AN EXPLORATION INTO THE IMPACTS OF LIFE SATISFACTION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT ON MILITARY WIVES’ SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE WHILE ENROLLED IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education School of Behavioral Sciences Liberty University 2021
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Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2021

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ABSTRACT

The military population is a unique segment of American society. Military members have specific obligations to their unit and fulfilling the mission. Even though military spouses do not wear the United States Armed Forces uniform, they play an integral direct, and supportive role in their partners’ lives. Military wives experience personal and professional challenges that influence their success in a graduate program. The purpose of this archival study is to examine the association between the independent variables, life satisfaction, and social support and the dependent variable, military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school. Life satisfaction is measured with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS); social support is evaluated with Military Spouse Deployment Survey, and religiosity is assessed by the Religious Commitment Scale-10 (RCI-10). Graduate school success is assessed by Grade Point Average (GPA). The theoretical framework for this study is the bottom-up life satisfaction theory. The current study used archival records comprising of 812 graduate students from one large Southeastern U.S. university. This study's three research questions are: What is the association between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school? What is the relationship between social support and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school? Is the relationship between the independent factors of life satisfaction and social support and the dependent variable successful performance while enrolled in graduate school moderated by religiosity?

Keywords: service member, military wives, life satisfaction, social support, military lifestyle, education, graduate school
Dedication

I dedicate my work, accomplishments, and my whole life to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, giver and sustainer of my life, and wellspring of my strength, joy, and hope. I thank the Lord that when I asked for wisdom, He generously gave to me every time. I praise and trust Him as “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14, King James Version).

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Marie Lumina LaRocque Louis, transformed to glory (10/20/1936-04/17/2012). I miss her humor, kindness, and overall loving care of my godly mother. She encouraged me from my early years to remain focused and determined in my academic pursuits. Most significantly, she modeled to me how to live righteously in all aspects of my life.

I also dedicate my work to my older brother Ted, now with his Lord in his heavenly home (09/27/72-07/12/2005). He was a source of humor and reliable protection to me as a young child. The world lost a genuinely kind soul.

To my devoted husband of 25 years, Paul, you remained my source of stability and a constant source of love, gentle wisdom, encouragement, and reality checks when I needed them the most. Even when you had your studies for Army Chaplaincy, you made sure you listened and helped me work through my struggles. Thank you for tireless and faithfully praying with me and for me. I thank the Lord for you and love you always.

To the intuitive and brilliant sweethearts, my daughters Myla-Danae and Malaeya, you amaze me every day. I love you both beyond words. Thank you for allowing me the time and space to work on my dissertation, alone time to rest and regroup, even when you wanted me to
spend time in a fun activity with you. You were my little reminder to log on to WebEx calls and to submit edits. My prayer is that you continue to remain close to the Lord Jesus Christ all your days.

To military wives who willingly choose to make enormous sacrifices to serve alongside their husbands while simultaneously being the persistent presence of stability for children in households, from the bottom of my heart, I say, Thank You!
Acknowledgments

I express profound thanks and appreciation to my dissertation chair, Dr. Frederick Volk, for providing generous and substantial guidance, support, and inimitable assistance throughout the strenuous dissertation process. You have been available and the constant source of dedication, motivation, and knowledge at various stages of this process. Your commitment to excellence made it possible for me to complete and defend my dissertation successfully. With much gratitude, I would like to articulate my thanks to my Committee Member, Dr. Mary Cate Guman. You have been insightful, a dedicated source of encouragement, and offered invaluable feedback to create the final dissertation product.

I want to express sincere thanks to my dear friend and confidant during my program, Dr. Tara M. Whitfield. Thank you for your inspiration, assistance, and motivation throughout the entire writing process.

Dr. Renee Foyou, my friend and fellow military wife, thank you for your prayers, selfless and abundant support during the most challenging days of my dissertation writing phases.

