

Abstract

This study aimed to find out the relationship between stressors, coping strategies, and health (physical and psychological) of spouses of personnel in the Indian army by type of commissioning and number of field postings experienced/deployment. A concurrent embedded strategy of mixed method research design was used. Snowball sampling was used to collect the data after taking formal permissions from the army. The data was collected from the wives living in separated family accommodation (SFA) or field area family accommodation (FAFA), whose husbands are right now at field posting. Three categories of commissioning/ranks, Officer, JCO and NCO were included in the study from 10 stations in northern and western parts of India and two categories of deployments were studied: those who have faced deployment once and those who have faced deployment more than once. Total 370 participants were part of the research. A questionnaire, developed by the researcher to find out the (a) level of stress, (b) perception of stress, (c) coping strategies used and (d) physical and psychological health condition was used to collect the data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore in-depth factors like resilience, sexual needs, identity dilemmas and the major stressors faced by them and Cohen-Hoberman Inventory of Physical Symptoms (CHIPS) was used to check the health status. The findings of the research indicate no difference in the stress levels between the ranks, however, deployment had significant impact on stress levels and their health. First deployment is more stressful than the later ones. Use of emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies differed among ranks as well as deployment phases experienced, however, most of the participants used to problem-focused coping strategies. Emotion-focused coping strategies - humour and expressing emotions were also used by army spouses who had experienced more number of deployments. Health was significantly affected due to deployments but there was no

difference among ranks. The results of this study intend to help the army spouses who have yet not been able to adjust to the military setting and also civilians who struggle with difficult times in their life.

Keywords: Deployment, army spouses, stress, coping strategies, health, military families, separated accommodation.