

Social Support & Psychological Well Being among Female Partners of Armed Forces & Non-Armed Forces

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ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates the association between social support and psychological well-being among female partners, comparing those affiliated with armed forces to those in civilian settings. Recognizing the pivotal role of social support in fostering resilience and mental health, the study aims to uncover nuanced dynamics influencing the psychological experiences of these women. Drawing on established literature highlighting the positive impact of social support on well-being, the research employs a comparative approach to examine differences between female partners of armed and non-armed forces. A purposive sample of 100 married females, aged 25-35, equally divided between military and civilian backgrounds, participated in the study. Data collection utilized validated measures including the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales. Statistical analyses, including t-tests, were conducted to explore the significance of social support and its impact on psychological well-being. Findings reveal that female partners of armed forces exhibit higher levels of psychological well-being compared to their civilian counterparts. Furthermore, the study demonstrates a significant positive association between social support and psychological well-being among female partners of armed forces, underscoring the importance of support systems in fostering resilience. The study contributes valuable insights into understanding the interplay between social support and psychological well-being in female partners of armed and non-armed forces. These findings carry implications for the development of tailored support interventions aimed at enhancing mental health and resilience among women in military and civilian communities.

Keywords: *Social Support, Psychological Well Being, Armed Forces, Non-Armed Forces*

My research paper delves into the intricate relationship between social support and the mental well-being of female partners in military and civilian settings. Examining how these individuals navigate challenges unique to armed forces and civilian life, the study emphasizes the pivotal role of social support in shaping their psychological resilience. The research seeks to uncover nuanced dynamics influencing the

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mental experiences of these women, providing valuable insights for both military and civilian support systems.

Decades of research have consistently demonstrated the positive impact of social support on mental well-being and health. Individuals surrounded by supportive spouses, friends, and family tend to experience higher life satisfaction, improved well-being, and fewer psychological and health-related issues like loneliness, depression, and cognitive deficits. Conversely, a deficiency in social support has been linked to emotional distress, depressive symptoms, and increased morbidity.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Social support is all about people helping each other out. The way a society works, both the good and the bad, is connected to how much support people give one another. Families are a key place where we find support, giving us a sense of belonging and the feeling that we can rely on each other.

People helping each other out, both emotionally and practically, is what social and emotional support is all about. Being part of groups like families, friends, schools, or work allows people to act kindly and helpfully towards each other. This network of connections serves as a safety net during tough times, no matter if it's just a minor setback or a major life crisis.

Social Support Theory

Two researchers, Drennon-Gala and Cullen, studied why young people sometimes commit crimes. They found a connection: young people with negative experiences were more likely to get into trouble. But they also found something good: if young offenders had people who believed in them and helped them feel good about themselves, they were more likely to get back on track. This led to the idea of "social support," which basically means helping each other out. The researchers also found that whole communities with strong support systems, like good friends and helpful neighbours, had less violence and fewer young people getting in trouble with the law. So, social support is like a safety net that can help both individuals and communities do better.

Benefits of Social Support

Studies reveal that having people around you can be a lifesaver during tough periods. Here's how: firstly, your support system can help you see the bright side of things, even when things seem bleak. Remember that friend who always makes you smile, no matter what? That's the power of social support! Secondly, these connections can offer valuable coping strategies. If you're facing a challenge, someone who has already been through it can share their experience and tips. In return, you can even help others facing similar situations down the line. It's a win-win!

Buffering Hypothesis

Indeed, the role of social support during times of stress is well understood, but there is disagreement regarding its necessity beyond such circumstances. According to the buffering hypothesis, social support is most advantageous when individuals encounter stressors. This theory posits that social support serves as a protective buffer, mitigating the negative consequences of stress. Consequently, if individuals are not experiencing substantial stress, the need for social support may be less pronounced.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING

Think of psychosocial well-being as a big umbrella covering both your emotional/mental health and your social connections. It's like quality of life, which also includes emotional, social, and even physical aspects. But here's the twist: "quality of life" gets used by doctors to specifically measure how a medical condition affects someone's well-being over time. This specific use makes it tricky to tell the difference between "quality of life" and "psychosocial well-being" at times.

