

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



**Focus:**  
Multiple  
Branches

## The Implications of Attachment Theory for Military Wives: Effects During Post-Deployment Period

Vincenzen, K. A., Haddock, L., & Hickman, G. (2014). The implications of attachment theory for military wives: Effects during a post-deployment period. *The Professional Counselor*, 4(2), 122-128. doi:10.15241/kav.4.2.122

**SUMMARY:** Military deployment can have both a positive and negative impact on military wives. Military wives participated in an online study examining the relationship between length of deployment and their psychological distress. There was a significant association between duration of deployment and psychological distress.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Length of deployment within this sample ranged between 6-16 months, with an average length of nine and a half months.
- Length of deployments ranges from zero to 12 month, with an average of six months.
- A significant association existed between the duration of the Service member's deployment and wives' psychological distress, such that deployments over six months led to significant increases in wives psychological distress.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Disseminate information to military spouses and families regarding the potential distress they may experience while Service member is deployed, especially for those facing longer deployments
- Offer support groups to help military wives manage the stressors of deployment
- Provide post-deployment workshops to Service members and their spouses that offer strategies to reduce distress during reintegration

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend that military leaders consider the impact of length of deployment on military wives' psychological well-being when making decision about deployment
- Continue to support research efforts looking at the impact of deployment on military families and wives
- Support programs that offer mental health services to military spouse throughout the deployment cycle

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## METHODS

- Emails sent to military advocacy groups and several military networks recruited females currently married to a U.S. Military Service member who had returned from a deployment within the previous 12 months to volunteer for a study.
- Participants completed a measure of depression and demographic questions.
- Duration of deployment equaled the total number of months the Service member was deployed, from the day he left and to the day he returned.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Fifty-eight military wives participated.
- The average age of participants was 31.2 years (SD = 6.7 years); no race/ethnicity information was provided.
- Participants were 57% Army, 22% Air Force, 12% Navy, and 1% Marine Corps; 5% were National Guard and 2% were Reserves.

## LIMITATIONS

- The participants were non-random volunteers and the results may be biased.
- The sample is small and appears unrepresentative of typical military wives; results may not generalize.
- The variable assessed (deployment length) accounted for a small percentage of the variance in psychological distress; other unmeasured variables may be implicated.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Evaluate the experiences of non-deployed husbands and their distress levels while their partners are deployed
- Examine deployment of more than six months regarding the struggles, challenges, resiliency, and other impacts on military wives and families
- Investigate the effectiveness of military programs and services meant to reduce distress among military spouses during deployment

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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