To my brothers and sisters, you cheered me on through the most challenging points of my studies. I am thankful for you and love you always. Finally, to all my relatives and friends, you never doubted me and believed that I would succeed, even when I doubted myself. Thanks for your showers of prayers and encouragement. Praise God, they worked!
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List of Abbreviations

Army Community Service (ACS)

Active Duty (A.D.)

All-Volunteer Force (AVF)

Department of Defense (DoD)

Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC)

Grade Point Average (GPA)

Governmental Issued Bill (G.I. Bill)

Military Spouses Career Advancement Accounts (MYCAA)

Military Spouse Preference (MSP)

Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB)

Multidimensional Scale Perceived Support (MSPSS)

(NCO) Noncommissioned Officer

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)

Permanent Change of Station (PCS)

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Temporary Duty (TDY)
World War I (WWI)

World War II (WWII)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Military families are a unique segment of American society. Compared to the general population, the United States armed forces, an all-volunteer force (AFV), comprise a small fraction of the general population, approximately 1% of the U.S. Population. As such, Caruth (2018) observes that individuals outside the military may not be aware of the specific demands placed on military members and their families. Therefore, civilians who are not connected to the military do not know the extent of their personal needs and experiences unless disclosed by them through various avenues like interviews, surveys, or personal interactions with them.

Wives play a vital role in their military spouses' careers, military readiness, and mission. Although the service members wear the armed forces' uniform, the entire military family serves (Rossiter et al., 2016). There are approximately 600,000 United States military spouses (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2017). Roughly 93% of the spouses are female (Southwell & Wadsworth, 2016). The military wives shoulder various responsibilities, including caring for the children in the absence of their husband, supporting husband, and mission (Clever & Segal, 2013).

Military service members receive fair wages with benefits, often higher than their civilian counterparts. However, some junior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) experience financial strain. Therefore, some military wives work outside the home to contribute to or supplement the household income (Kersey, 2013). Often employers are apprehensive of hiring military spouses due mainly to the possibility of the spouses moving to a new location soon after they begin work. Thus, they often work fewer hours and earn less income than civilian wives (Hosek & Wadsworth, 2013).
Military wives desire to advance their education and career (McBride & Cleymans, 2014; Runge et al., 2014). Due to the military lifestyle challenges, some wives face limitations in obtaining their career and educational goals. Markedly, the service member's military expectations and obligations create an environment where the wife seems to come secondary to the military and spouse's needs and wishes. These changes can cause considerable adverse outcomes for the wife’s family, mental health, employment and education, and general well-being (Ziff, 2020).

Previous studies have explored factors that affect military spouses, both male and female, in their desire to complete higher education. To date, no study has examined specific facets that may impact military wives’ pursuit of a graduate degree. To this end, this study seeks to analyze the influences of life satisfaction and social support on military wives’ pursuit of a graduate degree. The expectation is that these factors have varying negative and positive impacts on military wives’ success while enrolled in master’s and doctoral degree programs.

The subsequent section will provide information on military demographics, military wives' history, and military benefits to the civilian spouse. Further, this section describes the theoretical framework, the significance of the research, and the primary research questions.

**Background**

The military wife accepts her role of the support system for her husband, to be a homemaker, to care for the children and households, and be ready to change duty stations with the family every two to three years (Burke & Miller, 2018). The wife is fully invested in her husband’s military service. Hence, military needs and her husband’s career remain the priority for both the service member and the spouse. Before the 1980s, military wives did not have an incentive to pursue a career or higher educational goals (Harrell, 2001). As such, the military remained the
priority of the entire military family. However, as time passed, military expectations and protocol changed for spouses (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2017). Even so, lower junior enlisted military families face considerable financial distress living on the service member's single income (Hosek & Wadsworth, 2013).

