

Identifying how Leisure Influences Family Functioning of US Army Personnel

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U.S. Military Personnel

- Over 3.5 million serving in the U.S. Armed Forces
 - 2.14 million have deployed overseas (43% multiple deployments)
 - 60% married
 - 50% parents
- Deployment associated with multiple adverse outcomes
 - Individual outcomes:
 - PTSD, depression, poor sleep
 - Couple outcomes:
 - Lower marital satisfaction, higher marital conflict
 - Family outcomes:
 - Child maltreatment, financial instability

Baptist et al., 2011; Gibbs et al., 2007; Lapierre et al., 2007;
Peterson et al., 2008; U.S. DoD, 2014; U.S. IoM, 2013; Waliski et al., 2012



Current Study

Investigated *if* and *how* leisure is associated with military family functioning of active duty Army personnel

- Evaluated whether leisure is a protective factor for military families that have higher rates of transition and instability
- Identified factors that may systematically constrain family leisure among military families

Leisure

- According to Leisure Constraint Theory...
 - Fewer perceived leisure constraints will be associated with higher levels of family leisure, and, in turn, higher levels of family leisure will be associated with higher levels family functioning (Hypothesis 1).
- According to Effort Recovery Theory...
 - Leisure will serve as a buffer (moderator) to the relationship between constraints and family functioning (Hypothesis 2).

Measures

- **Structural Constraint**
 - PREPARE/ENRICH Financial Management Scale Profile
 - 10 items ($\alpha=.84$)
- **Interpersonal Constraint**
 - Relationship Warmth subscale of the Measures of Authoritative Parenting Scale
 - 6 items ($\alpha=.91$)
- **Intrapersonal Constraint**
 - Military Coping Scale from the Survey of Army Families V
 - 7 items ($\alpha=.92$)
- **Family Flexibility**
 - FACES IV Family Flexibility subscale
 - 7 items ($\alpha=.74$)
- **Family Communication**
 - FACES IV Family Communication subscale
 - 10 items ($\alpha=.93$)

Family Leisure Measure

- Combination of 5 items from the FACES IV thought to represent leisure engagement and satisfaction (Olson, Gorall, & Tiesel, 2006)
- To assess the suitability of these items as a single scale:
 - Exploratory factor analysis:
 - Scree plot indicated the structure of these 5 items was best explained as one factor
 - A one factor solution accounted for 49.57% of the total variance
 - All items loaded with standardized factor loadings ranging between .617 and .789
 - Exceeding the recommended cutoff value of .45
 - Internal consistency:
 - Cronbach alpha = .73

