Rejection Sensitivity and Marital Adjustment Among Military Spouses During Deployments


**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
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

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS

Design

Limited Research Plan and Sample

Methods

Appropriate Measurement and Analysis

Limitations

Several

For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
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