

The Family of Peacekeeper: Reactions to Stressful Phenomenon and Coping Resources

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Since the end of the Cold War there has been a dramatic increase in multinational military peacekeeping operations. The goal of these operations has been to neutralize the threat of violence occurring between and within sovereign states and to provide humanitarian aid. Though military personnel are involved in major ground combat and hazardous security duty. Usually peacekeeping operations last for a half of a year.

Increasing deployments means increasing family separations. As a result, modern military families must always be prepared to manage family life without the presence of at least one spouse. This kind of period often becomes stressful. During peacekeeping operations military family members have been found to experience a multitude of emotional and social problems such as increased anxiety or family conflict. However, not all separations affect persons in the same way or to the same degree, and a variety of factors can moderate the negative effects of separation on psychological state. Personal resources such as positive attitudes and good problem solving skills have been found to help families adjust to separation. In addition, the availability of social support has also been found to help families deal with problems related to separation.

The report covers the qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews. They were conducted with four wives of peacekeepers approximately two months after the soldiers came home from the operation. The aim of the analysis is to increase understanding of the phenomenon of what it means to be separated with the loved one deployed to military peacekeeping operation.

In the analysis the reactions of women to stressful experience are defined by emotional and physiological reactions. There is explored the emotional cycle of the deployment, i.e. the reactions in different stages of the deployment. Also the attention is addressed to the important factors, which influence the emotional state, such as telecommunication facilities enabling contact with the husband, the media or confidence between spouses. During the interviews observed stress concerning speaking about the phenomenon testify negative psychological consequences of it.

Coping resources include attitudes toward the phenomenon and availability of social support. The attitudes towards peacekeeping operations unfolded when the women were asked about the first reactions to the message about husband deployment and about the minds that had helped to overcome the separation. The social support indicates complex and dynamic interpersonal processes that serve as protection from development of physical and mental problems. Here the attention is focused on emotional, instrumental and informational supports during different stages of the deployment. So the lack of support for the family members and the difficulties of communication with other people are explored.

Doing analysis foreign studies on the topic of stressful experience of military family members are reviewed to determine the trends in this scientific field. There is also examined the issue about the number of operations that the husband had participated in his life-history and its impact on wives experience. But the core of the report remains going into the phenomenon as exhaustively as the time given to report would allow.