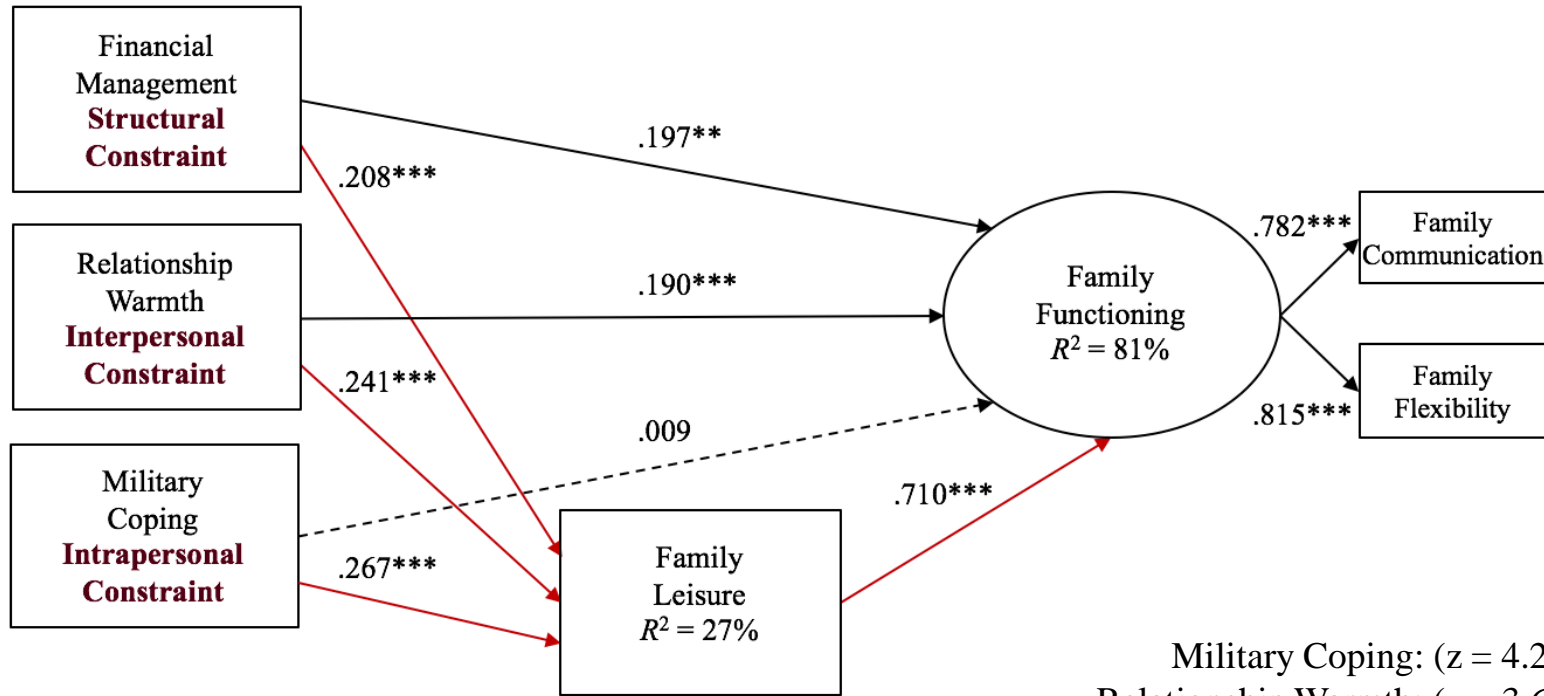


Analytic Sample

- Families of active duty army personnel ($N = 273$ families)
 - Cross sectional, secondary data
 - Families, Army Life, and Programs Study (Mancini, 2013)
 - Original data collected from Army Base in the Continental U.S.
- Inclusion criteria for current study
 - Service members who have previously been deployed at least once
 - In current relationship at least 2 years at time of survey
 - Had at least one adolescent child age between ages 11-18
- Analytic sample characteristics ($N = 222$ service members)
 - 58.4% between the ages of 36 and 45
 - 77.4% ranks E5 to E9
 - 92.3% male

Hypotheses 1 (leisure as a mediator)

Those that reported fewer constraints also reported higher family functioning indirectly through high levels of family leisure. Family leisure significantly mediated the links between leisure constraints & family functioning.

