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## **THE EFFECT OF DEPLOYMENT SEPARATION ON STRESS, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND RESILIENCE AMONG ARMY OFFICERS' WIVES**

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### **Abstract**

The present study aimed to investigate effect of deployment separation on stress, psychological well-being and resilience among army officers' wives. Apart from wartime stressors, frequent relocation and deployment not only affect the military member but also their spouses; therefore, the study intended to see the relationship between the variables. The present research used correlational research design. Population for the research comprised of army officers' wives who were approached through purposive sampling. The sample consisted of N=100 army officers' wives. Perceived Stress Scale was used to measure stress level, the 18 item Ryff Well-being Scale was used to assess the Psychological Well-being and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) was used to measure resilience respectively. In order to find the significant relationship between the three variables i.e. stress, psychological well-being and resilience Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used. The result indicates a significant relationship between variables i.e. there is a negative significant correlation between stress and psychological well-being. Similarly, there is a negative significant correlation between stress and resilience where as a positive significant relationship was viewed between psychological well-being and resilience. Findings suggest several implications such as providing grounds for further research. It can initiate positive social change, which may help in improving well-being for better coping and reducing stressors in the lives of army officer's wives.

### **Keywords**

Online Harassment, Pakistan, Women, Cybercrime

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## 1. Introduction

Deployment is a term commonly used for a long-term assignment mostly to combat war zone (Hall, 2008). It is a part of the military lifestyle. It refers to the movement of military troops to a place for military actions like war or even a peaceful mission. It plays an essential role for service members and families including the preparations and personal needs to be taken care of home during deployment as deployment ranges from six months to 18 months (Chartrand & Spiegel, 2007).

Deployment separation is the stage in which the service member of military is away from the family for training and military development (Wheeler & Stone, 2010) and the spouse of the military member who is not part of the military, is living behind at home. During this time the spouse often experiences problems related to loneliness and adjustment. However, Morse (2006) reported that many civilian spouses are competent enough to adjust to the experience of deployment especially if they have experienced it once.

War is a violent hostility. It adversely affects the countries involved in the war. It causes damage to lives of many individuals mainly soldiers who are fighting in the war and their families. Whenever there is a war, one who die are the soldiers on the frontline. Indeed, the soldier's contribution is complex and dangerous but the side it affects is on the wives of soldiers. According to the Jabri (2016), almost 30,000 army officers were deployed for a mission in Azad Jammu and Kashmir in 2016 (Business Recorder, 2016). Out of 30,000 army officers, the research shows that 20-30% die and the ones who have return home have experienced physical injuries, psychological wound or other sort of disabilities. Researchers are being conducted on problems faced by army officials yet a little is known about the wives of military officials.

Despite these types of separation, most families try to cope with deployment separation and most find ways to maintain and develop new ways of cohesiveness. Some are able to cope, adapt and manage the stress caused by deployment

separation. The military families are suggested to keep themselves prepared for the problems they may face due to deployment, as it is an integral part of this profession (McCall, 1981).

In either of the situations or during non-deployment phases military spouse have multiple emotional and physical demands on them which cannot be shared with other family members or the active duty member. Number, Osterlund and Ungvasky (2011) in their research, *The Military Spouses: the overlooked, underpaid and stressed-out casualties of war* stated that when hearing about war in Afghanistan or Iraq, civilians think of the war stressors or casualties with the duty service member. In rare situations are the spouses and their stressors considered during wartime. According to this research, there are almost 1.4 million active duty officers and more than half of them are married.

The selected reserves are also nearly about 90,000 and more than half of them are married as well. The research defined military spouse as a non-military female. The impact of war, when the army men are deployed leaving behind the spouse with the mounting responsibility and the feeling of uncertainty. It is overwhelming for a wife to deal with deployment, as it is not just their husbands going away; rather, it brings along many problems such as emotional issues, loneliness, shifting responsibilities, coping with the surrounding issues, fear of uncertainty, difficulties with children, financial problems, health issues.

The wives of army officers are under constant transition and vulnerability during the deployment period therefore this research will study the effect of deployment separation on resiliency, psychological well-being and coping with stress among army officers' wives. The feeling of uncertainty may affect the spouse physically, emotionally and mentally leading to many psychological problems. The public and the community overlook the spouses when it comes to receiving services for their work and efforts.

### *1.1.Theoretical framework*

This is an empirical study with a socioecological perspective based on Bronfenbrenner conceptual

framework from the 1970's that guides this empirical research study. This perspective provides the framework to characterize the interaction between the person and his environment. It describes how the environment affects the individual. Especially, when the individual is not able to bear the stress in the environment. It posits the changes in the person-environment fit which can be balanced or restored through changes in the environment. It emphasizes on the reciprocal and continuous transactions between a person and their environment. The goal of this framework is to investigate and reduce the distresses between the person and their environment to achieve a goodness of fit. Specifically, the social ecological perspective a framework to evaluate the individuals' vulnerability to the environmental stressors affecting the capacity within which an individual works (Lesser & Pope, 2010).

