information consulted in order to avoid plagiarism. This was done through text referencing and putting together a list of references showing all the sources cited in the study.

### **3.7 SUMMARY**

Chapter 3 presented the methodology of how the research problem will be investigated and why particular methods and techniques would be used. Qualitative research was outlined and adopted as the research methodology. Case study design was discussed and justified as the appropriate structure to follow when conducting this study. Furthermore, Botswana Defence Force is discussed as it forms basis of unit of analysis. In this study, qualitative data collection methods in

the form of secondary data are hinged upon getting comprehensive information for analysis. Content and discourse analysis were employed on complementary basis with each other in the analysis of data in this study.

The next Chapter deals with the analysis.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The identification of stressors and the evaluation of their likely severity in the different settings and phases of military service are essential requirements for developing a comprehensive understanding of military occupational stress. This helps in developing stress-reducing strategies useful for enhancing unit performance and for promoting soldiers' health thus improved military operational readiness. This Chapter serves to present an analysis on the effects of occupational stress in military operational readiness: case of the Botswana Defence Force. The analysis of this study is based on the secondary data presented in Chapter 2 and the research site which is Botswana Defence Force in Chapter 3. The Chapter is organised according to the research questions and objectives in Chapter 1. Section 4.2 will focus on the causes of occupational stress in the military work environment followed by analysis on the effects of occupational stress on military operational readiness in section 4.3. Section 4.4 considers analysis on measures of managing stress. Lastly, section 4.5 will mark the summary of this chapter with the key aspects.

#### **4.2 ANALYSIS OF SOURCES OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS**

The literature reviewed highlighted a number of causes of occupational stress in the military environment. Major among them used in this research are work overload, role ambiguity, work relationships, danger and work-home interface/isolation. Below is a brief account on their analysis.

##### **4.2.1 Work Overload**

As demonstrated from the secondary data presented, it is evident that the military operational environment places heavy demands on the soldiers as they always have to adjust to new responsibilities without being given sufficient time to adjust. The situation is exacerbated by working long hours/days during deployments and also the high frequency of duration and pace of deployments. This results in workload stress surfacing. The circumstance under which the military operates is in no doubt the primary source of occupational stress. It has been observed that Botswana Defence Force also work under the same conditions as highlighted by Young,

(2013) in the reviewed literature in this study. It is therefore, apparent that work-overload contributes to experiences of negative occupational stress by the BDF personnel.

#### **4.2.2 Role Ambiguity**

The military operational environment has high levels of ambiguity and this is a concern since role ambiguity/conflict is associated with high occupational stress. In particular, peace support missions where soldiers can be ambushed by the same people they are feeding which derails their mission because soldiers have to use force. This leads to ambiguity resulting in stressful situation. BDF has participated in UN peace support operations since 1992. Since role ambiguity is a source of occupational stress, these military undertakings indicate that BDF soldiers experience negative stress during their tours.

#### **4.2.3 Work Relationships**

Literature suggests that poor working relationships with colleagues and superiors can be a major source of work stress. The always volatile military operational environment requires cohesion among colleagues for protection and it also aid soldiers to perform their tasks since they always work in teams. However, non-supportive behavior from colleagues and supervisors always appears in the military deployments. BDF soldiers are not spared from the phenomenon since they operate in similar environment and military culture. The situation contributes significantly to feelings of job pressure resulting in stress. In light of that, work relationships are a source of stress to BDF soldiers.

#### **4.2.4 Danger**

BDF has been deploying in anti-poaching operations in assistance to the Department of Wildlife and National Parks dating back from the mid-80s. The anti-poaching operational environment is characterized by insecurities due to armed poachers and the dangerous animals that soldiers cannot fight back and this brings susceptibility to fear. Incidences of losing colleagues during these operations happen, particularly when soldiers are in the harbour at night. In fact, loss of life to BDF soldiers has happened due to animal attacks. The engagement of poachers by the BDF involving killings also induces the combat environment and soldiers encounter the distinct stressors associated with warfighting. As literature suggests, the anti-poaching operational environment causes psychological stressors and impact negatively on the soldier's control of the

situation they are operating in, leading to negative emotions of frustrations. The detrimental effect of danger has been noted in these types of military operational environment where tasks related to decision making and job performance were degraded because of stressful nature of danger. These undoubtedly is an illustration that danger is a source of occupational stress to BDF soldiers.

