



Military Individual Readiness: An Overview of the Individual Components of the Adam, Hall, and Thomson Model Adapted to the Canadian Armed Forces

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Introduction

There are several functional definitions of military individual readiness (IR). Some researchers^{1, 2} define military IR from the individual's point of view, based solely upon cognitive dimensions. Other researchers^{3, 4} approach the concept from a more holistic perspective and include social factors. Nevertheless, in the scientific literature in general and the military scientific literature, there is no consensus on the definition of military IR. Tucker, Sinclair, and Thomas feel that there is no real consensus on either the concept of operational readiness or its functional definition.⁵

Nevertheless, within the scientific community, certain aspects of the readiness concept are areas of consensus: for example that IR is the state of being mentally or physically prepared for an experience or action.⁶ That definition has the virtue of emphasizing mental and physical aspects as key elements of readiness.

The Individual Readiness Model Adapted to the Canadian Armed Forces

Adam, Hall, and Thomson, using all the findings that are currently available in research on individual readiness, created an IR model adapted to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). For them, military IR is a product of factors that include the units, the family, and the individual.⁷ The model includes the processes at the organizational and unit levels that influence factors that include or define individual readiness according to the authors. Individual readiness is a precursor to optimal performance and efficiency.⁸ IR therefore becomes an end in and of itself as well as a factor that contributes to an outcome (i.e., 'performance'). The authors recognize the limitations of their model, specifying that it may or may not fully capture

readiness, as it is possible that the concept is more than the sum of the factors presented.⁹ From that point of view, individual readiness is much more than simply a sum of factors. Rather, it is a basic ability that extends beyond all those factors.¹⁰ Another limitation is the fact that the model does not consider all the potential factors identified in the literature, such as the differences between individuals (hardiness or dispositional optimism).¹¹ Those concepts should be studied in future in order to explore whether or not they are relevant enough to be integrated into a future model of individual readiness.

This model is the first to focus upon the Canadian Armed Forces. Figure 1 presents the Adam, Hall, and Thomson model and its various factors.

It maps the elements and factors put forward in research. The model, which is adapted to the reality of the Canadian Armed Forces, seems promising, even though its validity still needs to be proven. A discussion on the conceptualization of individual readiness is therefore required, as are future research projects on the subject. An investigation of the individual components of the model makes it easier to understand the model itself and the issues that surround the military IR concept.

Individual Components of the Model

Factors arising from organizational structure

As an organization, the CAF plays a role in military individual readiness. Because its organizational structure is based upon a large number of policies and directives, a regimental system and leadership at various levels of the hierarchy, there is reason to believe that the CAF as an organization is able to influence individual readiness (Figure 2).

- **Organizational citizenship behaviours**

Organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) are, in short, behaviours that (a) are beyond the basic requirements of the job, (b) are to a large extent discretionary, and (c) benefit the organization.¹² Their value to the organization is explained by the fact that they are voluntary behaviours and are not subject to any type of institutionalized reward.¹³ Paillé states that researchers have empirically defined and identified a number of citizenship behaviours.¹⁴ Civic virtues, team spirit, conciliation, courtesy and altruism are considered to be OCBs.

In a military context, the work of McGonigle *et al.* has made it possible to state that OCBs such as discipline and motivation can prevent negative behaviours.¹⁵ *Discipline* leads soldiers to follow the

