

**STRESS, WELL-BEING AND MARITAL SATISFACTION IN SPOUSES
OF MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS
(A Study of Three Districts in Pakistan)**

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Abstract

Most military services require long hours, which may have a negative impact on their social and personal lives. This study made an effort to pinpoint and examine the stress, health, and marital satisfaction of military spouses. A sample of 120 married couples from three districts in Pakistan were contacted (60 civilian and 60 military) (Kaaryian, Abbottabad and Swabi). Marital Satisfaction Scale (Coral Gables Counseling Center), Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989), and Perceived Stress Scale were the research questionnaires that were utilized (Cohen et al., 1983). According to the study's findings, military spouses are less satisfied and happier in their marriages than spouses of civilians. Additionally, the findings indicated a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and general well-being and a negative relationship between these two

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and stress. In the study, no gender differences were discovered. The study's findings point out a number of military services components that require special consideration and can be handled by mental health professionals.

Key Words: *Stress, well-being, marital satisfaction and military*

Introduction

Military life differs from civil life in ways that may affect intimate relationships between couples, such as regular resettlement, often to various countries, extended working times, duration required for training, which required them to spend the majority of their life away from family, and operational duties (which place army members at risk of harm or even death) (Jarvis, 2011; Schumm et al., 2012). Furthermore, military personnel are subjected to a variety of stressors in their daily lives. They may experience stress as a result of the high demands of military service, as well as the degree of caution on loved ones and families.

The concept of stress has been explained by psychologists in various different ways. Some considered it as a physiological response resulted from a wide range of external stimuli, which is known as general adaptation syndrome (Selye, 1936). Relationship of a person with the surrounding that he considers as increasing taxes or surpassing his or her assets and risking his or her health (Folkman, 1984).

Thus, well-being includes actual and perceived attributes of physiological, interpersonal, and psychological well-being, as well as self - growth and meaningful involvement, all of which are evaluated by a set of principles (Felce & Perry, 1995). Two distinct theories underpin paradigms for scientific study into well-being. The first is hedonism, which is characterized as the belief that well-

being is defined by enjoyment or happiness. The second point of view is that happiness isn't the only part of well-being. Instead, it is found in the realization of human potentials. Eudemonism is the name given to this perspective. The two traditions hedonism and eudemonism are focused on contrasting viewpoints on human nature and what makes for a healthy society (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Individuals, communities, or nations will prosper and grow in a positive and sustainable state. This means that well-being denotes psychological, physical, and social states that are distinctly positive at the individual level (Huppert et al., 2004).

Likewise, marital satisfaction is another factor that effect marital life of civilian and military couples. Andersen proposes that marital satisfaction, or the quality of the relationship, is an enabling factor (1995). Also, it is defined as the attitude a person has toward his or her own marital relationship. Additionally, the research of Massello (2007) showed that gender, hardiness, locus of control and other variables affect the stress level. His research work was focused on military commanders and their spouses. His study explored stress levels of military commanders' spouses. He concluded that spouses of military commanders' need mental health practitioners in order to reduce stress. As we know, soldiers are deployed in different units and in different places during their service, which is very regular task. Even if it is not war, they are moved to different places time to time. This makes it hard for them to give much time to their families. The father's duties are transferred to the wife, who makes career sacrifices, handles finances on her own, organizes shifting, and copes with absence of social aid. As a result, army partners have a high degree of tension. They need high-quality social support services as well as demographic factors to relieve this vital stress (Joseph, 2014).

Padden et al., (2011) looked at the connections between stress, coping, well-being, and socio-demographic features in their research. They took 105 wives of presently serving members for this study. The result of their study emphasized that the stress may predict the mental and physical well-being of female spouses. They divided the participants into two groups: some who lived in a military family and others who had previously been separated due to deployment. The use of stress management varied across these ranked groups.

During the military operations or in war, the spousal supports played a key role in the resiliency of military families. Skomorovsky (2014) discovered that deployment tension and social support from relatives, non-military colleagues, and military partners each played different roles in partners' psychological well-being in a study of 639 military spouses whose husbands were shifted to different areas around the world. The role of social aid in explaining the difference in the psychological well-being of army spouses was also highlighted in this report. They analyzed the role of stress and emotional well-being as antecedents of military life outcomes. They offered background for recognizing military personnel's sources of stress. They looked at the dangers related to fighting and rollout periods, as well as personality traits and social assistance which are known as protective factors that can help people cope with stress and boost their emotional well-being and performance.

