Dyadic Analysis of Depression and Couple Relationships Prior to Military Deployment

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Background

• Evidence of elevated depression and conflict during pre-deployment
• Evidence of pre-deployment characteristics predicting post-deployment well-being
• Relationships among depression, conflict resolution (Withdrawal and Problem solving), and relationship quality
Goals of the Study

• To examine how National Guard members’ and their intimate partners’ depression is associated with their own and each other’s conflict resolution and relationship quality during pre-deployment using an APIM model

• To examine whether relationship processes of service members with combat experience differ from those without it
Methods

• Sample – 237 National Guard Couples

• Combat (n=117) vs Non-Combat (n = 120) groups based on the Combat Exposure Scale (Brown et al., 2007)

• Measures
  – Depressive symptoms – CESD-10 (Andresen, Malmgren, Carter, & Patrick, 1994)
  – Conflict Resolution – Withdrawal and Problem Solving subscales from Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (Kurdek, 1994)
  – Relationship Quality
    • Marital Happiness (Locke & Wallace, 1959)
    • Marital Instability Index (Booth, Johnson, & Edwards, 1983)
  – Control variables – relationship length, number of children at home, combined annual income, and deployment status (deploying vs. non-deploying)
Results

Non-Warriors

GM Depression → GM Withdrawal: .40***
Partner Depression → Partner Withdrawal: -.33*
Partner Depression → GM Withdrawal: .40***
Partner Withdrawal → GM Relationship: -.64***
Partner Withdrawal → Partner Relationship: .40**
Partner Withdrawal → Partner Relationship: -.55***

Warriors

GM Depression → GM Withdrawal: .19*
Partner Depression → Partner Withdrawal: -.39**
Partner Depression → GM Withdrawal: -.98*
Partner Withdrawal → GM Relationship: -.25*
Partner Withdrawal → Partner Relationship: -.62***

Model fit:
\( \chi^2 (78) = 103.52, p = .03 \)
CFI = .93; RMSEA = .04
Results

Non-Warriors

GM Depression → GM Problem Solving: -0.31***
Partner Depression → Partner Problem Solving: -0.38**
Partner Problem Solving → GM Relationship: 0.43**
Partner Problem Solving → Partner Relationship: 0.51***

Warriors

GM Depression → GM Problem Solving: -0.19*
Partner Depression → Partner Problem Solving: -0.42***
Partner Problem Solving → GM Relationship: 0.24*
Partner Problem Solving → Partner Relationship: 0.36**

Model fit:

$\chi^2 (80) = 93.67, \ p = .14$
CFI = .96; RMSEA = .03
Discussion

• Is the differences due to a selection bias?
  – “Healthy warrior effect” (Haley, 1998)

• Would there be “healthy warrior spouse” effect or “healthy warrior couple” effect?