

## Challenges of Integration of Women in Peacekeeping Operations

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Integration of women in peacekeeping operations is imperative for inspiring new solutions and solving conflicts. Men, women, boys and girls are affected differently by armed conflict which calls for a gendered approach to peacekeeping to adequately respond to their needs, therefore, UN has also shifted to a gendered approach in peacekeeping by passing the first Resolution 1325 in the year 2000. Many subsequent Resolutions have been passed since then so that the peacekeeping mission may not overlook vital issues of gender inclusive security essential for establishing sustainable peace and efforts are being made to impart an exclusive pre-deployment training to women officers. The current study aims to explore the challenges faced by deployed women peacekeepers which impact their effective integration into the peacekeeping operations and to propose strategies to deal with them. The data was collected from 13 women military officers from different countries who were undergoing pre-deployment training: female military officer course at CUNPK, Delhi wherein aspects related to female deployment on UN missions were covered. The women officers with deployment experience were taken for the study. A semi-structured interview was used for data collection. The data was analysed using qualitative content analysis method.*

*The major themes that emerged from the analysis highlight the main challenges faced by the women peacekeepers that include family responsibilities, motherhood, cultural sensitivity, sexual exploitation and abuse, gender role as determinant of success and occupational tasks. The study suggests the strategies to counter the challenges faced by women peacekeepers which include: acceptance of incongruent gender roles, building cultural intelligence of the peacekeepers, taking a proactive stance against sexual harassment and bullying, facilitating social support to the family members of the deployed women and optimized utilization of the women peacekeepers.*

**Key words:** Challenges, Gender Integration, Peacekeeping, Pre-deployment, United Nations, Women Peacekeeper

**Relevance to the meeting** – *The study is directly relevant to the meeting as it focuses on the challenges faced by women military officers during deployment. These help shed light on the social, cultural and psychological factors that impact integration of women in peacekeeping units. It also suggests strategies to counter these challenges and contributes to existing solutions to promote a gendered approach to peacekeeping.*

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

UN started a major exercise to analyze its peacekeeping experience and introduce a series of reforms to strengthen its capacity to manage and sustain field operations in the year 2000. Former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had established a High-level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations on 31 October 2014, to make a comprehensive assessment of the state of UN peace operations today, and the emerging needs of the future. The Secretary-General said that “the world is changing and UN peace operations must change with it if they are to remain an indispensable and effective tool in promoting international peace and

security.” The Panel considered a broad range of issues facing peace operations, including the changing nature of conflict, evolving mandates, good offices and peace building challenges, managerial and administrative arrangements, planning, partnerships, human rights and protection of civilians. This led UN to shift its peacekeeping mission mandate beyond exclusive military operations to multidimensional missions. It subsumes various key priorities like help countries in the transition from war to lasting peace, restructuring states’ institutions, reorganizing judiciary and rebuilding of societal norms, help to the sexual abuse and violence victims.

All this has led to an increasing recognition that a *gendered approach to peacekeeping* is essential to adequately respond to the needs of men, women, boys and girls who have been affected differently by armed conflict. There are two key dimensions in taking a gendered approach to peace building and conflict resolution. Firstly, the approach must acknowledge differences in women and men’s experiences, ensuring that women’s interests and needs are met. Secondly, it involves recognizing the key roles that women play in peace building and conflict resolution and facilitating those roles wherever feasible (UNSC, 2000). Such an approach facilitates the implementation of new security policies that may respond to all the different needs and issues on the ground.

The risk in not having a gender perspective is that the mission will overlook important issues of inclusive security that will jeopardize agreements and threaten any fragile peace. Applied at the mission level, gender mainstreaming is one tool for understanding complex situations, reaching a broader consensus, inspiring new solutions and solving conflicts by incorporating new approaches and viewpoints. By following and implementing gender-sensitive policies and procedures, a peacekeeping operation can provide a good example to national and local institutions. UN website provides some situational awareness of the extent of gender integration in the military: As per UN statistics (Feb, 2018) there are total of 3156 peacekeepers (military observers and staff officers) across the globe out of which 269 are women military observers and staff officers.

## 1.1 International peacekeeping perspective

The UN inextricably links women and peace by basing its call for women in mission roles on the idea that women are peaceful and nurturing. Since masculinity and femininity by definition are constructed by standards of the social order the integrated role of women may lead us to explore broader gender-based issues in various settings, including those in conflict. Thus, peace and security scholars propose that conflict can be understood by “deconstructing gender relations” (Pruitt, 2013). Women and men play different roles in violence. The gender order (by this, equating to the methods or constructs in which society shapes the notions of masculinity and femininity into power relations) can feed the conflict and help in making peace by providing incentives and disincentives to men and women for engaging in violence and security work.