Lazarus (1984) proposed a theory of cognitive appraisal. According to the theory, stress is a two-way process; production of the stressors by the environment and the response of the individual to the stressors proposed by the environment. Based on the central concept of Lazarus Stress theory, as a relational concept rather than stimulation or a certain pattern of stimulus-reaction. It is stated to be a relation between the person and the environment. The change occurring between the individual and their environment. Stress is perceived to be how well a person is coping with the demands of the environment with the available coping resources. It is the individual's evaluation of what is happening for their well-being and coping relating with cognitive appraisals (Lazarus, 1984).

A research was conducted by Burton, Farely and Rhea (2009) on 300 couples consisting of active duty members and their civilian spouses. The stress level was highest among civilian spouses regarding the idea of living in separation caused during deployment. The concern of living separated was related with the fear of loneliness, physical or psychological injury, death of spouse and effect on children.

Psychological well-being is a subjective term used in many form of researchers meaning

contentment, satisfaction, happiness and peace. According to research conducted at the University of Warwick in 2011, spousal deployment may cause psychological issues. It was observed that spouses of deployed partner suffered from social dysfunction and problems like depression and anxiety. The research conducted at University of Warwick and 14 similar researches in the U.S.A., reported that longer the deployment, the more likely the partner is to show increase symptoms of psychological illness.

Another variable under study in the research is resilience. Resilience is a term used to define strength. According to American Psychological Association (APA) (2016) it is the process of adapting well to adversity, trauma, threat or any sort of significant stress that may include family or relationship problem, health issues, workplace problem, financial issues etc. precisely it means bouncing back from difficult situations.

In military when a person joins, the whole family serves. Being a part of the military deployment and family separations due to deployment is a part of the active duty members' environment considered as standard practices. The practice brings along many emotional, psychological and physical demands during deployment or non-deployment period for military spouses. Under the circumstances of deployment, flexibility and adaptability to the circumstances of deployment is expected from the spouses. The added responsibility with the stress of deployment is finding a new home, shifting to a new place or finding a new job. Under non-deployment situations, they have to take a dual-partner role, taking care of home, work, children single handedly. Despite the multi-tasking they do researches have shown them to be resilient and having the ability to cope with the demands of military lifestyles (Eubanks, 2013).

A surge in research in recent years on the families of service members has brought attention to the unique challenges and demands on spouses raising concerns about how meet the need. However, a few researches have focused on it mainly in the west, such as Gray (2015) conducted a research on exploring dimensions of well-being among spouses of active duty

members. The data was collected from 300 spouses through mix method.

The results showed that socio-demographic factors contributed most to mental well-being. The data obtained from qualitative research gave the participant perspective of military life, impact of military lifestyle on parenting experience and advice to spouses in military lifestyles. Correspondingly, another research conducted on the wives of military officers showed that deployment area, rank of the officers, duration of deployment, educational background and means of communication were positively related to the stress and coping of military personnel wives (Shaiq, Malik & Nadeem, 2017).

Prachi and Lata (2017) conducted a study on psychological well-being as a correlate of physical well-being among the spouses of Indian armed force personnel. The result showed that both physical and psychological well-being are correlated. Similarly, Padden, Cornors and Agazio (2010) conducted a research on stress, coping and well-being in military spouses during deployment separation. The results predicted mental and physical well-being and a variance of optimistic coping yet depending upon the rank of military members and the number of deployments.

Despite the relationship between physical and psychological correlates, the research conducted by Maroncha (2012) concluded that women who had experienced deployment once or more than once during the military tenure were vulnerable to more stress and difficult coping.

### *1.2. Rationale*

Lifestyles of army officers is regulated by cultural considerations consisting of rules, regulation and traditions. The lifestyle places a strong demand on both the military members and their families. Deployment is a part of their job, which highly affects the lives of their wives' especially in places like Pakistan which is constantly in state of war. The study will be beneficial in gaining insight and understanding of the unique culture and challenges faced by the army officers' wives concerning stress, psychological well-being and resilience when their husbands are away on deployment and in

creating awareness that it is not only the army officials protecting are nation but there is a great contribution by their strong and determined wives who prove as a backbone behind those men.

### *1.3. Objective*

To explore the effect of deployment separation on resilience, stress and psychological well-being among army officers' wives.

