

DEPLOYMENT SEPARATION IMPACT ON MILITARY SPOUSE WELL-BEING

by Cinthia Joas

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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ABSTRACT

Military spouses are confronted with multiple responsibilities daily. These demands intensify when their spouses deploy. By extension, military families respond differently and adapt to these stressors differently than civilian families. This necessitates coping with dynamic changes described as adequate or maladaptive. The deployment of one's spouse is also affiliated with mixed feelings such as anger, fear, joy, loneliness, anticipation, and relief. While the active-duty spouse is deployed, communication with the family allows a more significant emotional balance for the military member, the spouse, and the children to obtain a more favorable performance in their functions. Without proper and consistent communication, which often occurs during deployment, the emotional well-being of the spouses left behind is affected. Throughout the life cycle of military families, they suffer and must deal with internal pressures that result from changes inherent to the development of individuals and subsystems and external forces that require their adaptation to the social institutions that influence them. This is because both the military and the family systems are social institutions that require commitment, loyalty, time, and energy from their constituent members. The long-term deployment of military members results in spouses' emotional distress and psychological issues. They face stress, depression, and financial issues.

Keywords: Military spouse, deployment, displacement, reintegration, coping, family systems, ambiguous loss

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

There is reason to believe that the deployment of military service members significantly impacts military spouses' well-being. Some spouses possess the resilience and flexibility to cope with the stress that comes up, especially when carrying out roles for which the deployed member was responsible. At the same time, others cannot cope, affecting their emotional and psychological well-being. Since military families and their wellness forms a crucial factor in the nation, it is essential to understand their experiences to act accordingly in helping them address these stressors before, during, and after deployment. The problem, purpose of study, research objectives, and hypothesis will be discussed to better understand the problem at hand.

Background of the Study

According to Caddick and Fossey (2021), military families experience unique moments of stress, primarily when their active-duty member is deployed. In particular, deployment affects military spouses who are singularly responsible for all the household duties previously shared with their now-deployed spouse (Caddick & Fossey, 2021). Most of the research focuses on military members' psychological and emotional well-being and excludes the military spouse who manages the home front (Caddick & Fossey, 2021). This suggests that the exploration of military spouse well-being is a critical area for study due to responsibilities and role changes that occur during the period that the active-duty member of the household is deployed. In their research, Caddick and Fossey (2021) state that the non-deployed spouse bears the burden of intensifying stress over time as they manage family demands alone. Families with additional hardships, such as caring for a disabled child, subject the military spouse to the additional stress of managing doctor visits, school meetings, meal preparations, and normal childcare alone. This often results in psychological

problems, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, social isolation, and suicide (Quinones, 2019).

According to Borah and Fina (2017), military culture also places significant demands on the soldier, ultimately affecting the military spouses. Demands such as the mission comes first and being on call 24 hours a day can be challenging to deal with. With these demands, the active-duty member must respond when called. That call can come at any given time. These unexpected calls are aside from the regular deployments, TDY, and other planned missions (Bora & Fina, 2017). Thus, enlarging the window period, the spouse will be left alone to take over the active-duty members' roles. According to Colburn (2020), these unexpected calls cause significant stress due to the lack of time allotted for the spouse to prepare for the departure of the active-duty member. Consequently, military spouses are always expected to be resilient, adapt, and have fortitude as they constitute the central leadership position in the family, ensuring the wellness and maintenance of the security of the family of the deployed spouse (Quinones, 2019).

According to De Soir (2017), the psychological health of the military spouse is a crucial buffer in mitigating the possible adverse effects of the deployment on the children and the entire family setup. Colburn (2020) opines that some of the risk factors affecting the well-being of the non-deployed spouse include the duration of the deployment of their partners, the extension of the deployment period, the family economic strain, insufficient support, and the life circumstances of the spouses. As a result of the compounded stress experienced by military spouses, there is an extensive range of mental illnesses among military spouses who seek care, similar to the service members who return home from their deployment in fierce combat fields (Quinones, 2019).

Social support is an essential moderator of life stressors experienced by military spouses by providing interventions that can offset the impact of these strains. According to Gilbert (2020),

strong social support is attributed to the potential positive adjustments during the deployment period, such as strong social support from the military leadership and unity among members and different bodies of the military community. Gilbert's (2020) research predicts that positive leadership support correlates with a better adaptation after a spouse has been deployed to combat and correlates with the desire of military members and their spouses to remain in service. This demonstrates the positive impact of support needed to overcome various challenges military families face from multiple stressors (Gilbert, 2020).

In summary, military spouses contend with significant stressful issues and emotional challenges compared to their civilian counterparts. Stressors include deployment duration of the active-duty spouse, extensions of service, potential injury, death, or economic distress. The military spouse bears all the family burdens, balancing and keeping their families stable. Consequently, they need strong social support from formal and informal sources, including close friends, relatives, faith-based organizations, and family. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the effects of deployment separation on military spouses' psychological and emotional well-being, thus finding the best way to address their challenges.

Problem Statement

Military deployment significantly impacts the family, particularly the military spouse. According to De Soir (2017), analyzing the main difficulties and benefits recognized, both at the individual and collective level, inherent to the deployed active-duty member is crucial. As discussed by Ross et al. (2020), given the nature of their experiences, during the period in which the active-duty member is deployed, communication with the family via letters, phone calls, and video calls allow a more significant emotional balance to be established both for the military member as well as for the spouse and children, and to obtain a more favorable performance in their

functions. This is one of the fundamental resources used by the military and their spouses during the period of deployment of the military member to face physical and emotional distance (Ross et al., 2020). According to Rea et al. (2015), even though social media positively impacts military spouses, more research is still necessary on how couples utilize online communication and social media during deployment to feel and remain connected with their service members. Rossetto (2015) asserted that some families could uphold resilience during the stressful event of military deployment though their well-being remains a national issue. To assist military families in managing stress, it is crucial to understand their behavior before gaining skills, maintaining stability, and avoiding disruptions (Rossetto, 2015).

There is limited information about the spouse's experiences, the strategies used to deal with the absence, and the main changes felt by the spouse before, during, and after the period of deployment of the military member to participate in international and national missions (De Soir, 2017). The problem is that there is a lack of research on the impact of deployment on the psychological and emotional well-being of the military spouse, as supported by the current research. Therefore, information on the variables that may affect military spouses' emotional well-being will be collected and analyzed to aid in filling the research gap and further emphasize the importance of such strategies.

Purpose of the Study

This quantitative research aims to assess the impact of deployment on the psychological and emotional well-being of the military spouse. Yablonsky et al. (2016) explained that war had been associated with battle casualties and stressors affecting active-duty service members. Rarely is the impact of these stressors on their spouses considered when discussing the effects of deployment. The military spouse is often exposed to pressure following the uncertainty associated

with the life of their partners when deployed for war. The uncertainty is always related to the safety of their loved ones and their role in the development of the family. Afterward, they are left to serve the duties of both the father and the mother. The separation brings many challenges to the spouse, such as loneliness, coping with the surrounding issues, financial problems, and emotional and health issues, as asserted by Yablonsky et al. (2016).

According to Chandra et al. (2011), there has been an increase in research focusing on military members' families, which has raised concerns about the unique difficulties and demands on spouses and, consequently, the attention regarding how needs are met (Chandra et al., 2011). Most research on the well-being of service members' spouses focuses on their general well-being, and few studies emphasize psychological and emotional elements. Therefore, this research aims to fill the research gap by adding to the existing research by explicitly focusing on the psychological and emotional well-being of the spouses left behind.

The current study explores the emotional issues experienced by military spouses through a survey of this population. The findings from the study conducted will be enhanced with the analysis of various scholarly works on military spouses and their emotional states during their partners' combat deployment.

Research Questions

The current study adopts the following research questions:

RQ1: Do military spouses experience emotional and psychological changes during the deployment of a military member?

RQ2: Does the spouse's gender affect how the spouse is impacted emotionally and psychologically?

RQ3: Does the length of service or number of deployments affect spouses' ability to employ effective coping mechanisms?

RQ4: Do spouses with added responsibilities, such as having children have a higher risk for emotional and psychological impacts?

RQ5: Does added responsibilities such as having children induce negative emotions and pose greater adversities to the military spouse?

RQ6: Does increased communication with the military member during deployment have a positive effect on the military spouse's well-being?

The adopted research questions help the current research formulate the following hypotheses, further explored in the literature review.

H1: Military life requires the active-duty member to deploy, and consequently, their absence affects the spouse's well-being.

H2: There is a significant effect of deployment separation on military spouses' emotional and psychological well-being.

H3: Deployment separation leads to a change in the expression of affection in the family system, changes in routines, and the restructuring of roles.

H4: The ability of military spouses to communicate with their absent spouse positively affects well-being.

H5: Reintegration techniques are needed to resume normalcy when the military member returns home from deployment.

Significance of the Study

The current study is conducted to identify and characterize the changes perceived in the military spouse during the military members' absence due to combat or other military assignments.

According to Padden et al. (2011), while it is loosely believed that military spouses are resilient to the nature of their family, they experience some adverse psychological effects that need to be addressed. In most cases, when military personnel return home after a mission, the issues tend to subside, and the family system returns to its normal level. However, there are cases where the military spouse may similarly experience increased depression, isolation, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental illnesses due to the separation, same as the military member (Padden et al., 2011). These issues can be addressed by understanding some crucial issues surrounding the welfare of military spouses (Verdeli et al., 2011). The current research will fill the literature gap regarding the changes manifested in military spouses' emotional and psychological well-being, which arise when the service member is deployed for war, peacekeeping, or rotation.

The present study will also add knowledge regarding the requirements of effective coordination between military members and their spouses. In this case, the present study will reveal how military members can live and conduct themselves in light of their deployment durations before, during, or after the mission. If service members understand how to behave in these different phases of military service, it can help address the mental health of military spouses (Wang et al., 2015). Finally, it is hoped that the results of this research will help military leadership understand the main factors that induce emotional distress during deployment through the responses received from the spouses through data collection. Identifying these factors may be crucial in addressing the primary needs of military spouses before, during, and after deployment.

Definitions

1. *Deployment*- the process of moving a military Service Member from their home station to somewhere outside the continent and its territories for war, peacekeeping, rotation, or other

reasons, usually for a period between six to twelve months (Sheppard, Malatras, and Israel, 2018).

2. *Ambiguous Loss*- A type of grief that is often associated with the lack of emotional closure and clear understanding of the factors influencing it, and often results in unresolved grief due to the uncertainty or a lack of information regarding a loved one's whereabouts or status as absent or present, dead, or alive (Boss, 2007)
3. *Coping*- This process involves adjusting to negative occurrences through strategies consciously or unconsciously (Yambo et al., 2016).
4. *Military spouse*- A spouse of a member of the armed forces that are still actively involved in the duty (Numbers et al., 2011).
5. *Emotional well-being*- Refers to the ability to develop positive feelings, moods, and ways of thinking and adjust easily when affected by stressful factors (Ryff, 2014).
6. *Psychological well-being*- Involves positive relations with others, a sense of self, having a purpose, and personal development while balancing positive and negative life events (Fung, 2019)
7. *Reintegration*- when an active service member returns home and adjusts to life in the new environment (Marek & D'Aniello, 2014).
8. *Gender role*- Refers to societal expectations about how one should behave, groom, and carry themselves (Morales-Garcia, 2018).
9. *Resilience*- The ability to get back on track after stressful events (Palmer, 2010)
10. *Family Systems*- Every member in a family plays a specific role that involves different responsibilities that aid in the functioning of the family unit.

11. *Military Displacement*- A process with distinct phases that impose specific tasks and emotional challenges on military families (Gribble et al., 2019)
12. *Role Exit*- Posits the position and dynamics of changing from a unique role central to promoting an individual's self-identity (Bailey, 2019).
13. *Civilian*- A person not in the armed services (Donoho et al., 2018).

Chapter Summary

The deployment of military service members has a negative impact on the well-being of their spouses. After their deployment, the spouses of these military service members take on more responsibility and additional hardships, including but not limited to caring for a disabled child, managing doctor visits, school meetings, meal preparation, and normal childcare alone. All these take a toll on military spouses, causing them psychological problems, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, social isolation, and suicide. Social support from close friends, relatives, faith-based organizations, and family is essential for managing these life stressors experienced by military spouses.

Constant communication is one of the go-to resources for the spouses of these military service members during deployment. Unfortunately, there is limited information on these spouses' experiences, including the strategies to deal with all the challenges that arise from their partner's deployment to national or international missions. The purpose of this study is to explore the emotional issues experienced by military spouses using a survey of this population. The significance of the study is first to add knowledge regarding the requirements of effective coordination between military members and their spouses and, secondly, to fill the literature gap regarding the changes in the emotional and psychological well-being of military spouses due to the deployment of their partner.

The next chapter focuses on the literature review. The first step in the next chapter will be to summarize the studies on current research touching on the emotional, psychological, and other challenges faced by military spouses upon their partner's deployment to missions. The next step will be the theoretical framework whereby five theories will be extensively discussed: the ambiguous loss theory, coping theory, role exit theory, the theory of risk and resilience in the military deployed families, and the gender role theory. The last step will be the empirical framework of family relationships. This part will focus on the effects of wives' deployment on male spouses and the implication of children on deployed couple relations. The relational aspects of military couples will also be explored.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter commences with background about deployment and how it influences the psychological and emotional well-being of the military spouse and other family members. The stages of deployment and their influence in each stage are also addressed. The theories of Ambiguous Loss, Gender Role, Coping, Role Exit, and Theory of Risk and Resilience in Military Deployed Families are addressed. Other sectors covered include the effects of wives' deployment on the male spouse, how children are affected by deployment, and family relationships.

Introduction

Numbers et al. (2011) estimate there are 750,320 married service members on duty among a total of approximately 1.4 million active-duty service members, accounting for more than half of the service members with spouses. Also, among the approximately 900,000 selected reserve members, 426,296 are married. With so many married military personnel, it is imperative to discuss military spouses and what they may be experiencing as the ones left behind. Military spouses are loaded with multiple responsibilities even before their active-duty spouses are deployed for battle; afterward, they are left to serve the duties of both the father and the mother. The separation brings many challenges to the spouse, such as loneliness, coping with surroundings, and financial, emotional, and health issues. Due to these stressors, spouses experience psychological and emotional challenges (Numbers et al., 2011).

The primary focus of this study is spousal psychological and emotional well-being. Determining psychological and emotional well-being includes the six aspects of psychological wellness: autonomy, purpose in life, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, personal growth, and relations with others (Ryff, 2014). The ability to regulate and manage one's life issues is

environmental mastery. Personal growth entails the development of one's prospective talents and abilities over time (Ryff, 2014). Positive relationships show a close and valued relationship with significant others in one's life. In life, having goals that offer significance to one's existence is referred to as purpose. The ability to see and accept one's talents and weaknesses is known as self-acceptance (Ryff, 2014). Autonomy is the condition or ability to govern yourself. Psychological wellness is the ability of an individual to cope with all the psychological issues relating to their daily lives (Ryff, 2014).

In the case of spouses of army officers who are deployed, psychological well-being and resilience have a significant positive association, indicating that psychological well-being is linked to autonomy, environmental mastery, personal progress, positive interpersonal relationships, life purpose, and self-acceptance in these particular spouses. Chandra et al. (2011) affirmed that determining emotional well-being includes the ability to cope with stress, degree of resiliency, and degree of happiness.

Similarly, a study of the psychological well-being scale and stress subscales found a negative relationship between stress and autonomy, with individuals with higher self-esteem having lower independence (Fung, 2019). The inability to cope with stress dramatically diminishes for individuals with higher self-esteem because of their perceptions and the lack of understanding of the approaches relevant to healthy stress management. The findings suggest a link between stress, psychological well-being, and resilience among army officer women who are separated from their husbands due to deployment. These findings reveal that stress has an inverse association with psychological well-being and resilience. This supports the socio-ecological perspective, which states that individuals impact their environment and try to fit in according to its demands, supporting such relationships (Fung, 2019). For example, wives of army officers separated from

their husbands have adapted well to their environment and its changes. Thus, stress and environmental mastery, personal progress, positive relationships, and self-acceptance have a substantial relationship. Overall, stress and psychological well-being findings show that psychological well-being can be observed if stress levels are low. Still, psychological discomfort results if stress levels are excessive (Fung, 2019).

Throughout their life cycle, families struggle with natural developmental changes. They must deal with internal pressures that result from changes inherent to the development of individuals and subsystems and external forces that require their adaptation to the social institutions that influence them (Mailey et al., 2019). The family system may encounter sources of stress in family relationships that relate to life cycle transitions and other unexpected problems such as divorce, work, and economic crises. Military culture is considered a source of stress for the families that are part of it. Considering the lack of flexibility in commands and responsibilities for the stakeholders, the stress level for their families is immense (McGuire et al., 2016). The military and the family systems are social institutions requiring commitment, loyalty, time, and energy from their constituent members (Mustillo et al., 2016).

Military displacement has distinct phases that impose specific tasks and emotional challenges on military families (Gribble et al., 2019). Displacement can be described as moving something from its place or position to another location. For military families, this may include moving from one location to another with new assignments or additional duties resulting from promotions and additional responsibilities.

There are several conceptions about the displacement process in the literature. Fivek (2017) presented the most referenced model, which translates the multiple family transitions during the process into five phases (pre-mission, mission, maintenance, pre-meeting, and post-mission).

However, other evidence of personal and family experiences during the cycle and other conceptual models may be involved to describe the displacement situation better. For example, Gribble et al. (2019) proposed the seven-phase cycle, which, although it does not offer an empirical basis, covers the different experiences lived by military wives throughout the process. The phases include anticipation, a positive or negative emotion that arises from thinking about or anticipating an upcoming event, and may include fear, anxiety, and hope (Gribble et al., 2019). It can be disappointing or reassuring when an expected occurrence does not occur. Detachment and withdrawal are the second stages. This stage usually begins the week before the service member departs. As the service member's departure date approaches, they become more focused on preparing for their assignment and may begin withdrawing from their family (Gribble et al., 2019).

According to Gribble et al. (2019), the next phase, elevated emotion, witnessing virtuous actions of exceptional moral virtue, might induce a sense of elevation. It is felt as a distinct sense of warmth and expansion, coupled with admiration and affection for the person whose exemplary behavior is seen—next, new routines. The active-duty member may start following new routines, like doing exercises more in preparation for their mission. Families of military personnel will begin to settle into their new normal as they recover their footing and create their own "battle rhythm" (Gribble et al., 2019). They may have a sense of freedom and confidence they did not have in previous months. In the home stretch phase, their families may ask the service members what they expect in their homecoming. The return of the deployed spouses appears to be nearing. Following is the homecoming phase. This is frequently referred to as the "greatest part of the deployment," eliciting feelings of relief and anticipation (Gribble et al., 2019). Finally, reintegration. Service members need to be reintegrated into the family, and as a result, family members must establish new routines, which may differ in each deployment (Gribble et al., 2019). The cycle follows an

integrated description of the different phases of the cycle of military displacement (Gribble et al., 2019).

According to Borah and Fina (2017), many military spouses believe that deployments result in their husbands' medical issues, resulting in family discord and emotional and behavioral problems in children. Most spouses also highlight inadequate support programs to cope with the experienced changes. Donoho et al. (2017) also highlights the overwhelming stress among military spouses from when their partners are deployed and when they return, especially with their partners' struggles with PTSD and severe depressive symptoms. The deployment of one's spouse is also affiliated with mixed feelings such as anger, fear, joy, loneliness, anticipation, and relief (Easterling & Knox, 2010). The associated view is that many spouses are unaware of how to react when they receive the news of their partners being deployed. This is mainly affiliated with the lack of certainty of how their partners will return after a battle (Easterling & Knox, 2010). The occurrence of alcohol problems and elevated distress levels are also approached as significant issues experienced by spouses of deployed military personnel (Erbes et al., 2017).