The basis for ‘war culture’ has been traced to the masculine-feminine dichotomy by Goldstein (2003). It is by devaluation of femininity that the state traditionally constructs the association between masculinity and militarism wherein the soldier has to prove that, ‘he is a man’ by fighting. Through the inclusion of women in peacekeeping, this notion is directly challenged as women are not only observers of peace but also trained as combatants to maintain law and order as peacekeepers.

The present gender order grants superior status to masculinity and also leads to undervaluing of ideas connected with femininity; promotion of peace in such a context is seen as feminine and hence is deemed relatively less important (Pruitt, 2013). Hence, it is crucial to make widespread transformation within the gender order a legitimate concern for peace-building and peace-making. There are various benefits as well as challenges in the incorporation of women into mission roles. Some of the many positives include establishing better relationships and contact with local women to normalize and de-escalate tensions that may have risen between locals and their male colleagues. Women peacekeepers may have greater sympathetic awareness and sensitivity to local female needs and their challenges. However, there are

numerous challenges still faced by women peacekeepers as their participation in peacekeeping roles has a relatively short history. Primarily, on a global level, this implies an overall lack of adequate training is given as a female peacekeeper. Additionally, most female peacekeepers are from developing countries with more traditional norms in society such as maintaining dual responsibilities of work and family and exposed to a lack of resources and access to basic education, including learning the English language. Further, many women still struggle to engage in peacekeeping missions because there is a lack of global political will to integrate them, and many national policies are still enforced in which women are not actively encouraged in the military or state-based forces (Ghimire, 2017).

## **1.2 UN perspective on Women in peacekeeping**

UN rationale for inclusion of women in peacekeeping is grounded on the belief that the presence of women can “help to reduce conflict and confrontation; improve access and support for local women; empower women in the community; provide a greater sense of security to local populations, including women and children; help create a safer and less fearful environment for women; highlight the UN’s commitment to diversity, inclusion and gender equality”; and ‘broaden the repertoire of skills and styles available within a peacekeeping mission” (UN, 2011). There have been reports of better and more civilized behaviour by male staff in the presence of female mission staff (Simic, 2010). Further, the cases of HIV and brothels near peacekeeping reduce with the presence of female peacekeepers. The presence of female police officers increases the reporting of crime by the local women (Vlachova & Biason, 2002). These reports clearly indicate the benefit of presence of women peacekeepers. However, this inclusion also comes with its own set of challenges.

The first major challenge is the military setting itself. Traditionally, women in peacekeeping tend to be military and police officers from troop-contributing countries (TCC). The gender order prevalent within the institutionalization of military and police is just as evident in the peacekeeping setting. Women peacekeepers, who are socialized to the highly masculine culture of these institutions, have internalized notions of ‘boys will be boys’; as a consequence, these individuals are less likely to report sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA) offences committed by their male colleagues against locals (Jennings, 2008). This may compromise the trust of the local women towards the police rather than enhancing it. However, in order to achieve a higher percentage of women in peacekeeping roles it is essential that the overall recruitment of women in TCC is increased.

## **1.3 Military Perspective on Benefits and challenges of Inclusion of Women**

The military can be defined as an institution responsible for the legitimate forms of violence (Greenwood, 2017). It is related to but different from militarism which is defined as a system of ideas designed to legitimize the use of military force, and militarization, the process and practices that uphold militarism (Greenwood, 2017). The military is a closed system where individuals experience controlled and coordinated work, living, and emotional experience (Arkin and Dobrofsky, 1978). It is perceived as a microcosmic society by itself - a select fraternity that has its own special set of traditions, associations and affiliations amongst its members that set it apart from civil society (Bakshi, 2006). It is fundamentally gendered based upon the central notion that the ideal soldier is essentially male (Woodward & Duncanson, 2017). This reflects the gender order of society and also reinforces it.

The inclusion of women in such a set-up comes with social barriers and challenges that need to be addressed. Women and men are socialized to military culture through basic training; Military culture is dominated by a model of military masculinity and has hostility towards the idea of gender integration and cooperation (Woodward, 2000). These notions are internalized by the recruits who then become entrenched in their rigid gender identities, materializing in the form of structural and attitudinal barriers to inclusion of women in military. The performance of women does not act as a barrier to inclusion. These barriers lie at organisational level and also in the day- to-day working level wherein informal exclusionary practices and attitudes breed

prejudice hampering the professional growth of the women (Bakshi, 2006).