#### **4.2.5 Work-home Interface/Isolation**

It has been demonstrated that the life of a soldier is not stagnant as there are constant changes in which military deployments or operations are most of the time sudden and unexpected. This for the most part conflicts with activities that were supposed to happen in the family at that particular time. As a result, the inability of a soldier to balance between family and demanding work schedule has a negative stressful effect. It is also most certainly evident that the most stressful experience of soldiers is being away from family from whom they get social and emotional support. Being away from home can leave a soldier socially isolated and lonely especially if the deployment is in remote areas, where there is foreign culture and language with no proper communication tools. The support they get from colleagues in deployments can have the opposite effect from that of the family. BDF deploys in anti-poaching operations, peace support operations, and other aid to civil authority duties more often and this separates personnel from their families. In the final analysis to this point, family separations experienced due to these deployments are military operational stressors. Thus work-home interface/isolation is a source of occupational stress to Botswana Defence Force personnel.

### **4.3 ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS**

Literature has shown that the phenomenon of occupational stress has adverse impact on military operational readiness across the armies in the world due to the nature of their operations. It is also evident that military personnel are repeatedly exposed to stressful operational environment and incidents. Drawing from the review in Chapter 2, poor work performance, lack of interest on the job and low morale have been identified to have a direct negative impact on the operational readiness of the military. With specific focus to the Botswana Defence Force, these effects are briefly explored below.

### **4.3.1 Poor Work Performance**

Megan and Donald, (2013) have asserted that stressors found in the military context can reduce operational effectiveness. These include impairment such as attention lapses, biased information processing which can contribute to errors in judgement and performance. These may further lead to lack of focus and accidents may results during operations or trainings. As submitted earlier in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2, role ambiguity (which has the more likely hood of people incurring injuries and burnout when subjected to it due to stress) and work-overload have been observed to contribute more to the effect of poor work performance which ultimately affect operational readiness.

BDF have operated in environment where the personnel have been exposed to role ambiguity. Furthermore, it is also evident that with the Units being deployed more often, it places more demands on troops because it calls for increased training and planning sessions which translates to more work load and increased pace of operation for soldiers. The demands placed on the soldiers create work stress and fatigue sets in. The outcome of fatigue undermines human capability from decision making to alertness hence accidents are most likely to occur when soldiers are most tired. Given these points, fatal accidents have occurred in the BDF as highlighted in Chapter 3 section 3.3.4.1. These include among others accidents during gunnery training courses and those that include air crashes of trainers colliding midair or during routine training. These incidents are an illustration that the operational effectiveness is affected and with that considered, poor work performance is a consequence. Ultimately, this is also an indication that alertness is compromised and there are errors in judgement.

Personnel exposed to this effect of poor work performance are said to compromise operational readiness (Driskel and Salas, 1996) since stress has been asserted to be a significant determinant of performance. It can therefore be inferred from the above discourse that BDF operational readiness decline due poor work performance.

### **4.3.2 Lack of Interest on the Job**

Botswana Defence Force personnel are exposed to prolonged intense environment where there is a threat to life in anti-poaching operations. Furthermore, scuba diving operations that the BDF undertakes have traumatic exposure to death (which has been identified as a source of stress in



the military operational environment) for the personnel. This leads to stress reactions such as depression and burnout. As Hourani (2006) asserts, if an organisation has depressed and burnout personnel due to work stress, it will be operationally affected substantially due to lack of interest in doing their job leading to poor turnout. Because of this stressful effect, subsequently lack of productivity is realised. This phenomenon can affect the military operational readiness if large numbers show that a lot of unit personnel are no longer interested in doing their job. Furthermore, the effect of lack of interest on the job is indicated by absenteeism which according to Hourani, (2006) is a common response mechanism adopted by workers to cope with stress. Loss of productivity and ultimately operational readiness are highest during this time as personnel struggle to deal with physical and emotional stress effects. In view of that, the BDF military operational readiness is impacted by this occupational stress effect. This is mainly as evidence suggest, due to the exposure of personnel to the operational environment which is a source of work stress that leads to lack of interest on the job.