**Military Family Demographics**

The military culture is an exclusive environment that distinguishes the military from civilian families (Redmond et al., 2015). In the military culture, the unit's needs, mission accomplishment, devotion to duty, and emotional restraint are paramount to Armed Forces members’ lives (Weiss & Coll, 2011). The military population includes Active Duty, Reserve, and Guard service members and their families (Clever & Segal, 2013). There are approximately 1,360,602 Active Duty, 801,714 Reserve and Guard, and 42,103 Coast Guard service members (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020). Early in their training, the recruits receive training from Drill Sergeants, so they begin to change their civilian identity and embrace the military warrior ethos mindset. The warrior ethos reinforces the unit's mission holds greater priority than the individual’s needs (Redmond et al., 2015).

There is unity in military training and culture. However, there are variations among armed forces members as well. Diversity factors within their culture could be personal or demographical (Lowe et al., 2013). Despite the difference from one service member to the next, certain established factors, including deployment, impact all military members and their families (Bonura & Lovald, 2015). Some military variations are because of branch, rank, geographic location, and years of services. The military branches are as follows: Army service members are Soldiers; Air Force service members are Airmen; Navy service members are Sailors; Marine Corps service
members are Marines; Coast Guard service members are Guardsmen (Strom et al., 2012); and Space Force service members are Guardians (Space Force, 2020).

**Historical View of Military Wives**

There are male military spouses. However, the overwhelming majority of military spouses (93%) are female (Southwell & Wadsworth, 2016). Starting from as early as the Civil War Era and prior, military wives have been supportive of their husbands and the military mission. Military wives stayed home, managed household responsibilities, and simultaneously struggled with negative emotions like isolation and anxiety when their husbands were on war frontlines (Bleser & Gordon, 2001). During that time, people often viewed military wives as “camp followers” who followed their military husbands. Nevertheless, these spouses had no specific privileges or rights of their own granted by the military (Kersey, 2013). Hence, their identity remained tied with their service member.

During the Civil War, military wives felt frustration, anxiety, loneliness, and isolation while their husbands were on the battlefield. The traditional military wife, particularly the officer wife, was expected to volunteer in her husband's career. They participated in symbolic and functional military duties, assignments, and promotions (Harrell, 2001). However, after World War II, the military stances about wives' roles and responsibilities began to shift. The military decision-makers and community began to embolden military wives to advance their education, rather than merely following their husbands’ careers (Kersey, 2013). Military wives have also been referred to as “trailing spouses” (Cooke, 2005; McNulty, 2012). The spouse is tied to the service member. Therefore, personal employment, education reality, and aspirations are generally unfulfilled due to military life demands on the entire family (Wilmoth & London, 2012).
Over the decades, military protocols have changed. Nevertheless, life has remained demanding for military families. One specific area that produces challenges to the entire family is conformity to military life. Military culture requires the service members and the whole family to adapt to military life to benefit the armed forces and their unit (Kelty, 2010). Enlisted and officer families encounter various challenges during their husbands’ military careers. The level of demands can be higher for an officer than NCO’s wives. More often than enlisted wives, contemporary officer wives feel the intense burden of volunteering to support their husbands' unit, family readiness, social event, and youth activities (Kelty, 2010). For instance, in the U.S. Airforce, the Key Spouses (K.S.) program is one military tool leaders employ. Specifically, certain spouses take on added responsibilities to support families in various aspects. These expectations negatively affect the wives’ overall well-being during deployment and their educational goals and attainment (Farrell, 2014).

**Satisfaction with Life**

Prior to WWII and Vietnam War periods, young Americans were being drafted to or joining the military to transition from youth to adulthood. Contrasting with contemporary career aspirations and military armed forces’ opportunities, individuals then often chose the military, not merely as an occupation but as a lifelong career (Kelty et al., 2010). That early mindset has now changed. Furthermore, military service and military culture impact family creation and development, including marriage, parenthood, timing, and structure (Kelty et al., 2010). Since many of the armed forces are now married, the wife's satisfaction is an essential component of their decision to remain in the military or return to civilian life (Lufkin, 2017). Consequently, military leaders consider spouse satisfaction a vital element of recruitment and readiness (Kersey, 2013).
Most military spouses perceive their connection to the military to be generally incompatible with their employment prospects, a perception which also has negatively impacted their life satisfaction; thus, military connection negatively impacts their competitiveness in the labor market and negatively impacts their satisfaction with life (Castaneda & Harrell, 2008). Mansfield et al. (2010) explain that the experiences and expectations associated with military deployment and single-parent responsibilities in the absence of their spouse can reduce marital satisfaction and decrease emotional health. Higher marital dissatisfaction, unemployment, divorce, and declining emotional health follow deployment cycles (Mansfield et al., 2010). Not surprisingly, these issues have harmful effects on overall life satisfaction.

