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of ADELAIDE



Research Unit on Military
Law and Ethics (RUMLAE)

*Controlled by the law of peace, the
human person remains under*

**Ex-Service personnel in the criminal
justice system: pathways to offending**

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Background

- Increased offending after cessation of conflicts- historical phenomenon
- Numbers unknown- state-based criminal justice, no national system of collecting data
- Anecdotal evidence
- International research suggests former serving members are the largest incarcerated occupational group
- Shared characteristics- male and predominantly incarcerated for violent and sexual crimes rather than crimes of acquisition

Aim: to explore and gain an understanding of the pathways to offending from the perspective of the sentenced prisoner.

Sample: male prisoners in South Australia who are former serving members of the ADF

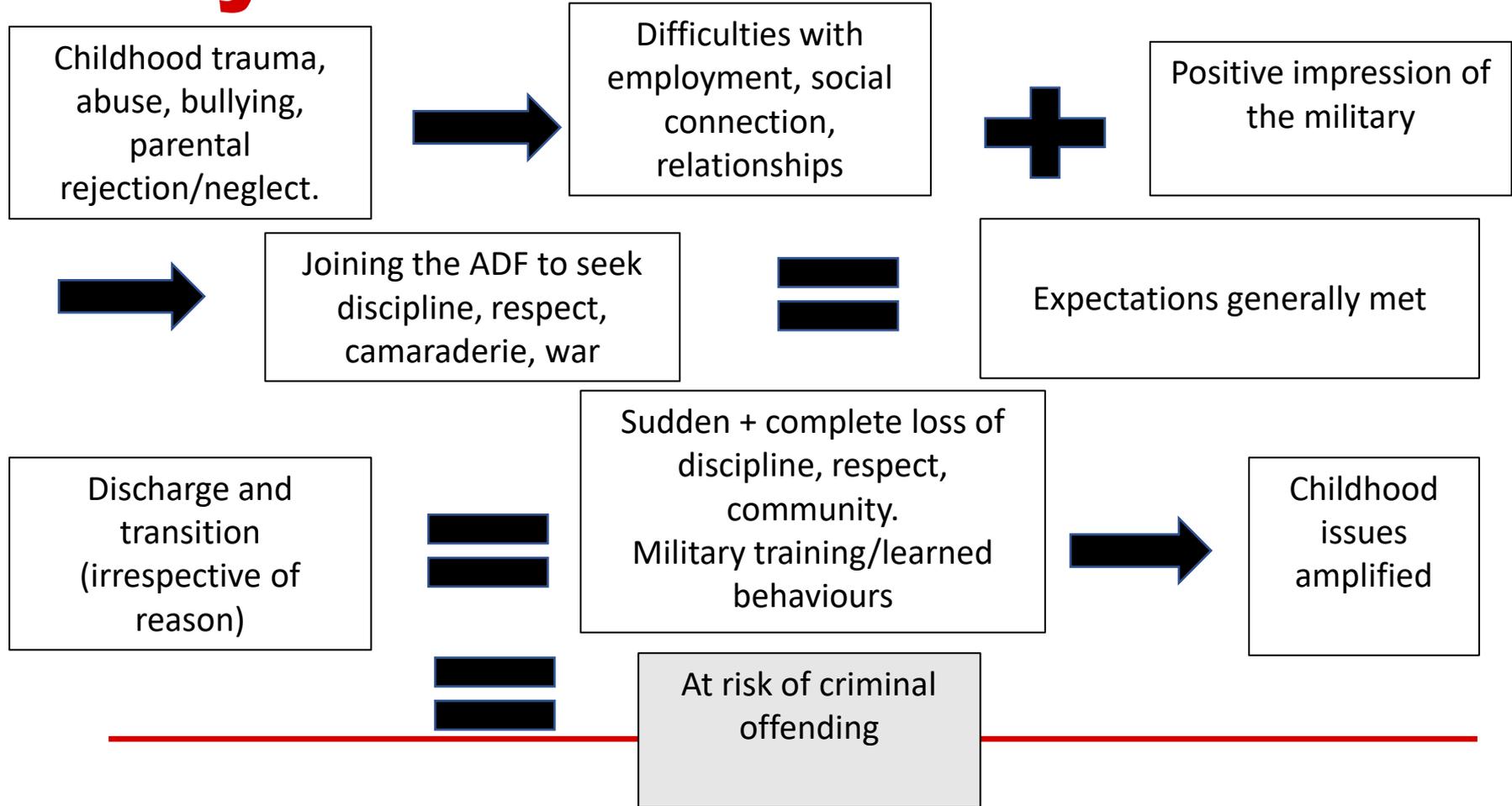
Methodology: in-depth audio-recorded semi-structured face to face interviews. Qualitative thematic analysis.

Participant profile

11 participants

- 1 RAAF, others regular Army and reserves
- enlisted late teens to early 20s
- Length of service <1 to 11 years (median=5)
- 5 described being actively deployed (all 5 served 5+ years)
- 3 corporal/lance corporal on discharge, all others privates
- 3 medically discharged, all others voluntarily
- 3 first offenders (2 while serving), others described history of offending post-discharge. NB little history of pre service offending described.
- Offences included violent and sexual crimes

Key themes



Mental Health issues

- 7 disclosed Posttraumatic Stress
- Other MH issues described- multiple personality disorder, anti social personality disorder, bipolar, depression, panic disorder, OCD, alcohol dependence.
- Traumatic exposures during childhood, military service/deployment, nature of offending and incarceration.
- AOD common- during and after military service. Role of alcohol in offending.

*“Yeah, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. I ended up getting Multiple Personality Disorder, Short Term Memory Loss due to alcohol substance abuse...
Severe depression.*

Personally I reckon the PTSD started when I lost my two brothers. Then going through the army and then coming out (of the military)”.

Treatment

- Withdrawal of DVA services and reliance on prison services.
- Self-management
- Importance of peer support in prison= identity, respect, community.

“DVA basically cut you off when you’re in here and no-one inside the prison system is going to pay for psychological help. There’s a lot of people that come in here, go “Well I was on this drug outside”, they get put on it unmonitored and that’s what they’re on for the whole time they’re in jail”.

“And they didn’t give me my anti-depressants for the first three days I was in gaol”.

“It’s very hard to manage it (PTS). Because I’ve been out of the army for a while now, I do have a couple of things, little strategies of my own that I try to use but they’re getting very thin”.



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