



Contextualizing the Psychosocial Well-Being of Military Members and Their Partners: The Importance of Community and Relationship Provisions

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SUMMARY: Interpersonal resources (e.g., having someone to count on, getting and receiving guidance, sharing activities and interests) are vital to individuals' well-being. Associations between Service members' and their partners' community connections, interpersonal resources, and psychosocial well-being (e.g., anxiety and depression symptoms, self-efficacy) were examined. Military couples with more community connections have more interpersonal resources and, in turn, greater psychosocial well-being.

KEY FINDINGS

- For both Service members and partners, greater connection with their military community and higher Service member rank were related to having more interpersonal resources.
- Partners, but not Service members, who were more connected with their larger local community reported having more interpersonal resources.
- For both Service members and partners, having more interpersonal resources was associated with greater overall psychosocial well-being.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS

Programs could:

- Provide organized social functions for military families to meet and enjoy activities together
- Coordinate volunteer outreach opportunities for military families, especially partners, to increase connections to the larger local community
- Disseminate information to military families about the importance of community connections and taking time to build and maintain social relationships

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES

Policies could:

- Encourage collaboration between Department of Defense programs and community volunteer organizations to provide military families with ways to get involved in the larger community
- Recommend education for professionals working with military families about the importance of social connections, including within the military community, on individual well-being
- Support programs that provide opportunities for military families to connect to others in their community

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- Military families with at least one adolescent, ages 11-18 years, were recruited from an Active Duty U.S. Army installation for a larger research study.
- Family members each completed measures about interpersonal resources, community connections, military variables, and psychosocial well-being on computers at the installation.
- The effects of interpersonal resources from community connections on Active Duty Service members' and their spouses' psychosocial well-being were examined.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included 266 Active Duty Service members (86% male) and 236 civilian partners.
- The majority of participants were between the ages of 31-40 years (68%).
- No race/ethnicity data were provided.
- On average, Service members had experienced 4.08 permanent change of station moves and 3.68 deployments.

LIMITATIONS

- Because the data are cross-sectional, the direction of effects cannot be inferred.
- The sample was from a larger study of families with adolescents, and results may not generalize to families with older or younger children or without children.
- Service members were primarily male, so the researchers were unable to examine gender differences in how community connections and interpersonal resources relate to well-being.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Investigate whether military families with younger children may have less time to invest in community connections than those with older or no children and the impacts on well-being
- Explore how community connections are built when military families move to a new community
- Examine the effects of Service member and partner gender on levels of military community and larger local community connections and interpersonal resources

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