



Reservists in a Postconflict Zone: Deployment Stressors and the Deployment Experience

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350 Australian Army Reservists deployed on a peacekeeping mission completed self-report questionnaires to identify deployment-related stressors and the association between those stressors and perceptions of the overall deployment experience. Most respondents reported a positive experience with relatively low levels of stress. Work-related stressors (particularly those related to leadership) were most commonly endorsed; they also exerted a larger influence on ratings of the overall deployment experience than other deployment-related stressors.

Key Findings:

- The majority of participants reported a positive deployment experience and rated other deployment-related stressors quite low.
- Work-related stressors were rated higher than stressors related to separation from home or the operational environment. Work stressors were also associated with less favorable ratings of the overall deployment experience.
- Participants reporting stress resulting from separation from home and family were more likely to report a negative or neutral deployment experience.
- Organizational issues (leadership and workplace difficulties) were among the most frequently cited negative aspects of deployment.

Implications for Programs:

- Programs could develop classes for Service members and families during the pre-deployment phase that would teach coping strategies for managing deployment-related stressors.
- Programs could educate family members about potential sources of stress that their Service members may face during deployment.
- Classes could teach families strategies for supporting their Service member (e.g., communication skills, awareness of resources).

Implications for Policies:

- Policies could recommend enhanced resiliency training to mitigate potential negative impacts of deployment on military families.
- Policies could fund professional education for military leadership, providing training on effective means of supporting their Service members, especially during challenging deployments.

Avenues for Future Research:

- Future research could seek to identify specific leadership and workplace difficulties that are most associated with more challenging deployment experiences.
- Future research could seek to replicate these findings in additional samples (including military personnel involved in other non-combat missions).
- Future research could identify other variables that may underlie the association between increased deployment-related stress and negative perceptions of deployment.

Background Information

Methodology:

- Data were part of a mandated psychological screen completed by all Australian Army personnel at the end of a tour.
- The current study focused on the Major Stressors Inventory (a 36-item questionnaire evaluating deployment-related stressors associated with work, separation, and the operational environment), and the Service members' perceptions of the overall deployment experience.
- Participant responses on the Major Stressors Inventory were evaluated and compared to those of 8,032 respondents from an Army-wide sample. Additional analyses examined whether ratings on the Major Stressors Inventory distinguished respondents reporting positive, neutral, or negative deployment experiences.




Participants:

- Participants were 350 Australian Army Reservists deployed to the Solomon Islands during a peacekeeping mission.
- All participants were men, the majority of whom were 18-29 years of age.
- About half were married or in long-term relationships, and most were employed.
- Most participants were at the rank of private or corporal with an average of 8 years of service. Most had not previously been deployed.

Limitations:

- Results of the study may not generalize to other military personnel who are not members of the select sample of Australian Army Reservists involved in this specific peacekeeping mission.
- The vast majority of participants reported no stress or slight stress. Thus, the results linking work-related deployment stressors to less favorable deployment experiences may be attributable to a very small number of participants with extreme scores on both measures.
- Additional unmeasured stressors may have influenced perceptions of the overall deployment experience.

Assessing Research that Works

Research Design and Sample					Quality Rating:	
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)		
The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Research Methods					Quality Rating:	
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)		
The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Limitations					Quality Rating:	
	Excellent Minor Limitations (★★★★)	Appropriate Few Limitations (★★★)	Limited Several Limitations (★★)	Questionable Many/Severe Limitations (★)		
The limitations of this study are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Implications					Quality Rating:	N/A
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)		
The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications						
Overall Quality Rating						