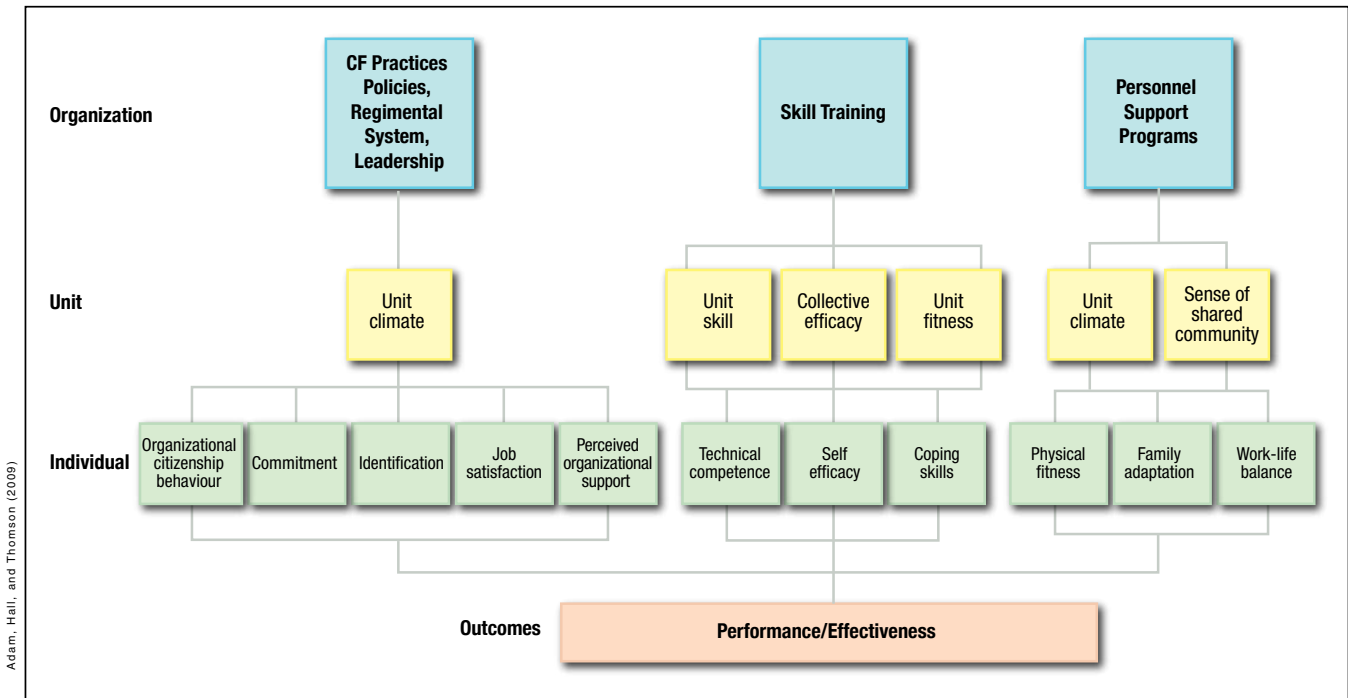


Figure 1 – Military individual preparedness model adapted to CAF

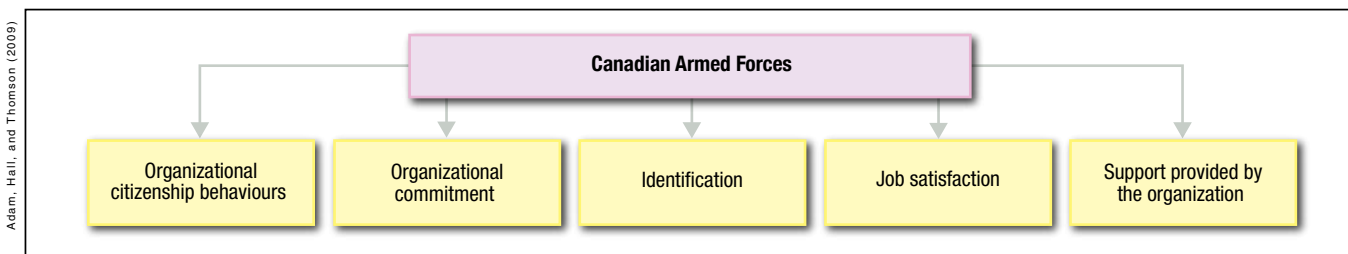


Figure 2 – Organizational structure and potential factors of influence



rules, to not abuse substances, and to be punctual, while *motivation* enables soldiers (or members) to continue to accomplish tasks in difficult situations or circumstances. OCBs influence military IR by limiting negative behaviours and eliciting positive behaviours. Gurbuz's study of 301 members of the Turkish Army established that certain pre-existing factors (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational justice, and confidence in superiors) are positively correlated with OCBs.¹⁶ Research by Tabarsa, Esmaili, and Esmaili on factors that have an impact upon the OCBs of nurses in military hospitals has shown that only job satisfaction has a positive impact.¹⁷

- **Organizational commitment**

According to the Canada Research Chair in the Management of Employee Commitment and Performance, organizational commitment is defined as the nature and strength of the bond that ties an employee to his or her organization.¹⁸

Organizational commitment is a complex psychological state that involves at least three elements. The first element is affective commitment, which is an individual's attachment to or identification with his or her organization. The second element is the normative commitment, which is a feeling of loyalty and moral obligation to the organization.¹⁹ The third element is continuing commitment, which is an individual's need to remain within an organization as a result of a lack of alternatives, or as a result of the investment that he or she has made within the organization.