Women in the military also face personal struggles and challenges besides organisational and work. Bakshi (2006) reported that women officers are generally appraised as performing on par with men based on the feedback from the Service Headquarters, personal observation and interviews of officers. However, their professional availability is greatly limited by the domestic constraints placed on them as caregivers, compared to their male counterparts who enjoy more flexibility in the domestic sphere. In order to gain acceptance in the predominantly masculine environment, they might reject their traditional feminine roles yet they may not be considered 'one of the boys', they are seen as rejecting feminine values and embracing traditionally masculine values, despite the fact that societal gendered norms teach that women's naturally softer characters simply do not 'fit' those of the typical hegemonic, masculine soldier (Arkin and Dobrofsky, 1978). These newly adopted masculine values tend to be in line with the generalised stereotype of the traditional 'macho fighting man' symbolising physical strength, aggression, emotional control and heterosexual competency (Hinojosa, 2010; Masters & Stouffer, cited in Whitworth, 2004). Yet on returning to society they are still expected to resign to their designated gender roles of being the caring, nurturing, and homely female.

Interviews with servicewomen showed that females who took on traditionally male roles struggled to get on with male colleagues as opposed to those who took on administrative roles (Basham, 2009:734). This behaviour reinforces the idea that women are judged on their collective gender rather than individual skills (Chandler et al, 1995:129). Equally, a key problem with women as a minority in the forces is that each individual is often treated like a model for that minority.

The integration of men and women is beneficial to the culture of the military units. Excluding women from roles considered more demanding, reinforces the assumption that women are a collective body that should be treated and managed differently to male colleagues (Basham, 2009:734). The introduction of a more inclusive policy is thought by many as welcome improvement to military capability.

## **1.4 Objective**

The current study aims to explore the challenges faced by deployed women peacekeepers which impact their effective integration into the peacekeeping operations and to propose strategies to deal with them.

## **2.0 METHOD**

### **2.1 Sample**

The sample included 13 women military officers from different countries (India, Sweden, UK, South Africa, Malawi, Fiji) who were undergoing pre-deployment training: female military officer course at CUNPK, Delhi wherein aspects related to female deployment on UN missions were covered. Women military officers with deployment experience were included in the sample. The age range of the sample varied from 32 years to 46 years and their duration of service in the military or police force ranged between 12-28 years. The ranks of the participants ranged from Major to Lieutenant Colonel.

### **2.2 Tools**

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed by the author for the study with the objective of understanding the role of women in peacekeeping operations. The objective was broken down further into various dimensions of exploration based on the purpose of the study. Keeping these dimensions in mind, an initial list of questions was generated. This initial list was further refined with the focus to elicit responses that reflected personal opinions of the respondents. The questions were worded in a neutral manner to avoid

biasing the responses towards the opinion of the researcher. Any ambiguity emerging in the initial list of items was eliminated by making them more specific. The questions were embedded with cues that primed the respondents to think about their personal experience before responding to avoid eliciting socially consensual responses. The interview began with a general question then moved to specific questions on the topic under study. The final interview schedule was sent to five subject matter experts (SMEs) for validation and recommendations were incorporated in to it. The questions aimed to elicit information regarding work-life balance, training for peacekeeping missions, women’s access to leadership positions, and further challenges to greater integration of women in peacekeeping missions.

### 2.3 Procedure

The data was collected from the participants who were undergoing pre-deployment training: female military officer course at CUNPK, Delhi. The researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants and it was asserted that participation is voluntary. An informed consent was obtained from the officers and the semi-structured interview was carried out. The data gathered was analysed through qualitative content analysis which involves making valid, replicable, and objective inferences based on explicit rules about the sender, the message or the receiver of the message (Prasad, 2008). Qualitative content analysis is critical in nature and involves penetrating the deeper layers of the message by examining the latent content (Du Plooy, 1995). Five methods for undertaking qualitative content analysis have been stated by Mayring (2014): summarising, inductive category formation, explication, deductive category formation, and mixed methods. As the nature of the present study was explorative with no set theories existing in literature for guiding the data analysis, Mayring’s **inductive approach** was used for category formulation.

Initially a selection criterion was established for determining the material for analysis. Responses from the participants included in the study were considered for analysis which was followed by definition of categories and identifying level of abstraction. The data was worked upon line by line to identify the content bearing parts of the text. Codes and sub-codes were formulated by one researcher through content analysis and new categories were formed or subsumed. Revision of categories was done by moving back and forth between the data and formulated codes and sub-codes. The codes and sub-codes were grouped to form the basic themes, organizing themes and global themes. The frequencies and percentages were calculated.