In a study Feeney et al. (2011) found that deployment-related stressors, such as prolonged separation and uncertainty, were associated with lower marital satisfaction among military spouses. Additionally, research has found that military spouses may also experience unique stressors related to the military lifestyle, such as frequent moves and difficulty maintaining social support

networks (Hobfoll et al., 2003). These stressors can contribute to feelings of isolation and strain on the marital relationship.

According to another study (Laser & Stephens, 2011) Military service members' marital lives are more at risk than civilians' because of their difficult lives. According to Haapala (2012)'s research, partners of service members face significant stress, use coping mechanisms, and have marital problems. The researchers were looking for a link among tension, coping mechanisms, and relationship quality. According to the study's findings, civilian spouses of military personnel have low stress and high marital satisfaction. The most commonly used coping mechanisms among civilian wives were influential ways to cope, constructive restructuring, preparation, and acceptance. Similarly, Vogt et al., (2010) reported that military spouses reported higher levels of stress and lower levels of marital satisfaction compared to civilian spouses.

Gray (2015) used various approaches to investigate numerous aspects of well-being encountered by partners of in-service soldiers. They collected information from 300 partners of engaged service members. The samples were divided into various groups based on their employment status, military person race and rank, having kids, educational status, and battle deployment past. Participants' well-being scores varied significantly based on their job status, ethnicity, and service rank. Although there was no difference in well-being scores between groups based on whether or not they had children, education level, or combat deployment background. The outcome scores for each aspect of well-being were subjected to separate hierarchical regression analyses. Within each model, the results showed that certain dangerous and safety variables were important determinants.

Burrell et al. (2006) studied M. Segal's framework, they centered on looking at four military ways of lifestyles, risk of military personnel wound or death, repeated rollouts, regular separation from family, and living in distant areas plus their connections to mental and physical prosperity, fulfillment with the army, and conjugal fulfillment. 346 mates living abroad demonstrated that the effect of partitions was adversely identified with each of the four results, while remote living arrangement was contrarily identified with physical and mental prosperity, fear for warrior security was adversely identified with physical prosperity, and the effect of moving was adversely identified with fulfillment with the army. The outcomes of their study additionally showed that their perception about moving and detachments were to a greater extent vital in deciding results than the real amount of moves or separation.

Utilizing family tree versatility and natural theories, researchers studied the connection between accomplice work-required travel separation and spouse mental prosperity. They discovered that the part of work-association supported families and informal motivating groups of individuals, like marital happiness, as elements that can minimize the dangers of poor Well-Being markers. The information originated from a likelihood test review of 8,056 wives of U.S. Armed Force Staff, with extensive variety in the measure of travel-related separations. The outcomes of their study demonstrated risks for poor mental prosperity are more noteworthy for companions who encounter more incessant business related partitions. Additionally, they showed that both work association bolster and casual encouraging group of people associations are noteworthy factors for life partners encountering these detachments (Orthner & Rose, 2009).

McCray (2015), looked into connection among wives' trust, marital engagement, and marital satisfaction when their husbands were deployed. The data was obtained from 127 army wives whose partners were stationed far-off. According to the study's results, the duration of a deployment has no effect on marital satisfaction. While correlation analysis revealed that, wives' perceptions of partners' disloyalty, confidence, marital engagement, and marital satisfaction all have a connection.

Military work, particularly operational organizations, may have an impact on army faculty's sentimental connections. The universality of marital problems and relationship with socio-statistic, army, and arrangement linked attributes was investigated using a sub-test (n=7581) of members from a companion investigation of UK military work force (information gathered between 2007 and 2009). The majority of members did not report having relationship problems. According to balanced investigations youth misfortune, minimal help from and for companions, unwedded relationships, money-related issues, and job being beyond trade, talent, and exposure were all main variables linked with relationship troubles. Individual vulnerabilities, which can be exacerbated in the military environment, raise the likelihood of UK army members undergoing family issues (Keeling et al., 2015).

Doctors have a lower separated rate than the all-inclusive community, yet prove recommended there are numerous potential wellsprings of worry in medicinal relational unions, especially amid postgraduate training. This survey was attempted to overview the level of conjugal fulfillment among third-year family rehearse occupants, to look at the amount of marital satisfaction of military with regular citizen inhabitants, and to recognize factors that relate with inhabitant

marital satisfaction. Results showed that most inhabitants are joyfully hitched and that marital satisfaction is the same for occupants preparing in military projects than it is for occupants in regular citizen programs. Relationships between marital satisfaction and lists of potential sources of marital stress demonstrated that elements improving restorative relational unions are like elements upgrading relational unions among other expert gatherings and the overall population (Ricer, 1983).