#### **4.3.3 Low Morale**

Morale is associated with psychological influence in the state of troops who serve within a unit. If there is high morale among the military force or among the troops there will be less likelihood of having a larger number suffering from stress casualties (Mlangeni, 2017). This means the higher the morale the less casualties of occupational stress. The effect of low morale is detrimental as discussed in Chapter 2 with an example of British forces in regard to the Falklands war and the Malta campaign. Accidents involving fatalities regardless of the causes are traumatic events stressors. There is shock caused by the loss of a colleague and the mental stress emerges on individuals as a psychophysiological response to the situation (Cambell and Nobel, 2009). The well-ness of the soldiers is negatively impacted and morale (mental and emotional condition) which has a psychological influence deepens low degrading the operational readiness of the soldiers. This situation by the same token qualifies to Botswana Defence Force because they have lost six personnel and nine aircrafts to air crashes over the last ten years. Arguably, the events were traumatic and shock has been experienced. The granted view is that morale has been dampened leading to operational readiness being affected.

Additionally, discussions in Chapter 3 have posited that family separations are experienced due to the BDF deployments. The importance of family from whom soldiers get social and emotional

support cannot be over emphasized as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2.5. This situation as Bartone (2005) asserts, have high psychological strain and puts individuals in a state where their mental resources are threatened and depleted leading to decreased soldiers' well-being and their job performance. This negative effect on the soldier's well-being dampens morale and military operational readiness is affected. This arguably puts BDF in the same boat in which its troops are affected by low morale and military operational readiness affected.

#### **4.4 MEASURES OF COPING AND MANAGING STRESS**

In the military, soldiers cope better in predicted stressful situations as their pre-deployment training will be designed to give strategies for survival and resilience through dry runs. But in situations where the event in the operational environment has not been rehearsed it becomes difficult for soldiers to repress those stressful situations. Botswana Defence Force who deploys in anti-poaching (for example) areas where there are dangerous animals, in this instance, soldiers have to know how to respond when confronted by these animals. It is suggested that the soldiers are equipped with survival skills and knowledge making use of natural resources. This forms successful coping strategies resulting in maximized resilience to stress effects that is induced by danger.

However, coping strategies or managing of occupational stress should be subject to individual, the fluid operational environment and sources of stress. But this is not the case as literature indicates that most of the stress coping programmes which are available at work only target the individuals. In essence, most stress management interventions are individually focused concerned with changing the employee as opposed to the work environment. These are inadequate in the sense that they are only for the individual and leave the organisation out. This means the sources of stress will always remain unabated. Until the organisation is targeted with stress interventions, the effects of occupational stress will remain unabated and military operational readiness will remain at lower levels.

#### **4.5 SUMMARY**

Chapter 4 presented the analysis of the effects of occupational stress to military operational readiness with focus to the BDF. It is evident that the sources of occupational stress in the BDF among others include but not limited to; work overload, role ambiguity, work relationships,

danger and isolation. This occupational stress has adverse effects to military operational readiness in the BDF because it leads to poor work performance, lack of interest in the job and low morale. Mitigating against these effects requires stress coping strategies or stress management interventions. However, stress coping strategies or interventions available in the organisation are focused only on the individual as opposed to the work environment.

The next Chapter covers conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The primary purpose of this study has been to analyse the effects of occupational stress on military operational readiness with particular focus on the BDF and come up with possible recommendations. Therefore, this Chapter serves to present conclusions and recommendations drawn from Chapter 4. The scope of this Chapter is articulated as follows: Section 5.2 outlines the conclusions and section 5.3 present recommendations.

#### **5.2 CONCLUSIONS**

Organisational stress is a major problem in organisations. The impact of occupational stress on the continued well-being of an individual is nowhere as pronounced as it is when the individual is in the Armed Forces. It affects the military personnel more because of the critical environment in which they operate. This study has shown that BDF is not spared from the occupational stress phenomenon since it carries out operations exposing personnel to operational environment stressors. BDF participates in peace keeping operations, anti-poaching, scuba diving operations which the analysis has shown they are stressful in nature. Ultimately, operational stressors have negative effect on the military operational readiness in the BDF.

