Military Veterans’ Satisfaction with and Ease of Adjustment to Civilian Life

Jennifer Coons & Daniel Ozer

Abstract

Military service members experience unique events that may impact their ability to successfully reintegrate into civilian life (Riviere, Merrill, Thomas, Wilk, & Bliese, 2012; Doyle & Peterson, 2005; Wintre & Ben-Knaz, 2000). There are few consistent findings relating to the potentially positive service effects on reintegration to civilian life. While some report that military experiences, such as combat exposure, relate to PTSD (Vogt et al., 2004), others report a buffering effect of combat that facilitates greater mental health in service members (Wood, Britt, Thomas, Klocke, & Bliese, 2011).

The current study was interested in assessing the potential positive effects of serving in the military on retrospective reports of ease of adjustment to civilian life and current satisfaction with life among United States military veterans.

Method

Data was collected through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk website, from 145 United States military veterans (112 males) from all branches of the service who had been separated from the service from 2 months to 20 years.

General Demographics:
Mean Age of participant was 35.34 (20-70) and the ethnicity break down was as follows: 75% European-American, 9% African-American, 8% Latino-American, and 4% Asian-American.

Military Demographics:
Mean length of service: 6.12 years, mean number of deployments: 2.34, mean time since discharge: 7.51 years, 55% served in a war zone, 30% reported to suffer from at least one symptom of PTSD, and military branch break-down was as follows: 47% Army, 17% Navy, 17% Air Force, 8% Marines.

General Positive Military Experience Items:
Military Experience Taught Me:

Positive Impact of Deployment(s) Items:
Deployment(s) had a positive impact on:
1. My finances, 2. My health, 3. My chances for promotion, 4. My ability to successfully reintegrate into civilian life (Riviere, Merrill, Thomas, Wilk, & Bliese, 2012; Doyle & Peterson, 2005; Wintre & Ben-Knaz, 2000). The satisfaction with life scale (Sener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). See Table 1 for correlations among constructs. Results of a path analysis indicated that when service members recollected on their time in the military, ease of adjustment to civilian life was only predicted by positive impact of deployment and perceived effectiveness of discharge training while current reports of satisfaction with life was predicted by all four military experience variables.

Additionally, the correlation between the retrospective report of ease of adjustment to civilian life and current report of satisfaction with life was dampened (r = .44 to .23) with the inclusion of the positive military experience variables. The results of this study provide evidence of positive effects of serving in the military on both recall of experiences on ease of adjustment to civilian life and current satisfaction with life that may help researchers to understand what experiences service members are remembering about their time in the military and how those experiences effect their current life satisfaction.

Table 1. Correlations among constructs in prediction model, ***p<.001, **p<.01.

Figure 1. Shows the fully saturated model of a path analysis, using maximum likelihood estimation, examining the direct effects of positive military experience, positive impact of deployments, effective discharge training, and frequency of contact on satisfaction with life and ease of adjustment to civilian life (with the outcome measures correlated).

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, **p<.10.

Results & Discussion

Ease of adjustment was measured with a single item and satisfaction with life was measured with the 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (Sener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). See Table 1 for correlations among constructs.

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References