Alhomaizi et al. (2020) present the notion that spouses of deployed soldiers tend to experience mental issues similar to their partners. One of the main psychological issues is depression, which persists after their spouses have been deployed. The associated view is that evidence-based mental health practices must support the military culture to address the challenges facing the soldiers and their family members (Alhomaizi et al., 2020).

Eubanks (2013) presents the view that military spouses tend to lead capricious lifestyles in shifting from the aspects familiar to them to support their active military partners. Values such as honor, commitment, and courage are considered essential for spouses to support their military partners. This also includes making personal sacrifices to support their partners fully. Maintaining

a healthy sense of self is considered among the most ignored challenges facing military spouses, especially wives (Eubanks, 2013). The associated view is that military wives are often expected to set their personal needs aside and focus more on their spouses' well-being. As a result, the women risk losing their self-identity as they highly relate to their husbands' military status (Eubanks, 2013). Furthermore, Godier-McBard et al. (2017) present the view that the unique situations experienced by partners or spouses of military personnel may subject them to the risks of acquiring perinatal-like mental health issues, which are highly likely to occur during their partners' deployment due to the heightened distress levels (Godier-McBard et al., 2017).

In brief, the deployment of military personnel negatively affects the soldiers and their families. Most studies in the literature review highlight mental health issues as one of the main problems affecting family members. The studies contribute to the research by highlighting ways in which the spouses of military personnel are affected before, during, and after deployment. The information furthers the need for examining the effect of deployment separation on the psychological and emotional well-being of military spouses. However, a theoretical framework must be adopted to develop a more effective analysis of the issue.

Theoretical Framework

Overview

Since there is a high likelihood that military spouses' psychological well-being will be negatively impacted during service member deployment, efforts to examine, identify and support at-risk spouses, this research employs a cluster of theories. In this context, the current study utilizes five theories, including ambiguous loss, coping, role exit, theory of risk and resilience, and gender role theory. These theories coherently facilitate the assessment of the effects of deployment on military spouses' psychological well-being.

A combination of theoretical frameworks is desirable in this study as they provide a conceptual framework upon which the core claims are based and facilitate a clearer understanding of how each factor influences the outcomes. Moreover, the combination of models reveals the impact of the interplay of these factors to clarify further the effects on the wellness status of the stakeholders.

Additionally, it is imperative to utilize the lens from the respective models to generate a clearer view of the impacts of ambiguous loss on the psychological and emotional well-being of military spouses. Various factors impact the capacity of the spouses left behind to understand the source of stress, how to cope with it, and even the impact it has on their mental wellness. With the application of the five models, it will be more effective to illuminate the issues and their consequences for a better understanding of the magnitude of the effects of this type of grief on spouses.

According to Yambo et al. (2016), military families contending with deployment are influenced mainly by distress that results from the alterations and events of general family life. For this reason, using the five theories assists in investigating the multiple aspects of the family ecology that may carry and transmit stress and other physiological disturbances. Using these theories will better shed light on the different factors of psychosocial susceptibility for military spouses, the effects of spousal cognitive distress concerning normal family functioning and guiding on the points of intervention to address the needs and vulnerabilities. The connection among the identified five theories assists in answering the research questions by explaining how and why military spouses experience psychological and emotional change during the deployment of military members. This section will discuss gender roles, resilience, coping, loss, and family systems, as

they are interconnected when discussing displacement and military spouses' psychological well-being.

Ambiguous Loss Theory

The theory of Ambiguous Loss relates to what military families experience regularly. Loss and separation are natural phases of life, according to Boss (2007). However, there is constant loss and separation that occurs within military families. The family member can be either physically absent but psychologically present or physically present but psychologically absent (Boss, 2007).

Boss (2004) states that an ambiguous loss is a loss that lacks clarity and, therefore, is without closure. A loss, such as death, contains specific markers that solidify what has occurred, like having a death certificate or funeral. With the ambiguous loss, there is no particular method of verification attached to what has occurred to say a person has "gone." Boss (2004) theorizes ambiguous loss as the most stressful loss due to the uncertainty of a person who is still a family member. The foundation of the ambiguous loss theory is that most individuals, couples, and families are traumatized by uncertainty or a lack of information regarding a loved one's whereabouts or status as absent or present, dead or alive. The ambiguity impedes the grieving process and prevents clear cognition, coping, and decision-making. It is not easy to get closure (Boss, 2004).

Betz and Thorngren (2006) further expound on the concept of ambiguous loss by defining it in terms of what society recognizes or legitimizes. According to Betz and Thorngren (2006), some losses are recognizable and natural in the eyes of society. For instance, the loss of a grandparent has been deemed a recognizable loss. Therefore, members can easily find closure and are supported by society and institutions such as religious institutions. However, the researchers argue that some losses are not clearly definable to the extent that it may not be certain what was

lost; such losses can be regarded as ambiguous losses. The losses may not necessarily involve a person and may include divorce, miscarriage, ending of a relationship, unemployment, infertility, disability, and even sexual abuse. Betz and Thorngren (2006) posit that ambiguous loss is a stressful situation for the affected individual and families and, in most cases, can be cruel in its unending torment. While investigating ambiguous loss in families of children with Autism spectrum disorders, O'Brien (2007) noted that the psychological distress brought about by ambiguous loss can significantly be reduced through social support.

As Betz and Thorngren (2006) asserted, concerning military families, this type of loss is manifested in many ways. This often occurs during the deployment period when the active-duty member becomes physically absent due to being deployed but is still psychologically present. In some cases, military spouses must face reality and uncertainty of whether their spouses will return if the experience transforms them if they do come back. Military spouses who are left behind have little choice but to make up their truth about the mental or physical status of the person who is no longer with them. Family members must live with the dichotomy of absence and presence in the absence of facts to help them understand their loss (Betz & Thorngren, 2006).

Betz and Thorngren (2006) explained that when families are separated due to military deployment, they naturally wish to be reunited. Still, they also recognize that they might never be the same. The uncertainty of a family member's absence or presence can increase adults' and children's resiliency. In other words, a family member can benefit from thinking dialectically about thesis, antithesis, and synthesis in a practical way: My loved one is no longer with me, yet they are still present; I can learn to cope with the stress of uncertainty (Betz & Thorngren, 2006).

Coping Theory

Coping refers to a process originating from the individual's interaction with his environment. A series of specific stressful situations occur, coming from both the external and the internal environment with which this individual must deal (Yambo et al., 2016). According to Lester et al. (2016), it consists of a moderator between adverse life events and their impact on the individual's physical and psychological well-being. According to Fivek (2017), to cope with stressful situations experienced by the wives of men who go on a military mission, resources of the cognitive and behavioral dimensions are mobilized according to the individual's orientation on the problem. Donoho et al. (2018) unfolded these two initial dimensions in four categories: behavioral approach (carrying out a concrete action to deal with the stressful situation or its consequences); cognitive approach (carrying out a logical analysis of the problem, positive reevaluation, or mental rehearsal of alternative actions); behavioral avoidance (involvement in impulsive behaviors, reducing tension); and cognitive avoidance (thoughts or responses that aim to deny or minimize the severity of the crisis or its consequences (Fivek, 2017).

Coping strategies effectively reduce the environmental difficulties faced by spouses, such as financial problems; in the same way, they contribute to a better adjustment of the spouse to the problems they encounter (McGuire et al., 2016). How difficulties are faced directly influences the levels of psychological health/well-being. However, many possible strategies to help individuals cope with psychological issues have not yet been fully developed (Mustillo et al., 2016). As in the case of adolescent development, those with good coping skills experience other life contingencies; they learn and test new ways of dealing with problems since adolescence is a moment of identity development. Therefore, the families of military deployment individuals developed an ability to face difficulties (McGuire et al., 2016).

Young military spouses are advantaged in coping with psychological distress due to developmental maturation, particularly identity and foreclosure adolescence (Dar & Kimhi, 2001). Young military service men are usually in their late adolescence or young adulthood. At this age, most individuals have experimented with social roles and explored personal identity (Dar & Kimhi, 2001). Therefore, at this time, young military service persons think that they have established their identity. As such, they emphasize developing new social and intimate relations less. Instead, they direct most of their resources towards adjusting to the rigid and demanding circumstances in which the military service places them (Dar & Kimhi, 2001). Like the service members, their young spouses also share similar characteristics and easily assume the roles they are often not involved in shaping (Dar & Kimhi, 2001). For this reason, young spouses can easily cope with the physical distress brought by military deployments since they view themselves mature enough to adjust to that kind of life (Dar & Kimhi, 2001).

Additionally, young military spouses are primarily at a point in life where they are experiencing maturation and transitioning to adulthood (Dar & Kimhi, 2001). Since the social environment influences maturation, military deployment creates opportunities for these individuals to experiment with new roles for identity formation. Both the deployed and left-behind spouses are forced to assume new roles because of the separation brought about by deployment (Dar & Kimhi, 2001). However, since these individuals are experimenting with new roles, they easily adapt to them and effectively cope with the circumstances. Consequently, young military spouses with good coping skills may not face much psychological distress as other military spouses (Dar & Kimhi, 2001).

Role Exit Theory

In essence, the role-exit theory posits the position and dynamics of changing from a unique role central to promoting an individual's self-identity (Bailey, 2019). The theory notes that four significant processes characterize the role-exit situations. The four processes include "firsts doubt, seeking alternatives, encountering turning points, and creating an ex-role" (Gambardella, 2008). Gambardella (2008) noted that individuals start creating self-doubt about their roles based on either past experiences or access to new information in the first doubts stage. This is subsequently followed by the second stage of seeking alternatives, where individuals start looking for what might appear different from their dominant roles, thus triggering contemplative thoughts on what alternatives might look like (Gambardella, 2008). The third stage in the exit role theory entails making turning points in the context of influential behaviors, practices, or events that trigger individuals to leave their previously occupied roles. Individuals create an ex-role to cope with the new environment, indicating creating a new identity and pursuing a new role (Gambardella, 2008).

As stated above, Role exit theory offers a framework for the likely process partners of deployed military officers undergo while trying to cope with prevailing situations (Bailey, 2019). On the other hand, spouses of a deployed member left behind are likely to experience reduced emotional support or increased responsibilities, thus necessitating the essential need to adjust their primary roles within the family setup (Keeling et al., 2020). Various scholars have argued that exiting roles could make the left-behind spouses start experiencing feelings of anger, anxiety, depression, or even persistent physical illness (Castañeda & Buck, 2011; Lu, 2012; Pauline & Boss, 2009). Furthermore, Gambardella (2008) noted that the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center had highlighted that marriage where one partner was serving military personnel was prone to unique challenges due to the pervasiveness of role-exiting situations. Frequent separations and

moves, loss of personal friends due to relocation or in the line of duty, job losses because of spouse reassignments, and the need to adapt faster in every deployment make the emotional and psychological burden during the role-exiting process to be challenging for left behind military spouses (Gambardella, 2008).

In their study, Gambardella (2008) observed that if appropriately applied, the role-exit theory could help left-behind military spouses cope and adjust to the new circumstances after the deployment of their partners. Their study found that six out of ten military couples in the research reported massive emotional, psychological, and relational self-improvements after incorporating the role exit theory in adjusting to the military deployment of their spouses (Gambardella, 2008). It was noted that significant shifts in family routines for the left behind military spouses during the deployment period included, among other things, improved religious beliefs, frequent and effective communications, learning new skills, and improved financial independence. It is also imperative to note that Hinojosa & Hinojosa (2011) highlighted that despite the role exit theory having an extensive positive impact on left behind military spouses' emotional and psychological state during deployment, the magnitude of its effects was amplified by the state of the couple's relationship and family dynamics before the deployment.

Furthermore, prior experience of separation during deployment among military spouses significantly impacted mitigating emotional and psychological issues and triggering role exiting (Bailey, 2019). Palmer noted that older military spouses with multiple deployment separation experiences with stints extending up to one year had better control of their personal and family holistic well-being during subsequent deployment compared to younger military couples in the same situation (2008).

Theory of Risk and Resilience in Military Deployed Families

Palmer (2008) acknowledges multiple stereotypes regarding military families' understanding ranging from parental characters to children's behaviors. Palmer (2008) cited late 20th-century schools of thought who had developed concepts such as 'military family syndrome' that had characterized military families as composed of depressed mothers, authoritarian fathers, and out-of-control children. By default, increased women enrollment into the military and their active deployment automatically means that some aspects of the fronted stereotypes have had their relevancy disapproved by time and the development of human societies (Bailey, 2019). Alternatively, some stereotypes have been further reinforced by persisting military spouses and family tendencies regardless of the shifted gender roles for military couples where the wife has been deployed (Gambardella, 2008). Various researchers still hold divergent opinions on the reliability of the evidence to support or discredit various notions and stereotypes labeled deployed military spouses, their spouses, and children. Palmer (2008) uses the theory of risk and resilience to show how the separation of military spouses during deployment could either lead to risks in family dynamics or present a particular form of enhanced resilience for left-behind spouses.

In the context of risk, Palmer (2008) noted that left-behind spouses had a higher likelihood of developing detrimental emotional and psychological experiences after military deployment. In some situations, this could extend to the children in the family in the form of internalized problems such as depression, anxiety, unnecessary aggressiveness, and discipline cases. Gorman, Eide, and Hisle-Gorman (2010) observed that the development of such risky behaviors could result from triggering factors such as family stressors, maternal psychopathology, and coping strategies. On the other hand, Palmer (2010) noted that if separated couples employed appropriate coping strategies during military deployment, the left-behind spouses would have the chance to build

resilience to navigate the period of separation comfortably. In this regard, factors that aid the development of resilience include, among other things, regular communication between spouses, solid and proactive social and community support systems such as families and friends, marital stability, and reduced stints of redeployment period. Deployment of spouses could also act as an opening for left-behind spouses to learn new skills, engage in various interests and pursue endeavors that could have been constrained before the deployment, such as pursuing hobbies like cooking for male spouses (Palmer, 2010).

Gender Role Theory

Morales-Garcia (2018) noted that spouses engaging in other hobbies that may have been constrained might generate a different dynamic of gender role reversal during the deployment-spouse separation. This gender role reversal may necessitate slight coping mechanisms on the part of the left-behind spouse. According to the gender role theory, men and women are driven throughout their lives to develop their skills, behavior, and attitudes to match the societal expectations of the gender they are classified under (Gambardella, 2008). The social role theory and social cognitive theory agree that labor division is critical in developing gender roles. There have been consistent findings that the behaviors of women and men are highly influenced by socio-cultural norms, which are products of factors such as family structure, environmental settings, media content, and even financial empowerment. In essence, masculinity and feminism are learned depending on societal implications (Bailey, 2019). Whereas some of the traditionally gendered roles are increasingly becoming blurred in some progressive societies, some scholars have noted that men tend to have a restrictive perception and understanding of their roles within family setups (Keeling et al., 2020). Nonetheless, it is believed that spouses left behind during military

deployment are more likely to experience changes in how they perceive their roles in the setting of being alone, especially if children are involved (Keeling et al., 202)

A study by Fox and Pease (2012), which was meant to explore the relationship between the implications of military deployment, masculinity, and veterans' trauma, revealed that masculinity played an equal role as social structures and social influences when assessing the impact of trauma on deployed military personnel. Even though female and male service members are likely to face similar work settings while on deployment, the impact of the experiences encountered could differ depending on factors such as gender. Southwell and Wadsworth (2016) observed that multiple publications have shown that deployed female service members are more likely to report depression symptoms than their male counterparts. On the other hand, male service members are likely to report alcohol or drug abuse problems post-deployment (Fox & Peas, 2012).

Furthermore, before 2016, there was compelling evidence from prospective studies that reported the suggested rate of PTSD post-deployment was about 2.4% to 6.2% for male service members compared to 3.7% to 13.2% for their female counterparts (Southwell & MacDermid Wadsworth, 2016). Southwell and MacDermid Wadsworth (2016) noted that although most of these findings and observations were done for post-deployment experiences, it was highly likely that retrospectively prorated data during the deployment phase could show similar trends on gender theory implications. Conjunctively, the trickle-down implications for the differences in gendered perceptions and behaviors during the deployment of military service members could also extend to their left-behind spouses. It is imperative to note that research by Fox and Peas (2012) and Southwell and Wadsworth (2016) illuminated the need to have thorough conversations concerning whether the principles which traditionally have been used to assess the impact of deployment separation on left behind military wives could also apply for left behind military husbands.

Family Relationships

Military families respond differently and adapt to the reintegration stressors in terms of other families adequately coping with the dynamic changes and others not adjusting as expected or instead not being able to cope with the changes (Marek & D'Aniello, 2014). For the latter, the self-reported mental health, the depiction of PTSD symptoms, and the mental wellness of the family members significantly affected the reintegration stress level of the individuals who had been deployed. Also, military children tend to be negatively affected by their parents' relationship functioning and coping skills. Another interesting perspective is that military families often view civilian families are unable to comprehend their situation. On the other hand, the reintegrating families find it easier to associate with other reintegrating families because they acquire much support. Marek and D'Aniello (2014, pp.448) state, "Talking with others who have personal experiences managing the unique stressors associated with a military lifestyle, deployment, and reintegration is important to military families." This puts into perspective the essence of reintegrating families taking part in group therapy to receive adequate support and guidance, as Marek and D'Aniello (2014) affirmed.

In their research on the mental well-being of children from families whose parents had been deployed, Chandra et al. (2011) discovered several factors that contributed to the challenges faced by the population, including the caregivers. The factors include the communication level between a child and the caregiver, the National Guard status of the deployed individual, the deployment period, and the emotional well-being of the caregiver. According to Creech et al. (2014), regardless of a child's age, a parent's deployment may heighten behavioral and emotional issues for children. This also entails frequent visits to medical facilities for mental assessments. Also, depression and PTSD symptoms depicted by the parents when they return home from service

may elevate symptoms of children such that the parents find it challenging to take care of their children as expected as they go through the reintegration process (Creech et al., 2014).

Additionally, research has shown that teenage children or adolescent children of parents in the military are at a high risk of acquiring mental health issues, particularly depressive symptoms (Cederbaum et al., 2014). The associated view is that children of deployed military officers often experience intra-familial and individual stressors concerning the deployment and reintegration of their parents. The stressors, in this case, are either indirectly or directly linked to internalizing behaviors. Cederbaum et al. (2014) explain that even though mental health stressors influenced by deployment may not occur during peaceful times, children may undergo mental health issues in times of warfare.

Murphy and Fairbank (2013) present that military families tend to deal with deployment-related stressors in isolation, mainly due to living in communities where mental health practitioners are less informed about military culture. Also, the families that live as community residents tend to live near military installations. As per their research findings, the reintegration process for reserve component or RC families is complicated due to high symptomatology rates, low utilization of mental health services, and the increased limitations to proper care for the active component families, thereby worsening the stress situation of military families (Murphy & Fairbank, 2013).

O'Donnell et al. (2011) present the view that about a third of children from military families acquire psychosocial morbidity. Psychosocial morbidity, in this case, entails an individual's inability to engage in social interactions, an inability that occurs together with either emotional or physical dysfunctions. O'Donnell et al. (2011) also state that deployment heightens the parenting stress levels for families where all parents are military-based and those where one is military-

based. Parenting stress levels are also influenced by the length of time that one is deployed. O'Donnell et al. (2011) also explain that about 30% of children in military families depict severe anxiety symptoms influenced by the separation from their parents. They also experience physical symptoms such as explainable stomach problems, sleeping issues, and headaches. The involved assumption is that a direct correlation exists between the deployment period and depressive symptoms among the caregivers and children of military families (O'Donnell et al., 2011).

