

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

Stress, Coping, and Well-being in Military Spouses During Deployment Separation

Padden, D. L., Connors, R. A., & Agazio, J. G. (2010). Stress, coping, and well-being in military spouses during deployment separation. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 33(2), 247-267. doi:10.1177/0193945910371319

SUMMARY: Female spouses of deployed Active Duty Army personnel participated in a study examining predictors of general wellbeing (including perceived stress, coping behaviors, and health-promoting behaviors) during deployment separation. Perceived stress was the best predictor of spouses' mental and physical well-being.

KEY FINDINGS:

- A higher degree of perceived stress was associated with lower mental and physical well-being.
- Increased perceived stress was related to increased use of both evasive and emotive coping, which were, in turn, related to a decreased mental and physical well-being.
- Increased optimistic coping was related to increased mental, but not physical, well-being.
- Higher levels of stress were found in spouses of husbands deployed to a military operation other than war.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Host special social events for military spouses and their children to increase social support while their family member is deployed
- Offer classes to military spouses that include information about active coping skills to reduce stress during deployment
- Disseminate information regarding programs and services available to military families during deployment

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to provide infrastructure and support for Family Readiness Groups
- Continue to provide additional services for spouses of deployed Service members such as a workshop in effective coping skills
- Recommend professional education to service providers working with military families regarding the unique factors that influence spousal well-being during deployment

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METHODS

- Female spouses of currently deployed Army Soldiers from one large military installation were recruited through Family Readiness Groups.
- Participants completed a paper and pencil questionnaire.
- Questions assessed perceived stress, coping thoughts and behaviors, and well-being.

PARTICIPANTS

- One hundred and five female spouses of Active Duty Army Soldiers participated.
- The majority of spouses were White (80%), and were on average 30.54 years old (SD = 6.31 years).
- The average number of previous deployments was 2.27 (SD = 1.24).

LIMITATIONS

- All the measures were self-report; participants could have tried to respond in the "best" way, which may bias the results.
- The sample was small and not random (attendees at Family Readiness Groups), limiting the generalizability of results.
- The study was correlational therefore causal conclusions are inappropriate.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Include assessment of the sources of stress during deployment for spouses of deployed military members
- Conduct a longitudinal study across the entire deployment period to see how these variables may fluctuate over time
- Replicate this study with spouses from other military branches

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