Research has delved deeper into two elements of organizational commitment, on both the individual and organizational level. Positive correlations have been found between affective commitment and the following variables: professional satisfaction and performance, cohesion within the unit, career opportunities, intentions to leave the organization, adjustment to the military lifestyle, preparation for combat, and psychological well-being.²⁰

Conversely, continuing commitment has been negatively correlated with work performance and psychological well-being.²¹

- **Identification**

The CAF influences the mechanisms by which its members identify with their organization. According to Boucher and Morosse:

...[trans] A feeling of belonging relates to an individual's sense of belonging within a group, an organization or an institution. Feeling good or comfortable at school, feeling useful in a group and feeling a sense of solidarity with others are indicators of a person's sense of belonging. The stronger an individual's sense of belonging within a group, the more he or she tends to adopt the values, standards and rules of conduct of that group.²²

As a factor that could potentially influence military IR, belonging to the organization that is the CAF plays a critical role, according to MacIntyre:

[...] military units can only function effectively when all of the members carry out their responsibilities in a collective manner. This means that every person in uniform, regardless of occupation, rank or operational status, has a role to play to ensure mission success. This also means that the most proficient militaries will be those with a cohesiveness that bonds them together in a unified sense of purpose and belongingness.²³

For Adam, Hall and Thomson, there are at least two aspects which characterize belonging. The first is that the soldier self-identifies as a member of the CAF, as a member of a regiment, or as a member of a unit. The second is that the soldier *accepts* and *identifies with* a specific role within the organization.²⁴ Reineck's study showed that identification was a key component of collective

training.²⁵ For example, at Royal Military College Kingston, "... measures of national indoctrination and nation-building have always been important [...]."²⁶ By adhering to a strict schedule, a code of discipline that applies to everyone, similar dress standards, and so on, soldiers develop a feeling of identification with the CAF. The studies consulted show that there is a link between identification and military IR. In trying to categorize the readiness of nurses in the US Armed Forces, Reineck and Reineck, Finstuen, Connelly, and Murdoch have developed a questionnaire titled "READI" that has a section on group integration and belonging.^{27,28} The questionnaire was validated by the authors, and it has been shown to be reliable for use in evaluating nurses before a deployment. According to the authors, belonging appears to be an essential element to evaluate in measuring military IR.

- **Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction has been the subject of numerous scientific studies since the 1930s, and a number of definitions have come out of those studies.²⁹ The one put forward by Locke makes it possible to understand the concept as a pleasant or positive emotional state resulting from the evaluation of the work or the work experience.³⁰ It is based upon workers' perception of the contributions and benefits that their organization brings them with respect to the professional factors they consider important. Büssing's model attempts to explain satisfaction and dissatisfaction at work through the interaction of four variables: 1) comparison between the actual work situation and the aspiration level; 2) subjective level of control over the work situation; 3) changes in level of aspiration; and 4) problem-solving strategies.³¹ According to Cambon, [trans] "...concepts that were classically associated with satisfaction are (positive elements) job performance, commitment to

the organization, commitment to the work and (negative elements) turnover (leaving one's employment) and absenteeism."³²

Within the CAF, a recent study concerning the job satisfaction of members with the rank of lieutenant-colonel indicates that:

Army lieutenant-colonels are highly engaged in their work and that they experience a number of key job satisfiers, including the opportunity to command, the ability to influence the CF/Army and the opportunity to develop soldiers. However, the study also revealed a number of job dissatisfiers among Army lieutenant-colonels, including those related to promotion criteria and opportunities, leadership and other organizational issues as well as concerns about post-command employment, workload, operational tempo and quality of life.³³

It is suggested in the literature that the relationship between job satisfaction and individual readiness is underestimated because job satisfaction measures are generally based upon *cognitive* rather than *affective* dimensions.³⁴ In individual readiness, job satisfaction becomes a key concept and is probably a predictor of high performance at work, according to Adam *et al.*³⁵

- **Support provided by the organization**

For Eisenberger *et al.*, the support provided by the organization is defined as follows: "perceived organizational support is the extent to which an employee perceives that the organization values his or her contributions and takes care of his or her well-being."³⁶ Military research has placed emphasis upon the support provided by the organization at the military unit level and upon the military



