Renegotiation of Household Labor after a Military Deployment: A Communication Perspective

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METHOD (cont.)

PARTICIPANTS

- Full sample consisted of 50 National Guard service members who recently returned from a deployment
- 40 service members (80% of full sample) completed all four days of calls
- The subset sample comprised the 36 service members who reported talking about household tasks at all during the four-day period.

RESULTS

Daily averages of time spent completing household tasks (N = 50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Tasks</th>
<th>Total Minutes on Task</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Proportion Spent with Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dishes</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.08</td>
<td>17.81</td>
<td>10.25</td>
<td>0.50 (0.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing food</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.95</td>
<td>20.78</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td>0.57 (0.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning – vacuuming, dusting</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.04</td>
<td>18.32</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>0.41 (0.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working outdoors</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.73</td>
<td>78.46</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>0.34 (0.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small repairs around the house</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.51</td>
<td>19.85</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.25 (0.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.82</td>
<td>29.20</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>0.30 (0.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial matters</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.20</td>
<td>16.91</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>0.52 (0.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery shopping</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.81</td>
<td>14.82</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>0.52 (0.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running errands</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.73</td>
<td>31.07</td>
<td>16.25</td>
<td>0.52 (0.41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Full sample reported the time spent, in minutes, completing certain household tasks during the previous 24 hours.

Total minutes on tasks are average across all 4 days for each task.

Proportion spent with partner is the average of the daily proportion that service members completed tasks with their partners.

RESULTS

Summary of mediation regressions (n = 36)

- Prior to analyses, scores were averaged across all days of participation. Perception of fairness was transformed into a dummy code.
- Multiple regressions tested mediation among the subset sample.
- The link between fairness perceptions and closure was not significant.
- The full model accounted for significant variation (R² = .086, F(2, 33) = 0.08, p = 0.01).
- Post-hoc moderation was tested.
- The interaction term (Perceptions of Fairness x Conversation Satisfaction) was not significant (B = 0.35, p = n.s.)

DISCUSSION

- Neither hypothesis (H1 & H2) was supported: Perceptions of fairness in the division of labor were not associated with conversation satisfaction or feelings of closeness.
- Service members rarely spoke with their partners about the division of household tasks. When these conversations did occur, service members were highly satisfied with their interactions (M = 7.72, SD = 0.97).
- Service members generally regarded the division of labor as fair. When the division was reported as unfair, more service members reported that the division favored them rather than their partner.
- Preliminary descriptives indicated that service members completed 1 to 2 of their daily tasks with their partners. There was considerable variability in minutes spent completing tasks, however, both individually and as a couple.

LIMITATIONS

- All variables were collected at the same time point.
- The small sample size contributed to an underpowered study.
- Averaging scores limited our understanding of daily lability in the interactions in and evaluations of household routines.
- Reports from only one romantic partner understated the dyadic nature of household renegotiations.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Incorporate daily variation in household task performance, communication strategies, and relational exchanges.
- Investigate dyadic interdependence by including responses of significant others and spouses.
- Examine alternative pathways through which couples negotiate, distribute, and maintain roles during reintegration.
- Include other indicators (e.g., employment, childcare tasks, relationship characteristics) to broaden understanding of family functioning post-deployment.

IMPLICATIONS

- Tested anecdotal findings surrounding difficulties in renegotiations of household roles and responsibilities.
- Highlighted need for intervention centered around effective communication strategies after a transition.

REFERENCES