Consequently, the study has highlighted factors as poor work performance, lack of interest on the job and low morale to have a direct negative impact on the operational readiness of the military. Psychological strain due to shock, fatigue, depression, burnout, boredom and loneliness puts personnel in a state where their mental resources are threatened and depleted leading to decreased soldiers' well-being and their job performance. The well-being of these service members affects military operational readiness because any failure to meet physical and mental health standards results in fewer deployable or operational troops. Therefore, it is the position of this study that military operational readiness depends on these factors as critical for military operational performance.

The effects of occupational stress to the BDF military operational readiness have been evidenced by the incidences and accidents that BDF has experienced. These, as discussed earlier in Chapter

3, are relational to the literature analysed in Chapter 4. During the analysis, it became evident that participation in military operations is potentially detrimental to mental health and well-being (psychological strains that the stressors create, such as feelings of isolation, confusion and ambiguity, powerlessness, boredom and threat/danger) of soldiers and this has been recognised and documented to have negative effects on operational readiness. This motivates the study to conclude that effects of occupational stress in the BDF have a detrimental effect on the military operational readiness as shown in the analysis.

Additionally, this study has also identified that managing resilience to occupational stress target the individual which gives temporary coping measure. An example is counselling of individuals which only help soldiers cope with their personal and work lives better. However, this is not an organisational level intervention and this means organisational sources of stress are unlikely to be affected by counselling. Since the organisation is not included in the stress intervention measures, the stressors will remain and military operational readiness will always be affected.

Theoretically, the study contributes as it pertains to closing the existing gap in the available literature concerning occupational stress in the Botswana Defence Force. Furthermore, practically, the study might provide opportunity to shape the positive organization culture by adopting policies on stress management coping strategies which may lead to improved organizational performance thus upgraded military operational readiness.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

During analysis, it became evident that effects of occupational stress in the BDF have a detrimental effect on the military operational readiness. However, it has been shown in the literature that in order to improve operational readiness, interventions of stress management are key to dealing with occupational stress effects.

In dealing with stress effects, stress management interventions should not be individually focused as literature has indicated, they should rather be concerned with changing the work environment itself as opposed to the worker. Therefore, BDF should adopt job re-design and organisational change as the ultimate approaches to stress management because they focus in removing the sources of problems in the work environment instead of leaving or expecting an individual to deal with it alone. Even so, it is difficult for an organisation like the BDF or any

other military to change because militaries have a strong tradition where each job is role based and highly dependent on hierarchy. However, stress interventions management should incorporate the response within an organisation perspective to achieve results. Targeted interventions should ideally be both for the institution and the individual in order to improve operational readiness.

Furthermore, it is equally important for the BDF to foster as part of stress intervention management an awareness of mental health in the military, in order to reduce the stigma of suffering from occupational stress. This can be achieved if a control cycle is formulated with regards to stress management by accepting that employees are experiencing stress at work, identifying sources of stress, assessing risk to health by experience of stress, designing of control strategies, implementing and evaluation of the effects of those strategies. In addition, Employee Assistance Programmes in which maladaptive interventions like alcohol are targeted, should be part of the control cycle. With the above interventions military operational readiness can be kept at optimal levels.

### **5.3.1 Recommendations for Future study**

This research contributes to the literature on occupational stress in the BDF and thus provides a foundation of further research work in which some questions have been provoked and remain unanswered by the scope of the study. It is important to note that the study relied on the secondary data which is a second hand information and very limited on the BDF. As such, it is not a comprehensive study on the effects of occupational stress to military operational readiness to the BDF or quantitative approach. Hence, a potential area of research will be to undertake a similar study using sampling by collecting primary data from the BDF. Another important area which has been identified and not covered in this research is non-operational stressors. These are personal life stressors that originate outside the military environment but have a spillover effect on the performance of military personnel thus affecting their deployment. In light of this, a topic on the effects of non-operational stressors to military operational readiness is recommended. An additional topic involves an investigation into stress management strategies that target the organisation to explore if they exist and their level of implementation.

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