

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

An Exploratory Study of Marital and Quality of Life Ratings Among Male Spouses of Military Members

Lufkin, K. P. (2017). An exploratory study of marital and quality of life ratings among male spouses of military members. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 39, 162-171. doi:10.1007/s10591-017-9413-2

SUMMARY: Few studies explore the experiences of male military spouses, which can impact family readiness within the military. Survey data were used to examine the demographic information of male spouses of Active Duty Service members on a variety of satisfaction measures (e.g., life, marital, health). Results indicated that male spouses in this sample had high levels of education and income and scored high on the satisfaction measures.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Seventy-four percent of male spouses rated their physical health as near excellent or excellent.
- The average life satisfaction score was 27 out of 35, suggesting high life satisfaction among male spouses; almost half of the male spouses agreed that their life was close to ideal.
- The average depression score for spouses was 13 out of 36, indicating low levels of depression among male spouses.
- Twenty-four percent of male spouses scored a 60 or 61 on a 75 point scale for marital satisfaction, suggesting a medium to high level of marital satisfaction among spouses.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Continue to offer services that support employment opportunities for both male and female military spouses
- Provided resources and services to meet the unique needs of male military spouses
- Continue to provide marital education to military couples to enhance marital satisfaction

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support legislation aimed at making licensure portability easier for military spouses who relocate
- Continue to support programs aimed at enhancing marital well-being among Service members and their spouses
- Continue to provide support for programs and services that increase family readiness

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METHODS

- Participants were recruited via an advertisement on a popular male military spouse blog and posted advertisements on Blue Star Families Facebook and Twitter pages.
- Snowball and convenience sampling were used to further distribute the link to these advertisements and data were collected from July-August 2016.
- Only participants who were over the age of 18 years, who were married to an Active Duty Service member, and completed the majority of survey questions were included in the sample (n = 34).

PARTICIPANTS

- The majority of spouses (85%) were heterosexual, while 15% of respondents were in same-sex marriages, and the average length of marriage was 10.9 years.
- Seventy percent of spouses were White and ranged in age from 26 to 57 years (M = 39).
- Fifty-six percent of spouses had no military history of their own, 32% were retired or separated from the military, 9% were current Active Duty Service members, and only one spouse reported being a Reservist.
- Forty-four percent of spouses completed college; half of the spouses were working full-time, 32% were unemployed, and 18% were unemployed or "other."

LIMITATIONS

- The majority of spouses in the sample were married to officers; therefore, results may not be generalizable to male spouses married to enlisted military personnel.
- Results may be biased as spouses indicated high levels of education and income, which could influence life satisfaction, health, depression, and marital satisfaction scores (and these factors were not accounted for in the analyses).
- The small sample size (n = 34) and reduced responses on some of the measures limit the generalizability of results to the larger population of male military spouses.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine marital and life satisfaction scores among male spouses of enlisted military personnel
- Compare the experience of male military spouses with those of female military spouses to assess similarities and differences to better tailor programs aimed at supporting military spouses
- Explore how other factors (e.g., length of marriage) influence life and marital satisfaction, depression, and health outcomes

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