Significance of the Work

This research has the potential to increase the knowledge concerning the connection regarding Stress, well-being, and marital satisfaction. Findings specified that stress affect both marital satisfaction and well-being of a spouses of military in-service members. In a therapeutic context, this finding is significant, as psychotherapists frequently come in contact with individuals who are not contented and pleased with their romantic partner. For instance, an individual with mild or moderate stress may not get satisfaction from the partner due to the excess amount of cortisol hormone. The therapist will provide psycho-education on stress and work to reconstruct the concept of self-worth and relationship satisfaction of their client, contributing to higher levels of overall well-being. The findings also suggest that stress management programs should be initiated in military in order to decrease their stress level. If stress level decreases in military service members, then their performance level will be higher. It also recommended that they must employ counselors in military which help the service members to resolve their marital issues in a better way. As in terms of coping strategies, King et al., (2015) suggested that military spouses who possess

higher levels of social support and a sense of control over their lives had better marital satisfaction.

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the level of stress, well-being and marital satisfaction in the spouses of military service members and civilians.
2. To find out the relationship between stress, well-being and marital satisfaction.

Hypotheses

1. Well-being and marital satisfaction will be high in the spouses of civilians as compared to military service members.
2. Stress will be low in the spouses of civilians as compared to military service members.
3. There will be negative relationship between stress and marital satisfaction.
4. There will be positive relationship between well-being and marital satisfaction.
5. There will be no difference in the level of stress, well-being and marital satisfaction in both genders.

Methodology

Sample Size

From the civilian and military populations, we selected a sample of 120 people. These 120 sample participants were split evenly between 60 men (30 civilians and 30 military personnel) and 60 women (30 wives of civilians and 30 wives of military service members). Using a convenience sampling design, the

data was gathered. In Abbottabad, Swabi, and Kaaryian, these families resided. These areas were chosen for data collection because they were convenient for the researcher.

Inclusion Criteria

For the study, educated couples between the ages of 30 and 50 were chosen.

Exclusion Criteria

Couples under 30 or over 50 years old and without a bachelor's degree were not included in the study.

Instruments

Three scales and two demographical questions were used as data collection instruments in this analysis. The stress level was calculated using the Perceived Stress Scale. The 42-item versions of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB) was used to evaluate well-being. The Marital Satisfaction Scale was used to determine marriage satisfaction.

Perceived Stress Scale

Perceived Stress Scale was design by Cohen et al. in 1983. It is self-report measure of stress. The scale consists of 10 items, each item represents the feeling during last month. The items on the PSS are graded on a five-point scale, with 0=Never, 1=Almost Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Fairly Often, and 4=Very Often. The scores are obtained by sum of 10 items and revers item 4, 5, 7 and 8. The score of perceived stress scale are ranging from 0-40. The higher score indicates more stress. Cronbach's alpha for the PSS was stated to be between.84 and.86 by Cohen et al., (1983). The PSS had an.85 test-retest reliability.

Psychological Well-Being Scale

Psychological Well-being scale (PWB) was design by Carol Ryff (1989). It is a self-report inventory that assesses an individual's well-being. It has 42 items, each of which is scored on a 6-point Likert scale. The scores are determined by adding all 42 items and recoding negative phrased items: #3, 5, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 39, and 41. (i.e. if the score is 1 then the adjusted score 6 and so on). A higher score suggested a higher level of satisfaction. Ryff's Psychological Well-Being measure has a 0.82 test-retest reliability coefficient.

Marriage Satisfaction Scale

Marriage Satisfaction Scale (MSS) was developed by Coral Gables Counseling Center. In this scale, the participants represent their present feelings and thoughts about their marriage. It comprises 12 items that are scored on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 representing pleased, 5 representing half yes/half no, and 0 representing not pleased.