### *1.4. Hypothesis*

$H_1$ : There is a significant effect of deployment separation on resilience, stress and psychological well-being among army officers' wives.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### *2.1. Method*

A sample of N=100 army officers' wives participated in the present study. They were selected through purposive sampling between the ages of 22 to 45 experiencing deployment separation at least once in their lives for a period of at least 2 months to five years. The participants were given a questionnaire after giving them an insight of the study and taking a consent. They were asked to complete it according to their situation during the period they lived in separation. Their responses were recorded. Software, statistical package for social science (SPSS-22) was applied to observe the relationship between stress, psychological well-being and resilience.

### *2.2. Data Collection*

Perceived Stress Scale – The perceived stress scale (Cohen, Kamarack & Mermelstein, 1983) consists of 10 items designed to measure stress. Responses are reported on a 4-point Likert scale that ranged from 0-4.

Psychological Well-being Scale- The brief version of psychological well-being scale (Ryff, 1995) is used to measure the psychological well-being. It consists of 18 items, originally consisting of 84 items. The shorter version was used as the elaborated is time consuming and the participant may be fatigued. Responses are rated on a 7 point Likert scale that ranged from 1-6.

Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) is a 25 item tool developed by Connor & Davidson, 2003 to measure resilience. Responses are reported on a 5 point Likert Scale ranging from 0-4.

### **3. Results**

Pearson Product Moment Correlation is used to find the correlation between the variables. The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between stress, psychological well-being (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relation with others, purpose in life, self-acceptance) and resilience. There is a negatively relationship between stress and psychological well-being stating that lower the stress level among army officers' wives, higher will be the level of psychological well-being. The correlation is moderate indicated by the value in table 3.3. Similarly, the result reveals correlation between the subscales of psychological well-being scale and stress shows that there is a negatively poor correlation between stress and autonomy such that individual with increase self will have low independence. There is a moderately significant but negative correlation between stress and environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relation and self-acceptance. The overall findings of stress with psychological well-being indicates that if the levels of stress is low then psychological well-being can be observed but if stress is high then psychological distress will be the outcome.

Similarly, there is a negative but significant correlation between the level of stress and resilience among army wives. Lower level of stress indicates higher resilience.

Psychological well-being has a significantly strong relationship with resilience that is the psychological well-being and resilience indicates both to be high among wives of army officers when experiencing deployment. Psychological well-being however indicates significantly strong correlation with autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance.

The results conclude that stress is negatively related to psychological well-being and

resilience whereas psychological well-being and resilience are positively correlated which indicates that wives of army officers experiencing deployment have lower level of stress, high psychological well-being and resilience. They have the ability to adjust to the environment and bear the hardships.

### **4. Discussion**

The intent of the present research was to identify the relationship between stress, psychological well-being and resilience among army officers' wives experiencing deployment separation. There was a significant relationship between stress, psychological well-being and resilience among army officers' wives experiencing deployment separation.

The results indicated an inverse relationship between stress with psychological well-being and resilience. It indicates a relationship between stress, psychological well-being and resilience. Relationship was consistent between psychological well-being and stress a research conducted by Knapp and Newman (1993). The research conducted on 74 wives of army officers whose husband had been deployed to Persian Gulf. The findings were that stress contributed to psychological well-being indicating that during the time the wives lived in separation the lower level of stress had a correlation with higher levels of psychological well-being.

Similarly, Elliot (2011) conducted a correlational analysis to measure the relationship between resilience and perceived stress in army spouses coping with the stress experienced during combat deployment. The results of the study showed a significant negative relationship between stress and resilience. The results of the study also indicate that there is a significant effect of deployment separation on psychological well-being and resilience among the army officer's wives. The significance value indicated significant effect on psychological well-being which is consistent with the research, which states that psychological well-being during deployment adversely affects the physical-wellbeing of the army officer's spouses depicting psychological well-being as a correlate of physical well-being (Prachi & Lata, 2017).

The finding of third variable indicates high levels of resilience. It shows that the wives have a strong ability to bounce back to life despite the hardships and difficulties faced by them. The findings were supported by the study of Carter (2014) on resilience and social support among national guard/ reserve families. The study predicted five variables that were distance from the family, number of children, employment status or base unit of spouse, rank of spouse and neighborhood tenure. The results showed relationship between resilience, social support and any of the five-predictor variables. It also showed that the level of resilience was high in comparison to the need of social support. The overall literature supports the relationship between stress, psychological well-being and resilience (Smith & Yang, 2017). The findings support the phenomena of socioecological theory proposed by Bronfenbrenner. Individual can achieve balance in their lives and a good fit between them and their environment by reducing the levels of stress (Rotabi, 2007). The research had certain limitations such as collection of data was difficult based on the access to the population, which was difficult because of the rules and policies of the military system. The present research is a quantitative study so it consists of close-ended questions so in depth information cannot be obtained. Another limitation of the study is that the population to be research on are wives and living in a collectivist culture and conforming to social norms, population may give socially desirable response. The sample in the current study was wives who have experienced deployment separation therefore it cannot generalized to women who have not lived in separation during their deployment period. During research, a prominent observation that

came through was that there is limited indigenous research in Pakistan or a similar cultural context. Therefore, the study is beneficial as it researches a social issue that is not highlighted in researches and have little indigenous work. It provides a ground for further researches on army officials' wives.