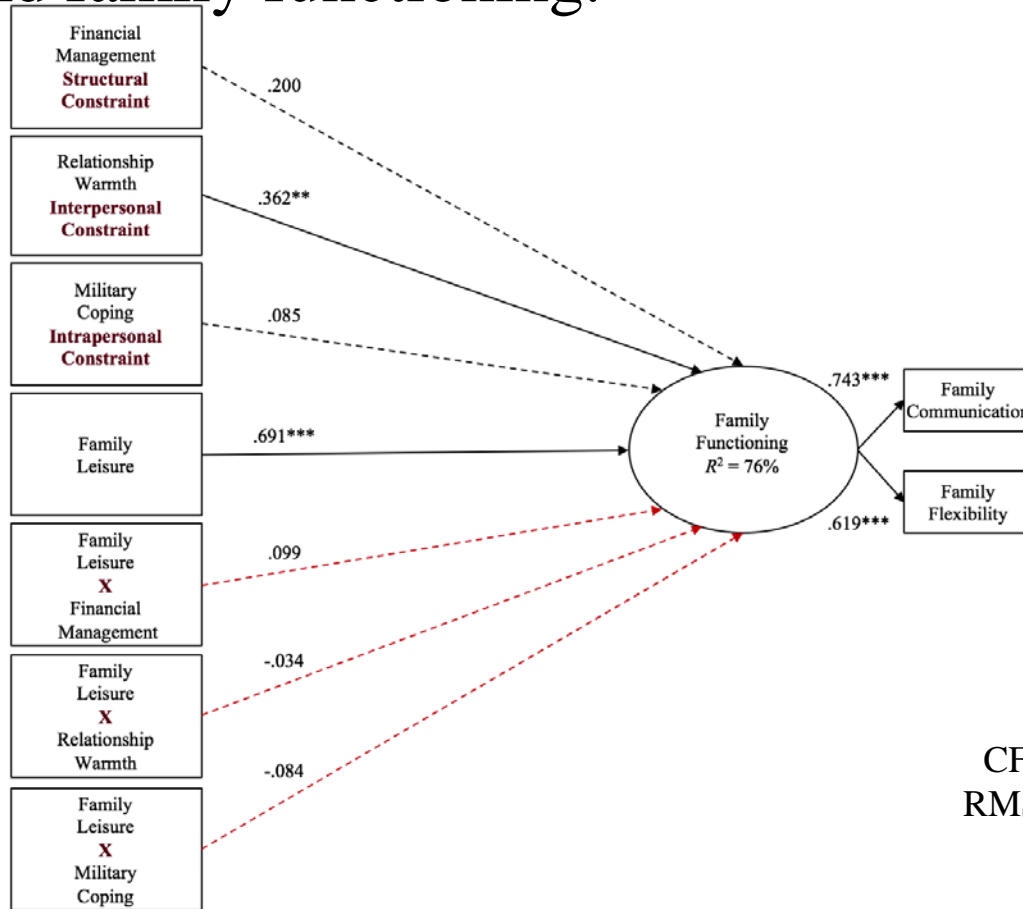


Model Fit
 $\chi^2 = 8.79$ ($df = 7$, $p = .268$)
 CFI = .996, NFI = .981, TLI = .984
 RMSEA = .034 and PCLOSE = .597

Sobel Test
 Military Coping: ($z = 4.24$, $p < .001$)
 Relationship Warmth: ($z = 3.63$, $p < .001$)
 Financial Management: ($z = 3.58$, $p < .001$)

Hypotheses 2 (leisure as a moderator)

Family leisure did NOT moderate the relationship between leisure constraints and family functioning.



Model fit

$$\chi^2 = 88.899 (df = 16, p < .001)$$

$$CFI = .876, NFI = .862, TLI = .575$$

$$RMSEA = .182 \text{ and } PCLOSE < .001$$



Discussion

- Those with fewer leisure constraints
 - Higher positive perceptions of financial management
 - i.e., lower perceived structural constraint
 - Higher positive perceptions of relationship warmth
 - i.e., lower perceived interpersonal constraint
- reported...
 - Higher levels of family leisure
 - Higher levels of family functioning
 - Family flexibility
 - Family communication



Limitations

- Cross-sectional
 - Caution is need with making causal inferences
- Military coping measure focused more on personal coping
 - Future intrapersonal constraint measures may consider focusing on relational coping strategies that are more salient to family functioning
- Family leisure scale not an established measure
 - Continued validation is needed
- Median split used to examine the moderating effect
 - Not necessarily High vs. Low family leisure for this sample



Headline News

- The combination of socially supportive leisure environments (family leisure) and supportive informal networks (the family network) are key to successful family functioning following major life transitions such as deployment
- So how do we help?
 - Promote family leisure as a mechanism that can be used in independently & in conjunction with formal support systems
 - Disseminate findings to leisure providers
 - Army Community Service & Army MWR
 - Promote positive family functioning
 - Consider all members of the military family
 - Significant others
 - Adolescent children





Headline News

- Micro-level perspective
 - Promote family life education to help inform military families about constraints
 - Disseminate findings to helping professionals
 - Military & Family Life Counseling Program
 - Volunteer within Family Readiness Groups
 - Provide information directly to service members and their families
- Macro-level perspective
 - Promote family impact seminars to help inform decision makers about key findings
 - Target elected officials, military leaders, etc.
 - Inform those in key positions how factors such as budgets & policies impact military families



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Family Leisure Questionnaire

We want to shift gears and learn more about the relationships with your immediate family. For each statement below, please click the circle that best describes your immediate family...

Responses are:

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Undecided

Agree

Strongly Agree

Although family members have individual interests, they still participate in family activities.

My family members like to spend some of their free time with each other.

Family members are involved in each other's lives.

*Satisfied with the amount of time you spend together as a family.

*Satisfied with family's ability to share positive experiences.

Notes. Questions identified by * follow a separate prompt than listed above. The separate prompt reads as: in this section, we ask about your satisfaction with different parts of your family life. Items come from FACES IV Balanced Cohesion subscale and Family Satisfaction subscale.



Correlation Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Financial Management	-						
2. Relationship Warmth	.403***	-					
3. Military Coping	.173**	.150*	-				
4. Family Leisure	.355***	.366***	.351***	-			
5. Family Flexibility	.433***	.389***	.260***	.707***	-		
6. Family Communication	.414***	.471***	.256***	.660***	.640***	-	
7. Depressive symptomology	-.271***	-.181**	-.507***	-.321***	-.280***	-.196**	-



Family Leisure Measure Scree Plot