Social Support

As discussed earlier, unlike civilian life, long periods of being a single parent, deployment, and frequent geographic changes are inherent to the military lifestyles (Ziff & Garland-Jackson, 2020). These events interrupt the social support systems of the spouse. However, instrumental, and emotional support from extended families and the community can buffer deployment influences (Chapin, 2011; Wadsworth & Southwell, 2010). The extent to which military families seek social support from relatives or others in their lives varies from one family to the next. Families with social support structures in place tend to do better than those who do not. These boundaries enhance resilience, family connectedness, and the openness to seek help and support when necessary (Riggs & Riggs, 2011).

Military families share particular experiences. Training, temporary duty (TDY), and deployment of the service member are aspects military families have in common. However, there are specific differences between Active Duty service members and their families and Reserve and National Guard. The Reserve and National Guard are often part of the local families near a
military installation. On the other hand, active-duty families live on or near the base, are attached to a unit, and report to their units daily (Paley et al., 2013). Notably, the change of duty station (PCS) applies to military service members on active duty status. The military's Reserve component is often described as “Citizen Soldiers” because they serve as part-time military members who also have civilian jobs. However, all service members receive training and readiness if called upon to Active Duty missions. Reserve and National Guard personnel can have active-duty orders for months or a few years during deployments, national emergency, or other military needs (Lane et al., 2012). An essential distinction between National Guard and Reservists is that during peacetime, the National Guard personnel report to the governor of their state of residence.

In contrast, Reservists, like Active Duty, answer to the President. However, the President maintains the right to mobilize National Guard, changing them to federal status. The units then fall under the Combatant Commander's authority, who directly answers to the President (National Guard, n.d.). The Army, specifically the National Guard, Reserve, and Active Army, work together to meet military needs (National Guard, n.d.). Despite the variances between military branches, the husbands and wives experience various ongoing military life challenges (Bonura & Lovald, 2015).

Social Support and Resilience

Married couple's lives are intimately linked with each other, especially in military marriages. The military offers supportive services, education opportunities, leadership, improved financial status, and even preferential hiring for service members and veterans. These services provide a buffer against some military issues like divorce, which the civilian population does not have (Wilmoth & London, 2012). Thus, these services enhance the military families’ resiliency. Ferrell (2014) found resiliency outcomes for families with children with special needs varied based
on whether the source of support was extended family, friend, neighbor, military, special needs support, or community. However, the conclusion showed that the higher the network support for military spouses, the higher their resiliency (Ferrell, 2014).

**Educational Pursuits**

Individuals intentionally pursue higher education to increase their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Caruth (2018) maintains that change must occur within the student to succeed in their educational pursuits and success. Since 1940, American earnings and levels of education have been increasing. In 1940, 24% of people aged 25 and older had a completed high school or higher. In 2017, the figure reached 90% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). This trend has continued for the last 70 years.