Procedure

The data was collected from spouses of military service members and civilians using three scales to assess the connection among stress, well-being and marital satisfaction. Sample was recruited from different cities of Punjab (kaaryian) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Swabi, Abbottabad). For Marital Satisfaction Scale the subject were ask to write down after each question the number which were related to yours present feeling and about the marriage or spouse. On a scale of 0-10, 10 is for pleased, 5 is for half yes/half no and 0 is for not pleased. For Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale, the subject were ask to

degree of agreement using a score ranging 1-6 to the sentences given in the scale. For the Perceived Stress Scale, subjects are asked to rate each item on a 5-point scale ranging from never (0) to very frequently (4). Positively phrased items are reverse scored, and the ratings are added together, with higher scores reflecting more perceived stress. This study uses causal comparative approach to identify differences among civilians and military couples.

Results

The aim of this study was to explore if there was a correlation between stress well-being and marital satisfaction among spouses of military personnel. Alpha reliability of the scale MSS, PWB, PSS used in this study were found.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participant

Characteristics	N	%
Gender		
Male	60	50
Female	60	50
Occupation		
Civilians	60	50
Military	60	50

Note: N= number of participants.

Table 2

Alpha Coefficient Reliability of Marital Satisfaction Scale, Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale and Perceived Stress Scale (N=120).

<i>Scale</i>	M	SD	Alpha Coefficient
<i>MSS</i>	80.2	20.1	0.84
<i>PWB</i>	155.3	23.7	0.83
<i>PSS</i>	19	4.9	0.63

Note. MSS: Marital Satisfaction Scale; PWB: Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale; PSS: Perceived Stress Scale

Table 2 indicates that alpha coefficient reliability of Marital Satisfaction Scale and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale is good. The Perceived Stress Scale has acceptable but somewhat low reliability; this may be because it was created for a different culture and we used it without being modified for our own culture.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation of MSS, PWB and PSS (N=120)

Variables	1	2	3
1. MSS	-		
2. PSS	-.265**	-	
3. PWB	.687**	-.470**	-

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

Table 3 indicates Pearson correlation of MSS total, PWB total and PSS total. The results show that the variable of MSS total is in positive correlation with PWB at 0.01 level, and is negatively correlated with PSS total at 0.01 level. PWB total is positively correlated to MSS at 0.01 level and is negatively correlated to

PSS total at 0.01 level. PSS total is in negative correlation with both MSS and PWB at 0.01 level.

Table 4

Mean Standard Deviation and t Value of Civilian and Military on Marital Satisfaction Scale, Psychological well-being and Perceived Stress Scale. (120).

Variables	Occupation				<i>t</i> (118)	<i>P</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
	Civilian		Military				
	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
	n=60		n=60				
MSST	84.48	22.09	76.20	18.24	2.239	0.027	0.408
PWBT	169.61	26.37	152.86	20.71	3.86	0.000	0.706
PSS	19.00	5.05	18.90	4.52	.114	.909	0.020

Table 4 displays the mean, standard deviation, and t value for civilians and military personnel. The study's findings indicate that they are significant at the 0.05 level for the mean differences on Marital Satisfaction Scale, indicated that civilians scores higher than military. The results of the study show that the results are significant at $p < 0.01$ level for Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale and the mean differences indicate that civilians score higher than military. The results are not significant at $p < 0.05$ level for Perceived Stress Scale. The results indicate that there is no difference in the score of civilians and military on Perceived Stress Scale.

Table 5a:

Mean, Standard Deviation and t Value of Male and Female on Marital Satisfaction Scale (N=120).

Variable	Gender				<i>t</i> (118)	<i>P</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
	Male		Female				
	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
MSST	79.16	21.65	81.51	19.60	-.62	.53	0.113
PWBT	161.6	26.61	160.8	23.64	.185	.85	0.031785
PSST	18.55	4.66	19.33	4.89	-.91	.36	0.163303

Table 5 indicates mean, standard deviation and t value of male and female on Marital Satisfaction, Psychological Well-Being Scale and Perceived Stress. The results were not significant at $p < 0.05$ level that means there were no significant gender differences on Marital Satisfaction, Psychological Well-Being Scale and Perceived Stress

Discussion

The reason behind this research was to investigate connection between stress, wellbeing, and marital satisfaction in spouses of both military personnel and civilians. The principal discovery is that there is a significant relationship among stress, wellbeing, and marital satisfaction.

The study discovered that spouses of civilian service members were happier and more satisfied with their marriages than spouses of military service members. Given the difficulties and transitions that military spouses face, it stands to reason that social support contributes in their marital satisfaction, chiefly given how frequently a spouse is set apart from its partner. Low marital satisfaction can be attributed to the influence of separation on conversation/connection, problems of togetherness, the stress of continuous change, and always confronting short-term way of living (Baptist et al., 2011). Past experimentation studied negative effect of stress on close relationships among general population backs up the link between stress and marital satisfaction (Randall & Bodenmann, 2008). This connection could also be explained by the numerous demanding aspects of having a military family, like deployments and separations, which have been shown to have a significant negative impact on military marriages (Baptist et al., 2011).

