

## A study on military wives psychological well being, life satisfaction & social support

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### ABSTRACT

In the vast and varied spectrum of married ladies in our society, the military wives are distinctly different and can be identified at a glance. Their living conditions, the environmental pressures they face and their capability to survive against all odds with a smile on their face while being away from their husbands makes them distinct and role models for the citizens of this country. As an ordinary citizen one cannot fathom the difficulties the military wives face in their day-to-day chores. The military wives go about managing their families, their jobs, looking after their aged parents etc knowing fully well that they cannot fall back on their husbands as they are deployed on borders and other difficult areas and need to be left stress free to do their task. This is a situation which any military wife faces every two to three years with the constant threat of her husband not coming back to her. At times one wants to salute these brave ladies and wonders as to what stuff are these legends made of. Keeping in mind the above, the present study aims to study psychological well-being, social support and life satisfaction of military wives staying away from their husbands. The sample consists of 32 Military wives (age group 35-50) whose husbands posted away. The findings of the study are revealed that Life satisfaction is positively correlated with psychological well-being and also social support & life satisfaction. The present study was successful in analysing the importance of social support, life satisfaction and well being of military wives.

**Keywords:** *Military wives, Psychological well-being, Life satisfaction, Social support*

**God chose the strongest and the most courageous and made them military wives.**

It is not easy to live the life of a military wife; it needs sacrifices at various levels. They have to keep it together when their husband leaves for months on end or more to work at dangerous places. They have got to be fine with traveling with their families halfway around the world after every 2 years or sometimes even after a few months. With their spouse missing all the special things like birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, or gasping for child's birth, it is not an easy journey. Often, since going all over the world and keeping a career is not as simple as it seems, they have to put their career on the back burner. When they start a new life, they have to be comfortable with leaving close friends and family behind. Military deployment of the spouse in field areas can be hard for them, from

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managing the household to trying to fulfil all the needs of the children. At times, it is not easy to manage so much when you are constantly worried about the circumstances their husbands are serving in. (war or extreme weather conditions), but they simply do it with a smile on their face.

### **Well- being**

Shin & Johnson (1978) define well-being as “a global assessment of a person’s quality of life according to his own chosen criteria.”

Renger (2000) defined wellness as “consisting of physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions, and added environmental wellness.”

Well-being derives from your emotions, actions, and experiences, over which we often have influence. We tend to have greater mental well-being when we think positive, for instance. We tend to have greater social well-being when seeking meaningful relationships. And we seem to have lower occupational well-being when we lose our job, or really dislike it. These examples begin to illustrate how common well-being is and how many different kinds of well-being are there.

In a study by Martin and Ickovics (1987) explores the relations between marital and military- specific stress and the general psychological well-being of military wives. Such data comes from a three-year longitudinal panel study that is on-going. Participants in the study (N =277) were assessed 12 to 15 months apart at two separate periods. It was expected that, even though past levels of stress and well-being were taken into account, existing marital stress and military life stress would have major negative (and independent) relationships with well- being. To analyse the data, a path model was used. In addition, the relationship between marriage and well-being tends to take on added significance the longer one remains in the military system.

### **Life Satisfaction**

Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin (1985) define Life satisfaction as “the level of enjoyment, well-being and satisfaction with one’s life and activities. It was in terms of high score achieved on satisfaction with life scale. It was global assessment of a person’s quality of life according to his chosen criteria.”

In philosophical and psychological accounts of happiness and well-being, the idea of life satisfaction is employed. As a synonym for "happiness," "life satisfaction" is commonly used and is also either acknowledged or seen as an essential component of well-being. In these separate accounts, however, there are two distinct meanings of "satisfaction": "satisfaction" refers to the perceived fulfilment of desires or requirements in some accounts; "satisfaction" refers to a feeling of being satisfied with something in other accounts. Owing to these various definitions of the word "satisfaction," two distinct concepts of life satisfaction are commonly used in life satisfaction. In a study by Klein, Tatone & Lindsay (1989) Life satisfaction was found to be correlated with elevated levels of perceived social support from family and friends, an internal control locus, and low emotionality-stress and emotionality-fear levels. The findings reinforced the importance of individual resources during the changes inherent in military life to mediate adaptation and enhance life satisfaction. Implications for the recognition and assistance of high-risk women have arisen.

### **Social Support**

Berkman (1984) sees social support as the emotional, instrumental, and financial aid that is obtained from one's social network.”