Psychological well-being embracing both hedonic and eudemonic well-being, and distress involving both depression and anxiety.

Being psychologically well isn't just about not feeling bad. It's also about feeling happy, fulfilled, and able to function well in your daily life.

Positive psychology focuses on boosting people's overall mental well-being. They believe this requires two key approaches:

Hedonic well-being: This focuses on maximizing pleasure and happiness.

1. Eudemonic well-being: This emphasizes living a meaningful and purposeful life, reaching your full potential, and flourishing.
2. Both approaches are seen as crucial for achieving optimal mental well-being in positive psychology.

Imagine happiness (hedonic) is like eating a delicious cake. It feels good in the moment, but it's not everything. Finding purpose (eudemonic) is like learning to bake the cake yourself. It takes effort, but it's more fulfilling and long-lasting. Both feeling good and finding purpose are important for a happy and meaningful life.

Hedonic Well Being

Hedonic psychology explores the elements that determine whether experiences are pleasurable or not. Traditionally, well-being centred on happiness and overall life satisfaction. This field of study covers various aspects, including people's emotions, their satisfaction with different aspects of life, and their overall happiness. It considers both emotional states (positive and negative) and cognitive assessments (levels of life satisfaction).

Eudemonic Well-Being

The eudemonic approach finds its origins in a variety of psychological disciplines, including clinical, developmental, existential, and humanistic psychology, as well as in the philosophical teachings of Aristotle. Within this realm, three principal theories stand out: Waterman's Eudemonic Identity Theory, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, and Ryff's Psychological Well-being model. All three theories share the belief that the "fulfilment of the ultimate purpose of being human" defines a good life, typically associated with optimal functioning. Eudemonic well-being, which centres on achieving optimal functioning, enables individuals to perceive their actions as meaningful and purposeful. It involves the pursuit of positive growth and encompasses key concepts such as autonomy, mastery, and life meaning.

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Rationale

The topic "Social Support and Psychological Well-being among Female Partners of Armed Forces and Non-Armed Forces" is pertinent due to the unique stressors experienced by military families. By investigating the role of social support in the psychological well-being of female partners, this study aims to fill a critical gap in existing research that predominantly focuses on service members. Through a comparative analysis between partners of armed forces and non-armed forces, this research will shed light on specific factors influencing social support and mental health outcomes, providing valuable insights for developing targeted interventions and support programs. Ultimately, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within military families, with practical implications for enhancing their overall quality of life and resilience.

METHODOLOGY

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between social support and psychological well-being among female partners of armed forces personnel compared to female partners of non-armed forces individuals.

Variables of the Study

Independent Variable:

Social Support: The independent variable in this study is Social Support. Social support encompasses the emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal assistance received from one's social network, including family, friends, and community. It serves as a buffer against stressors and contributes to individuals' resilience and well-being.

Dependent Variable:

Psychological Well-Being: The dependent variable in this study is Psychological Well-Being. Psychological well-being refers to individuals' subjective evaluation of their overall mental state, including aspects such as life satisfaction, positive affect, and resilience. It reflects individuals' ability to cope with stressors and maintain a sense of balance and fulfilment in life.

Objectives

- To examine the impact of social support and psychological wellbeing among female partners of armed forces & non-armed forces.
- To see the significant difference between social support and psychological wellbeing among female partners of armed and non- armed forces.

Hypothesis

- There will be a significant difference in the level of social support among female partners of armed forces & non-armed forces.
- There will be a significant difference in the level of psychological wellbeing among female partners of armed forces & non-armed forces.

Sample

- Sample Population - The sample population consisted of married females falling within the age range of 25-35 years.

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- Sample Size - The sample comprises of 100 married females with 50 female partners of armed forces and 50 non-armed forces.
- Sampling Technique- The sampling technique used is Purposive.