Paley, Lester, and Mogil (2013) highlight the interferences in family schedules, prolonged separations, compromised parenting, and mental health issues as significant problems affecting military families. The challenges can negatively affect the well-being of people and their relationships in the military family dynamic. The relationships, in this case, include parent-child relationships and marital relationships. Punamäki et al. (2005) highlight childhood maltreatment and mental health problems as one of the effects of adulthood military violence. Also, Sayers et al. (2009) highlight that children from military families are afraid of their deployed parents when they return home from service and are negatively affected together with their caregivers by the inadequacy of the parental skills depicted by the soldier parent (Sayers et al., 2009).

Effects of Wives' Deployment on Male Spouses

Morales-Garcia (2018) noted that despite the connection between military deployment separation on couples and the development of emotional and psychological traumas, a large segment of the literature had been developed under the premise that spouses of deployed military service members were majorly women. This is despite the recent increase in the enlistment of female military officers, thus resulting in male spouses who actively take roles that traditionally have been associated with women, such as the provision of childcare and homemaking. Southwell and Wadsworth (2016) noted that as of 2016, women in the United States military were posed to

ascend and occupy any positions in direct combat units below the brigade level. Furthermore, the integration of more women into advanced combat roles has also increased the likelihood of being deployed, thus leaving behind their families under the care of their husbands. Beyond the conversation, whether the left-behind male spouses have a background in the military or are non-military, societal settings push them to perform stereotypical roles assumed to be feminine duties in the family (Southwell & MacDermid Wadsworth, 2016).

Trautmann et al. (2015) and Morales-Garcia (2018) highlighted that the impact of female service member deployment on their male spouses could be narrowed down to the dynamics of impact on physical and mental health, marital relationships, role transferring, and caregiving. For instance, a study by Fish (2013) reported that more than half of the United States Army active service members' spouses were overweight and left behind male spouses were also more likely to be obese and experienced psychological distress due to being overweight. Some of the males in the study reported having experienced decreased social support due to their overweight status (Fish, 2013). The research model argued that as psychological distress among left-behind military spouses increased alongside their age, their perceived social and community support decreased while the overweight status intensified (Fish, 2013). In the context of mental health, male spouses left behind during deployment were more likely to experience feelings of frustration, exhaustion, and hopelessness than anxiety and depression (Morales-Garcia, 2018).

Negrusa et al. (2014) noted that despite the dearth of extensive literature on the impact of deployment on spouses and marriage, few studies have noted that female deployment increased divorce rates compared to the deployment of their male counterparts. The study's findings concluded that deployment of women service members had a more extensive detrimental impact on their left-behind male spouses and the couples' marriage, especially in cases where the

deployment was for an extended period and the couple did not have children. Negrusa et al. (2014) further observed that role conflict was a significant factor in stimulating discontentment in marriages with children where male spouses were left behind during long deployment stints. Whereas deployed married military men had less likelihood of divorcing their wives, especially after repetitive deployment, the study by Morales-Garcia (2018) revealed that deployed women had higher divorce rates compared to their male counterparts. This is notwithstanding that veteran service members have higher divorce rates than other civilians once they leave the military.

Wang et al. (2015) conducted an elaborative study on caregiving and role transferring, especially when mothers in a family are deployed for active duty. In such situations, Wang et al. (2015) highlighted that left-behind male spouses were more likely to face challenges in caregiving and their influence within the family. Furthermore, there is the concern that in giving care to children of an actively deployed spouse, the left-behind spouse must step in and provide the care of the absentee parent while also constantly addressing any likely emergent stress and fear that families with deployed service members encounter (McFarlane, 2009). In caregiving, spouses of deployed women had to conform to perform tasks such as educating their children, preparing meals, and giving emotional support to them. Besides facing the challenge of raising their children as single parents, male spouses left behind during deployment faced the challenges of helping their children get accustomed to life with one parent, appropriating sufficient time for their children's development, and balancing their professional pursuits with family responsibility (Wang et al., 2015).

While observing that many military families with either of the spouses deployed had difficulties comfortably surviving on the salaries and benefits of the spouse working as a service member, McFarlane (2009) noted that left behind male spouses in military families were faced

with the dilemma of finding alternative sources of income and being around for their children. Most of the husbands had difficulties balancing working outside their homes and providing sufficient parental guidance to their children, especially if they were younger. It was typical for men married to military women to experience career hurdles and frustration, especially in cases where proactive support is not accorded by the community and family members (Morales-Garcia, 2018). Morales-Garcia (2018) further notes that as military women who were married to civilian men progressed through the ranks and career, their likelihood of divorcing their partners increased significantly. Naturally, this poses an increasing risk to male spouses who are left behind during deployment on whether to persist in pursuing their careers and interests as a precautionary step for protecting their future or prioritizing care provision for their children at the risk of missing out on personal development and losing their marriage (Allen et al., 2011).

As a way of coping with the challenges of balancing career and family prioritization conflicts, Morales-Garcia (2018) reported that about 14.6% of civilian male spouses married to military service females in the United States need robust support groups that would aid them in dealing with several stressors when acting as primary caregivers and lone parents. Nonetheless, the recent active mobilization of military arms and government institutions on the plight of families with female deployed spouses has significantly impacted removing the invisibility lid on left behind male spouses (Bailey, 2019). Hinojosa and Hinojosa (2011) also identified the need for men married to deployed spouses to increase their circles of friendship to include civilians to cope with the absence of their loved ones. Their study noted that even though friendships among military families were easy to create, associate with, share experiences and sustain in the long haul, it also created an artificial bubble for the rest of the world (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011). Therefore, developing friendships with other members of the society could not only help in normalizing the

social effects amidst the deployment separation but also create an opportunity for children in the families to connect, bond, and network with other members of the society; thus reducing the defensive pressure of the male parents to be constantly there for their children (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011).

Implications of Children on Deployed Couples Relations

Like most scholars who preceded the dynamics of the impact of military deployment on couples, Coulthard (2011) recognized that military deployment had significant effects on families by separating spouses and children from either of their parents. The separation of family members because of military deployment not only exposes children to the risk of prolonged parental absence and the possibility of a loss of a parent in the line of duty but also forces them to make considerable alterations to routines to fit into the created gaps (Keeling et al., 2020). Furthermore, despite the willingness of some of the left-behind spouses to take extra steps and cover for the absent partners, some of the remaining partners are prone to have a diminished impact than they had intended, especially under heightened stress (Keeling et al., 2020).

Marnocha (2012) observed that left-behind spouses of deployed military service members who had children were more likely to have higher emotional and psychological trauma cases than their counterparts who did not. This was mainly associated with the provision that couples with children were almost always anxious about the safety of their deployed partners since most of them were the primary breadwinners for their families (Keeling et al., 2020). Moreover, reduced quality of life among left-at-home spouses of deployed military service members has been extensively linked to the overwhelming burden of acting as a single parent, exhausting responsibility in overseeing all the management of households, and depressing loneliness that

extends for a more extended period due to being separated from loved ones (Dursun & Sudom, 2009).

The fear of their children growing up without one of their parents due to unfortunate circumstances in the line of duty also meant that left behind spouses had to contend with the constant worries about what the future could look like for their military partners alongside the fate of their children (Keeling et al., 2020). Moreover, Trautmann et al. (2015) recognized that separated military couples resulting from deployment with children were likely to be easily triggered into experiencing emotional and psychological trauma at the slightest provocation. Incidents that could otherwise be considered usual, such as children developing fever or insecurity, could cause them to panic slightly higher than the other civilian families within the same neighborhood (Trautmann et al., 2015). Trautmann et al. (2015) highlighted three studies that linked spouse deployment with increased consumption and utilization of pediatric healthcare services. The research further noted a higher likelihood that left-behind spouses of deployed military service members were prone to feel that their children were easily maltreated and even ridiculed for the absence of one of their parents. These situations were common for young children who had not developed their cognitive abilities and awareness of the kind of job their deployed military parents were doing as an occupation (Trautmann et al., 2015).

Since young children primarily depend on their primary caregivers' emotional stability and physical availability, it is necessary to establish a sense of security, safety, and assurance. Such understanding is crucial because military spouse parents who experienced high stress in the form of depression could affect their children's psychological and emotional state. Coulthard (2011) used this premise to correlate the close resemblance of the psychological and emotional behaviors of left-behind spouses of deployed military service members with those of their children. The study

noted that children from families whose couples had been separated due to military deployment had higher levels of internalized behaviors such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, intense sadness, and anger. Marnocha (2012) recognized that such behaviors could be shared between left-behind parents and their children as one way of coping with the absence of deployed family members.

However, it is essential to note that while researching military wives' transition and coping during deployment and post-deployment, Marnocha (2012) discovered that some of the left-behind spouses found more comfort from interacting with their children as a coping mechanism in distracting themselves with the inevitability implications of the deployment separation. The study recognized that the shifting focus of attention from their deployed military spouses to their children had a therapeutic impact on the left behind partners (Marnocha, 2012). While observing deployed Canadian military couples and families, Dursun and Sudom (2015) noted that the presence of children within the military household had an extensive influence on the left-behind spouse's adjustment during the deployment period, as well as the stability of marital relations. Moreover, there has also been advanced research evidence that the quality and impact of the parent-child relationships and perceived involvement with children influenced all the involved family members (Dursun & Sudom, 2015). The researchers, however, noted that the quality of life of military families largely depended on traditional sources of support such as close friends, extended families, and stable community relationships. In particular, military families isolated from traditional sources of support experienced higher levels of personal and interpersonal stress (Dursun & Sudom, 2015).

Southwell and Wadsworth (2016) found a strong correlation between coping with deployment situations for experienced military couples who had older children and had encountered multiple deployments during their lives. Military spouses with children who were

either young adults or were almost past the adolescent stage reported considerably better-coping mechanisms than their counterparts who provided care to infants. Research by Southwell and Wadsworth (2016) recognized that having grown-up children with spouses of deployed military service members could have engaging conversations helped them build emotional resilience and confidence. The children also provided opportunities for the spouses to actively engage in other social activities, which eventually distracted them from developing worries about the deployment effects, such as getting engaged in their children's interests, hobbies, friends, and other fun-related activities (Bailey, 2019).

Furthermore, older children better understood the kind of professional engagements their deployed military parents were engaged in and reduced parental pressure for the left-at-home spouses to explain inquiries associated with the absence of one parent (Bailey, 2019). Bailey (2019) noted that this positively reduced emotional stressors and triggers among the left-at-home spouses of deployed military service members. Some studies have also argued that military families with older children had enhanced social circles for support since children could act as venting outlets, thus preventing the unnecessary accumulation of emotional and psychological trauma (Mustillo et al., 2016). Beyond providing alternative communication partners among spouses of deployed service members, older children also provided an extra layer of personalized friendship for the parents due to the increased time spent together (Mustillo et al., 2016).

In contrast, it is also essential to note that Morales-Garcia (2018) makes a critical observation that spouses of deployed couples who did not have children experienced a slightly difficult period coping with the separation compared to their counterparts who had young or older children. Negrusa et al. (2014) further observed that divorce rates among military couples were extremely high among couples who did not have children. Most marital separations were initiated

immediately after the deployed spouses returned from active duty. In explaining this phenomenon, Morales-Garcia (2018) used the position that male spouses of deployed military service members with no form of parental obligations were more likely to leave their partners than their female counterparts. The research further indicated that the existing psychological and emotional factors made coping more difficult for couples without children after deployment (Morales-Garcia, 2018).

Some psychologists have argued that the absence of children and long periods of separation among spouses diminished shared interests among couples, with the left-at-home spouses inclined to form new relationships within their social circles to fill in the gap between their absentee partners (Gorman et al., 2010). Even though the new social relationships might not be intentionally meant to replace the position of the absent partner, factors such as loneliness and peer influence could gradually make them shift their interests and emotional commitments. Gorman et al. (2010) and Bailey (2019) observed that as deployment periods become more prolonged, spouses of deployed service members with no parental responsibilities gradually affective connection with their partners. Additionally, Bailey (2019) noted that in the initial days of deployment, female spouses with no parental obligations reported more emotional breakdowns and psychological disturbances following separation from their spouses than their male counterparts.

However, in an interesting twist, female spouses of deployed service members with no parental responsibilities had improved mental and emotional states as time passed. At the same time, their male counterparts started to experience declined emotional and mental wellness for separating from their spouses (Gorman et al., 2010). Whereas male spouses of deployed military service members were more likely to get depressed due to the loneliness of separating from their partners, female spouses were likely to start developing feelings of admiration for the professional undertakings of their marital partners, thus creating stronger bonds (Bailey, 2019).

Young spouses with no children but whose partners had been deployed had a high propensity to separate after the deployment compared to older couples who deliberately decided not to have children or prioritized pursuing other things at the expense of having children. Rossetto (2013) noted that military couples who might not have had children but had been together for an extended period had a special relationship that was rarely affected by their spouses' deployment. Nonetheless, Rossetto (2013) was also keen to note that couples of deployed service members who did not have parental responsibilities but had active careers, hobbies, and social life were more likely to easily cope with the deployment separations by distracting themselves with their other areas of interests Rossetto (2013).

Relational Aspects of Military Couples

Regarding relational issues, military couples have inherent differences compared to other types of couples. The frequent and long separations, together with the great concern for the safety of the romantic partner, typically characterize these couples' relationships (Yambo et al., 2016). Situations of stress challenge marital relationships. Still, for the reasons already mentioned, military service is highly stressful for military service members and their spouses, especially in the face of successive war-related field missions and combat (Bommarito et al., 2017). These situations repeatedly imply the readjustment of families to daily living and emotional work to maintain family relationships. As in non-military couples (e.g., company managers, truck drivers), in the face of a situation of regular, repetitive, or extensive separation, it is difficult to manage feelings of uncertainty and ambivalence regarding the marital relationship, as well as to preserve satisfaction in the relationship and trust in the partner (Donoho et al., 2018). However, unlike in civilian couples, separation in military couples is almost inevitable because military deployment is a central part of military work. During their career, military members get deployed and separated

from their spouses. Bearing in mind the challenges separated couples face due to military displacement, they would be expected to present a high risk of divorce (Donoho et al., 2018).

According to the Systemic Model of Marital Satisfaction and Quality (Lester et al., 2016), marital quality and satisfaction depend on a set of factors internal and external to the couple that influence each other. Factors that originate in the marital system include affective processes (feelings of love and relational processes of intimacy and commitment to the relationship), behavioral processes (communication and conflict resolution), and cognitive processes (assumptions and beliefs, perceptions, expectations, and duties). The factors external to the couple refer to the life path. Thus, to better understand how psychological and emotional well-being is affected during the various phases of the military displacement process, it is necessary to study the affective, cognitive, and behavioral processes of the military spouses' relationship, in addition to the route conjugal life and personal, contextual, and demographic factors that influence and are influenced by relational processes (Bommarito et al., 2017).

Military couples' internal and external resources, despite the particular characteristics of the context in which they operate and influence them, as we have seen so far, demonstrate an unexpected and remarkable resilience in the face of stressful situations (Fivek, 2017). The stress level experienced by individuals in the face of adversity is related to the nature of the stressor, family resources and strengths, and their perceptions of the stressor (Fivek, 2017). This means that the resources that couples have, such as social and community support, flexible family roles, and the quality of the marital relationship, are determinants for developing resilience and resistance to the stressors of military life (Mustillo et al., 2016). When the couples have a greater ability to adapt to the military lifestyle, their psychological well-being and physical health is improved. The impact

of this is that the agility of the military unit, the retention of soldiers, and the effectiveness of missions are all improved (McGuire et al., 2016).

To cope with the stress associated with military displacement, military spouses resort to a series of coping which can be adaptive (favor emotional adjustment) or maladaptive (make emotional adjustment difficult). Problem-focused strategies that involve resolving the situation or changing the source of stress are more adaptive as they lead to feelings of empowerment that promote personal growth and the discovery of oneself and others (Donoho et al., 2018). In a study with military women on a mission, it was found that participants who had already experienced previous displacements used a positive strategy known as coping confrontational, which translates to the capacity to confront the situation and the problems to deal with the stress (Ross et al., 2020). However, some use coping with negative emotions, such as those focused on emotions, including avoidance, detachment, and self-blame, to reduce emotional distress caused by a stressor (Lester et al., 2016). Avoidance is reflected in denial, substance abuse, or involvement in activities that do not imply dealing directly with the situation of stress.

The following hypotheses are presented based on the literature review to give meaning to all the work developed.

H1: Military life requires the active-duty member to deploy; consequently, their absence affects the spouse's well-being.

H2: There is a significant negative effect of deployment separation on military spouses' emotional and psychological well-being.

H3: Deployment separation leads to a change in the expression of affection in the family system, changes in routines, and the restructuring of roles.

H4: The ability of military spouses to communicate with their absent spouses positively affects well-being.

H5: Reintegration techniques are needed to resume normalcy when the military member returns home from deployment.

Research Gap

There is an increase in research focusing on military members' families, which has raised concerns about the unique difficulties and demands on spouses and, consequently, the attention regarding how to meet their needs. Although many studies have focused on the impact of deployment on soldiers and their families, few studies specifically look at the effects of deployments on military spouses. Also, most research on the well-being of service members' spouses focuses on their general well-being, and few studies emphasize psychological and emotional elements. For example, Padden et al. (2010) studied military spouses' stress, coping, and wellness during deployment separation. The outcome predicted physical and mental well-being and a variation of optimistic coping still relying on military members' rank and the number of deployments.

Gray (2015) explored the well-being dimensions among spouses of active-duty members and found that sociodemographic factors contribute the most to mental well-being. The data achieved from the research provided the participant viewpoint of military life, the effect of the military lifestyle on parenting experience, and advice for spouses regarding military lifestyles. Corresponding research was conducted by Shaiq, Malik, and Nadeem (2017). They found out that the deployment area, officer's rank, educational background, and means of communication are positively associated with the stress and coping of military spouses (Joas, 2020).

Although many studies have focused on the impact of deployment on soldiers, the available studies focus on the general impact of deployment rather than specific areas of impact (Joas, 2020). Based on the results of previous research, this research aims to fill the research gap by adding to the studies and explicitly focusing on the psychological and emotional well-being of the spouses left behind.

Chapter Summary

The aspects of how and why military spouses face significant stress due to the deployment of the active-duty service member have been explained through the cluster of the selected theories. The ambiguous loss theory is foundational to examining and explaining how loss and separation are experienced within military families and how this affects the military spouse. On the other hand, coping theory describes how individuals interact with their environment based on stressful situations. Ryff (2014) explained that coping strategies effectively decrease environmental challenges experienced by spouses. This concept detailed how environmental challenges directly influence the levels of psychological health and well-being of military spouses. The role exit theory demonstrates the position and the dynamics of changing roles and how this affects the spouse's psychological well-being. Finally, gender role theory explains how gender roles influence the coping mechanism for military spouses and their families.

The selected theoretical cluster oriented the investigation around the ideology that military spouses are accountable for upholding equilibrium and psychological health in military families during deployments. The integrated theories provide details regarding coping mechanisms, resilience, the impact of role reversal, and the limitations of all of these. Jointly, the five theories confirmed that community systems play a role in supporting or eroding the functionality of a family and that the non-deployed spouses should stand at the core of support networks.

