



Supporting
Military Families
Through Research
and Outreach

PUTTING RESEARCH TO WORK FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Distress, Support, and Relationship Satisfaction During Military-Induced Separations: A Longitudinal Study Among Spouses of Dutch Deployed Military Personnel

Andres, M. (2014). Distress, support, and relationship satisfaction during military-induced separations: A longitudinal study among spouses of Dutch deployed military personnel. *Psychological Services, 11*(1), 22-30. doi: 10.1037/a0033750



153 female spouses of Dutch military personnel completed surveys about relationship satisfaction before, during, and after deployment. Levels of satisfaction were fairly high overall, but declined significantly over time.

Key Findings:

- Spouses' relationship satisfaction generally declined during deployment.
- Relationship satisfaction before deployment was the most important predictor of relationship satisfaction after deployment.
- Strong social support during deployment was related to higher levels of relationship satisfaction after deployment.
- Positive spousal interaction following deployment improved relationship satisfaction and mediated the effects of psychological distress.

Implications for Programs:

- Programs could include modules in pre-deployment workshops for military couples on the importance of addressing relationship problems before deployment.
- Programs could facilitate the development of support networks for military spouses.
- Programs could develop and offer courses on positive communication skills for couples following deployment.

Implications for Policies:

- Policies could recommend that Service members and their spouses have access to professional support services before deployment.
- Policies could dedicate funding to offering communication training for Service members and their spouses after prolonged separations.
- Policies could recommend regular review of social support programs to assess their effectiveness in meeting the needs of spouses.

Avenues for Future Research:

- Future research could collect qualitative data (e.g., interviews or focus groups) to improve understanding of how military-induced separations affect spousal relationships.
- Future research could focus on relationship satisfaction from the perspective of non-deployed male partners.
- Future research could examine relationship satisfaction among deployed women and mothers.
- Future research could replicate this study with a United States population.

Prepared by the Military REACH Team.

For additional information, please visit reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu

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Background Information

Methodology:

- Participants completed questionnaires before, during, and after their partners' deployment.
- Questionnaires measured relationship satisfaction, spousal interaction, social support, psychological distress, life stress (e.g., injury or death of a family member), and work-family conflict.
- Hierarchical regression analyses examined predictors of relationship satisfaction following deployment.

Participants:

- 153 female spouses of deployed Dutch military personnel completed surveys at three time periods: before, during, and after deployment.
- Mean age of the participants was 34 years (SD = 8.92).
- Average relationship length was 12 years (SD = 8.10).
- Demographic information was not provided regarding military branch or race/ethnic background of participants.

Limitations:

- Bidirectional relationships exist between some variables (e.g., relationship problems and distress) which was not addressed in the analyses.
- Description of the research methods does not provide response rates, information about missing data, or attrition levels.).
- The study only examines the experiences of female non-deployed military spouses and does not include male non-deployed spouses or female deployed spouses.

Assessing Research that Works

Research Design and Sample				Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent (★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★★)	Questionable (★★★)	
The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Research Methods				Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent (★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★★)	Questionable (★★★)	
The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Limitations				Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent <i>Minor</i> Limitations (★★★)	Appropriate <i>Few</i> Limitations (★★★)	Limited <i>Several</i> Limitations (★★★)	Questionable <i>Many/Severe</i> Limitations (★★★)	
The limitations of this study are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Implications				Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent (★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★★)	Questionable (★★★)	
The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications					
Overall Quality Rating					★ ★ ★