Tools Used

The tools that were used for data collection included the demographic as well as “**Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support and Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being Scales.**”

Multidimensional scale of perceived social support

A self-administered 12-item questionnaire called the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) assesses how much support an individual feels they receive from their social circle, including family, friends, and significant others. Friends, Family, and Significant Others make up the MSPSS's three subscales. There is a seven-point Likert scale for each topic, with 1 being the most strongly disagreeing and 7 the most agreeing.

Reliability: The internal consistency of the entire scale demonstrated high reliability, as indicated by a Cronbach’s α coefficient of 0.91.

Validity: The convergent validity of the MSPSS was established through robust inter-item and item-total correlations. Corrected item-total correlations consistently exceeded 0.20, ranging from 0.64 for item 10 to 0.78 for item 8. Inter-item correlations were also consistently above 0.20, with the smallest correlation observed between items 4 and 10 (0.32) and the strongest between items 5 and 6 (0.90).

RYFF’S PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING SCALES

Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being Scale, developed by psychologist Carol Ryff, is a tool designed to measure different aspects of psychological well-being. It consists of six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. The scoring instruction requires recoding for negatively phrased items numbered 3, 5, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 39, and 41. In this recoding process, if the original score is 6, the adjusted score becomes 1; if the original score is 5, the adjusted score becomes 2, and so forth. This adjustment ensures that higher scores still represent stronger agreement with the statements, even though they are negatively phrased.

Reliability: The internal consistency of the measure was found to be acceptable, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .93 to .86. Additionally, the test-retest reliability over a six-week period ranged from .88 to .81, indicating consistent measurement stability over time.

Procedure

The data collection procedure for this study involved administering two standardized questionnaires: “**Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support and Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being Scales**”. Each questionnaire was carefully chosen to evaluate specific constructs pertinent to the research objectives. After explaining the study’s goals, participants were requested to participate and were provided with a questionnaire containing information about the study, privacy concerns, the researcher’s contact details, and other relevant measures. Ten minutes were allocated to explain the instruments.

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Statistical Analysis

The research will employ SPSS software for data analysis. The hypothesis will be examined through descriptive statistics tests, utilizing t-test analysis for validation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Results and Interpretation chapter marks a watershed moment in our investigation of the influence of social support on psychological well-being among female spouses of armed forces and non-armed forces members. This chapter aims to explore in detail the complex dynamics of social support networks and their impact on the mental health outcomes of people negotiating the unique obstacles that come with living in the military and the civilian world using a comparative perspective.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of all variables

	Psychological Well-being	Social Support
Mean	334.78	101.92
Standard Deviation	31.98105	18.19491
Count	50	50

The table summarizes descriptive statistics for two variables: Psychological Well-being and Social Support. Psychological well-being demonstrates a notably higher mean score compared to Social Support, indicating, on average, stronger psychological well-being among participants. Additionally, Psychological Well-being exhibits greater variability, as indicated by its higher standard deviation. Conversely, Social Support scores have a lower mean and standard deviation, suggesting more consistent levels of social support across participants. Both variables have an equal count of 50 observations, ensuring sample size consistency. Overall, the data suggests that participants generally report higher levels of psychological well-being with more varied responses, while social support levels appear relatively stable across the sample.

Table 2: t-test for social support and psychological well-being among female partners of armed forces.

	Social Support	Psychological Well-Being
Mean	51.16	168.62
Variance	76.87184	578.8118
Observations	50	50
Pooled Variance	327.8418	
df	98	
t Stat	-32.436	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000	
t Critical one-tail	1.660551	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000	
t Critical two-tail	1.984467	

As the obtained p-value (0.000) is considerably lower than the chosen significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), we accept the hypothesis, indicating a notable distinction in the level of social support between female partners of armed forces and non-armed forces individuals. This suggests that there exists a substantial impact of social support on the psychological well-being of female partners within the armed forces community.