In discussions of relationships, the word "social support" also appears. Social support means getting friends and other individuals, including relatives, to turn to you to give you a wider perspective and positive self-image in times of need or crisis. Social help increases the quality of life and offers a protection against traumatic events in life.

In order to help people deal with stress, social support refers to the psychological and material services offered by a social network. Such social support can come in various forms and could include:

1. Giving advice to a friend when they are facing a difficult situation
2. Providing caring, empathy, and concern for loved ones in need

In a study by Wood, Scarville & Gravino (1995) the ethnographic study explores army wives' adjustment to separation and reunion. The women were married to soldiers who were deployed for six months to the Sinai as part of the Multinational Force & Observers. Thirty-five women completed lengthy interviews before and during the separation, just before reunion, and six to eight weeks after the reunion. The women's behaviours, attitudes, and perceptions at each of the four stages were noted, and researchers evaluated subjectively the degree to which subjects had adjusted to the separation and reunion. In dealing with prolonged deployment, junior enlisted families had more trouble than others. As families incorporated returning soldiers into family structures, reunion could be overwhelming, but interactions were not necessarily negative. For women who successfully adapted, it was necessary to be working, to have a social support network of friends and family, and to engage in family support group activities.

### ***Purpose***

The purpose of the study is to study psychological well-being, social support and life satisfaction of military wives staying away from their husbands.

### ***Hypothesis***

There will be no correlation between psychological well-being, life satisfaction and social support.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Sample***

The sample consists of 32 Military wives (age group 35-50) from various states of India whose husbands are posted away.

### ***Measures***

The following standardized tests were used:

**1. Ryff's Psychological Well Being Scale:** It is a 18 item questionnaire developed by Ryff & Keyes in 1995 for adults with reading level 6th to 8th grade and the Answer Format is: 1 = strongly agree; 2 =somewhat agree; 3 = a little agree; 4 = either agree or disagree; 5 = a little disagree; 6= somewhat disagree; 7 = strongly disagree.

**2. Life Satisfaction Scale:** The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was created by researchers Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985).

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It is a 5-item scale with statements in which the respondent may agree or disagree. Scoring is done by using the 1-7 scale with, 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Slightly Disagree 4 = neither Agree nor Disagree 5 = Slightly Agree 6 = Agree 7 = Strongly Agree. The sum of all items will tell us the final score. Higher scores mean higher levels of life satisfaction scale

**3. Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS):** The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support given by Zimet et al., (1988) is a 12-item measure of perceived adequacy of social support from three sources: family, friends, & significant other; using a 5-point Likert scale (0 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

### Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled through Google forms. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of the information to elicit honest responses without any fear or inhibitions. Standardized psychological test was administered to participants.

## RESULTS

*Table 1: Showing mean and standard deviation of psychological well being, Life Satisfaction and Social Support.*

	Descriptive		
Psychological well Being		Life satisfaction	Social Support
N	32	32	32
Mean	96.3	26.8	5.78
Standard deviation	11.5	4.40	0.882

*Table 2: Showing the correlation of Psychological well being, life satisfaction and social support.*

	Correlation Matrix		
Psychological well Being		Life satisfaction	Social Support
Psychological well Being	—		
Life satisfaction	0.520	**	—
Social Support	0.326	0.519	**

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## DISCUSSION

There is a positive correlation between life satisfaction and psychological well being and positive correlation between social support and life satisfaction. The results indicate that Life satisfaction is positively correlated with psychological well-being ( $r=0.520$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and social support is positively correlated with life satisfaction. ( $r=0.519$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

In a study by Rosen & Moghadam (1988) the effects of perceived social support, stress, and the interaction of Stress X Support on general well-being were explored in a study of military wives. Support was described as the concept of being able to depend on another military wife for help with a personal or family issue. Stress was defined by the soldiers in the husbands' units as the amount of time spent in the field. Only for those who did not consider themselves as having social support, which is consistent with the buffering theory of social support, was stress found to have an adverse impact on well-being. The rank of the husband, form of unit, and stress were major predictors of social support. It shows that to some extent.

## CONCLUSION

The research aimed at analysing psychological well-being, social support and life satisfaction of military wives staying away from their husbands. The results provide evidence that Life satisfaction is positively correlated with psychological well-being ( $r=0.520$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and social support is positively correlated with life satisfaction. ( $r=0.519$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The research was conducted on a sample of 32 military wives and more future research can give us more in-depth insight.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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