

## **RESTRICTED**

### **ABSTRACT**

Large percentage of Sri Lanka Army woman officers and soldiers retire after completing 15 to 20 years of service. This has resulted in the midlife transition of these female officers and soldiers from military to civilian life occurring in the mid to late thirties, and early forties age period of these individuals. Review of literature indicates that there is a dearth of research on the personal challenges and obstacles faced by these individuals in this midlife career transition from military to civil life. The main objective of this study was to understand the challenges and difficulties faced by SLA women officers and soldiers in their transition from military to civilian life. The research method employed in this study was an exploratory research method. The main data collection instruments employed in the study were in-depth interviews, whilst sample for the study consisted of 30 SLAWC retired officers/soldiers, 10 SLAWC officers/soldiers about to retire, 10 senior SLA personnel, and 5 relatives of SLAWC officers/soldiers about to retire. Content-based analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data obtained through the in-depth interviews, while statistical analysis was used to analyse the quantitative data obtained from these in-depth interviews. Findings revealed that the retired SLAWC personnel in sample faced no personal challenges and obstacles in their transition from military life to civilian life, whilst senior SLA personnel stated that SLAWC personnel face significant challenges in this regard. As per these senior SLA personnel, the challenges and difficulties faced by SLAWC personnel in their midlife transition from military to civil life, range from financial difficulties, to mental depression, difficulties in findings employment, and personal problems. In addition, findings from the study also revealed that organizational support provided by the SLA to help retired SLAWC personnel to overcome personal challenges and obstacles in their midlife career transition from military to civil life was limited to providing free medical treatment at the SLA hospital, and free high education at the country's defence university. Further findings from the study indicated that whilst SLA female soldiers about to retire are provided vocational training in various discipline six to twelve months prior to retirement, no training programs are conducted for SLA female officers about to retire.