The spouses of military members face significant stress due to the deployment of their spouses. Deployment impacts the spouse and the children of military families and often results in psychological distress. Military members' deployments cause significant stress, disruption, and displacement in the family system itself. This causes the members the inability to tend to the needs of the spouses left behind. These needs are limited to physical and emotional and are also associated with emotional attachment. The inability to tend to the needs of the loved ones causes distress to the deployed service persons and the left behind spouses. Spouses face many other issues, including the upbringing of their children alone; thus, the spouse must take on dual roles within the home. Considering these challenges, strong communication must be provided to deployed military members to communicate with their families to strengthen and hold their relationships.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed description of the methods used to identify the data critical in the current study and describes the strategies used in data collection and the justification for each technique. Specifically, this section stresses the approaches used, making the present study meet all ethical requirements for the research. The proposed research focuses on assessing the impact of deployment separation on military spouses' psychological and emotional well-being. The current study will adopt a quantitative cross-sectional design and in-depth data analysis. This chapter provides a broad description of the approaches used to collect the research data, preserve the collected data, and the analysis techniques used (Walter, 2019).

The research questions are proposed to identify the factors that lead to emotional changes among military spouses when their partners are deployed to be part of various military missions. Hopefully, they will provide valuable insights and recommendations to assist stakeholders in addressing military spouses' psychological and emotional needs.

Research Questions

The following research questions were adopted in the current study:

RQ1: Do military spouses experience emotional and psychological changes during the deployment of a military member?

RQ2: Does the spouse's gender affect how the spouse is impacted emotionally and psychologically?

RQ3: Does the length of service or number of deployments affect spouses' ability to employ effective coping mechanisms?

RQ4: Do spouses who have added responsibilities, such as having children have a higher risk for emotional and psychological impacts?

RQ5: Does added responsibilities such as having children induce negative emotions and pose greater adversities to the military spouse?

RQ6: Does increased communication with military members during deployment have a positive effect on military spouse well-being?

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the adopted research questions help the current research formulate the following hypotheses,

H1: Military life requires the active-duty member to deploy, and consequently, their absence affects the spouse's well-being.

H2: There is a significant effect of deployment separation on military spouses' emotional and psychological well-being.

H3: Deployment separation leads to a change in the expression of affection in the family system, changes in routines, and the restructuring of roles.

H4: The ability of military spouses to communicate with their absent spouses positively affects well-being.

H5: Reintegration techniques are needed to resume normalcy when the military member returns home from deployment.

Research Approach

Two research approaches can be used in any study, including deductive and inductive approaches. According to Armat et al. (2018), the inductive approach enables the researcher to approach the study from a particular point of view towards a general perspective. This indicates that such a study approach would compel a researcher to study a given phenomenon and

consequently work towards understanding it relative to other related phenomena, thus creating patterns or theories of the observed concept. On the other hand, the deductive approach enables the researcher to design hypotheses aligning with the theories formulated by scholars in a given field and then design the best methods to test the adopted assumptions, probing the fitness of observation with the research expectations. This study adopts an inductive research approach, collecting data and testing based on the research questions.

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional design to best establish the extent of deployment separation's impact on the well-being of the military spouse. Unlike the qualitative, the focus of the quantitative method is usually on a large sample size (Queirós et al., 2017). Therefore, a representative sample was utilized using the formulas discussed below in the procedures section. Inferential statistics infer the findings of a quantitative study to a target population, increasing the utilization of the research findings to a broader population, in this case, the broader military community (Guetterman, 2019). Cross-sectional design involves collecting data at one point in time, and the researcher can easily measure the outcome of interest (Spector, 2019). By adopting the cross-sectional design, the military spouses' well-being and the exposure of the deployment separation will demonstrate the exposure-effect relationship (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018).

Procedures and Instruments

Samples and Sample Size

The study population consisted of military spouses since they experience the problem of deployment separation. The sample was randomly selected to achieve the targeted sample size. A sample size of 250 participants is chosen as calculated using the G-power formula below.

$$n = (Z^2Pq)/e^2$$

n is the sample size

Z is the value at an 80% confidence level, which is 1.96

e is the level of precision which is 0.05

P is the proportion of the population with the desired characteristics (50%, which is 0.5).

q is 1-P (1-0.5) therefore 0.5

Sampling Technique

Using social media platforms and flyers, participants were gathered to target spousal groups to enlist. Recruitment flyers were posted in the social media groups and placed at locations near and on the military installation, such as Starbucks, USO, Walmart, and the library. Permission to display flyers was requested from the different department heads of each facility. The flyers indicated study objectives and preferred characteristics. The link to where the survey is to be completed was provided on the recruitment flyer and social media postings. An email address to which the interested military spouses with questions as indicated in the flyers. The participants were able to click on the SurveyMonkey link and were taken directly to the information regarding the study, followed by the data collection tool and questionnaire. Once completed, the data was automatically returned to the researcher.

The sampling criteria utilized were purposive. Purposive sampling is a non-probability criterion in which the study participants are selected based on specific characteristics and objectives of the study. The inclusion and exclusion criteria below were used to select the subjects for this study.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria included current military spouses, age 18 years and above, and their spouse having been deployed for at least six months. The participants comprehended English since the data collection tool was in English. The exclusion criteria included military spouses less than 18 years old, spouses deployed for less than six months, those who did not have good English comprehension, suffered from a diagnosed mental disorder, or were being treated for a mental disorder that prohibits them from comprehending the directions. Demographic questions were asked to ensure participants met the requirements. A waiver of consent was obtained due to participation being anonymous.

Data Collection Method

The study used the SurveyMonkey website to create a survey tool using the 42-item Psychological Wellbeing Scale (PWS), which took about 8-10 minutes to complete. Scoring used a 7-point Likert scale, in which 1= strongly agree, 2=somewhat agree, 3= a little agree, 4= neither agree nor disagree, 5= a little disagree, 6= somewhat disagree and 7= strongly disagree. The Likert scale quantifies the different aspects of the variables and facilitates easy analysis (Mircioiu & Atkinson, 2017). Demographic information was gathered, including age, children, marital status, and duration of separation. The PWS evaluated six aspects of psychological well-being and happiness: purpose in life, positive relations, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, autonomy, and personal growth (Ryff et al., 2007). Once the collection forms were completed, the study participants submitted their responses by clicking "SUBMIT", allowing the researcher access to the data for analysis.

Reliability of the Research Instruments

The research addressed the need for trustworthiness by examining the research outcomes' credibility, dependability, and transferability. Consequently, the research maintained the quality and reliability of the data collected by critically focusing on the questions guiding the study, methods used to gather information, and selecting the data needed to address the research's objectives. Personal biases were minimized by focusing on the results of each variable.

Studies have found Ryff's PWS valid, reliable, and suitable for assessing study participants' psychological well-being (Shryock & Meeks, 2018). Ryff et al. (2007) have also found the 42-item PWS version to be more statically appropriate than the shorter 18-item scale. However, it does take longer to administer. The validity and reliability of the 42-item PWS have been put into question. Ryff's original paper exhibited the reliability and validity of the scales used. He argued that the scale has internal consistency abbreviated as (α), ranging from 93-86. To attest to the reliability, Ryff conducted a test-retest by administering the same test over a period of time for the basis of certainty (Ryff et al., 2007). The test-retest produced slightly different coefficients from the previous projections, which ranged from 88-81, demonstrating that the scales were consistent. The findings produced a basis for the conclusion that the results would be reliable when used on questionnaires.

Data Analysis

Validity

Internal validity is the truth within a study (Baldwin, 2018). However, several threats to internal validity need to be minimized to increase the credibility of the findings. One threat is the instrumentation, which in this case, is minimized by using the validated PWS tool. Convergent validity was used to define this critical parameter by placing positive and negative scale measures

under the test. These included the depression scale by Zung, the life satisfaction index, and the Rosenberg scale, which determined self-esteem (Ryff et al., 2007). Upon testing the validity, the rankings in question exhibited the same as all the previous correlations, were significant enough, and coincided with the expected direction. Based on discriminant validity, the six scales under consideration were consistent and strongly correlated with positive and negative measures (Ryff et al., 2007).

A second threat is statistical, whether the data analysis techniques are appropriate to the research questions and whether they presume cause and effect. These threats include violated assumptions of the test statistics, low statistical power, inaccurate effect size estimates, and fishing and error rate problem. These threats were addressed through an objective analysis of the capabilities of the tools, eliminating errors through collaborative review of data and analysis processes, and replicating results using control measures to ensure there is accuracy in the analysis process. Other threats to internal validity included selecting participants and using those that do not answer the research question and inadequate defining and operationalizing of the study constructs.

External validity entails the application of the study results to the target population (Baldwin, 2018). External validity was minimized by selecting the study participants based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. External validity was further minimized by selecting a large sample size representing the target population. Finally, the study participants were allowed to answer the questionnaire in a setting and time of their choice where an individual feels comfortable filling out the questionnaire. The participants were requested to answer the questionnaire honestly and to the best of their ability. To further enhance external validity, statistical errors were minimized by using at least a 0.05 level of significance and by selecting a large sample size.

Variables

Deployment separation exists when the spouse is separated from the deployed military member for a minimum of six months and will be adopted as the independent variable. The dependent variables include military spouses' psychological and emotional well-being. Psychological well-being is defined as the spouse's mental and behavioral well-being, while emotional well-being is the resilience associated with positive and stable emotions and relaxation.

It was evident that the psychological well-being of the study participants was influenced by factors such as age, whether they have children or not, length of deployment of a military spouse, gender, number of deployments, and the length of time the military spouse has been in service. These demographic variables influenced the psychological and emotional well-being of military spouses. They were sample characteristics that described the study population and were considered representative of the broader military community.

Statistical Procedures

Descriptive statistics using percentages and means were used to describe the sample population (Walter, 2019). Inferential statistics, using chi-square, was used to generalize the findings to the target population (Chu & Ke, 2017). The chi-square established whether a difference exists between the different aspects of spousal psychological and emotional well-being, including comparing the demographic characteristics of spouses. The standard deviations were analyzed to answer the research questions, while the results were compared to the hypothesis.

Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to the APA ethical codes regarding human subjects. Data collected was numbered, anonymous, and remained confidential and protected in a separate electronic storage file and was submitted for approval from the Liberty University IRB. Subsections 3.10 and

8.02, Informed Consent to Research of the APA Ethical principles guidelines (2017), state that researchers must obtain the informed consent of the individual or individuals using reasonably understandable language to that person or persons. Thus, the study participants were allowed to be part of the study only as their informed consent was received. Since the study was anonymous, a waiver of consent was obtained, and participants were still required to thoroughly read through the research information and agree before completing the survey. The research was conducted online via surveys where information on age, sex, number of children, and number of deployments was collected.

An email address was created solely to send and receive research data to avoid using the researcher's personal email. Thus, participant data was protected and not mixed with personal email traffic. The researcher adhered to section 4.01 of APA guidelines (2017) by taking reasonable precautions to protect confidential information obtained or stored in any medium. The researcher utilized a separate USB digital device to store research data that was only accessible by the researcher and kept in a locked drawer. The participants had an opportunity to seek clarification if any questions arose during participation by sending an email to the researcher. All email correspondence, if any, will also be destroyed once the research is completed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This study aimed to determine whether deployment affects military spouses' emotional and psychological well-being. The study aimed to explore the emotional issues experienced by military spouses through the survey of this population of military spouses. The study's purpose is necessitated by the existing research gap where past studies have not explicitly focused on the psychological and emotional well-being of the spouses left behind. Therefore, the research questions were formulated to target the study's aims and purpose. This chapter presents the findings of the quantitative cross-sectional design that used the inductive deductive research approaches. The findings from the 250 participants are therefore presented in this chapter. The first step is to present the main emotional and psychological findings affecting the military spouses' well-being in a table along with their Cronbach's Alpha score. These will be interpreted further down the chapter in deeper detail. Next, the data analysis, including their descriptive statistics on the 250 participants, is presented. These descriptive statistics answered the research questions. The next step in this chapter is the reliability analysis. The analysis is divided into autonomy, positive relations with others, purpose in life, personal growth, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance. Lastly, inferential statistics are used to analyze the six hypotheses presented.

Research Questions

The research questions and hypotheses for the study were as follows:

RQ1 – Do military spouses experience emotional and psychological changes during the deployment of a military member?

H₀ – Deployment is not a significant predictor of emotional and psychological changes among military spouses.

H₁ – Deployment is a significant predictor of emotional and psychological changes in military spouses.

RQ2 – Does the spouse’s gender affect how the spouse is impacted emotionally and psychologically?

H₀ – Gender is not a significant predictor of emotional and psychological changes in military spouses.

H₁ – Gender is a significant predictor of emotional and psychological changes in military spouses.

RQ3 – Does the length of service or number of deployments affect spouses' ability to employ effective coping mechanisms?

H₀ – Length of service or number of deployments is not a significant predictor of spouses’ ability to employ effective coping mechanisms.

H₁ – Length of service or number of deployments is a significant predictor of spouses’ ability to employ effective coping mechanisms.

RQ4 - Do spouses with added responsibilities, such as having children have a higher risk for emotional and psychological impacts?

H₀ – Added responsibilities do not significantly predict a higher risk for emotional and psychological impacts.

H₁ – Added responsibilities are a significant predictor of higher risk for emotional and psychological impacts.

RQ5 – Does increased communication with the military member during deployment positively affect the military spouse's well-being?

H₀ –Communication with a service member during deployment is not a significant predictor of positive spouse well-being.

H₁ – Communication with a service member during deployment is a significant predictor of positive spouse well-being.

Participants completed a survey that included inclusion and exclusion criteria and a demographic questionnaire. Chapter four reports the study's results, examines the timeframe in which the data was collected, and describes the recruitment procedures. In addition, the descriptive statistics of the sample will be presented. Furthermore, inferential statistics will be presented, focusing on testing the study's hypotheses. The hypothesis testing results will be critical in answering the study's central questions.

Results

The survey data was collected from May 8, 2022, to August 22, 2022. Surveys were administered online via the SurveyMonkey link. This link was promoted through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. A total of 250 surveys were completed by August 15, 2022. Survey Monkey displayed a completion rate of 94%, and the estimated time respondents took to complete the survey was 8 minutes.

Descriptive Statistics

The study participants answered inclusion, exclusion, and demographic questions before completing the assessments in the survey. All 250 respondents passed the questions on inclusion and exclusion criteria. All respondents (N = 250) were spouses of military service members. Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of respondents by gender; 45.2% (n = 113) of respondents were male, while 54.8% (n= 137) were female.

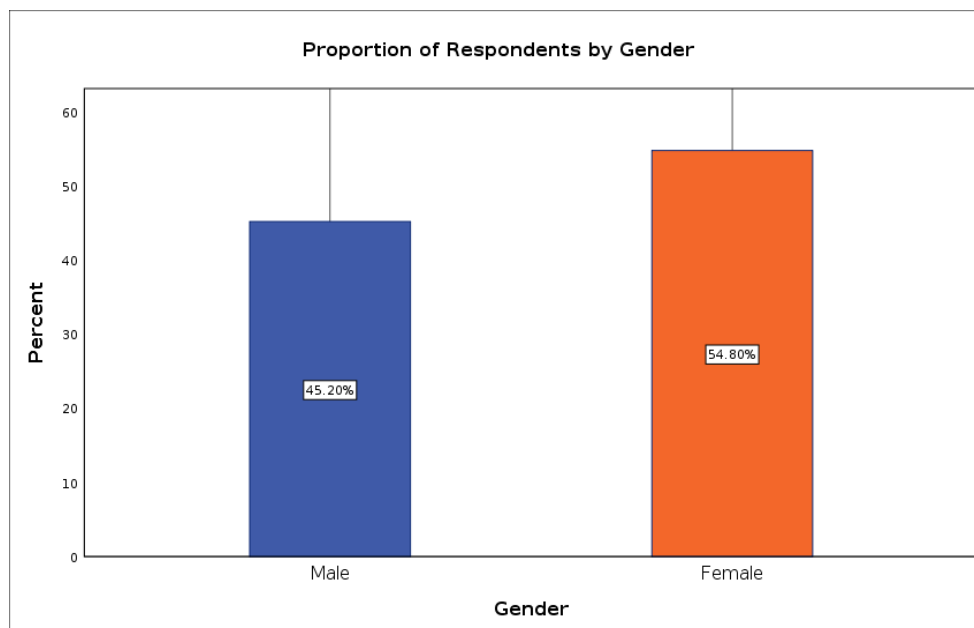


Figure 4.1: Proportion of Respondents by Gender

Figure 4.2 show that most respondents were White or Caucasian ($n = 216$; 86.4%), Black or African Americans ($n = 18$; 7.2%), American Indian or Alaska Native ($n = 12$; 4.80%), and then Asian/Asian Americans and Hispanic respondents accounted for 0.8% ($n = 2$), respectively. Most respondents were between 22 and 32 years (Figure 3). The participants ($N = 250$, 113 males and 137 females) were in the following age groups: 18 to 21 years old ($n = 2$), 22 to 26 years old ($n = 60$), 27 to 32 years old ($n = 86$), 33 to 37 years old ($n = 35$), 38 to 42 years old ($n = 29$), 43 to 47 years old ($n = 14$), 48 to 54 years old ($n = 12$) and 55 years or older ($n = 12$).

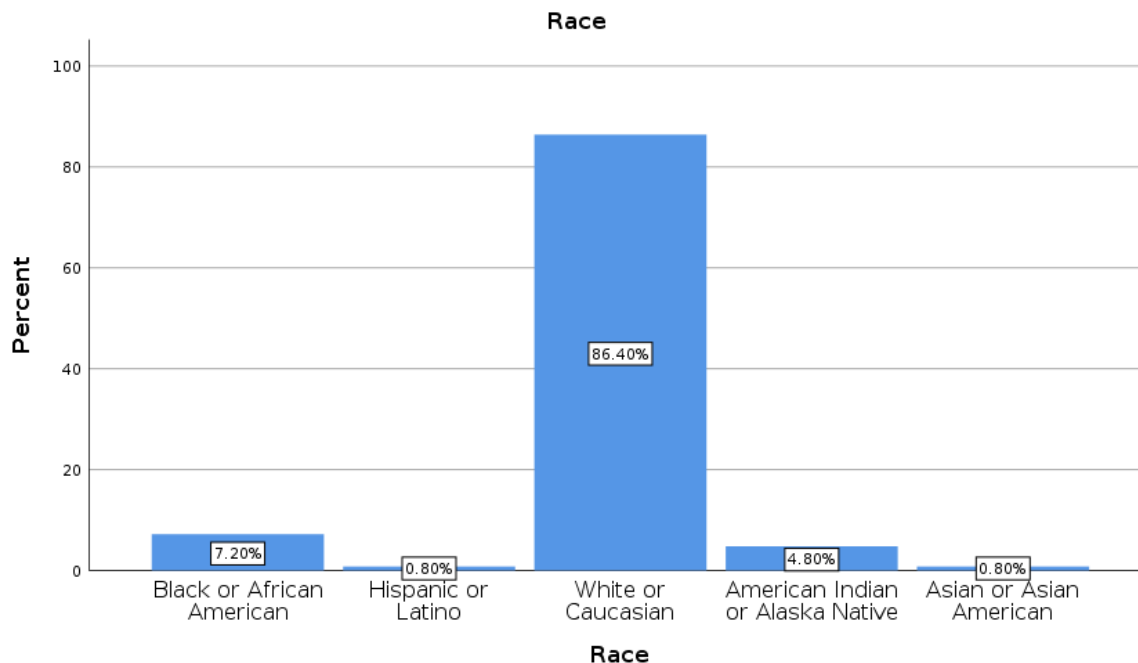


Figure 4.2: Respondents by Race

In the figure above, 92.8% (n = 232) of the respondents indicated that they were currently active participants in the labor markets, while 7.2% (n = 18) of the respondents were unemployed. Most participants (n = 225; 90%) reported having children, while the remaining (n = 25; 10%) did not. Among those who reported having children (n = 225), 170 had one or two children, 36 had three or four children, 14 had 5 to 6 children, and 6 had seven or more children. Furthermore, 139 respondents indicated that their children had special needs; the rest (n = 111) reported that their children did not.

