

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Navy

Predicting Post-Deployment Family Adaptation in U.S. Navy Families

Scott, M. A., Condon, E. H., Montgomery, A. J., & Baker, S. R. (2014). Predicting post-deployment family adaptation in U.S. Navy families. *International Journal of Advanced Nursing Studies*, 3(1), 32-41. doi:10.14419/ijans.v3i1.2316

SUMMARY: Researchers investigated predictors of postdeployment family adaptation including length of deployment, prior deployments, years married, number of children, participation in religious and family support groups, communication, race, and interdependence. Spouses of Navy Service members were surveyed, with results highlighting the role of perceived security in promoting healthy family functioning.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Higher levels of interdependence and feelings of security in the relationship among spouses of Navy Service members predicted higher levels of adaptation.
- Spouses whose partners had a larger number of prior deployments experienced greater levels of post-deployment family adaptation than those with fewer deployments.
- Military rank, length of deployment, years of marriage, number of children in the home, participation in religious activities, communication during deployment, and participation in family readiness groups was not associated with post-deployment family adaptation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Support interdependence and feelings of security in relationships within military families
- Disseminate information regarding support services for military families prior to, during, and after deployment
- Offer workshops during reintegration to help families and Service members adjust to the Service members return

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support services for military families during reintegration
- Recommend screening for Service members for mental health issues that may affect interdependence and feelings of security in family relationships during reintegration
- Recommend collaboration between DoD programs and community-based organizations that support military families throughout the deployment cycle to provide streamlines and continuous care

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METHODS

- Spouses of Service members in the Navy (Rank: 45% enlisted, 55% officer) completed an online survey six weeks to 12 months following the return of a Service member from a deployment (which lasted six months or longer).
- Participants were recruited via links on internet sites visited by military families and ads posted at a large southeastern university.
- The survey included multiple choice and open-ended questions regarding family adaptation post-deployment.

PARTICIPANTS

- One hundred forty-two Navy spouses participated.
- The sample was comprised of mostly female (97%) and non-minority (89%) participants.
- The majority of participants (30%) were married for between 6 to 11 years.

LIMITATIONS

- This study focused on small sample of Navy spouses; hence, generalizability may be limited.
- Participants may differ from non-participants in a way that was not measured, but affected the outcome variables (e.g., participants may be functioning better than non-participants).
- The cross-sectional study limits inferences about causation.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Replicate this study in a larger, more demographically diverse sample
- Utilize longitudinal data to explore the relationships among phases of the deployment cycle and family adaptation, including additional predictor variables such as frequency of communication, frequency of participation in family support groups, the age of children in the home, and educational level
- Explore the effects of a Service member with a war-related physical or mental health disorder on adaptation during postdeployment

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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