However, numerous other factors hinder military wives from advancing their education and career. Military spouses experienced a substantial shift in education and labor force participation towards the first decade of the twenty-first century. Kersey (2013) reports that in 2011, 66% of the 711,375 military spouses earned less than 42% of their civilian counterparts. Despite this apparent marginalization in salary, military spouses continue to persevere in education and career fields. Military spouses are educated, and many pursue certification and professional licensure in various areas (Kersey, 2013). For military wives, issues such as financial limitations often dampen the student’s willingness to begin and continue the educational journey. Wives are tied to their service member husbands’ identity and status, rank, and military service (Ziff & Garland-Jackson, 2020; Kelty et al., 2010). Therefore, wives' ongoing expectations are to participate and contribute to military life. These changes limit wages, career, and educational aspirations. Their journey to a master’s degree or doctorate includes other factors such as PCS. Their civilian counterpart does not have to overcome such a hurdle to pursue a graduate degree (Clever and Segal, 2013).
Education can lead to personal and innate development and growth, economic success, and competitiveness in the employment market for people from many cultures (Teowkul et al., 2009). More than 85% of military spouses are working on or have obtained a college degree (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2018). Military wives pursue and complete a graduate degree for reasons such as feelings of contentment about their life, a sense of accomplishment, and enhanced achievement of their financial status and career-related goals (Friedman et al., 2015). Caruth (2018) explains obtaining a bachelor’s degree increases an individual’s earning potential. One would expect a much higher return on a doctoral degree. The United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2015) note that in 2013, the median annual earnings of young adults ages 25 to 34, with less than a high school degree was $23,900, and $50,000 with a bachelor’s degree (Caruth, 2018).

Success in Graduate School

Clever and Segal (2013) conclude military family members make incredible sacrifices to support their service members and their families. The contributions of the wives extend beyond the military to civilian sectors of the communities. The wars and the first line of defense, which they willing to carry, rest on the military wives' shoulders. Despite these tasks and expectations, military wives continue to celebrate their personal accomplishments and find avenues to advance their career and educational goals (Clever & Segal, 2013).

Life stressors can be an obstacle to maintaining these essential characteristics. Interruptions in education can obstruct progress toward graduation. Frequent geographic relocations are another possible obstacle for wives completing their degrees (Bonura & Lovald, 2015). Moreover, PCS introduces hindrances to military wives acquiring the internship hours and gaining necessary training and work experience (Friedman et al., 2015). For the military wife, this
hindrance could be her husband’s deployment. Despite these interruptions, military spouses are independent, mobile, socially adaptable, and resilient, which are critical qualities to succeed in life (Runge et al., 2014).

Some of the characteristics of successful students outlined by Caruth (2018) include student determination, motivation, dedication, and direction. The rigors of graduate school can impact all these factors. Researchers have found GPA to be a valid measure of graduate success (Stewart, 2015; LeCrom et al., 2016). GPA refers to an average of students' academic studies performance during their coursework (Hall et al., 2017). For this current study, the marker of success in graduate school satisfactory grade point average (GPA), 3.0. GPA was measured on a continuous 4.0 scale.

**Theoretical Support**


First, the bottom-up theory suggests that life satisfaction results from various conditions and situations (Heller et al., 2004; Pavot & Diener, 2008). Some of the domains included in this perspective are family, income, housing, job, leisure, income, and one’s group. Notably, life satisfaction is a complex theory to comprehend based on an individual's perspective. Thus, life satisfaction is subjective and individual-specific. Although life satisfaction is not tantamount to happiness, life satisfaction influences an individual’s happiness and varies depending on factors that a person deems to be essential components of life (Erdogan et al., 2012). The second theory, the top-bottom theory, refers to the broad cognitive and personality factors like introversion,
extraversion, positivity, and neuroticism that influence satisfaction with life (Diener et al., 2003). This study employs the bottom-up approach to life satisfaction as the theoretical framework.

Research has often focused on both military service members and their families. From this research, the information and insight gained from the military wives' perspective (how the transition to the various roles, flexibility, coping, and resilience with military life) can help the military leaders and Department of Defense (DoD) augment current services offered to military wives. More specifically, the knowledge attained, and actions implemented by DoD and military leaders can help future and current military wives’ success in graduate school. Additionally, since there are limited studies on military wives, the information examined in this study will add to current scholarly data on military wives' experiences, their coping abilities, their struggles, and their success in graduate school.