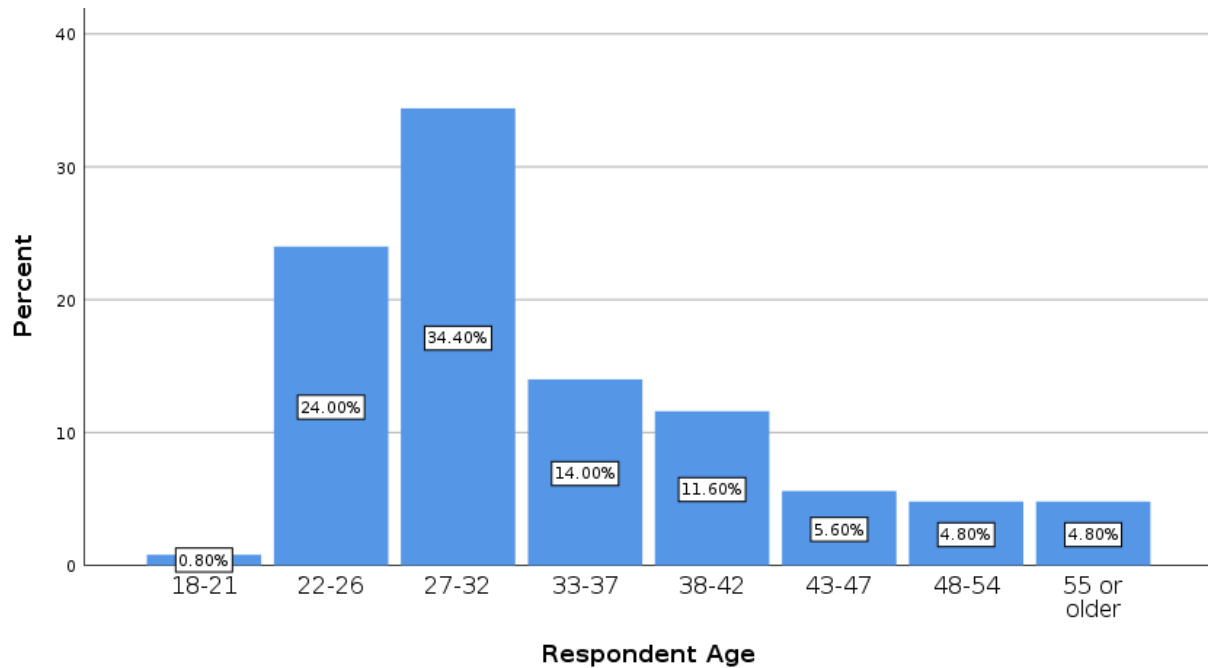


Figure 4.3: Respondents by Age

Regarding the highest level of education attained, the respondents indicated that they have Bachelor's (n = 122; 48.8%) and Master's (n = 82; 32.8%) degrees (Figure 4.4). For other respondents, the highest level of education was as follows: High school/GED (n = 31; 12.4%), Associates (n = 10; 4%), postgraduate (n = 4; 1.6%), and others (n = 1; 0.4%).

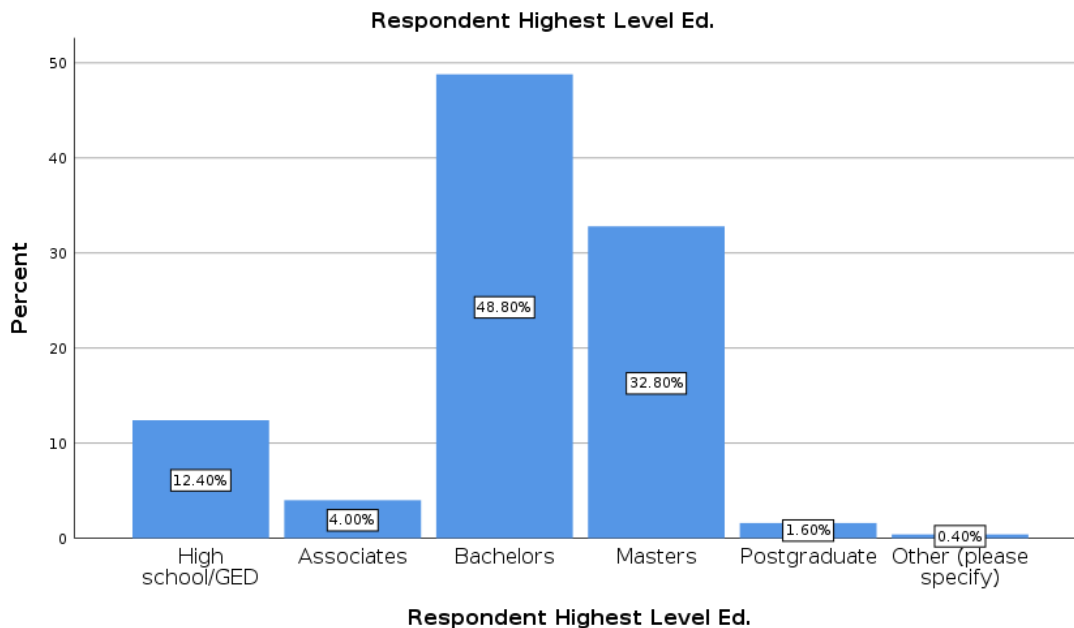


Figure 4.4: Respondents by Highest Level of Education

Participants were also asked questions regarding their spouse's service in the military. First, participants were asked whether their spouses currently serve on active duty. This question restricted the survey to individuals married to military service members. All survey reports (n = 250) comprised only answers from people married to military personnel. In another question, participants were asked about their spouse's age group. The responses were as follows: 18 to 21 years old (n = 10), 22 to 26 years old (n = 77), 27 to 32 years old (n = 84), 33 to 37 years old (n = 27), 38 to 42 years old (n = 28), 43 to 47 years old (n = 16), 48 to 54 years old (n = 7) and 55 years or older (n = 1).

Regarding the age distribution of participants and their spouses, those between 22 and 32 years old were the majority, accounting for more than 50 percent. On the other hand, those below 22 and above 55 years old were the fewest, accounting for about 5 percent of the total number of participants and their spouses.

In response to the question on how long their spouses had served in the military, participants indicated the minimum as 0 years and 55 as the maximum. The mode and median years of service reported were five years. Furthermore, the mean years of service were 8.05, with a standard deviation of 7.394. As Figure 5 below shows, the majority of participants reported that their spouses had served for three ($n = 32$), five ($n = 67$), and ten ($n = 17$) years. The distribution of years of service does not correspond to a normal distribution. This distribution is skewed to the right ($S_k = 2.821$) because many responses comprise values of less than ten years of service. Hence, the distribution has a longer right-hand tail than the left-hand tail. This observation is enhanced by Figure 4.5 below.

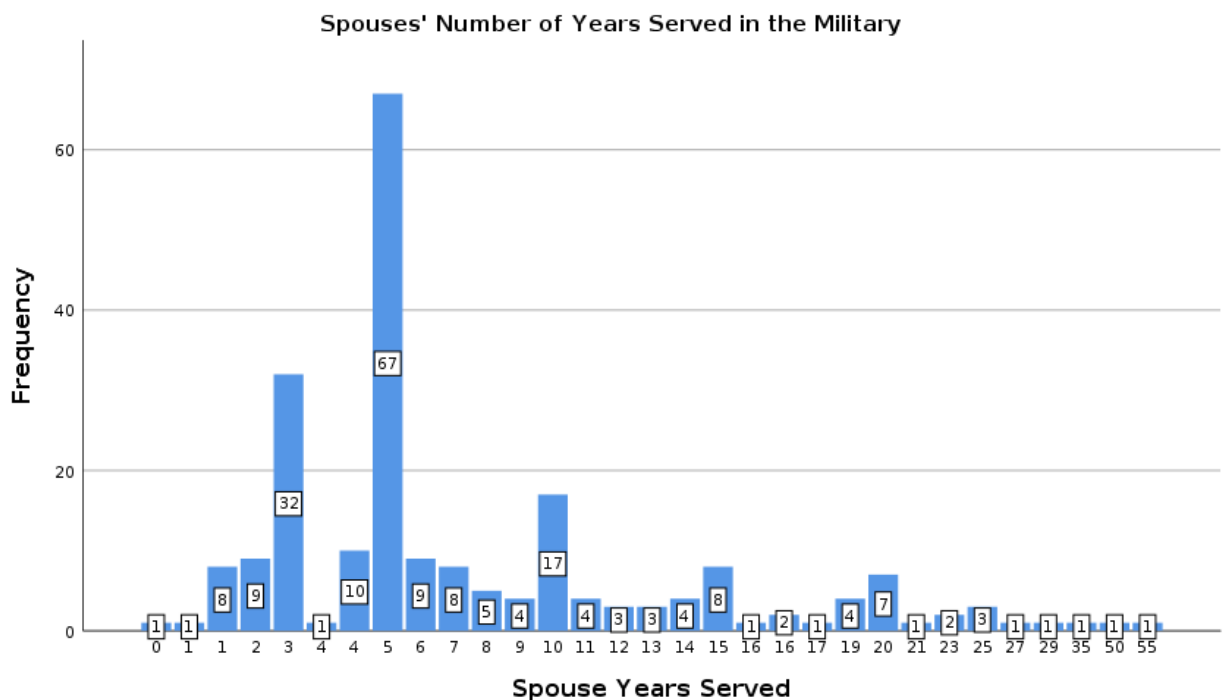


Figure 4.5: Number of Years Served in the Military

One hundred and twenty-three ($n = 123$; 49.2%) participants indicated that their spouses had been deployed once during their military service; eighty-six ($n = 86$; 34.4%) indicated that their spouses had deployed twice; twenty-one ($n = 21$; 8.4%) indicated their spouses had

deployed three times; and twenty ($n = 20$; 8.0%) reported their spouses had deployed at least four times during their service. At this point, it is worth noting that the number of years in military service may be closely related to a service member's age. Previously, we said most participants reported their spouses being between 22 and 32 years old. Also, it was noted that most service members had been in the military for three to ten years. Hence, the number of deployments may be tied to the number of years in service and where a service member would receive more deployments as years in service increase.

Participants were also asked about the military branch in which their spouses serve. Six ($n = 6$) respondents indicated that their spouses served in the Active Guard, sixteen ($n = 16$) served in the Airforce, 186 ($n = 186$) served in the Army, 20 ($n = 20$) were Marines, 21 ($n = 21$) were in the Navy, and one ($n = 1$) was in the Other Reserve Component. This information is presented in Table 9 in the Appendix. Based on this insight, we can note that most respondents indicated that their spouses served in the Army (74.4%).

Participants were asked to indicate their roles when their spouses were deployed for service. This question was multiple choice, and participants could select all options most relevant to their conditions. Results were as follows: primary parent (55.6%), head of household (64.0%), cooking (47.2%), cleaning (36.40%), disciplinary parent (24.4%), and paying bills/finances (25.2%). These results are shown in Figure 4.6 below. In response to a follow-up question regarding roles that the respondents relinquish once their spouses return from deployment, most indicated the following: head of household (51.6%), primary parent (38%), cooking (34.8%), disciplinary parent (12%), cleaning (24.0%) and paying bills/finances (14.8%).

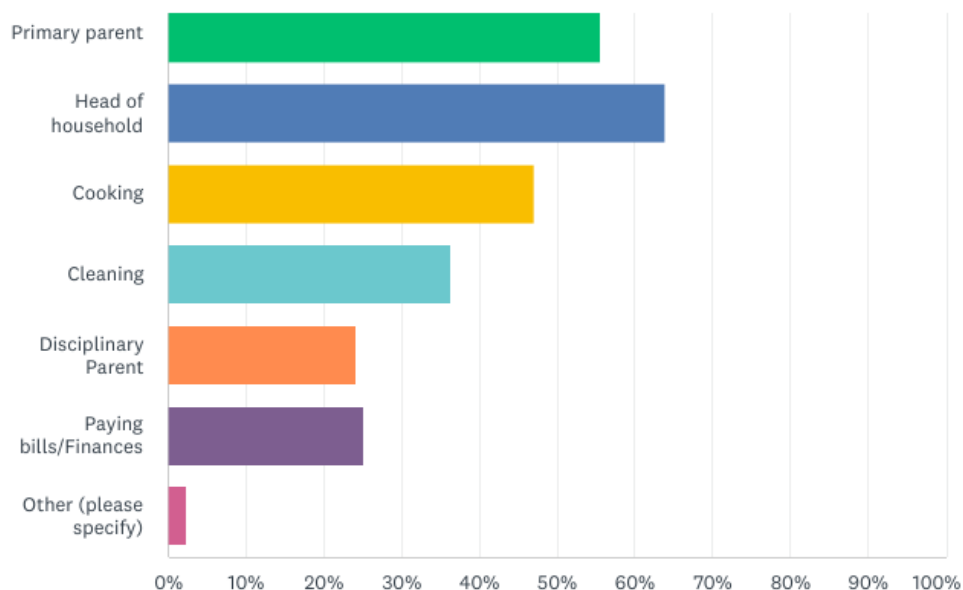


Figure 4.6: Proportion of Roles Respondents take on when spouses are deployed.

Responses to the multi-choice question “What support programs do you receive in order to cope with the emotional and psychological changes” indicated the following: 41.60% received command support, 70.40% received family support, 45.60% received support from friends, 10% received help from the community agency, and 8% received day care support. In another closely similar question, the participants were asked to select areas they felt support was needed. The responses are childcare (45.2%), family (64.4%), listening support (37.6%), financial (26%), support groups (17.6%), and transportation (6.8%). Respondents were also asked how often they communicated with their spouses weekly during deployment. 43.2% of the participants reported communicating with their spouses 1 or 2 times per week, 37.6% reported communicating 3 or 4 times per week, and 18.4% indicated that they communicated four or more times per week. 0.8% of the respondents reported no communication with their spouses (see Figure 4.7 below).

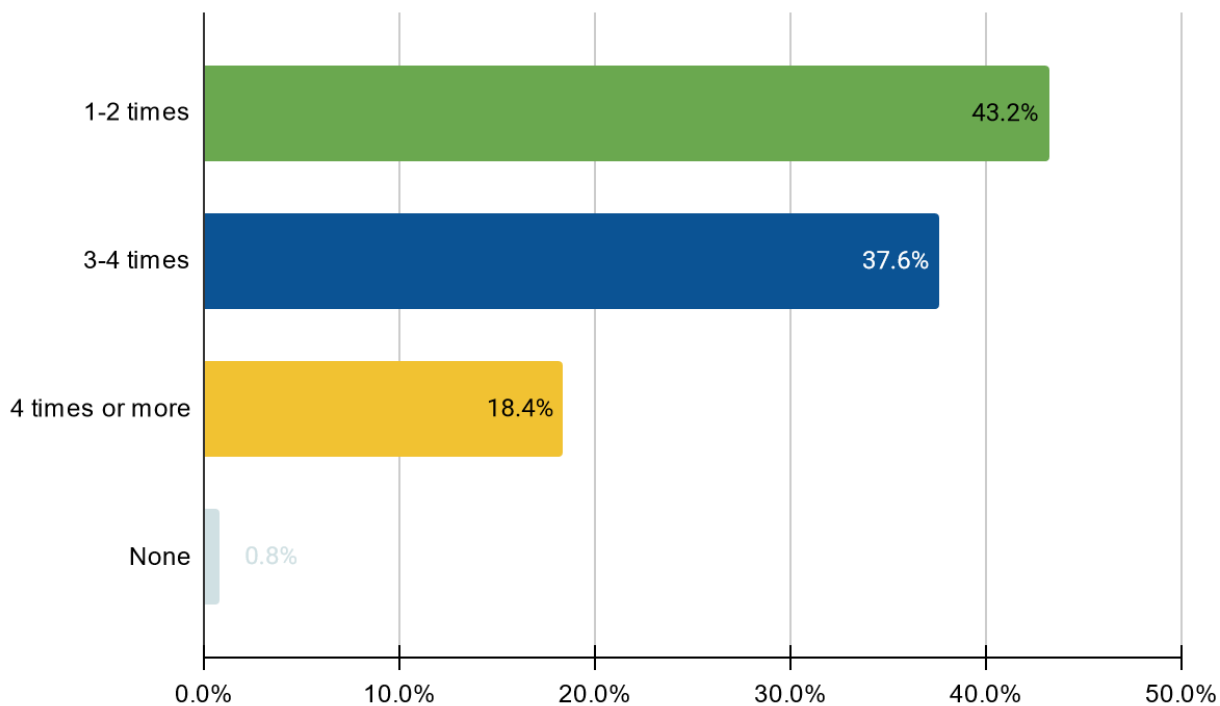


Figure 4.7: Frequency of Communication with Deployed Spouses (Weekly)

In response to the question on the communications tools used to communicate with their spouses, the respondents indicated the following: phone calls (72.4%), facetime/video calls (52.8%), Zoom/virtual platforms (32.8%), and letters/mail (19.6%). This question was also multi-choice. Hence, participants could select any of the indicated tools they used to communicate with their spouses. The values in the brackets correspond to the proportion of participants that chose the given communication tool. Higher values show that more respondents utilized the specific tool, while lower values were associated with less popular communication tools.

Participants were also asked about their feelings when their spouses were deployed. The question targeted respondents whose spouses had been deployed more than once. Unlike other questions where respondents only selected a predefined set of options, this question was open-ended. It allowed the respondents to offer their insights. The responses revealed mixed reactions from the participants regarding their spouses' deployments. For some participants, the first

deployment was the most challenging situation they had to confront. The most common reason for this was a lack of strong support systems. Some respondents indicated that having children made coping with future deployments easier.

Regarding the emotional and psychological response to deployment, most respondents (87.2%) reported experiencing feelings of fear and anxiety when their spouses were deployed. Their emotional reaction largely depended on the tasks their spouses were scheduled to perform during the deployment. Participants with spouses sent to combat zones (51.8%) were more likely to be fearful and anxious than when the spouses were deployed to less dangerous areas (35.4%). The feelings of anxiety and fear were enhanced by more extended periods of deployment. 12.8% of the participants did not report experiencing any feelings of fear and anxiety when their spouses were deployed. These participants indicated that the deployments were expected; hence, they did not need to get anxious. However, these reports were few compared to those previously shown. Most participants reported experiencing an emotional state characterized by feelings of disappointment, grief, or hopelessness. The emotional trigger could be anything — including memories, experiences, or events — that sparks an intense emotional reaction, regardless of an individual's current mood. Emotional triggers are associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Reliability Analysis

The study included questions utilizing a Likert Scale to collect user input regarding their emotional and psychological well-being. These questions had a 7-point scale, where at the extremes, one = strongly agree and 7 = strongly disagree. Questions on emotional and psychological well-being were adapted from the 42-item Psychological Well-being (PWB) scale (Ryff et al., 2007). The scale measures six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy,

personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, positive relations with others, and environmental mastery. Ryff (2007) conceptualized these dimensions as contributing to an individual's psychological well-being.

In this section on descriptive statistics, the researcher sought to determine the internal consistency of questions within each of the six aspects (see questions in Appendix B). Each element of psychological well-being was measured using seven questions. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha. These measures are primarily used when a study has multiple Likert questions in the questionnaire, forming a scale, and the researcher wishes to determine if the scale is reliable.

