Military spouses and the deployment cycle: exploring the well-being, protective factors, and personal resources of waiting wives

Date
2013-05

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Abstract
Research suggests that the deployment cycle is associated with decreased psychological well-being in military spouses, yet not all individuals married to military service members experience psychopathology. It may be that spouses who do not experience reduced well-being possess personal resources, such as positive emotions, that protect them against the stresses of military life. The primary purpose of this dissertation was to determine the effect of deployment on the psychological well-being of military spouses and examine whether personal resources protected military spouses and enhanced their wellbeing throughout the deployment cycle. A synthesis of the existing literature was performed in order to determine the direction and magnitude of the effect of deployment on the psychological well-being of military spouses. For the primary analyses, participants were drawn from a convenience sample of military spouses stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. Meta-analysis, hierarchical linear regression, and structural equation modeling were used to test study hypotheses. In the first study, a meta-analytic review, deployment was found to have a moderate effect on psychological well-being, such that spouses experienced greater psychological problems during deployment. Two studies were conducted as part of the primary analyses. In the first, positivity was found to moderate the relationship between stress and depressive symptoms during deployment. Specifically, the relationship between stress and depressive symptoms was stronger for spouses with low levels of positivity. Finally, the third study found that adaptive coping, maladaptive coping, and resilience completely mediated the relationship between positive emotions and depressive symptoms. Of the three mediators, adaptive coping was found to be the most influential. Together, the results of these three studies illuminate the detrimental effect of deployment on the psychological well-being of military spouses, while providing support for the broaden-and-build theory's proposed roles of positive emotions -- broadening, building, and undoing -- in a unique population. Study limitations, implications for military spouses, and suggestions for future directions in research are discussed.

Department
Kinesiology and Health Education

Subject
Military spouses
Deployment
Positive emotions
Psychological well-being

URI
http://hdl.handle.net/2152/30479

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Military spouses are at risk for experiencing such distressing symptoms as anxiety and depression [20] and are at an increased risk for mental health diagnoses surrounding times of their service member’s deployment [21]. During this time, spouses are faced with increased burden surrounding caregiving and household duties [22]. Despite the prevalence of this population and the multiple risk factors that may constrain resiliency outcomes, little is known about the mechanisms that facilitate the resilience process for military families with a child with ASD. Protective factors - strategies. In addition to having access to quality resources and supports, caregivers endorsed the use of various strategies to ameliorate burdens in their everyday lives. Military Deployment and the effects on their Family Members In America, the weight of the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan falls heavily upon military families. In fact, military families are living the new normal. “What that really means is that this,” intense life of repeated deployments, of prosthetics, of memorial services, this is what life is going to look like for us from now on, so we had better learn to deal with it. While the Army has taken steps to ensure that the spouse is protected. Those in the higher ranks have found ways around this. The potential for deployment is a constant reality. Today’s military deployments may occur in rapid succession and be extended.