### 3.0 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The interview schedule aimed at understanding the challenges faced by deployed women peacekeepers which impact their effective integration into the peacekeeping operations. The questions can be further categorized into seven broad areas pertaining to the challenges of the women peacekeepers and their effective integration. These are motivators to join peacekeeping, maintaining work life balance and family support, gender segregation of the tasks, pre-deployment training, leadership, gender based violence and sexual exploitation and experiences in the host country. The details of the organizing themes and basic themes emerged in these are given in Table (3-1 to 3-7) below:

**Table 3-1: Organizing Themes, Basic themes, frequencies and percentages emerging from the data analysis on motivators to join peacekeeping**

Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Frequency ( <i>f</i> )		Percentage (in %)		Excerpts (example)
		Basic Themes ( <i>f</i> )	Organizing theme ( <i>f</i> )	Basic Themes (%)	Organizing theme (%)	

1. Benefits of Joining peacekeeping	1.Financial support to carry out family responsibilities	• 3 • • • • 2 • •	4	23.07	30.76	<p>“UN mission phele barr mahilaon ke liye thay. Yeh avsar mila issleye hum UN mission mai janay ka mann kiya apnay se UN mission janya ka teyaar hua kuch paisa zayada milega uss paisay se kuch kaam aajae.</p> <p>Khushi bhi thi. UN mission pe jana paisa milega uss samay ghar ki parishthiti kuch achi nahi thi sab kuch ho gaya.”</p> <p>(UN Mission was for women for the first time. Got this chance so felt like going to the UN Mission and got ready by myself as will get some more money. That money may be of use. There was happiness also that going to UN mission will get money. At that time home’s condition was not so good, everything happened. )</p>
	2.Increased social status	• 2		15.38		
	3.Exposure to foreign country	• 2		15.38		

**Table 3-2: Organizing Themes, Basic themes, frequencies and percentages emerging from the data analysis on maintaining work life balance and family support**

Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Frequency ( <i>f</i> )		Percentage (in %)		Excerpts (example)
		Basic Themes ( <i>f</i> )	Organizing theme ( <i>f</i> )	Basic Themes (%)	Organizing theme (%)	

<p>1. Family Support</p>	<p>1.Role of family / husband's support</p> <p>2.Emotional turmoil, requirements and predicaments</p> <p>3. Technology: Bridging distances</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>• 7</li> <li>•</li> <li>• 2</li> </ul>	<p>11</p>	<p>69.23</p> <p>53.84</p> <p>15.38</p>	<p>84.61</p>	<p><i>“Apne desh, ghar, bachho ki yaad aathi thi. Kyonki bachhe chote the. Mere pathi ne bachho aur ghar dono ke saath-2 duty bhi dekha.”</i></p> <p><i>(I used to remember my country, home and children. Because children were young. My husband looked after the home and children as well as his duty.)</i></p>
<p>2. Work life balance</p>	<p>1.Dilemma of multiple roles</p> <p>2.Challenges of being a working woman</p> <p>3. Culturally determined roles of a woman</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8</li> <li>•</li> <li>• 6</li> <li>•</li> <li>• 6</li> </ul>	<p>9</p>	<p>61.53</p> <p>46.15</p> <p>46.15</p>	<p>69.23</p>	<p><i>“UN mission ke dauran humay bachon avum family ko adjust karnay me dikat ayi”</i></p> <p><i>(During the UN mission, I had difficulty in adjusting my family and children)</i></p>

3. Challenges of a working mother	1. Expectations from a mother	9	9	69.23	69.23	<p><i>“Kuch paristhiyon ka samna karna padta. Pehle bataye 6 mahinay ka usskay baad 1 year ka ho gaya. Khushi bhi hui. Uss samay shadi nahi hui thi. Phone pe baatay ho jati thi. Par jo shaadi shuda thi. Ussay apnay bachon ko apnay se door 1 saal bahut badi chunauti ka samna karna pada...”</i></p> <p><i>(Some difficulties had to be faced. First they told us for 6 months, then it increased to 1 year. Felt happy also. At that time, I was not married. Was able to talk on the phone. But those who were married. They had to face a big challenge in being away from their children for 1 year...)</i></p>
	2. Continued contribution to child's upbringing (even when abroad)	7		53.84		
	3. Separation from child a major "sacrifice"	5		38.46		

**Table 3-3: Organizing Themes, Basic themes, frequencies and percentages emerging from the data analysis on gender segregation of the tasks**

Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Frequency (f)		Percentage (in %)		Excerpts (example)
		Basic Themes (f)	Organizing theme (f)	Basic Themes (%)	Organizing theme (%)	



1. Gendering of peacekeeping roles	1. Perceived Gender Roles in peacekeeping missions	9	9	69.23	69.23	<i>“Sometimes it is easier for a woman to get information or commit a search at a check-point and so on. Sometimes it is easier to be a man.”</i>
2. Presence of men as essential	1. Underlying need for male presence	5	6	38.46	46.15	<i>“To some extent yes. However, when I was deployed I carried similar tasks as men. However, there are some tasks which are more challenging and from another point of view, need to be carried out by men. For instance- combat engineering”</i>
	2. Relatively challenging tasks to be performed by men	4		30.76		

**Table 3-4: Organizing Themes, Basic themes, frequencies and percentages emerging from the data analysis on pre-deployment training**

Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Frequency (f)		Percentage (in %)		Excerpts (example)
		Basic Themes (f)	Organizing theme (f)	Basic Themes (%)	Organizing theme (%)	
1. Gender neutral training	1. Similar training for both men and women	2	2	15.38	15.38	<i>“I wouldn’t want to discriminate against men... so whatever efforts made for women, men also deserves them... so yes both men and women deserve further training than basic training.”</i>

2.Recommen dations for training	1.Language training	1	2	7.69	15.38	Training on “CRSVs & SEAs, sexual violence”
	2.Dealing with Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)	2		15.38		

**Table 3-5: Organizing Themes, Basic themes, frequencies and percentages emerging from the data analysis on leadership**

Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Frequency ( <i>f</i> )		Percentage (in %)		Excerpts (example)
		Basic Themes ( <i>f</i> )	Organizin g theme ( <i>f</i> )	Basic Themes (%)	Organizi ng theme (%)	
1.Gender and Leadership	1.Boldness as criterion for leadership	1	3	7.69	23.07	“Purush leader mahila leader dono apnay jagah bold hai. Parantu purush leader perfect hai”.  (Male leader, female leader both are bold in their own place. But a male leader is perfect.)
	2.Prototype of ideal leader as male	2		15.38		
	3.Changing scenario	2		15.38		

2.Perception about female leaders	1.Same approach as male leaders	2	4	15.38	30.76	<p>“Mahila commander ko hum sub bathe batha sakte hai. Purush ko hum sabhi baathe nahi bathaa sakte hai.”</p> <p>(To a female commander, we can disclose all. To a male, we cannot disclose everything.)</p>
	2.More understanding	2		15.38		

**Table 3-6: Organizing Themes, Basic themes, frequencies and percentages emerging from the data analysis on gender based violence and sexual exploitation**

Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Frequency (f)		Percentage (in %)		Excerpts (example)
		Basic Themes (f)	Organizing theme (f)	Basic Themes (%)	Organizing theme (%)	
1.Gender based violence	1. Sexual harassment during deployment	2	3	15.38	23.07	<p>“Liberian me apas me mahilaye apni majboori me mission ki shikar ho rahi hai. Vahan kuch paisay vali public avum kuch vyaqti vahan ki mahilayon ko khanay avum paisay ka lalach dekar unka shoshan kar rahay hai. Avum kahin kahin vahan ki janta bhi jabardasti uskay sath rape jaisay case kartay hai, avum choti-1 ladkiyon bhi yaun-shoshan ka shikar ho rahi hai jiski jankari humay duty ke dauran dekhney ko mili hai”</p> <p>(In Liberia, women are falling victims in the mission due to their helplessness. Some public with money and some people are exploiting women by tempting them with food and money. And at some places their population also rapes them, and young girls are also falling prey to sexual exploitation about which we get to see during our duty.)</p>
	2. Violence against women	2		15.38		

2. Recommended Action	1. Need for a strict action against perpetrators	4	4	30.76	30.76	“Repeating – constantly- that SEA is unacceptable. Many contributing nations do not feel that SEA is so bad in my experience. They need commanders to repeatedly tell them it is not and take action on those who carry it out”.
	2. Need for training	2		15.38		

**Table 3-7: Organizing Themes, Basic themes, frequencies and percentages emerging from the data analysis on experiences in the host country**

Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Frequency (f)		Percentage (in %)		Excerpts (example)
		Basic Themes (f)	Organizing theme (f)	Basic Themes (%)	Organizing theme (%)	
1. Lack of Cultural awareness	1. Underlying sense of "Othering"	6	6	46.15	46.15	<p><i>Humne vahan dekha driver gaadi bina licence ke chalaathe the. Vahan shaaririk samband jyaada baanathe hai. Vahan kisi kaa kahi parivaar nahi hai. Bina shaadi ke bachhe paida karne ki izaazat hai. Bachhe kisi ke shaadi kisi se karte hai. Gaadi bahut theez gahti se chalaathe hai. Vahan par bijli Nahi hai. Gariibi bahut jyaada hai”.</i></p> <p><i>(We saw there that drivers drive cars without a license. Physical relations are established more there. No one has any family there. Having children without marriage is allowed. They have children with someone and marry someone else. Drive cars with a lot of speed. There is no electricity there. Poverty is too much.)</i></p>
	2. Culturally determined concept of "being civilized"	4		30.76		

2. Cultural differences	1.Observed cultural differences	7	7	53.84	53.84	<i>“At first I was surprised that families wanted to dig up graves of their dead family members (when moving back to Serbia). As a Swede it felt wrong and like a violation to the descended. But after a while I realized that it was the right thing to do for the Serbians. Their actions sprung from love, they wanted to keep their descended family member close- and bring them back home to Serbia. Putting my ‘Swedish Glasses’ aside this made perfect sense!”</i>
	2.Moral dissonance due to cultural exposure	6		46.15		

Qualitative content analysis revealed main themes that emerged from the seven broad areas. These themes were recurring through the data and representative of the individuals who were participants in the study and are not intended to represent the services as a whole. The following Global themes emerged from the qualitative content analysis (Table 3-8): -

**Table 3-8: Global Themes, Organizing themes, frequencies and percentages emerging from the data analysis**

Global Themes	Organizing Themes	Frequency (f)		Percentage (in %)	
		Organizing theme (f)	Global theme (f)	Sub theme (%)	Global theme (%)
1.Family Responsibilities	1. Family Support	11	11	84.61	84.61
	2. Work life balance	9		69.23	
2. Motherhood	1. Challenges of a working mother	9	9	69.23	69.23

3. Sexual Exploitation and Abuse	1. Gender based violence	3	4	23.07	30.76
	2. Recommended Action	4		30.76	
4. Gender Role as determinant of success and occupational tasks	1. Gendering of peacekeeping roles	9	9	69.23	69.23
	2. Presence of men as essential	6		46.15	
	3. Gender and Leadership	3		23.07	
5. Cultural Sensitivity	1. Lack of Cultural awareness	7	7	53.84	53.84
	2. Cultural differences	6		46.15	
6. Training for peacekeepers	1. Gender neutral training	2	3	15.38	23.07
	2. Recommendations for training	2		15.38	
7. Motivators	1. Benefits of Joining peacekeeping	4	4	30.76	30.76

#### 4.0 DISCUSSION

The results depict seven global themes emerging from the organizing themes and the basic themes. Out of these global themes, five are aligned to the objectives of the current study which was to investigate the challenges faced by deployed women peacekeepers which impact their effective integration into the peacekeeping operations. These five global themes that depict the major challenges faced by women peacekeepers are: family responsibilities, motherhood, sexual exploitation and abuse, gender role as determinant of success and occupational tasks and cultural sensitivity. Family responsibilities (84.61%) emerged as the dominant global theme followed by motherhood (69.23 %) and gender roles as determinant of the success and occupational tasks (69.23%) that reflected the challenges of the women peacekeepers as

reported by the participants. The obstacles encountered by the women peacekeepers are discussed in this section.

#### 4.1 Family Responsibilities

The participants expressed their difficulties in fulfilling family responsibilities because of their changed professional role. Herein, the support provided by their spouses and extended family members was considered essential. One of the participants shared her difficulties in managing her family and children while she was deployed on mission. She said:

*“UN mission ke dauran humay bachon avum family ko adjust karnay me dikat ayi”<sup>R6</sup>*

*(During the UN mission, I had difficulty in adjusting my family and children)*

Women across cultures are traditionally considered responsible for domestic chores and care-taking of children. Thus when they are unable to devote time to their families, they tend to experience dissatisfaction as it runs contrary to the notion of an “ideal woman”. For instance, one of the participants expressed:

*“Being away from home for one year is quite challenging and it takes a lot of sacrifice especially being away from loved ones”<sup>R1</sup>*

This can be contrasted with the men who have to stay away from their families for providing financial support to them. They are less likely to be faced with questions about managing their domestic responsibilities with their work life because the domestic sphere is conventionally associated with women.