Since this study used Likert Scale questions to measure respondents' emotional and psychological well-being, it was integral to utilize Cronbach's alpha to determine the scale's reliability. In that case, it measures the internal consistency in the research questionnaire. When Cronbach's alpha is close to zero ($\alpha = 0$), the scale items are entirely independent; hence, they are not correlated. A Cronbach's alpha close to 1 ($\alpha = 1$) indicates that all scale items have high covariances, and the items most likely measure the same underlying concept. According to Morales-Garcia (2018), a reliable set of scale items should have a Cronbach's alpha between 0.67 and 0.85. A value of Cronbach's alpha less than 0.5 indicates less internal consistency between a given set of scale items. This value is unacceptable for scales purporting to be unidimensional. The scale confirmed the internal consistency of the questionnaire.

Autonomy

The aspect of autonomy is measured using seven questions, each on a 7-point Likert scale. This subscale of psychological well-being has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.437 (Table 4.1(a)). This

value is less than 0.5, indicating internal inconsistency among the scales used to measure autonomy.

| Reliability Statistics | | |
|------------------------|--|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
| .437 | .481 | 7 |

Table 4.1 (a): Reliability Analysis for Autonomy

In the reliability analysis, we also check the option to determine each scale item's effect on the value of Cronbach's alpha. In that case, the seven questions were labeled Qu1 through Qu7. A Cronbach's alpha test was run for the reliability of autonomy analysis on the seven variables (seven-point scale). Testing the reliability of autonomy is crucial as it measures the respondents' attitudes to each question. The analysis shows that removing the question (Q10) "I tend to worry about what other people think of me" improves Cronbach's alpha from $a = 0.437$ to $a = 0.675$. Removing any other question would not enhance the value of Cronbach's alpha (Table 4.1(b)). However, we should not take these results at face value. It is essential to ensure that a researcher combines their theoretical and substantive knowledge to determine whether a set of scale items is a 'good' measure of the underlying aspect.

| Item-Total Statistics | | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Squared Multiple Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
| Q1 | 29.65 | 18.749 | .415 | .243 | .287 |
| Q10 | 32.67 | 31.777 | -.438 | .382 | .675 |
| Q13 | 29.82 | 19.573 | .396 | .296 | .306 |
| Q21 | 29.73 | 19.085 | .487 | .324 | .270 |
| Q24 | 30.23 | 19.583 | .250 | .397 | .371 |
| Q35 | 29.80 | 20.351 | .358 | .191 | .330 |
| Q41 | 30.35 | 19.417 | .239 | .406 | .378 |

Table 4.1(b): Item-Total Statistics for Autonomy

Positive Relations with Others

| Reliability Statistics | | |
|-------------------------------|--|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
| .076 | .189 | 7 |

Table 4.2: Reliability Analysis for Positive Relations with Others

The well-being subscale of positive relations with others has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.076 (Table 4.2). Since the value is close to zero, there is less internal consistency between the scale items used to measure the aspect of positive relations with others.

Purpose in Life

| Reliability Statistics | | |
|-------------------------------|--|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
| .596 | .545 | 7 |

Table 4.3(a): Reliability Analysis for purpose in life

Table 4.3(a) above shows that Cronbach's Alpha for Purpose in life is $a = 0.60$. The measure of purpose has an inadequate internal consistency. In Table 4.3(b) shown below, deleting the question Q29, "Some people wander through life, but I am not one of them," improves the value of Cronbach's Alpha from $a = 0.596$ to $a = 0.674$.

| Item-Total Statistics | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Squared Multiple Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
| Q6 | 23.54 | 35.674 | .124 | .248 | .611 |
| Q9 | 26.32 | 26.047 | .526 | .570 | .471 |
| Q20 | 23.70 | 37.208 | .017 | .252 | .639 |
| Q29 | 23.83 | 39.224 | -.108 | .174 | .674 |
| Q32 | 26.03 | 24.935 | .576 | .534 | .446 |
| Q33 | 26.31 | 26.720 | .476 | .431 | .492 |
| Q39 | 26.21 | 26.044 | .547 | .423 | .463 |

Table 4.3(b): Item Statistics for Purpose in Life

Personal Growth

Personal growth is also investigated to determine the internal consistency of questions used to measure it. Table 4.4 shown below reveals a Cronbach's Alpha value of $a = 0.614$ (Table 4.4 (a)).

| Reliability Statistics | | |
|------------------------|--|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
| .614 | .497 | 7 |

Table 4.4 (a): Reliability Statistics for Personal Growth

Further analysis shows that the removal of Q27, "I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me." would further improve Cronbach's score to $\alpha = 0.696$ (Table 4.4(b)). It is essential to add more relevant items to the test and remove items that are not relevant to increase alpha. The removal of Q27 would ensure that the responses are consistent between items.

| Item-Total Statistics | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Squared Multiple Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
| Q2 | 20.19 | 37.002 | .015 | .236 | .651 |
| Q5 | 22.88 | 22.920 | .613 | .484 | .451 |
| Q14 | 23.30 | 24.410 | .586 | .467 | .471 |
| Q17 | 20.43 | 39.762 | -.176 | .312 | .696 |
| Q25 | 23.33 | 26.355 | .523 | .326 | .503 |
| Q28 | 23.05 | 22.419 | .703 | .539 | .413 |
| Q37 | 24.00 | 38.142 | -.071 | .306 | .672 |

Table 4.4(b): Item Statistics for Personal Growth

Environmental Mastery

| Reliability Statistics | | |
|------------------------|--|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
| .268 | .264 | 7 |

Table 4.5s: Reliability Statistics for Environmental Mastery.

Environmental mastery has a Cronbach's Alpha score of $\alpha = 0.268$ (Table 4.5). There is internal inconsistency since the value is less than 0.5. Also, the value indicates a weak co-variance between the scale items used to measure internal consistency.

Self-Acceptance

| Reliability Statistics | | |
|------------------------|--|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
| .351 | .358 | 7 |

Table 4.6: Reliability Statistics for Self-Acceptance

The Self-Acceptance subscale of psychological well-being has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.351 (Table 4.6). Since the value is close to zero, there is less internal consistency between the scales items used to measure the aspect of positive relations with others.

Inferential Statistics

Hypothesis 1:

The first hypothesis was that deployments have an impact on psychological well-being. Psychological well-being was measured using the 42-item Psychological Well-being Scale composed of six sub-scales (Ryff et al., 2007). The subscales include autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The subscales help determine the level of happiness one possesses. Suppose there are increased levels of pleasure and satisfaction in the different areas; a person's happiness increases, leading to positive well-being. Consequently, decreased levels of pleasure and increased levels of pain decrease one's level of happiness, which negatively impacts their well-being. In Figure 4.4.1, the aim was to determine the correlation between deployments and the subscales for psychological well-being. Deployment causes different emotions and reactions; therefore, it was imperative to determine whether deployment and the number of deployments affected spouses' well-being. The table shows a significant correlation between the number of deployments and purpose in life ($r = 0.134$; $p =$

0.036). Additionally, the correlation between the number of deployments and personal growth is significant ($r = 0.225$; $p < 0.01$).

| | | Correlations | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| | | Autonomy | Purpose in Life | Self-Acceptance | Positive Relations | No. of Deployments | Personal Growth | Environmental Mastery |
| Autonomy | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.255** | .018 | .048 | -.108 | -.562** | -.054 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .783 | .455 | .092 | .000 | .396 |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 |
| Purpose in Life | Pearson Correlation | -.255** | 1 | .598** | .462** | .134* | .757** | .516** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .036 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 |
| Self-Acceptance | Pearson Correlation | .018 | .598** | 1 | .473** | .101 | .405** | .486** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .783 | .000 | | .000 | .113 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 |
| Positive Relations | Pearson Correlation | .048 | .462** | .473** | 1 | .047 | .258** | .440** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .455 | .000 | .000 | | .466 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 |
| No. of Deployments | Pearson Correlation | -.108 | .134* | .101 | .047 | 1 | .225** | .122 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .092 | .036 | .113 | .466 | | .000 | .056 |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 250 | 247 | 247 |
| Personal Growth | Pearson Correlation | -.562** | .757** | .405** | .258** | .225** | 1 | .374** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | | .000 |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 |
| Environmental Mastery | Pearson Correlation | -.054 | .516** | .486** | .440** | .122 | .374** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .396 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .056 | .000 | |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 2:

The second hypothesis evaluated whether gender significantly predicted psychological and emotional well-being during military deployments. This hypothesis test was conducted using the One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and the results are presented in the table (Figure 4.4.2). The table indicated significant gender differences in psychological well-being among males and females following military deployments of their spouses.

Significant gender differences were observed in the psychological aspects of autonomy ($F = 19.811$; $p < 0.01$), personal growth ($F = 30.074$; $p < 0.01$), and purpose in life ($F = 25.001$; $p < 0.01$) as well. While this study also revealed gender differences in self-acceptance, positive relations with others, and environmental mastery, these differences were not statistically significant ($p > 0.01$). Mean plots for the six aspects of psychological well-being showed that

females scored higher in all areas except for autonomy. A higher score in psychological well-being implies that women are generally better at coping with the military deployment of their spouses than men cope when their spouses are deployed.

| | | ANOVA | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Autonomy | Between Groups | 10.192 | 1 | 10.192 | 19.811 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 126.045 | 245 | .514 | | |
| | Total | 136.237 | 246 | | | |
| Personal Growth | Between Groups | 21.059 | 1 | 21.059 | 30.074 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 171.565 | 245 | .700 | | |
| | Total | 192.625 | 246 | | | |
| Purpose in Life | Between Groups | 18.040 | 1 | 18.040 | 25.001 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 176.786 | 245 | .722 | | |
| | Total | 194.826 | 246 | | | |
| Self-Acceptance | Between Groups | .958 | 1 | .958 | 2.053 | .153 |
| | Within Groups | 114.262 | 245 | .466 | | |
| | Total | 115.220 | 246 | | | |
| Positive Relations | Between Groups | .907 | 1 | .907 | 2.266 | .134 |
| | Within Groups | 98.095 | 245 | .400 | | |
| | Total | 99.003 | 246 | | | |
| Environmental Mastery | Between Groups | 1.640 | 1 | 1.640 | 3.856 | .051 |
| | Within Groups | 104.216 | 245 | .425 | | |
| | Total | 105.857 | 246 | | | |

Figure 4.4.2: One-Way ANOVA of Psychological Well-being and Gender

Hypothesis 3:

The study also sought to determine whether the length of service or number of deployments affected a spouse's overall well-being—cross-tabulations to determine the value of Chi-Square. In the cross-tabulations, the variables used represented the spouses' number of deployments and length of service. The aspect of autonomy was used to represent the psychological well-being of spouses left behind. The chi-square results indicate that length of service significantly impacts all aspects of psychological well-being except autonomy (see Appendix B, Figure 1.0 (a -f)). Furthermore, the number of deployments has significant effects on purpose in life ($\chi^2(108) = 160.38$; $p < 0.01$), positive relations with others ($\chi^2(87) = 126.49$; $p < 0.01$), self-acceptance ($\chi^2(99) = 131.18$; $p < 0.01$), and personal growth ($\chi^2(87) = 1117.60$; $p < 0.05$). However, the number of

deployments does not significantly affect autonomy and environmental mastery (Appendix B, Figure 2.0 (a -f)).

Hypothesis 4 & 5:

The study also sought to determine how added responsibilities, such as having children, affect psychological well-being or induce negative emotions in spouses left behind after their husbands or wives are deployed. Among respondents that indicated having children (n = 225), 55.6% of them reported that their children have special needs (n = 139). Furthermore, when asked about the responsibilities that they take on after the spouse is deployed, the majority of the respondents selected primary parent (55.6%), head of household (64%), and cooking (47.2%). Chi-square tests were performed to determine whether having children (and children's special needs) affect psychological well-being. The results show that having children significantly affects self-acceptance and positive relations with others with a negative effect on the individual's well-being following the deployment of their spouses (Appendix B, Figure 3.0 (a - f)). However, the effect is not statistically significant for the other aspects of psychological well-being. Additionally, children having special needs significantly affect self-acceptance and purpose in life (Appendix B, Figure 4.0 (a - f)). The effect is also insignificant for measuring psychological well-being on the other subscales.

Hypothesis 6:

The final hypothesis tested whether increased communication was a better predictor of psychological well-being among military spouses. To complete this task, correlations were utilized. The results of this analysis are shown in the figure below:

| | | Correlations | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| | | Autonomy | Purpose in Life | Self-Acceptance | Positive Relations | Personal Growth | Environmental Mastery | Frequency of comm. |
| Autonomy | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.255** | .018 | .048 | -.562** | -.054 | -.080 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .783 | .455 | .000 | .396 | .210 |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 |
| Purpose in Life | Pearson Correlation | -.255** | 1 | .598** | .462** | .757** | .516** | .173** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .007 |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 |
| Self-Acceptance | Pearson Correlation | .018 | .598** | 1 | .473** | .405** | .486** | .180** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .783 | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .000 | .005 |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 |
| Positive Relations | Pearson Correlation | .048 | .462** | .473** | 1 | .258** | .440** | .102 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .455 | .000 | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .108 |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 |
| Personal Growth | Pearson Correlation | -.562** | .757** | .405** | .258** | 1 | .374** | .211** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | | .000 | .001 |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 |
| Environmental Mastery | Pearson Correlation | -.054 | .516** | .486** | .440** | .374** | 1 | .145* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .396 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | | .023 |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 |
| Frequency of comm. | Pearson Correlation | -.080 | .173** | .180** | .102 | .211** | .145* | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .210 | .007 | .005 | .108 | .001 | .023 | |
| | N | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 247 | 250 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 4.4.6: Correlations between Frequency of Communication and Psychological Well-being

The table shows that the frequency of communication is positively correlated with the aspects of purpose in life ($r = 0.173$; $p < 0.01$), self-acceptance ($r = 0.18$; $p < 0.01$), personal growth ($r = 0.211$; $p < 0.01$) and environmental mastery ($r = 0.145$; $p < 0.05$). These correlations were found to be statistically significant.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This study aimed to determine whether military deployments affect the psychological well-being of the service members' spouses. First, a summary of the findings will be presented. Next, the findings of this research are discussed in this chapter through a general interpretation of the analysis results from chapter four. This will then be followed by the implications of the results and findings of this research. The limitations and delimitations of the current study are addressed, along with recommendations for future research. Lastly, a summary of this chapter will be presented.

Summary of Findings

The research findings are that for most of the respondents, the roles they played when their spouses were deployed included being the primary parent, head of the household, cook, cleaner, disciplinary parent, and paying bills. Regarding the frequency of communication, 43.2% only communicated 1-2 times a week, whereas 0.8% did not communicate weekly. 87.2% of the respondents report that they experience fear and anxiety upon the deployment of their spouses. The performance on the reliability analysis on a Cronbach alpha score was 0.437 on autonomy, 0.076 on positive relations with others, 0.60 on the purpose of life, 0.614 on personal growth, .0268 on environmental mastery, and 0.351 on self-acceptance. It was concluded that there is a significant correlation between the number of deployments and aspects of emotional well-being. There is an indication of significant gender differences in psychological well-being among males and females following the military deployments of their spouses. Results indicate that length of service significantly impacts all aspects of psychological well-being except autonomy. Also, having children significantly affects self-acceptance and positive relations with others, with a negative effect on the individual's well-being following the deployment of their spouses.

However, the effect is not statistically significant for the other aspects of psychological well-being. Finally, increased communication is positively correlated to a spouse's emotional well-being.

Discussion of Findings

Psychological well-being can be measured using six subscales: personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, autonomy, self-acceptance, and environmental mastery (Ryff et al., 2007). These dimensions are conceptualized in chapter four as contributing to the psychological well-being of service members' spouses. Five research questions were incorporated to accomplish the study's primary purpose. These research questions were utilized to develop research hypotheses, described in chapter four.

The first research question aimed to determine the effect of deployment on spousal well-being. Results of the analysis indicated significant correlations between deployment and the aspects of personal growth and purpose in life. The results also indicated that the deployment correlations with the other psychological well-being elements were not statistically significant. We can conclude that there is a substantial correlation between deployment and the subscales of personal growth and purpose in life.

These findings are consistent with previous research studies that show that sociodemographic elements significantly impact the mental well-being of spouses whose partners are deployed in the military (Gray, 2015). Military families experience mental health problems, disruptions in parenting, increased separation, and interference with family routines because of a partner's deployment (Paley, Lester, and Mogil, 2013). Such issues affect psychological health and relationship in families. Children from military families develop emotional and behavioral problems. On this point, the major view is that children of the deployed officers encounter

individual and intra-familial stressors associated with deployment or the return of their deployed parent. Such stressors may be directly or indirectly associated with internalizing behaviors (Cederbaum et al., 2014; Creech et al., 2014; Palmer, 2008).

Consequently, it amplifies the amount of stress experienced by the military spouse, as they now must deal with their children's emotional imbalances and behavioral changes. As this research has highlighted, some spouses left behind do not identify as the disciplinary parent. Thus, the question of how to address these behavioral issues may arise, causing increased pressure and added stress on the military spouse. Palmer notes there are also heightened stress levels in families where an active-duty member is deployed (2008). Notably, stress occurs among the spouses who are left alone to care for the family, such as helping the children, managing schedules, preparing meals, and caring for disabled children (Caddick & Fossey, 2021). Some psychological issues experienced by spouses of deployed service members include anxiety, depression, suicide, social isolation, and low self-esteem (Quinones, 2019).

Due to the significant demands placed on a soldier (Borah & Fina, 2017), like unexpected calls, which may not necessarily mean deployment, the spouse will experience increased stress because of the insufficient time given to them to prepare for the deployment of their partners (Colburn, 2020). Quinones (2019) supports the expectations placed on military spouses; for instance, adapting, being resilient, and taking all the roles left behind by the deployed partner led to significant stress. Such stress often results in various mental health problems among spouses who seek medical care (Quinones, 2019). Increased anxiety among the military spouses left by the spouses heightened depending on their perceived decrease in community and social support, age, and intensification in overweight status (Fish, 2013).

The findings of this study are similar to those of Colburn (2020), who notes that the extension of deployment time, long periods of deployment, lack of support, and increased economic strain affect the psychological well-being of the military spouse. Further, the military spouse experiences significant pressure associated with the uncertainty of whether their partners will return home. Such pressures usually result in numerous issues, for instance, health and emotional problems (distress) (Godier-McBard et al., 2017), inability to adapt to the surrounding, and loneliness (Yablonsky et al., 2016). Such issues result in marital relationship problems (Bommarito et al., 2017).

More specifically, a partner's deployment sometimes results in post-traumatic stress disorder, isolation, anxiety, depression, and other psychological diseases associated with separation (Padden et al., 2011; Palmer, 2008). Consequently, when the active-duty member returns home with these mental health issues, this adds additional stress on the military spouse as they try to resume the normalcy within the relationship that existed prior to the deployment. The literature review section examined instances of military spouses experiencing some adverse psychological effects that must be addressed. Notably, military spouses risk experiencing similar psychological effects as the deployed member (Padden et al., 2011). While it had been reported that these issues tend to subside when military personnel return home after a mission, there were many cases where the military spouse experienced increased depression, isolation, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental illnesses due to the separation, same as the military member (Padden et al., 2011).

Similarly, Palmer's theory of risk and resilience shows how separation of military spouses during deployment could lead to risks in family dynamics and suggests that individuals had a higher likelihood of developing detrimental emotional and psychological experiences following

the deployment of their spouses. (2008). These mental health issues increase among spouses with children more than those without children (Marnocha, 2012). In families where the deployed member is the breadwinner, couples with children experience worries about the safety of their partners (Keeling et al., 2020). Betz and Thorngren (2006) discuss the concept of ambiguous loss, which is displayed in different ways after the deployment of a serviceman, for instance, the physical absence of a partner and the constant worry about the safety of the deployed partner (Betz & Thorngren, 2006).