**Problem Statement**

The military culture and life profoundly influence military wives in various ways. As such, military wives face many challenges in their daily lives due to the demands and expectations of the military lifestyle (Redmond et al., 2014). The studies investigating military families have not included life satisfaction and social support impacting military wives and their success in a graduate program. Although an integral part of their husbands’ career success and the military, military wives do not often receive the support they require to attain personal and professional success.

Because service members place the military and their demands and obligations above their personal needs and families, they have specific barriers to life satisfaction, social support to educational pursuit and success, and overall well-being. Additional research is needed to gain a more in-depth understanding of military wives' particular needs in facets of life satisfaction and
social support received from family, friends, professional and community sources. Current published studies emphasize issues such as deployment directly affecting service members. However, scholarly research has not focused on how the military lifestyle impacts military wives’ life satisfaction, social support, and graduate school GPA.

**Purpose Statement**

This archival study aimed to fill the gap in current research on the relationship between military life satisfaction and social support on military wives’ success in graduate school. The study aimed to investigate the relationship between life satisfaction and social support on military wives' success while enrolled in graduate school. The data examined in this study augmented knowledge existing in the literature to understand better the motivations and hindrances of military wives’ success while enrolled in a graduate program. Accordingly, understanding the effects of life satisfaction, social support, and military culture on military wives' success in graduate school can lead to positive interventions and additional support for military wives who want to pursue graduate-level education.

**Significance of the Study**

Many studies have explored the demographics and issues of military service members and spouses, including income, education, race, ethnicity, gender, and mental health (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2019). To date, no study has analyzed the association between life satisfaction social support on military wives’ pursuit of a graduate degree. By identifying the connection between the variables, one can have a more precise concept of the military lifestyle and intervene to assist wives who have higher education goals. An analysis of the findings contributes to researchers and other stakeholders understanding of how the study variables are linked with the difficulties in the military wife’s successful performance in graduate school.
Another possible outcome is that mental health practitioners and human service helpers will have more reliable information on various consequences of military life on individual and family life, mental health, motivation, marital and life satisfaction, and educational success. Strom et al. (2012) note that cultural competency is an essential aspect of delivering services. Markedly, clinicians and other human service workers will more effectively serve military families when the practitioners acquire a complete view of military culture through the eyes of those who serve and their primary support system, namely their wives (Hall, 2012). In a similar vein, Rossiter et al. (2016) suggest that anyone who deals with the military community needs to know the military culture. Familiarity and appreciation of the beliefs, rituals, norms of behavior, language and code of conduct are essential for those interested in serving military families competently.

This information will include developing best practices for military families, especially in higher education settings. Bonura and Lovald (2015) argue that comprehending military culture's uniqueness is imperative for educational institutions to provide a welcoming and suitable environment for military service members and families to succeed. Bonura and Lovald (2015) suggest higher learning institutions will serve military spouses better if they seek to understand better how to support their wives during their pursuit of higher education. One tangible way the universities may support military spouses is to offer educational and career options when spouses are moved to a different duty station. Furthermore, the universities with an overall welcoming attitude and atmosphere to the service members, should seek to understand the military culture and legislative regulations, and how military personnel's procedures provide service and family members increased chances of success in their degree programs. Consequently, the wives should receive more relevant and practical personal and professional support from the organizations such as the DoD, which benefits military families and local communities, and society by extension.
The current archival quantitative study seeks to fill in a gap and shed light on the influences of life satisfaction and social support on military wives’ success in graduate school. Some of the struggles of military wives are documented in the academic literature. The data gathered helped inform best practices of professional services like mental health practitioners and educational institutions on how to better accommodate and serve the military wives as prospective students, including those currently pursuing advanced degrees. As a result, as a population, despite their husbands' branch, rank, years of service, and other specific differences, military wives may no longer be ignored and marginalized. They continue to support their husbands to meet their military obligations and service to the country.

**Research Question(s)**

This researcher has identified a gap in the current literature on life satisfaction and social support on military wives’ successful graduate school performance based on the scholarly resources reviewed. Therefore, the following research questions are warranted for this archival study.