### **5. Conclusion**

The findings indicate that there is a relationship between stress, psychological well-being and resilience of army officers' wives experiencing deployment separation. It shows an inverse relationship between stress with psychological well-being and resilience. Reason for such relationship is supported by the socioecological perspective, which states that the individual has the impact of the environment they live in and tries to fit in the environment according to the demands of it such as the wives of army officers experiencing deployment separation have adapted well to their environment and the changes it brings along.

The present study gives numerous avenues for future researches such as it can be used to measure other dimensions related to the lives of army officers' wives. The addition of this research of the body of knowledge is an implication for positive social change that may help in providing interventions for improving well-being for better coping and reducing stressors in life. The findings from the study can be used by the researcher to decrease social desirability and view that actual impact of deployment on the army officers' wives. The army officers' wives can be empowered by increasing functional activities, social relations and decreasing dependency. It can be implied for enlightening the readers with insight about the lives of army officer's wives.

**Table 1:** Demographic profile of respondents

Variable	f(%)	M(SD)
<b>Age</b>		31.13(6.67)
22-25	18(18%)	
26-30	42(42%)	
31-35	15(15%)	
36-40	11 (11%)	
41-45	14 (14%)	
<b>Years of Marriage</b>		8.36 (7.38)
<b>Rank of Army officers</b>		
Second Lieutenant	0 (0%)	
First Lieutenant	1(1%)	
Captain	28(28%)	
Major	44 (44%)	
Lieutenant Colonel	15 (15%)	
Brigadier	1 (1%)	
<b>Frequency of deployment</b>		
Currently	18 (18%)	
One time	26 (26%)	
Two times	21 (21%)	
More than two times	35 (35%)	
<b>Recently deployed</b>		
Less than a year ago	15 (15%)	
1 year ago	34 (34%)	
Two years ago	27 (27%)	
More than two years ago	24 (24%)	
<b>Lived in separation during deployment</b>	100 (100%)	
Yes	0 (0%)	
No		
<b>Time Lived in separation</b>		
Less than a year	29 (29%)	
1-3 years	48 (48%)	
3-5 years	18 (18%)	
More than 5 years	5 (5%)	

**Table 2.** Psychometrics Properties of Major Study Variables in the sample

Variables	K	M	SD	$\alpha$	Skewness	Kurtosis
Stress	10	21.41	4.15	.56	.21	.39
Psychological well-being	18	77.46	10.83	.72	.09	-.64
Autonomy	3	13.83	2.49	.28	-.27	.10

<b>Environmental Mastery</b>	3	12.23	2.97	.54	-.14	.24
<b>Personal Growth</b>	3	14.42	2.68	.49	-.41	-.72
<b>Positive relation with others</b>	3	12.95	3.14	.39	-.17	-.53
<b>Purpose in life</b>	3	12.14	2.95	.21	-.14	-.61
<b>Self-acceptance</b>	3	13.83	2.49	.13	-.24	-.65
<b>Resilience</b>	25	67.20	15.52	.91	-.23	.10

**Table 3.3.** Shows the mean (Mean), standard deviation (SD), Correlation (r) and significance value (p) of stress, psychological well-being and resilience of army officers wives experiencing deployment separation (N=100).

(P>0.05, P\*<0.05, P\*\*<0.01)

Note: 1: Stress, 2: Psychological well-being, 3: Autonomy, 4: Environmental Mastery, 5: Personal growth, 6:

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	M	SD
1	1	-.52**	-.16	-.57**	-.45**	-.41**	-.01	-.40**	-.40**	21.41	4.15
2		1	.58**	.69**	.85**	.70**	.44**	.58**	.64**	77.46	10.83
3			1	.29**	.37**	.21*	.16	.22*	.38**	11.89	2.74
4				1	.56**	.42**	-.06	.40**	.59**	12.23	2.97
5					1	.53**	.32**	.48**	.57**	14.42	2.67
6						1	.22*	.22*	.35**	12.95	3.14
7							1	.00	.07	12.14	2.95
8								1	.51**	13.83	2.49
9									1	67.20	15.52

positive relation with others, 7: Purpose in life, 8: self-acceptance, 9: resilience, M: Mean, SD: Standard deviation.

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