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organization in general.³⁷ The scientific literature also identifies the positive impact of support offered to the individual and to the organization. The study by Dobreva-Martinova *et al.* concluded that that support is directly related to job effort and satisfaction and the organizational commitment of Regular Force members of the CAF.³⁸ The support provided by leaders or work colleagues is also associated with self-esteem, job satisfaction, and retention of soldiers (members) in the US Navy.³⁹ An analysis of the different organizations that provide social support to soldiers and families highlighted the link with members' attitudes at work. With respect to combat operations, Martin noted that support provided by unit leaders buffers the negative impact of a traumatic event on the psychological well-being of Regular Forces soldiers in the US Army.⁴⁰ The yearly survey within the CAF entitled "Your Say" has not shown a correlation between the support provided by the organization and an individual's readiness.⁴¹

Factors arising from professional training

Professional training such as training, trade courses, and leadership courses makes it possible for members to develop or strengthen professional and personal skills, and, in so doing, contribute to military IR. Three factors arise from professional training (Figure 3).

- **Technical competence**

Technical competence is cumulative, and may be acquired through professional training and through specific and non-specific tasks at work. Having technical competence means having the knowledge and practical skills required to successfully complete an undertaking, job or task.⁴²

As Beardsley has remarked, technical competence is essential in career soldiers because, "...as a professional advances in rank, responsibilities and appointments, the study of the professional body of knowledge will be much more substantive and intellectually challenging."⁴³ The author goes on to state that soldiers who are hired to practise a specialized profession (in addition to the profession of arms), such as social workers, doctors, dentists and lawyers, also have to include the study of the professional body of knowledge related to their other profession.⁴⁴ Reineck's research on military IR with a group of military nurses has contributed to the development and understanding of the concept.⁴⁵ Griffith's studies have also made it easier to understand the effects of those factors on military IR.⁴⁶ For example, simply learning to fire a machine gun makes a soldier better prepared for deployment in a theatre of operations.

Adam, Hall, and Thomson (2009)

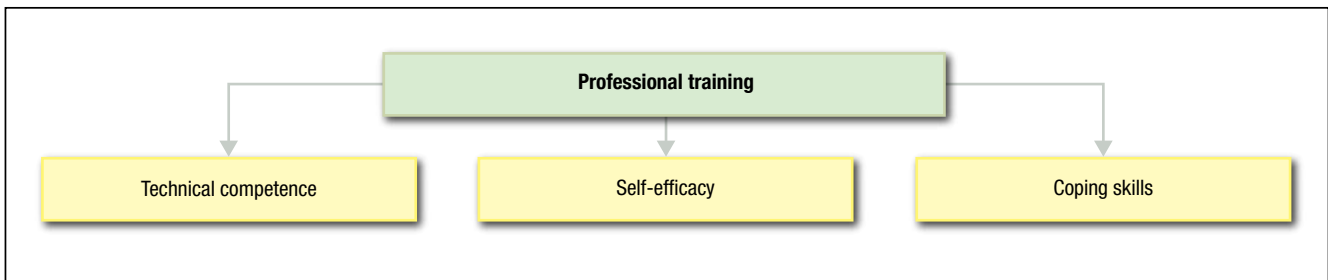


Figure 3 – Professional training and potential factors of influence

Canadian Army Flickr by Master Corporal Cameron Strypnik



- **Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy is the confidence an individual has in his or her ability to act in order to achieve the desired results. The concept was theorized by Albert Bandura, for whom the term 'self-efficacy' was defined as a person's sense of being able to shape his or her own experiences through self-reflection, self-regulation, and sustained effort.⁴⁷

For soldiers, a feeling of self-efficacy means believing that, when the time comes, they will do everything it takes to reach the goals they have set (individually or collectively). Both individually and collectively, professional training gives soldiers experience and an opportunity to succeed in preparation



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for their future mission. It enables them to build confidence with respect to their sense of self-efficacy.⁴⁸ For example, Cossar posits:

Learning about Rules of Engagement (ROE) is one area where knowledge of the material is required to respond appropriately in an infinite number of possible scenarios. Still, such skill training through repetitive exposures increases the soldier's sense of self-efficacy, which will, in turn, enhance motivation and goal perseverance.⁴⁹