The second research question sought to determine whether gender was a significant predictor of the psychological impacts of deployments experienced by military spouses. One-way ANOVA showed substantial gender differences in the personal growth, purpose in life, and autonomy subscales of psychological well-being. The analysis also revealed that gender differences in self-acceptance, positive relations with others, and environmental mastery were not statistically significant.

Other studies have presented similar findings, with males experiencing more impacts than women on aspects such as caregiving, role transferring, mental and physical health, and marital relationships (Trautmann et al., 2015; Morales-Garcia, 2018). The male spouses left behind by their deployed partners are reported to have an increased likelihood of being overweight and encountering psychological distress due to their weight (Fish, 2013). Most of the male spouses left following the deployment of their wives are more likely than women to express feelings of hopelessness, frustration, and exhaustion. However, women spouses are more likely than men to experience depression and anxiety (Morales-Garcia, 2018). While many studies have focused on the effect of deployment on marriage and spouses, very few studies have reported an increased

divorce rate in cases where the female spouse is deployed compared to when male spouses are deployed (Negrusa et al., 2014; Morales-Garcia, 2018; Donoho et al., 2018).

Findings show that in cases where women service members are deployed, their male spouses experience more detrimental effects. This also affects their marriage, especially when they do not have children and the deployment period is lengthy (Negrusa et al., 2014). The issue of role conflict is also more among male spouses left by their partners than women spouses left by their deployed husbands. Notably, the role conflict increases the marriage's discontent, especially when the male spouse is left alone with the children. While deployed married military men are less likely to divorce their wives, a study by Morales-Garcia (2018) shows that deployed wives have increased chances of divorcing their husbands.

Regarding autonomy, most of the male spouses left behind by their deployed wives are more likely to experience difficulties in caregiving and exerting influence in the family than their female counterparts (Wang et al., 2015). Moreover, male spouses will experience more challenges in constantly addressing any probable emergent fear or stress that households with a deployed member experience (McFarlane, 2009).

McFarlane (2009) adds that numerous military households where a family member has deployed encounter challenges in surviving on the spouse's benefits and salaries. While the family of the deployed service member may continue to receive a paycheck, the constraints of childcare and domestic work may affect the spouse and hinder them from engaging in paid work to increase or maintain household income. Notably, this issue is reported more in left-behind male spouses than left-behind female spouses. One reason for this trend is that male spouses were likely to experience problems creating a work-family balance. Male spouses find it hard to balance offering parental care, especially to young children, and working outside the home. As such, male spouses

married to a military service member would encounter career frustration and hurdles that female spouses, especially when they do not get any assistance from family members and the community (Morales-Garcia, 2018).

Another reason is the gender gap in the military, where men are more likely to receive a promotion than women at most levels, which translates to the gender pay gap (Lundquist, 2008). Noteworthy, military females who have civilian husbands and have advanced their military careers and ranks are likely to divorce their partners. Such an aspect is a massive threat to the male spouses left behind after their partner's deployment because they juggle between pursuing their life interests and careers as a preventive measure for securing their future or paying attention to offering parental care for the children (Allen et al., 2011).

The third research question dealt with the relationship between the length of service or number of deployments and the ability of military spouses to employ effective coping mechanisms. Based on these results, the service length significantly impacts all aspects of psychological well-being except autonomy. In contrast, the number of deployments substantially affects purpose in life, positive relations with others, self-acceptance, and personal growth. As noted in the results, spouses reported experiencing different emotions when their spouses deployed. Some reported different emotions associated with each deployment. Others noted emotions associated with the expected length of deployment.

Similar findings have been reported in previous literature. Risk elements like deployment duration, lack of support from family or community, the economic strain on the family, extended deployment period, and spouses' life situations impact the left-behind spouse's mental wellness (Colburn, 2020). Deployments increase levels of parenting stress in families regardless of whether both parents are military based or only one is on active duty. Notably, the levels of parenting stress

are highly influenced by lengthy deployment periods (O'Donnell et al., 2011). Approximately 30% of the children in military families show signs of anxiety, primarily because of parental separation. The high levels of anxiety are demonstrated by sleeping problems, stomach issues, and headaches which may be assumed to occur because of the absence of one of their parents for extended periods (O'Donnell et al., 2011).

Fung (2019) found that autonomy was associated with lower stress levels. Specifically, participants who reported higher levels of autonomy had lower levels of stress, and participants who reported lower levels of autonomy had higher levels of stress. These findings suggest that autonomy is vital for stress management. When individuals feel they have control over their lives and can make their own decisions, they may experience less stress. This is likely because they feel like they are in control of their lives and are not being controlled by others. These findings have implications for both individuals and organizations. For individuals, it is crucial to find ways to increase autonomy in their lives. This may involve setting personal goals and making decisions that align with one's values. It is essential for organizations to create an environment conducive to autonomy. This may involve giving employees more control over their work and providing opportunities for them to make decisions. Overall, the findings of Fung (2019) suggest that autonomy is vital for stress management. When individuals feel they have control over their lives and can make their own decisions, they may experience less stress.

Padden et al. (2010) found that military spouses' coping strategies, stress levels, and psychological well-being during deployment separation report mental and physical wellness. The study found that military spouses who used positive coping strategies, such as social support and problem-solving, had lower stress levels and greater psychological well-being during deployment separation. These findings suggest that military spouses who can effectively cope with deployment

stressors are more likely to maintain their mental and physical health during this period of separation. The findings of this study are significant because they highlight the importance of effective coping strategies for military spouses (Ross et al., 2020). This is especially true during deployment, when spouses are often separated from their loved ones for extended periods (Lester et al., 2016). By using positive coping strategies, military spouses can reduce stress levels and maintain psychological well-being during this difficult time.

Of note, spouses of deployed service members with active hobbies, careers, or social life and lacking parental responsibilities could easily adapt to deployment separations. Their primary coping mechanism was distracting themselves with other things, such as hobbies and careers (Rossetto, 2013). The coping strategies may be maladaptive (inability to make dynamic adjustments) or adaptive (effective emotional modification). Problem-focused mechanisms involving shifting the source of stress or addressing the issue are said to be adaptive since they result in the discovery of oneself, increased personal growth, and empowerment (Donoho et al., 2018).

The fourth research question investigated whether spouses with added responsibilities like having children had a higher risk for emotional and psychological impacts. The results show that having children significantly affected self-acceptance and positive relations with others. However, the effect was not statistically significant for the other aspects of psychological well-being. Additionally, children having special needs significantly affect self-acceptance and purpose in life. This effect was not substantial on the other subscales to measure psychological well-being.

Some studies support these findings. O'Donnell et al. (2011) report that a third of the children from military households develop psychosocial morbidity, which is the person's inability to interact with other individuals socially. Regarding positive relationships with others, studies on

the coping and transitioning mechanism the left behind military wives used indicate that they used interactions with children to cope with deployment separation. Notably, these interactions distract them from deployment separation's adverse psychological impacts. More military wives found comfort in shifting their attention to their children rather than their military husbands (Marnocha, 2012; Dursun & Sudom, 2015). The presence of children in the Canadian army family assisted the military wives in adjusting during the period when their husbands were deployed. Notably, parent-child relationships have a significant positive impact on all household members during the period when one parent was deployed (Dursun & Sudom, 2015). However, the quality of life and nature of relationships among military families was based on the support they received from extended family, close friends, or the community (Dursun & Sudom, 2015).

Numerous spouses whose partners have been deployed experience challenges adjusting to deployment separation. More pointedly, male spouses whose wives are deployed in the military experience dilemmas of paying attention to other income sources or staying close to their children. Many husbands have challenges in creating a work-family life balance. On this point, many male spouses find balancing work and caregiving difficult, especially when the family has very young children (McFarlane, 2009).

Male spouses married to deployed military women often encounter frustration and career adjustment challenges (Morales-Garcia, 2018). They are unsure whether to continue pursuing their interests and careers or focus on caring for the children left behind by their mothers (Allen et al., 2011).

Regarding life purpose, married men left behind by their deployed wives experience challenges in performing tasks like preparing meals, emotionally supporting the children, and educating them. They also find it challenging to assist the children in adapting to life without their

mother's presence. Allocating enough time to focus on the children's development while at the same time balancing their career life is rather a considerable hurdle for left-behind male spouses (Wang et al., 2015; Dursun & Sudom, 2009; Keeling et al., 2020).

While results from this study indicated that having children in the military family only affected positive relations with others, research findings indicate that having children also had other significance for other aspects of psychological well-being, like personal growth. At this point, many left-behind couples experienced fears and anxiety of raising the children alone in case their partners died in the line of duty. Further, deployment separation for couples with children resulted in left-behind partners getting easily triggered into having psychological and emotional trauma at the slightest aggravation. Some situations that may be considered normal, for instance, children getting sick, could translate into more panic in a military family than in a civilian family (Trautmann et al., 2015).

The final research question examined whether the frequency of communication between spouses affected the psychological well-being of the spouse left behind. The goal was to determine if a higher frequency of communication improved the spouses' psychological well-being. The results indicated that the frequency of communication was positively correlated with the aspects of purpose in life, self-acceptance, personal growth, and environmental mastery. These correlations were found to be statistically significant (Figure 4.4.6).

Previous research supports these findings. On the issue of environmental mastery, findings from a study by Chandra et al. (2010) show some of the elements that result in positive mental well-being among children whose guardian has been deployed. Some of the factors facilitating coping among these children include the emotional wellness of the parent, the degree and frequency of communication between the deployed parent and the child, and the deployment

period. Shaiq, Malik, and Nadeem (2017) note that educational background, deployment area, communication means, and the officer's rank are linked to stress levels and coping mechanisms adopted by military spouses (Joas, 2020).

Communication by deployed service members with family through video calls, phone calls, or letters results in increased emotional balance for the spouse, military member, and children. Increased communication between the deployed service member and their family members is associated with better performance of the military member in their tasks (Ross et al., 2020). However, more research is required to investigate the impact of social media on spouses, children, and deployed service members (Rea et al., 2015).

Based on these findings, we can conclude that deployments significantly affect various aspects of psychological well-being among spouses of military service members. There are also gender differences in the effects experienced by military spouses. These psychological effects are compounded by added responsibilities, such as having children and children with special needs. However, the effects are mitigated by increased frequency of communication between married couples while one is on active duty.

Implications

The findings from this research will be fundamental in enhancing positive change within the organizations handling military spouses and military service members. Importantly, these organizations and experts may consider integrating the findings from this study into their practice. The training sessions and workshops for these experts may involve training on coping mechanisms. Such training will be essential to the professional who can devise various plans for helping spouses or military service members whose mental health has been adversely affected by deployment. Different research findings indicate that the psychological well-being of military

spouses has an impact on their health (Colburn, 2020), their children's health (Borah & Fina, 2017; Cederbaum et al., 2014), and the mental health of the deployed service member (Caddick & Fossey, 2021; Fung, 2019).

When military spouses adopt healthy mechanisms for coping with the adverse impacts of deployment, there will be improved physical and psychological well-being, marriage quality, and their family's wellness. This study thus indicates the importance of imparting coping skills among military spouses. Research has suggested that the degree of children's behavioral and psychological disorders and child maltreatment heightened after the deployment of one of their parents (Trautmann et al., 2015). In this case, the results from this study offer effective coping mechanisms which military spouses may adopt to enhance the quality of life and psychological wellness of the service members and their children.

Results from this research indicate that the church is an important source of coping among the spouses left behind by their partners during military deployment. These results are consistent with findings from previous research studies. For instance, Dimiceli, Steinhardt, and Smith (2010) surveyed military wives (N=77) to investigate their stressful experiences, coping mechanisms, and self-apprised stress management. These participants were recruited from Fort Hood's 4th Infantry Division of the Army in Killeen, Texas. Results from this study showed that military wives frequently used problem-focused coping (PFC) mechanisms, including religion, planning, acceptance, emotional support, and active coping. Regarding the impact of emotion-focused coping (EFC) and problem-focused coping (PFC) mechanisms, the researchers found that PFC mechanisms are more effective than EFC mechanisms in mitigating distress associated with a deployment (Dimiceli, Steinhardt & Smith, 2010). Moreover, Santana (2018) notes that the church is an essential source of support for spouses whose partners have deployed.

That said, the results from the current study will be highly effective and applicable in marriage therapy, chaplain-sponsored marital retreats, and pre-marital workshops. In that manner, they add to the existing body of knowledge and literature, which may inform the civilian religious and military leaders about the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation on military spouses left behind by their partners after deployment. More pointedly, the findings from this research will inform professionals that help the military with coping mechanisms after their partners have deployed. In essence, this will decrease divorce rates among military families.

The research findings will help improve the lives of military spouses and military service members. The findings suggest that the church is a source of coping among the spouses left behind by their partners during military deployment. This study provides essential information for professionals who help the military with coping mechanisms after their partners deploy. The research findings will help decrease divorce rates among military families.

One of the biggest challenges for military spouses is the frequent moves. In a typical year, a military family will move three to five times. This can be very disruptive to a spouse's career and education. Some have had to quit their jobs or put their careers on hold because of a move. Also, some spouses have had to start over in their careers after a move. Another challenge for military spouses is the deployment of a service member. This can be a challenging time for families. Spouses are often left alone to care for the family and manage the household. They may also have to deal with the stress of worrying about their service member's safety. Military spouses are seeking support in many areas. One of the essential things that can be done is to provide financial assistance to help with the costs of moving and career disruptions. People can also provide emotional support to help spouses deal with the stress of deployment. One can also provide education and career resources to help spouses maintain their careers.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was that it was impossible to determine whether participants responded honestly and without bias to the question prompts. Since the survey was administered online, it did not allow military spouses without internet access to participate in the study. Another major limitation lies in the sampling method used (purposive sampling). Notably, this sampling method offers non-probability samples chosen based on the characteristics displayed by the study and the population group.

It is also believed that this sampling mode is more susceptible to researcher bias. Despite the data collection method, purposive sampling may increase researcher biases. The notion is that the sample is first developed depending on the researcher's judgment and personal interpretation of data. If the researcher has poor judgment, that issue is a disadvantage and may affect the final results. The application of self-report survey data in this study has its characteristic limitations, for instance, the probability of incorrect or untruthful responses because of the failure to have self-awareness.

Delimitations

The first delimitation of this research was to use purposive sampling rather than convenience sampling. Whereas convenience sampling may have been easier and simpler for the researcher since participants that are easily accessible are chosen, they may not have been ideal for this research. Instead, through purposive sampling, the researcher could study the participants and select them based on the study's objectives and their specific characteristics. Through purposive sampling, the researcher could choose research participants whose spouses had been enlisted and posted to missions at one point. It was crucial to ensure that the participant pool met

the specific criteria of being a current military spouse that has experienced the deployment of their active-duty spouse to be able to share their experiences in the questionnaire.

Secondly, it was essential to use participants over the age of 18. The choice of the participants in this age group was to avoid the need to seek parental consent before they could participate in the research. This also decreased the likelihood that the participant would not meet the criteria of being married to a service member due to being a minor.

Lastly, ensuring that participants understood the English language was imperative, as all the research material was in English. Informed consent was needed; therefore, consent could not be obtained if one did not speak English. Speaking the language ensured that the participant could read and comprehend all the requirements and expectations to participate in the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

A recommendation for future research is to focus on the spouses of deployed service members that had successfully survived and even thrived in this difficult period where they remained as the sole parent. This is necessary for future research because past research has only focused on the negative side of the psychological, emotional, and other difficulties faced by the spouses of these service members. It is thus necessary to get an insight into the approaches they used to thrive. The rationale of such future research is that it does not summarily dismiss current personal and institutional approaches to support these military service members' spouses. It also ensures that even though new recommendations and changes may be instituted, they should act as a support mechanism for current measures, thus leading to optimum outcomes.

The other related recommendation is for these future studies to use the stratified data sampling method. It is prudent to intentionally choose these spouses of military service members to participate in future studies. They should include males, females, parents, and spouses with no

children. This ensures that the sample population is representative of the target population and that the research outcomes can apply to any of the spouses. This is achievable through stratified data sampling because it recognizes internal heterogeneities in the target population, splits them into groups based on homogeneity, and then picks representatives from each group.

It is also recommended that future researchers conduct a longitudinal study with military spouses. The current study only investigated the relationship between military spouses' psychological well-being and deployments at a single point in time. The effects of deployments on psychological well-being may be cumulative and hence, could increase over time. Such a longitudinal study would provide data that can be used to examine the long-term effects of deployments on spouses' overall well-being. Future research should consider an intervention study that focuses on coping mechanisms. It should also consider integrating objective behavioral observations, for instance, physical illness and verifiable depression.

Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of this study that were presented in chapter four. More specifically, this study aimed to investigate the impact of military deployment on the psychological well-being of the spouse. As such, the research questions targeted the specific effects of deployments on the well-being of military spouses. The psychological well-being scale was utilized, which comprises questions that gauge six components of mental well-being: personal growth, purpose in life, self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, and positive relations with others. The results from this study are similar to those from previous research.

Based on the research findings, it was concluded that deployments have a considerable effect on components of psychological well-being among spouses of military service personnel. The findings also show that gender differences are prominent, especially when looking at the

impacts experienced by military spouses. As such, they are also consistent with results from previous studies. The psychological implications among left-behind military spouses are further heightened by added responsibilities such as caregiving.

It is crucial to note that findings from this study would be helpful for professionals handling military families and their spouses, especially in mitigating the adverse impacts caused by deployment. In essence, the results from this study show that religion is an important aspect that enables some left-behind spouses to cope with deployment separation. They would assist religious leaders and organizations in addressing psychological issues affecting military couples and their families. They may use the results to develop effective guidelines during pre-marital workshops and marital retreats. Counselors will benefit from the study findings since they can incorporate them into their treatment plans, especially when addressing psychological issues affecting spouses. This research study included limitations regarding the method of sampling used, the data collection method used, and the inability to know whether the participants gave genuine answers or were biased. Thus, future research should focus on these aspects to ensure that more valid results are achieved.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 9, 2022



Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-1029 Impact of Deployment Separation on the Psychological and Emotional Well-Being of Military Spouses

Dear ,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,



Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B

Chi-Square Test Results/Frequency Charts

Figure 1.0 (a): Chi-square Spouse Years served * autonomy

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 729.709 ^a | 870 | 1.000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 376.400 | 870 | 1.000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .009 | 1 | .926 |
| N of Valid Cases | 217 | | |

a. 927 cells (99.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00.

Figure 1.0 (b): Chi-square Spouse Years served * Person Growth

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1028.340 ^a | 870 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 420.933 | 870 | 1.000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 4.886 | 1 | .027 |
| N of Valid Cases | 217 | | |

a. 928 cells (99.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00.

Figure 1.0 (c): Chi-square Spouse Years served * Purpose in Life

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|------|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1466.979 ^a | 1020 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 431.892 | 1020 | 1.000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.589 | 1 | .058 |
| N of Valid Cases | 217 | | |

a. 1080 cells (99.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00.

Figure 1.0 (d): Chi-square Spouse Years served * Self-Acceptance

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1080.807 ^a | 930 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 367.642 | 930 | 1.000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.417 | 1 | .065 |
| N of Valid Cases | 217 | | |

a. 988 cells (99.6%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .00.

Figure 1.0 (e): Chi-square Spouse Years served * Positive Relations with Others

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1214.901 ^a | 840 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 378.583 | 840 | 1.000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 7.060 | 1 | .008 |
| N of Valid Cases | 217 | | |

a. 894 cells (99.4%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .00.