According to the findings of the Perceived Stress Scale, there is no difference in the level of stress faced by civilian and military spouses. The findings also indicated that stress and marital satisfaction have a negative relationship. Research by Kolessar (2010), who discovered a connection between perceived stress and marital satisfaction, lends credence to this hypothesis. For active duty military personnel and controls, a link was calculated, and it was predicted that higher levels of perceived stress would be linked to lower levels of marital satisfaction. This is because military spouses and families deal with a variety of stressors that civilian spouses and families do not. Due to deployments and stateside training, military families experience frequent geographic changes and separations. These incidents significantly alter their social networks and their spouses' employment situations (Wang et al., 2015). Other unique experiences

that have an impact on the livelihood of military families include the force to reflect one's service member well and to attend all required events, such as army balls or dinner parties. Some partners claim that it can be stressful to live in a male-dominated society (Sheppard et al., 2010). Another significant source of anxiety is the possibility that a service member could be hurt or killed while in training or on a deployment (Sheppard et al., 2010). Military spouses and their families have been known to suffer greatly as a result of these unusual circumstances.

Further data analysis found that well-being and marital satisfaction have a positive relationship. Civilians scored high on well-being scale than military service members. Economic stress, trouble obtaining help, the duration of a service member's tour of duty, deployment modifications, and the spouse's personal situation have all been identified as major risk factors for partner well-being (de Burgh et al., 2011). When compared to a sample of the non-military community, military spouses reported higher levels of perceived stress, and higher stress was negatively correlated with both mental and physical well-being (Padden et al., 2011). The schema for the soldier fight and wellbeing model used in the 2008 report by the Mental Health and Advisory Team can help to explain this (MHAT-5, 2008). According to that model, risks or stressful events such as trauma exposure and deployment duration are associated with a variety of adverse consequences such as reduced emotional well-being, poor performance, Post-traumatic stress, and suicidal behavior. In military families, PTSD has been associated to marital conflict (Riviere et al., 2012). This association is moderated by a number of coping mechanisms, including personality characteristics, sources of support and help such as leading figures or domestic partners, and coaching.

Data analysis also revealed that there is no difference in stress, well-being, or marital satisfaction between men and women.

The current research informed the clinical community on the negative effects of stress on well-being and marital satisfaction. It will also let the clinicians know which sort of stress will predispose the individual to which kind of relationship. This knowledge will help clinicians create a comprehensive treatment plan for individuals who are suffering from either distress, a mental problem, or marital dissatisfaction. Clinicians who focused on each of these aspects can achieve a more in-depth understanding of the complexities with which people think about and address conflicts within their relationships. Counseling strategies can be used to help individuals improve their well-being and relationship satisfaction. King et al. (2014) reported that participating in couple therapy was proven to be effective in improving marital satisfaction for military couples (King et al., 2014).

Limitations

The current study has a few restrictions, but these can be addressed in follow-up investigations. First, a non-probability sampling technique was used; probability sampling would be much preferable. Second, regression analysis would have provided a more accurate explanation of the results than correlation analysis. Thirdly, methods for solving these issues need to be discussed as well.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of stress, well-being, and relationship quality between partners of military personnel. Data analysis revealed that spouses of military service members had lower levels of well-being and marriage satisfaction than civilian spouses. According to the findings, there is

no difference in stress levels between partners of military personnel and civilians. This study also discovered a positive link between well-being and marital satisfaction, as well as a negative association between stress and well-being and marriage satisfaction. There were no gender differences discovered. The small sample size and limited variables observed would have been a limitation of this study.

Recommendations

This research will help government of Pakistan, chief of army staff to launch the stress management programs to cope the stress among military service to get best work from military service members and help them to ready for every situation. The government of Pakistan needs to employ clinical psychologists who work with military families in order to decrease their stress and resolve marital issues. Social workers are also needed to be employed in military services. Welfare worker who work with military service members collect qualitative data that allows them to identify many aspects of each family that quantitative data cannot. After getting ideas about stressors in military, issues related to marital life and impact of these variables on well-being, we will find best coping strategies to reduce stress and marital issues related to military families.

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