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Table 3: T test for social support and psychological well-being among female partners of non-armed forces.

	Social Support	Psychological Well-Being
Mean	50.76	166.16
Variance	181.0024	423.28
Observations	50	50
Pooled Variance	302.1412	
df	98	
t Stat	-33.1949	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000	
t Critical one-tail	1.660551	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000	
t Critical two-tail	1.984467	

The results suggest that there is a significant impact of social support on psychological well-being among female partners of non-armed forces. The data provide strong evidence to support the **Hypothesis** that there is a significant difference in the level of social support & psychological well-being among female partners of non-armed forces.

DISCUSSION

The Results and Interpretation chapter of this study marks a pivotal moment in our exploration of the intricate relationship between social support and psychological well-being among female spouses of armed forces and non-armed forces members. Through a comparative analysis, we aimed to delve into the complexities of social support networks and their impact on mental health outcomes within these distinct contexts.

Findings Among Female Partners of Armed Forces

The test compares social support and psychological well-being among female partners of armed forces. The mean score for social support is noticeably lower than that for psychological well-being, suggesting that these women generally perceive their psychological well-being to be higher than the level of support they receive. The t-statistic, which reflects the difference between these scores, is significantly negative, indicating a meaningful difference beyond random chance. In essence, female partners of armed forces tend to express higher psychological well-being compared to their perceived level of social support. This emphasizes the necessity of enhancing support systems tailored to address their unique requirements.

Findings Among Female Partners of Non-Armed Forces

Conversely, our analysis among female partners of non-armed forces members revealed contrasting yet equally significant results. The obtained p-values from T-test, provide strong evidence to support the Hypothesis that there is a significant difference in the level of social support on psychological well-being among this demographic.. This underscores the nuanced nature of social support dynamics within civilian contexts, where the influence of social support on mental health outcomes may manifest with greater variability.

Comparative Insights

The comparative analysis between female partners of armed forces and non-armed forces members offers valuable insights into the differential impact of social support on

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psychological well-being within distinct social contexts. While both groups exhibit significant associations between social support and psychological well-being, the underlying mechanisms driving these relationships vary. In military settings, where resilience and self-reliance are prized virtues, the perception of social support may inadvertently signal vulnerability or dependency, contributing to a counterintuitive impact on psychological well-being. In civilian settings, societal norms and cultural expectations surrounding emotional expression and support-seeking behaviour may influence the effectiveness of social support mechanisms, leading to subtle yet meaningful effects on psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION

In summary, our investigation into the psychological well-being of female partners of non-armed forces members compared to those in armed forces settings has revealed intriguing differences in the interaction between social support and mental health outcomes. The notable findings from our T-test, based on the obtained p-values, strongly support the hypothesis suggesting a significant distinction in how social support influences psychological well-being within this particular demographic.

These results emphasize the complex and varied nature of social support dynamics within civilian contexts. Unlike the relatively consistent impact observed among female partners of armed forces members, where social support seemed to have a lesser effect on psychological well-being, our study unveils a more diverse relationship within civilian settings. This variability indicates that the impact of social support on mental health outcomes depends on various factors specific to civilian life, including social networks, community resources, and individual coping strategies.

The intricacies of these dynamics within civilian populations underscore the necessity for tailored and contextually sensitive approaches to support systems. Acknowledging the diverse experiences and challenges encountered by individuals in civilian settings, interventions designed to strengthen social support must consider these intricacies. Through such approaches, we can better address the unique needs of female partners of non-armed forces members and effectively promote their psychological well-being.

Ultimately, our study highlights the significance of recognizing the variability in how social support influences mental health outcomes across different population groups. By acknowledging and addressing these complexities, we can develop more targeted strategies to improve the well-being of individuals within civilian communities.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on social support and psychological well-being, particularly within the context of military life. By elucidating the differential effects of social support among female partners of armed forces and non-armed forces members, it provides valuable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers working to support the mental health and well-being of military families.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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