Self-efficacy is associated with motivational focuses, such as increased effort, selection of increasingly challenging goals, and perseverance in the face of stressors. In a military context, it is necessary for soldiers to put operational needs first, and it is from the perspective of recognizing efforts that performance recognition and reward policies are established within the CAF.⁵⁰ For Cossar, "... people who are rated as being high in self-efficacy are more likely to adopt problem-focused coping strategies as they accept the challenge and develop solutions that will shape the outcome."⁵¹

- **Coping skills**

The last factor related to professional training that can potentially influence military IR is the ability to adapt to a series of stressors and situations. For Lazarus and Folkman, having coping skills involves making cognitive and behavioural effort to manage specific requests deemed to be arduous or beyond a person's ability.⁵² Experience, professional training and other types of training make it possible to develop and strengthen coping skills.

Thompson and McCreary are of the opinion that just as much emphasis should be placed upon soldiers' *psychological* readiness as upon their *physical* readiness; the psychological aspect is malleable and can be improved through professional training.⁵³

Within the CAF, all soldiers who are called upon to be deployed in a theatre of operations must take a training course called *Road to Mental Readiness* that includes a component on stress management and covers the four major adaptation strategies (self-talk, goal setting, arousal control, and visualization). In addition to training soldiers to recognize stressors, impacts, and symptoms, this training helps them adopt the different strategies (positive and negative) to adapt to situations. *Road to Mental Readiness* also provides soldiers with training on mental resilience as part of the leadership courses. The program is currently undergoing a validation study by a team under the leadership of Deniz Fikretoglu, Ph.D.

The *Battlemind* initiative, implemented within the US Army, is a comprehensive mental health training program that was established to prepare soldiers for the requirements and challenges of military life and combat.⁵⁴ This program is a foundation for building psychological resilience in soldiers during pre-deployment and post-deployment. The impact of *Battlemind* on military IR is currently being discussed. Based upon a validation study of pilot groups, the authors state that the program is effective.

Novaco, Cook, and Sarason have shown that using the *Making It* video to help Marine Corps recruits in the United States can have a significant impact upon their coping skills by helping them to adjust to military life and the stress of basic training.⁵⁵

Factors arising from personnel support programs

The personnel support programs try to meet a broad range of objectives, both with respect to soldiers and their family members. Within the CAF, the support programs exist, "...to enhance the morale and welfare of the military community, thus contributing to the operational readiness and effectiveness of the Canadian

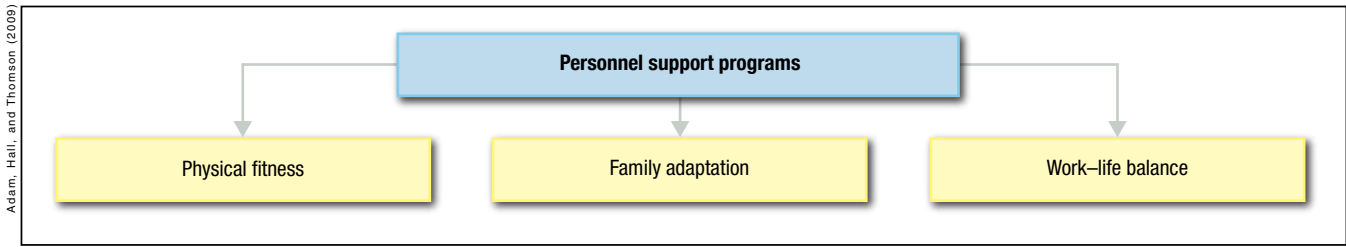


Figure 4 – Personnel support programs and potential factors of influence

Forces.”⁵⁶ Such a program, which includes deployment support, family services, health promotion, physical fitness, sports and recreation and the operation of the mess and newspapers, has a significant impact on the three factors that can potentially affect military IR (Figure 4).