Figure 1.0 (f): Chi-square Spouse Years served * Person Growth

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1459.724 ^a | 990 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 429.973 | 990 | 1.000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 10.328 | 1 | .001 |
| N of Valid Cases | 217 | | |

a. 1049 cells (99.5%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .00.

Figure 2.0 (a): Chi-square Number of Deployments * Person Growth

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 117.596 ^a | 87 | .016 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 114.432 | 87 | .026 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 12.431 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 102 cells (85.0%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .08.

Figure 2.0 (b): Chi-square Number of Deployments * Autonomy

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 104.934 ^a | 87 | .092 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 90.168 | 87 | .387 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 2.844 | 1 | .092 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 98 cells (81.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08.

Figure 2.0 (c): Chi-square Number of Deployments * Purpose in Life

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 160.379 ^a | 108 | .001 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 133.108 | 108 | .051 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 4.390 | 1 | .036 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 136 cells (91.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08.

Figure 2.0 (d): Chi-square Number of Deployments * Self-Acceptance

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 131.183 ^a | 99 | .017 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 101.325 | 99 | .416 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 2.512 | 1 | .113 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 123 cells (90.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08.

Figure 2.0 (e): Chi-square Number of Deployments * Positive Relations with Others

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 126.488 ^a | 87 | .004 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 98.749 | 87 | .183 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .535 | 1 | .465 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 107 cells (89.2%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .08.

Figure 2.0 (f): Chi-square Number of Deployments * Environmental Mastery

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 113.835 ^a | 99 | .146 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 102.505 | 99 | .385 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.653 | 1 | .056 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 124 cells (91.2%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .08.

Figure 3.0 (a): Chi-square test for Having Children and Autonomy

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 31.448 ^a | 29 | .345 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 29.679 | 29 | .430 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.021 | 1 | .082 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 44 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .10.

Figure 3.0 (b): Chi-square test for Having Children and Personal Growth

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 28.396 ^a | 29 | .497 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 25.843 | 29 | .634 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.420 | 1 | .064 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 45 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .10.

Figure 3.0 (c): Chi-square test for Having Children and Purpose in Life

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 46.700 ^a | 36 | .109 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 32.456 | 36 | .638 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 2.671 | 1 | .102 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 63 cells (85.1%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .10.

Figure 3.0 (d): Chi-square test for Having Children and Self-Acceptance

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 54.815 ^a | 33 | .010 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 39.239 | 33 | .210 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .000 | 1 | .999 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 58 cells (85.3%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .10.

Figure 3.0 (e): Chi-square test for Having Children and Positive Relations with Others

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 44.022 ^a | 29 | .037 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 38.069 | 29 | .121 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 1.209 | 1 | .271 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 49 cells (81.7%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .10.

Figure 3.0 (f): Chi-square test for Having Children and Environmental Mastery

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 35.795 ^a | 33 | .339 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 35.182 | 33 | .365 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .706 | 1 | .401 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 57 cells (83.8%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .10.

Figure 4.0 (a): Chi-square test for Children with Special Needs and Autonomy

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 36.313 ^a | 29 | .165 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 43.314 | 29 | .043 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 4.276 | 1 | .039 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 36 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .44.

Figure 4.0 (b): Chi-square test for Children with Special Needs and Personal Growth

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 36.633 ^a | 29 | .156 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 41.345 | 29 | .064 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 10.811 | 1 | .001 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 40 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .44.

Figure 4.0 (c): Chi-square test for Children with Special Needs and Purpose in Life

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 58.060 ^a | 36 | .011 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 71.682 | 36 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 12.836 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 62 cells (83.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .44.

Figure 4.0 (d): Chi-square test for Children with Special Needs and Self-Acceptance

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 49.028 ^a | 33 | .036 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 60.794 | 33 | .002 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .045 | 1 | .832 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 53 cells (77.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .44.

Figure 4.0 (e): Chi-square tests - Children with Special Needs and Positive Relations with Others

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 33.079 ^a | 29 | .275 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 38.709 | 29 | .107 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.229 | 1 | .072 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 45 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .44.

Figure 4.0 (f): Chi-square test - Children with Special Needs and Environmental Mastery

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 25.862 ^a | 33 | .807 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 32.639 | 33 | .485 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 1.173 | 1 | .279 |
| N of Valid Cases | 247 | | |

a. 53 cells (77.9%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .44.

Table 1: Gender

| Gender | | | | | |
|---------------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Total | 250 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Female | 137 | 54.8 | 54.8 | 54.8 |
| | Male | 113 | 45.2 | 45.2 | 100.0 |

Table 2: Race

| Race | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Total | 250 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Black or African American | 18 | 7.2 | 7.2 | 7.2 |
| | Hispanic or Latino | 2 | .8 | .8 | 8.0 |
| | White or Caucasian | 216 | 86.4 | 86.4 | 94.4 |
| | American Indian or Alaska Native | 12 | 4.8 | 4.8 | 99.2 |
| | Asian or Asian American | 2 | .8 | .8 | 100.0 |

Table 3: Respondent Age

| Respondent Age |
|-----------------------|
| |

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | Total | 250 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| | 18-21 | 2 | .8 | .8 | .8 |
| | 22-26 | 60 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 24.8 |
| | 27-32 | 86 | 34.4 | 34.4 | 59.2 |
| | 33-37 | 35 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 73.2 |
| | 38-42 | 29 | 11.6 | 11.6 | 84.8 |
| | 43-47 | 14 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 90.4 |
| | 48-54 | 12 | 4.8 | 4.8 | 95.2 |
| | 55 or older | 12 | 4.8 | 4.8 | 100.0 |

Table 4: Spouse Age

| Spouse age | | | | | |
|------------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Total | 250 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| | 18-21 | 10 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| | 22-26 | 77 | 30.8 | 30.8 | 34.8 |

| | | | | | |
|--|-------------|----|------|------|-------|
| | 27-32 | 84 | 33.6 | 33.6 | 68.4 |
| | 33-37 | 27 | 10.8 | 10.8 | 79.2 |
| | 38-42 | 28 | 11.2 | 11.2 | 90.4 |
| | 43-47 | 16 | 6.4 | 6.4 | 96.8 |
| | 48-54 | 7 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 99.6 |
| | 55 or older | 1 | .4 | .4 | 100.0 |

Table 5: Employment Status

| Respondent Employment Status | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Total | 250 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Yes | 232 | 92.8 | 92.8 | 92.8 |
| | No | 18 | 7.2 | 7.2 | 100.0 |

Table 6: Respondent has Children or Not.

| Children (Yes/No) | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Total | 250 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

| | | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|------|------|-------|
| | Yes | 225 | 90.0 | 90.0 | 90.0 |
| | No | 25 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 100.0 |

Table 7: The Number of Children

| No. of Children | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | 1-2 | 170 | 68.0 | 75.2 | 75.2 |
| | 3-4 | 36 | 14.4 | 15.9 | 91.2 |
| | 5-6 | 14 | 5.6 | 6.2 | 97.3 |
| | 7 or more | 6 | 2.4 | 2.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 226 | 90.4 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 24 | 9.6 | | |
| Total | | 250 | 100.0 | | |

Table 8: Children have Special Needs?

| Children Have Special needs? | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Valid | Total | 250 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Yes | 139 | 55.6 | 55.6 | 55.6 |
| | No | 111 | 44.4 | 44.4 | 100.0 |

Table 8: Respondents' Highest Level of Education

| Respondent Highest Level of Education. | | | | | |
|---|------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Total | 250 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| | High school/GED | 31 | 12.4 | 12.4 | 12.4 |
| | Associates | 10 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 16.4 |
| | Bachelors | 122 | 48.8 | 48.8 | 65.2 |
| | Masters | 82 | 32.8 | 32.8 | 98.0 |
| | Postgraduate | 4 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 99.6 |
| | Other (please specify) | 1 | .4 | .4 | 100.0 |

Table 9: Spouses' Branch in the Military

| |
|-------------------------------|
| Spouse Military Branch |
|-------------------------------|

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | Total | 250 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Active Guard | 6 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.4 |
| | Air-force | 16 | 6.4 | 6.4 | 8.8 |
| | Army | 186 | 74.4 | 74.4 | 83.2 |
| | Marines | 20 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 91.2 |
| | Navy | 21 | 8.4 | 8.4 | 99.6 |
| | Other Reserve Component | 1 | .4 | .4 | 100.0 |

Table 10: Number of Deployments

| No. of Deployments | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Total | 250 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Once | 123 | 49.2 | 49.2 | 49.2 |

| | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|----|------|------|-------|
| | Twice | 86 | 34.4 | 34.4 | 83.6 |
| | Three times | 21 | 8.4 | 8.4 | 92.0 |
| | Four times or more | 20 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 100.0 |

Table 11: Frequency of Communication per Week

| Frequency of communication. | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Total | 250 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| | 1-2 times | 108 | 43.2 | 43.2 | 43.2 |
| | 3-4 times | 94 | 37.6 | 37.6 | 80.8 |
| | Four or more times | 46 | 18.4 | 18.4 | 99.2 |
| | None | 2 | .8 | .8 | 100.0 |

APPENDIX C

The Psychological Wellbeing Scale

This survey accompanies a measure in the SPARQTools.org Measuring Mobility toolkit, which provides practitioners curated instruments for assessing mobility from poverty and tools for selecting the most appropriate measures for their programs. To get a copy of this document in your preferred format, go to "File" and then "Download as" in the toolbar menu.

Age: Adult

Duration: 6-8 minutes

Reading Level: 6th to 8th grade

Number of items: 42

Answer Format: 1 = strongly agree; 2 = somewhat agree; 3 = a little agree; 4 = neither agree nor disagree; 5 = a little disagree; 6 = somewhat disagree; 7 = strongly disagree.

Scoring:

The Autonomy subscale items are Q1, Q13, Q24, Q35, Q41, Q10, and Q21. The Environmental Mastery subscale items are Q3, Q15, Q26, Q36, Q42, Q12, and Q23. The Personal Growth subscale items are Q5, Q17, Q28, Q37, Q2, Q14, and Q25. The Positive Relations with Others subscale items are Q7^[SEP], Q18, Q30, Q38, Q4^[SEP], Q16, and Q27. The Purpose in Life subscale items is Q9, Q20, Q32, Q39, Q6, Q29, and Q33. The Self-Acceptance subscale items are Q11, Q22, Q34, Q40, Q8, Q19, and Q31.

Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q6, Q7, Q11, Q13, Q17, Q20, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q27, Q29, Q31, Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38, and Q40 should be reverse-scored. Reverse-scored items are worded in the opposite direction of what the scale is measuring. The formula for reverse-scoring an item is:

$$((\text{Number of scale points}) + 1) - (\text{Respondent's answer})$$

For example, Q7 is a 7-point scale. If a respondent answered 3 on Q7, you would re-code their answer as $(7 + 1) - 3 = 5$.

In other words, you would enter a 5 for this respondent's answer to Q7.

To calculate subscale scores for each participant, sum respondents' answers to each subscale's items.

Sources:

Ryff, C., Almeida, D. M., Ayanian, J. S., Carr, D. S., Cleary, P. D., Coe, C., Williams, D. (2007). *National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS II), 2004-2006: Documentation of psychosocial constructs and composite variables in MIDUS II Project 1*. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.

Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069-1081.

Instructions: Circle one response below each statement to indicate how much you agree or disagree.

1. "I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

2. "For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

3. "In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

4. "People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

5. "I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons."^[L]_[SEP]

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

6. "I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

7. "Most people see me as loving and affectionate."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

8. "In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life."^[L]_[SEP]

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

9. "I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future."^[L]_[SEP]

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

10. "I tend to worry about what other people think of me."^[L]_[SEP]

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

11. "When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

12. "I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me."^[L]_[SEP]

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

13. "My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

14. "I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

15. "The demands of everyday life often get me down."^[L]_[SEP]

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

16. "I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

17. "I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

18. "Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me."^[L]_[SEP]

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

19. “My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves.”^[SEP]

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Somewhat agree | A little agree | Neither agree nor disagree | A little disagree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|

20. “I have a sense of direction and purpose in life.”

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Somewhat agree | A little agree | Neither agree nor disagree | A little disagree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|

21. “I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important.”

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Somewhat agree | A little agree | Neither agree nor disagree | A little disagree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|

22. “In general, I feel confident and positive about myself.”

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Somewhat agree | A little agree | Neither agree nor disagree | A little disagree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|

23. "I have been able to build a living environment and a lifestyle for myself that is much to my liking."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

24. "I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

25. "I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

26. "I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

27. "I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

28. “When I think about it, I haven’t really improved much as a person over the years.”

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

29. “Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.”

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

30. “I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns.”^[1]_[SEP]

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

31. “When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am.”

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

32. "I don't have a good sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life."^[1]_[SEP]

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

33. "I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

34. "I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

35. "I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

36. "I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

37. "I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

38. "I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members and friends."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

39. "My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me." ^[1]_[SEP]

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

40. "I like most parts of my personality."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

41. "It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

42. "I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities."

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Strongly | Somewhat | A little | Neither agree | A little | Somewhat | Strongly |
| agree | agree | agree | nor disagree | disagree | disagree | disagree |

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent

The Impact of Deployment Separation on the Psychological and Emotional Well-being of Military Spouses

The current research will be conducted by [REDACTED], Liberty University, under the supervision of [REDACTED], the School of Behavior Sciences, Liberty University.

Purpose of The Research: This study intends to explore how military spouses' psychological and emotional well-being are impacted by the separation resulting from their partners' deployment.

Who Can Participate in the Study?

The researcher invites you to participate in this research if you meet the criteria listed below:

1. You are 18 years or older.
2. You have been married to a member of the U.S.A armed forces.
3. Your active-duty partner has been sent on an international military mission for six months or more.
4. You comprehend the English language
5. You volunteer to be part of the study after reading, accepting, and completing the recruitment form and informed consent.

The Description of this Research

Active-duty military spouses are frequently separated from their families for long periods whenever they are deployed on international missions. During the deployment periods, the families keep communicating with the one in active service through various methods such as telephone, video calls, instant messaging services, or emails. The current research involves

completing a survey of active-duty military spouses and the multiple challenges they face when their partners are deployed. When you participate in this study, you must indicate how you use different communication technologies to reach your partner when they are on a mission. You will also be required to reveal some or all the feelings, experiences, or behaviors you or your spouse show when you are separated.

Moreover, you will also be asked to indicate some of the ways you deal with your families when your partner is deployed. However, since some questions may be personal, you are not required to discuss the questionnaire with anyone except where you believe such a discussion will not harm you. You will need between 8 and 10 minutes to complete the online survey.

What Are the Benefits of Participating in this Study?

Even though you are part of this study, you will not be compensated for your responses, and it will not directly benefit you as a participant. However, the research findings can help define future approaches to help manage the issues military spouses face when their partners are deployed. The results can assist military leaders and community organizations in finding ways that better address such needs, thus improving the overall health and lifestyle of families of deployed military members.

What are the Risks and Discomforts You Can Meet While Undertaking the Study?

The researcher understands that some questions may seek sensitive answers, including regrets about your relationship with a military member. Consequently, if you agree to participate in this survey, please do so privately. It is recommended that you close your browser when you complete the survey so that your answers will not reappear on any other page of the browser. When you respond to the questions asked, please consider reflecting on some sensitive areas in your experiences and how you handled them during your partner's deployment. If you realize

that you cannot answer some questions due to the nature of answers needed, please feel free to skip those questions and only respond to those you are very confident with or discontinue participating in the study altogether.

Personal Information Protection/Anonymity

When you participate in this study, you will remain anonymous as no information that can identify you will be collected. The researcher is only interested in the answer you will provide for each question. The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous. Participant responses will be kept confidential by assigning a numerical figure to survey answers received. The initials recorded on the consent form will be deleted, and a number will be given to that survey.
- Data will be collected on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. Once data is received via email, it will transfer onto a USB drive that will be stored and locked in the office cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- The researcher will not be able to link your data (e.g., survey responses) to the specific participants who provided or are associated with the data.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or withdraw at any time.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser.

You Have Questions about this Research?

Please contact,

Name: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Name: [REDACTED]

Contact: [REDACTED]

You can also contact the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) regarding your rights as a participant in the study and a human subject by using the following contact details:

Name of university: Liberty University – IRB@liberty.edu

Telephone: 1800-424-9595

Email address: [REDACTED]

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that human subjects research will be conducted ethically as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of this document for your records. If you have questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher/study team using the information provided above.

By submitting your answers to the online survey, you indicate that you have read and understood the information in this consent form and have had a chance to inquire about the questions in this research thoroughly. You also indicate that you have agreed to be part of this study and know that you are not forfeiting any of your legal provisions. Thank you in advance for agreeing to be part of this study.

APPENDIX E
Recruitment Form

Are you a military spouse? Y/N

What is your Gender?

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Other

What is your Race?

- a) Black
- b) Caucasian
- c) Latino
- d) Asian
- e) Pacific Islander
- f) Other

How old are you?

- a) 18-21
- b) 22-26
- c) 27-32
- d) 33-37
- e) 38-42
- f) 43-47

- g) 48-52
- h) 53-57
- i) 58 and older

How old is your spouse?

- a) 18-21
- b) 22-26
- c) 27-32
- d) 33-37
- e) 38-42
- f) 43-47
- g) 48-52
- h) 53-57
- i) 58 and older

Are you employed? Y/N

What is your current level of education?

- a) High school/GED
- b) Associates
- c) Bachelors
- d) Masters
- e) Postgraduate
- f) Other

What branch of service is your spouse in?

- a) Army
- b) Navy
- c) Marines
- d) Airforce
- e) Active guard
- f) Reserve Component _____

Do you have children? Y/N

If yes to the question above, how many children?

- a) 1-2
- b) 3-4
- c) 5-6
- d) 7 or more

If you have children, what are their ages?

- a) 0-2 year
- b) 3-5 year
- c) 6-9 year
- d) 10-13 year
- e) 14-17 year
- f) 18-21 year
- g) 22 or older

Do any of your children have special needs? Y/N

How long has your spouse been in the armed forces?

What is your spouse's rank in the armed forces?

APPENDIX F

Demographic Questions

When your spouse is deployed what are some of the roles you take on?

- a) Primary parent
- b) Head of household
- c) Cooking
- d) Cleaning
- e) Disciplinary parent
- f) Paying bills/Finances
- g) Other

When your spouse returns, what roles do you relinquish?

- a) Primary parent
- b) Head of household
- c) Cooking
- d) Cleaning
- e) Disciplinary parent
- f) Paying bills/Finances
- g) Other

What support do you receive when your spouse is deployed?

- a) Command
- b) Family
- c) Friends
- d) Outside agency assistance
- e) Day care
- f) Other

What support do you feel you need when your spouse is deployed?

- a) Family
- b) Childcare
- c) Listening support
- d) Financial
- e) Support groups
- f) Transportation
- g) Other

Is your family blended? Y/N

- a) Stepmother
- b) Stepfather

- c) Stepdaughter
- d) Stepson
- e) Other
- f) N/A

How many times has your spouse been deployed?

- a) Once
- b) Twice
- c) Three times
- d) Four times or more

If deployed more than once, did each time bring forth a different emotional reaction? Y/N?

Explain your answer.

How often did you communicate with your spouse weekly during their deployment?

- a) 1-2 times
- b) 3-4 times
- c) 4 or more times
- d) None

What type of communication tools did you use to communicate with your spouse?

- a) Phone call
- b) Facetime/Video call

- c) Zoom
- d) Letters/mail
- e) Other