

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

Rejection Sensitivity and Marital Adjustment Among Military Spouses During Deployments

Hurley, E. C., Field, T., & Bendell-Estoff, D. (2012). Rejection sensitivity and marital adjustment among military spouses during deployments. *Psychology*, 3(6), 480-484. doi:10.4236/psych.2012.36067

SUMMARY: An examination of the relationship between rejection sensitivity (the degree to which an individual expects rejection by a significant other) and marital adjustment post-deployment was conducted. Two surveys were given to 129 spouses of deployed Service members. Overall findings suggest a negative association between rejection sensitivity and marital adjustment.

KEY FINDINGS:

- A greater rejection sensitivity predicted a lower level of marital adjustment.
- The total number of deployments had a greater impact on relationship adjustment than the immediate deployment separation.
- Neither gender, age, education level, number of marriages, number of children in the household, or number of months currently separated due to deployment affected relationship adjustment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer military couples education training that focuses on unique military family stressors, such as deployments and relocations
- Offer deployment support groups for spouses of deployed Service members
- Provide support for military families that focuses on relationship building during deployment and reintegration

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue support for programs that specifically address spouses of Service members and their adjustment post-deployment
- Facilitate pre- and post-deployment support for military families that promotes resilience in Service members, their partners, and children
- Recommend education for professionals who work with military families (e.g., child caregivers, mental health, and education professionals) on the possible effects of deployment on spouses at home

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METHODS

- The sample of spouses of Army personnel were recruited at a shopping mall in a town with a military base.
- Data was collected from participants through the use of the following measure: Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire, the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and the Participant Information Form (PIF).
- Statistical analyses were conducted to assess the relationships between spouses of Service members' rejection sensitivity and marital satisfaction.

PARTICIPANTS

- The 129 spouses of Army personnel were 94% female, and their ages ranged from 19 to 50 years old, with 57% being between 21 and 29 years old.
- Seventy-seven percent of the participants were in their first marriage, 11% had one previous military marriage and 12% had 2-5 previous marriages.
- Eighty-eight percent of participants had between one and four military deployment separations while 56% had no other separations, and 44% had between one and 39 other separations.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample was not representative of other military branches; therefore, not generalizable.
- A convenience sample was used to recruit participants; therefore not necessarily representative of the population being studied.
- The Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire has only been used with single undergraduate students; therefore there is questionable validity of the instrument for a married military population.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore how different military units, diverse cultures, and family structures are impacted by deployment and have experienced rejection sensitivity
- Investigate how couples who have divorced following deployments experienced rejection sensitivity
- Evaluate what supports military families need most in the reintegration stage of deployment

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