#### 4.2 Motherhood

Motherhood is considered as a vital phase in a woman’s life. Women deployed for peacekeeping operations reported lack of means to stay in touch with their children, which made it tough for them to feel connected to their family. A participant elaborated that it was easier for her to carry out her duties because she was unmarried. However she expressed that it was challenging for married women as they had to stay away from their children for a year.

*“Kuch paristhiyon ka samna karna padta. Pehle bataye 6 mahinay ka usskay baad 1 year ka ho gaya. Khushi bhi hui. Uss samay shadi nahi hui thi. Phone pe baatay ho jati thi. Par jo shaadi shuda thi. Ussay apnay bachon ko apnay se door 1 saal bahut badi chunauti ka samna karna pada...”<sup>R12</sup>*

*(Some difficulties had to be faced. First they told us for 6 months, then it increased to 1 year. Felt happy also. At that time, I was not married. Was able to talk on the phone. But those who were married. They had to face a big challenge in being away from their children for 1 year...)*

Concerns over pregnancy, childcare and family life are frequently mentioned in the accounts of servicewomen. Many have to carefully consider the commitment to deployments or to family, as for the most part, the role of a sailor and a mother are viewed as mutually exclusive (Kelley et al, 2001:56). Pierce (1998, cited in Kelley et al, 2001) reported that active-duty Air Force women who gave birth between the beginning of Desert Storm and the time of the survey (2 years later) were twice as likely to leave the military as women who did not give birth during that time. Similarly, around one fourth to one third of the women listed the difficulty of balancing a Navy career with family responsibilities as a reason they planned to leave the military. (Kelley et al, 2001:67).

### 4.3 Sexual Exploitation & Abuse

Another major challenge that women peacekeepers tend to face is that of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). Many researchers have reported women officers' experiences of sexual harassment and inappropriate conduct by their male colleagues in the military as well as by the host population (Carreiras, 2000; Simic, 2010).

Kate Hendricks Thomas (2017) shared a narrative account of her personal experiences when she was a part of the US Marine Corps. Once, she along with her unit was deployed to Iraq where soldiers from military units of other countries were also present. She recalled the prolonged stares she used to receive from soldiers from other units because she was the only female Marine officer on the deployment. She also recounted a horrific incident when she was on the verge of getting raped one night by drunken foreign soldiers. Moreover, she expressed her concerns over objectification of women officers. During her deployment, she and her team had to carry spray paints to cover graphic uncouth paintings of her that soldiers from other units used to draw on the washroom walls. Thomas expressed guilt over remaining silent after such experiences and encouraged other women officers to raise voice and take action against any form of sexual assault and harassment.

During analysis, it was observed that while the women did not share any personal experiences of SEA, they did talk about the need for sensitizing the troops about seriousness of this issue and for taking strict action against the offenders. For instance, one of the participants stated:

*“Repeating – constantly- that SEA is unacceptable. Many contributing nations do not feel that SEA is so bad in my experience. They need commanders to repeatedly tell them it is not and take action on those who carry it out”*.<sup>R3</sup>

This implies that the participants were aware of such incidences taking place however, they did not disclose any detail for the same.

### 4.4 Gender Role as determinant of success and occupational tasks

Traditional roles associated with gender are seen as a determinant of success and occupational tasks in the military. The organizational culture is reflective of such exclusionary beliefs and policies. Women officers are posted to limited locations depending on the physical location of the unit, level of hardship faced, availability of accommodation and operational commitments of units.

Another inference drawn from the analysis was the underlying need of male presence for tasks that were considered to be more challenging. For example, when asked whether women and men should perform different tasks on peacekeeping missions, one of the participants stated:

*“To some extent yes. However, when I was deployed I carried similar tasks as men. However, there are some tasks which are more challenging and from another point of view, need to be carried out by men. For instance- combat engineering”*.<sup>R2</sup>

Further, women are still assigned supporting roles and roles that are sometimes incongruent with their qualifications. Despite the mandates, perceptions about gender determined roles in peacekeeping missions persist. This eventually results in the underutilization of female officers' skillsets which emerges as one of the barriers to their integration. In the light of such beliefs, a participant said:

*“Due to stereotypes kind of individual who are in mission leadership, usually they would like to apply their own perception as far as gender is concerned from their various countries. In a sense that when planning any activity, women in uniform will not be considered in most cases until as*



*Gender Advisor you scrutinize the plan and provide advice to the commander”.*<sup>R3</sup>

Moreover, women officers rarely progress to higher positions of authority. Role Congruity Theory (Eagly and Karau, 2002) explains such gender stereotyping of leadership positions by maintaining that perceived gender roles may conflict with expectations regarding leadership roles, especially when an occupation is held predominantly by one sex. The theory elaborates that prejudice towards female leaders occurs because societal expectations from women are perceived to be incongruent with the characteristics associated with a successful military leader. Although some women carefully try to balance the masculine and feminine aspects of their behavior, it may compromise their advancement to higher level positions because their behavior may appear less powerful and confident than that of their male counterparts.

