

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Crossover of Organizational Commitment

Bull Schaefer, R. A., Green, S. G., Saxena, M., & Weiss, H. M. (2013). Crossover of organizational commitment. *Human Performance*, 26(4), 261-274. doi:10.1080/08959285.2013.814657

SUMMARY: This study explored the relationship between spousal commitment, spousal emotions about reenlistment, Service members' reenlistment, and Service members' attitudes towards military service. Findings suggest spouses' emotions as it relates to reenlistment impact spouses' and Service members' level of commitment to military service.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Military spouses' expression of positive emotions was positively related to Service members' levels of commitment to reenlist.
- Spouses' attitudes about the military were associated with Service members' reports of spouses' emotions when discussing reenlistment, and these reports of emotions were predictors of Service members' work attitudes.
- Spouses' positive emotions during discussions of reenlistment were positively related to both spouses' and Service members' level of commitment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Create peer support groups for military spouses to help them learn coping skills to better help them manage potential negative emotions and reactions related to reenlistment
- Offer training workshops for professionals who work with military families about how to address families' concerns about reenlistment
- Develop after-school activities for military-connected youth so that they learn how to better cope with changes related to military experiences (e.g., reenlistment, deployment)

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Support programming that provides resources on well-being and coping for military families during the reenlistment process
- Encourage collaboration with community-based organizations to provide additional support to military spouses who have difficulty coping with military service-related decisions
- Develop initiatives that increase awareness about the link between emotional experiences and commitment to military service

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METHODS

- Qualitative data were gathered from focus groups of military spouses over a year. Their responses were used to inform the questions on a measure of spousal commitment that was used in the next part of the study.
- Quantitative data were collected by mailing surveys to military members and their spouses for each to complete and return via postal mail separately.
- No information were provided as to the recruitment methods of the focus group members or the participants who completed the surveys.

PARTICIPANTS

- Two groups of participants were included in this study. One group, 76 military spouses, participated in focus groups over a year. Data from the focus groups were used to create a spousal commitment measure.
- The second group consisted of 186 Service members and their spouses who each completed a self-report survey. The survey consisted of questions about Service members' and military spouses' organizational commitment, reenlistment intention, and spouses' displays of emotion.
- No demographic data were provided about either of the two samples.

LIMITATIONS

- There were many terms that were not well-defined in the description of the study, which limited the ability to understand and interpret all of the findings.
- There was no explanation of the recruitment methods for the military spouses who participated in the focus groups and therefore it is impossible to compare spouses in the focus groups against those across military branches.
- The data were cross-sectional, which means the direction of the relationship between reenlistment, commitment, and negative emotions is unclear.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Conduct a focus group of both Service members and their spouses to interview both about spousal commitment before and after reenlistment
- Investigate any relationship between Service member reenlistment and parents' of Service members reports of negative emotions
- Gather data on military connected youth's emotional experiences regarding their military parent(s) reenlistment

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