- **Physical fitness**

Physical fitness is definitely an element of military IR, and there are numerous studies available on the topic. Physical fitness refers to physical activities aimed at improving a person’s level of fitness and life hygiene. It is very important, as:

Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members must be physically fit to meet military operational requirements, to perform under a wide range of geographical and environmental conditions, to cope with the stresses of sustained operations and to be ready to respond on short notice.⁵⁷

The former CDS of the Canadian Armed Forces, General Rick Hillier, said, “I am convinced that adherence to a physical fitness program will not only increase strength, energy and endurance but also improve an individual’s ability to cope with mental and emotional stresses.”⁵⁸

Despite the fact that Canadian military authorities are well aware of the importance of physical fitness, it appears that

fitness levels are not high enough within the CAF. Based upon the results of the *Canadian Forces Health and Lifestyle Information Survey 2004 – Regular Force Report* (between 2000 and 2004), the number of CAF members who exercise has dropped while the obesity rate has increased slightly.⁵⁹ The CAF personnel support program has put in place a series of programs, activities, documents, and tools in an effort to reverse that trend. Adam, Hall and Thomson have observed that decreased levels of physical fitness for CAF members can potentially impact military IR.⁶⁰ In the United States, a number of studies have also shown links between military IR and physical fitness.^{61, 62}

- **Family adaptation**

Family support is an integral part of the personnel support programs. The family adaptation concept has been developed by McCubbin, and is intended to be a process that involves active use of available family resources (internal and external) to prevent and reduce stress as much as possible. Family adaptation requires family resources (internally within the family), such as the ability to integrate, adapt, and devise adaptation strategies or behaviours.⁶³ Those behaviours are aimed at strengthening the internal organization and functioning of the family. They furthermore seek the support of the community and society and aim to reduce, limit or eliminate sources of stress. Burr and Klein have identified a list of the possible family adaptation strategies, which they have classified into seven categories: 1) cognitive (i.e., accepting situations);



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2) emotional (i.e., expressing feelings and affection); 3) relationships (i.e., increasing cohesion); 4) communication (i.e., being open and honest); 5) community (i.e., seeking help and support from others); 6) spiritual (i.e., increasing one's faith); and 7) individual development (i.e., developing autonomy).⁶⁴ Family adaptation is also related to other concepts such as family well-being, work-family balance and family resilience.

Among the most significant works, Orthner and Bowen's review of the literature on family adaptation in the American military community found that family adaptation was related to factors that vary, depending upon the individuals, families, work and characteristics of the community, such as the informal support

network, support services for soldiers and their families, and support from military leaders.⁶⁵

The preliminary results of Sodom's research bring to light major elements concerning family adaption to a military environment: 1) spouses are important to the CAF; 2) many spouses have made professional sacrifices for their partner's military career; 3) nearly half the spouses use the services offered by the CAF during deployments; 4) the post-deployment services offered by the CAF are used by only five percent of spouses; 5) spouses perceive that known personal problems could have an impact on their partner's military career; and 6) most spouses are in favour of a career within the CAF and of deployments.⁶⁶

• **Work-life balance**

A challenge for soldiers who must serve their country and put military needs before any personal considerations is to achieve work-life balance. Like all Canadians, they have the challenge of fulfilling numerous roles. They are workers, parents, spouses, partners and friends; they care for their aging parents, they volunteer in their communities, and they must find time to see to their own physical and mental well-being. Work-life balance is a key factor in individual preparedness.

The concept of work-life balance is defined as [trans]

"...a person's ability to balance the obligations of his or her professional life with his or her family responsibilities and personal commitments."⁶⁷ Duxbury and Higgins have shown that a large body of scientific literature exists with respect to the subject of work-life balance and conflict.⁶⁸

Conflict arises when professional and family obligations are incompatible and it therefore becomes difficult to perform one role without failing in another.^{69,70} The conflict between work and personal life has two main components: 1) the practical aspects associated with overloaded schedules and work conflicts; and 2) the feeling of being overwhelmed by events.

Based upon results cited in the *Canadian Forces Health and Lifestyle Information Survey 2004 – Regular Force Report*, 15 percent of participants stated that they had trouble achieving work–life balance, and 25 percent said they had missed family activities as a result of work commitments.⁷¹

Work–life balance tends to influence and impact individual and family functioning.

Conclusion

An individual’s military readiness is influenced by a series of factors that arise out of the organizational structure, the

impact of training and preparation, and the personnel support programs. A review of the literature reveals that research on military IR has developed over time in a non-systematic way. Certain factors that influence military IR have been studied more than others, and rarely have they been examined from a global perspective. The Adam, Hall, and Thomson model that has been adapted to the Canadian Armed Forces is part of this scientific approach of developing knowledge of the components that influence military IR. It is important to validate that approach and pursue further research.

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