

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

How Does Spouse Career Support Relate to Employee Turnover? Work Interfering With Family and Job Satisfaction as Mediators

Huffman, A. H., Casper, W. J., & Payne, S. C. (2014). How does spouse career support relate to employee turnover? Work interfering with family and job satisfaction as mediators. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 35(2), 194-212.
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SUMMARY: Survey data from U.S. Army officers was used to examine the extent to which spouse career support predicted the likelihood of officers leaving the Army over the next four years. Furthermore, researchers examined how work interference with family life and job satisfaction influenced spouse support and Army officers subsequent job turnover. Results indicated that spouse support was associated with Army officers' choice to leave the military and work interference with family and job satisfaction influenced this relationship.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Officers who reported higher levels of spouse career support were less likely to have left the military over the subsequent four years.
- Officers without children were more likely to leave the military than those with children.
- Higher job satisfaction and lower work interference with family was associated with increased spouse career support, which reduced career turnover for Army officers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer family-friendly social events to Service members and their families
- Provide workshops to help Service members and their families learn about the programs and resources available to help support military families
- Disseminate information regarding the importance of work-life balance in the military

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs that offer support services to military spouses when Service members are deployed or during intense training periods
- Encourage military leaders to afford Service members some flexibility in their duties during times of high family stress (e.g., death of a family member, new baby)
- Encourage collaboration between DoD programs and community-based organizations that support military families as they transition through life stages (e.g., marriage, birth of a child)

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METHODS

- A mail survey was distributed to a random sample of U.S. Army officers worldwide in 1996.
- Survey data was matched to archival turnover data four years after the survey was administered; those who involuntarily left the Army (n = 333) or were unmarried (n = 2,299) were excluded.
- The sample consisted of 5,505 officers, with 42% of the sample holding the rank of captain.

PARTICIPANTS

- The majority of participants were male (81%), and the average age was 33 years (SD = 5.8).
- Participants served in the Army an average of 12 years (SD = 5.4).
- Approximately 32% of participants deployed at least once prior to or at the time of the survey.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample consisted of only Army officers; results may not be generalizable to other branches of the military or to families of enlisted Service members.
- Non-validated and single item measures were used which may present challenges to validity.
- The researchers did not account for other variables (e.g., relationship functioning, family harmony) that could influence spouse career support.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine how unit morale influences job satisfaction and turnover in the military
- Investigate the effectiveness of programs that support military families in an effort to reduce turnover
- Examine how deployment influences turnover in the military

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