

The Center for Research and Outreach

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

Satisfaction with Family Life in the Military

Bowen, G.L. (1989). Satisfaction with family life in the military. *Armed Forces and Security*, 15(4), 571-592.
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SUMMARY: This study examined the relationship between satisfaction with the military environment for families and overall satisfaction with the military way of life. While there was a significant relationship between those two variables, other factors emerged as stronger predictors of overall satisfaction with the military way of life.

KEY FINDINGS

- Overall, the more satisfied Soldiers were with the environment for families, the more satisfied they were with the military way of life generally.
- Satisfaction with the environment for families was not the strongest predictor of satisfaction with the military way of life. Levels of satisfaction with personal freedom, opportunity to serve one's country, pay and allowances, and current job were all stronger predictors.
- Personal freedom was the strongest predictor of overall satisfaction with military life for several subgroups of Soldiers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS

Programs could:

- Educate Service members and their families about resources available to them to increase satisfaction
- Create peer support groups for members of military families in order to increase satisfaction with the military environment for families
- Conduct focus groups to determine what supports would be most helpful for military families

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES

Policies could:

- Encourage programs to be tailored to different types of families (e.g., families with and without children, homes with multiple Service members, etc.) to maximize positive effects
- Promote education for providers about the factors that matter most to different types of military families
- Continue to support the development of a culture that is supportive of military families of all types

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METHODS

- Data were derived from a stratified random sample of Active Duty officers and enlisted personnel in the U.S. Army who participated in the 1985 DoD Worldwide Survey of Officer and Enlisted Personnel.
- Participants completed questions about satisfaction with the military as a way of life, satisfaction with the environment for families, and demographic and military variables.
- Data were analyzed to estimate the contribution of each variable to the level of member satisfaction with the military as a way of life.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 7,117 married Active Duty U.S. Army personnel with at least 10 months of service.
- Of these Soldiers, 20% were married to a military spouse with no children, 25% were married to a military spouse with children, 28% were married to a civilian spouse with no children, and 27% were married to a civilian spouse with children.
- The sample consisted of 53% males who were on average 30.4 years old. The Soldiers were White (56%), Black (35%), Hispanic (8%), and other races (1%).

LIMITATIONS

- The variables in this study were assessed with single item measures, which may limit the validity.
- Due to the correlational nature of the study, no claims can be made about causation.
- Demographic variables differed from those of the general Army population, which limits generalizability.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Examine these relationships for Service members from all military branches.
- Investigate the efficacy of programs designed to increase satisfaction with the environment for families in the military.
- Use a longitudinal design to determine how these relationships change over Service member's careers.

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