

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Perceived Support from Multiple Sources: Associations with PTSD Symptoms

DiMauro, J., Renshaw, K. D., Smith, B. N., & Vogt, D. (2016). Perceived support from multiple sources: Associations with PTSD symptoms. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 29*(4), 332-339. doi:10.1002/jts.22114

SUMMARY: There is evidence that perceived level of social support is negatively associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). An examination of the relationships between PTSD and perceived support from different sources were conducted in the study using two distinct samples of Service members. Results revealed high levels of support from multiple sources for Service members but modest association between PTSD and perceived social support.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Participants perceived high support from both the broader public and close others (family and friends).
- Perception of support from the broader public was modestly related to the PTSD symptoms of Service members in both samples, whereas the association between supports from family and friends and PTSD symptoms was modest in one sample but zero in another.
- Marital status had no effect on Service members' perceived support level, but women reported slightly higher support from family and friends than men.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer support groups for Service members who were exposed to traumatic war experiences
- Design workshops for Service members regarding how to seek supports not only from family and friends but also from the broader public
- Educate Service members' families and friends in workshops on how to support loved ones with PTSD

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs that aim to reduce PTSD symptoms in Service members after deployment
- Raise awareness of the importance of broader public support on Service members' well-being
- Recommend training for professionals working with Service members regarding what PTSD symptoms to look for after Service members return from deployments and what support they could provide

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- Participants in sample one were recruited through marriage workshops, whereas participants in sample two were selected from a Defense Manpower Data Center database.
- Each participant completed self-report questionnaires regarding PTSD symptoms, perceived social support from the broader public and from family and friends, and exposure to traumatic war experiences.
- Data were analyzed to examine the associations between perceived social support and PTSD symptoms.

PARTICIPANTS

- Sample one included 207 National Guard and Reserve Service members and sample two consisted of 465 Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve members; all of the participants had been deployed during OEF/OIF.
- The average ages of sample one and sample two were 35.09 years (SD = 8.37, 99% male) and 35.27 years (SD = 10.81, 41% male), respectively.
- The race/ethnicity breakdowns of samples one and two were: White (91% vs. 73%), Black (1% vs. 16%), Asian American (3% vs. 3%), Native American (3% vs. 4%), and other (2% vs. 4%).
- The military branches that participants of sample one and sample two served in were: Army (76% vs. 67%), Air Force (24% vs. 14%), Navy (0% vs. 12%), and Marine Corps (0% vs. 7%).

LIMITATIONS

- The definition of the broader public support was not clear, which makes it hard to replicate the study.
- Only self-report measures were used, therefore the result might be subject to self-report bias.
- Sample one was recruited from marriage workshops, and people who attend those workshops might be different from people who do not, so the results may have been different if the people who do not attend the workshops were also included in the study.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Clearly define what broader public support means and examine what specific type of public support is most helpful for Service members
- Explore the causal relationships between perceived support and PTSD symptoms
- Examine the potential effects of social support on other domains of Service members' and Veterans' mental health (e.g., depression and anxiety)

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>