

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



**Focus:**  
International  
Military

## Keeping Engaged During Deployment: The Interplay between Self-Efficacy, Family Support, and Threat Exposure

Delahaij, R., Kamphuis, W., & van den Berg, C. E. (2016). Keeping engaged during deployment: The interplay between self-efficacy, family support, and threat exposure. *Military Psychology*, 28(2), 78-88. doi:10.3037/mil0000098

**SUMMARY:** Resources of resilience and perceived threat were assessed in a sample of military personnel. Findings revealed that when threat exposure from deployment is high, having greater self-efficacy was beneficial to overcome the increased stressors. Family support also served as a buffer regardless of the level of self-efficacy and deployment threat exposure.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Military personnel with greater self-efficacy tended to fair better in the threat of exposure during deployment.
- A decrease in work engagement and increased burnout were present among military personnel with high self-efficacy and no exposure to threat during deployment.
- Family support served as a positive resource to military personnel, especially among those with low self-efficacy, and exposure to threat during deployment.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Develop classes and workshops on building and enhancing self-efficacy for Service members and their families to help manage military-related stressful demands
- Provide support groups for Service members and their families, especially to help them reappraise the expectations of deployment
- Educate Service members and their families on how to deal with family contact and sustaining family support throughout the deployment cycle

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Support professional training for individuals who work with military families on self-efficacy and family support as it positively impacts post-threat exposure adaptation
- Encourage a focus on self-efficacy and family support across all programs for military families
- Continue to support programs for identification of deployment threat exposure in military families

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## METHODS

- Participants' resources of resilience before deployment and perceived threat during deployment were assessed.
- Measures included self-efficacy, exposure to threatening situations during deployment, levels of work engagement, family support, and work burnout.
- Statistical analyses were conducted to examine the effects of deployment threat exposure, self-efficacy, and family support on work engagement and burnout.

## PARTICIPANTS

- The participants included 123 members from the Police Training Group and 41 Air Task Force of the Netherlands Armed Forces.
- For both groups, there were only four female participants (two in each); no race/ethnicity demographics were mentioned in this study.
- The mean age was 32 years for the Police Training Group and 37 years for the Air Task Force.

## LIMITATIONS

- Very little information was provided about the description of the sample, thus it is difficult to understand the study's findings.
- Since the statistical analyses were run for all of the participants in this study, it is difficult to interpret if there were differences in resources of resilience and perceived threat during deployment among each group.
- Measuring threat exposure only at one time point, two months into the deployment and having limited information about the length of the deployment, limits the ability to determine the significance of threat exposure among military personnel.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Evaluate perceived threat at multiple time points throughout the deployment and after to assess the significance of exposure threat
- Utilize samples with military personnel from other branches of the military, including female members
- Include demographic information about the sample, such as marital status, socioeconomic status, and number of children

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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