Kanter's (1977) study on concept of tokenism is well applicable to the study of women who work in the non-traditional jobs. He reported that women's negative experiences on the job and their inability to achieve equality is attributable to their token status- their low proportion in workplace dominated by men. The structure of male domination in the armed forces can be changed if the proportion of women is significantly increased (Michael, 1982). This is one of the major reasons for barriers to the inclusion of women as due to their relatively small proportion they are perceived as 'token representatives' of their category rather than independent individuals. Their performance is held under close scrutiny and small mistakes made by few individuals are seen as a reflection of the entire group.

The theory of critical mass (Dahlerup, 2006) suggests that in order for a group to make an impact there needs to be a critical number that provides them with a commanding position to meaningfully establish their authority. These challenges are not faced in all countries; women in militaries are often deployed in all positions and given the high amount of female numbers overall, this indicates a significant change in global gender dynamics.

#### 4.5 Cultural Sensitivity

Lack of cultural sensitivity is another key challenge that needs to be addressed. Some of the excerpts from the participants reflect their lack of understanding about the culture of the host population. They tend to view actions and behavior of the host population from the lens of their own cultural context rather than that of the host population. For instance, one of the participants said:

*“Humne vahan dekha driver gaadi bina licence ke chalaathe the. Vahan shaaririk samband jyaada baanathe hai. Vahan kisi kaa kohi parivaar nahi hai. Bina shaadi ke bachhe paida karne ki izaazat hai. Bachhe kisi ke shaadi kisi se karte hai. Gaadi bahut theez gahti se chalaathe hai. Vahan par bijli Nahi hai. Gariibi bahut jyaada hai”.*

*(We saw there that drivers drive cars without a license. Physical relations are established more there. No one has any family there. Having children without marriage is allowed. They have children with someone and marry someone else. Drive cars with a lot of speed. There is no electricity there. Poverty is too much.)*<sup>R10</sup>

The participant described that people in the host country frequently indulge in physical relationships. She purported that the host population did not have any 'family culture' as people in the host nation tended to have children without getting married. Through this verbatim, it can be seen that peacekeepers tend to judge and compare the host population with their own cultural context without acknowledging and accepting the cultural variations and diversity.

It is therefore important for peacekeepers to adopt a culture-sensitive approach while dealing with populations from various cultural backgrounds. One of the participants narrated her experience when she was deployed to Kosovo. She expressed how adopting a culture-sensitive approach helped her look beyond

her own cultural lens and develop a better understanding of the host nation. She shared:

*“At first I was surprised that families wanted to dig up graves of their dead family members (when moving back to Serbia). As a Swede it felt wrong and like a violation to the descended. But after a while I realized that it was the right thing to do for the Serbians. Their actions sprung from love, they wanted to keep their descended family member close- and bring them back home to Serbia. Putting my ‘Swedish Glasses’ aside this made perfect sense!”<sup>R5</sup>*

Certain strategies need to be adopted to counter the challenges faced by women peacekeepers. Officers need to be trained to adapt and to accept the incongruent gender roles that require to be performed during the course of their duties. This will ensure optimal utilization of the women peacekeepers.

Military organization can take several measures to facilitate social support to the family members of the deployed women. These may include providing access to child care facilities and making available counselling services to the family members of the deployed officers.

As stated by one of the participants above, a proactive stance against sexual harassment and bullying should be adopted so that women are encouraged to report such incidences. This will discourage the tolerance of such acts which will promote integration of women officers.

They also need to be trained on building cultural intelligence as a part of their pre-deployment course. A lack of cultural sensitivity can result in biased perceptions and judgments which can ultimately impact the effectiveness of the mission.

## 5.0 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Interview method was used for the purpose of data collection however no further probing could be done because of time constraints on the part of participants. Male participants were not included in the study. Future research can take into consideration the male perceptions of women peacekeepers.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

The current study aimed to explore the challenges faced by deployed women peacekeepers which impact their effective integration into the peacekeeping operations and to propose strategies to deal with them. In line with the objectives of the study, the main challenges faced by the women peacekeepers were found to be family responsibilities, motherhood, cultural sensitivity, sexual exploitation and abuse, gender role as determinant of success and occupational tasks. The study also proposes certain strategies to counter the challenges faced by women peacekeepers.

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