**RQ1:** What is the association between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school?

**RQ2:** What is the relationship between social support and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in a graduate degree?

**RQ3:** Is the relationship between the independent factors of life satisfaction and social support and the dependent variable successful performance while enrolled in graduate school moderated by religiosity?
Definitions

1. **Active Duty Service-Members** - U.S. military service members who are serving on active duty status. (Title 10). These service members' priority is the military. They can be living either on a military installation within the Continental United States or other locations overseas or deployed in a combat zone (Bonura & Lovald, 2015).

2. **Civilian** – An individual who is not a service member or not married to a member of the armed forces (Meadows et al., 2016)

3. **Deployment** - A defined period ranges from 3 to 15 months when the service members are separated from their family due to the military's needs. (Agazio, 2014).

4. **Family Readiness** - Refers to the ability of family members to build and sustain strengths and resilience under the demands placed on them by a military service job or career (Orthner & Rose, 2003)

5. **Life Satisfaction** - Generally describes an individual's global evaluation of their quality of life, based on their specific criteria (Diener et al., 1985).

6. **Military Culture** - Encompasses the rituals, ceremonies, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the military personnel’s life (Hall, 2018).

7. **Military Family Member** - An individual who lives with an active duty service member, Guard, Reserve, veteran, and retiree to include spouses and children under 26 years of age. Previously Military family members were referred to as military beneficiaries (Bonura & Lovald, 2015).

8. **Military Husband** - A man who is not in the military and married to a female service member between 18–46 years old who is on active duty in the United States Armed Forces (Hisnanick & Little, 2015).
9. Military spouse – A person who is married to a United State military service member (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2017)

10. Military Wife – A woman who is not in the military and married to a male service member of the United States Armed Forces (Hisnanick & Little, 2015).

11. Permanent Change of Station (PCS) – When an active duty service member receives official military orders and relocates for new assignments with their family (Burke & Miller, 2018).

12. Rank - Refers to the military member’s pay grade and level of responsibility level (Clever & Segal, 2013).

13. Social Support - refers to the availability of individuals on whom one relies and from whom one feels loved and valued (Sarason et al., 1983)

14. Temporary Additional Duty/Temporary Duty (TAD/TDY) – Refers to a member of the U.S. armed forces travel or assignment in a location other than the permanent duty station (Kersey, 2013).

15. The United States Armed Forces - Refers to the United States' military forces, which comprise the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Navy, Marine Corps, and Space Force.

16. Warrior Ethos – This is the mindset of mission and unit first. Defeat, quitting, or leaving one member behind, is unacceptable (Redmond et al., 2015).

Summary

U.S. military families live and function in a workplace fraught with demands and in an environment where service member readiness is closely intertwined with their spouses’ support. Issues such as multiple deployments, the threat of service members injury or death, geographic Mobility, and extended duty hours are commonplace in the military culture (Bowen et al., 2013). Chapter one provided an overview of the current study, history, and demographics of military
families. Also discussed were the theoretical framework, purpose statements, the significance of
the study, and the research questions. The predictor variables for this study are life satisfaction and
social support; the criterion variable is successful performance while enrolled in graduate school.
Finally, the data and argument supporting the study's significance and key terms used throughout
the paper were provided.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

There is an abundance of academic literature focusing on various aspects of military life, including service member deployments and the consequences of distinct deployment phases for the family. Added to these issues in scholarly sources is the impact of economic hardships and permanent change of duty station (PCS) on military spouses (both male and female) educational and career attainment (Cooney, 2011; Meadows et al., 2015; Mailey et al., 2018). However, there is a dearth of data about the connections between life satisfaction and social support on the military wives’ pursuit of advanced educational goals and attainment.

Consequently, this archival study examines the relationship between life satisfaction, social support, and military wives’ successful graduate school performance. Investigating the scholarly articles’ results around these two main factors helped determine if religiosity has a moderation effect on the independent variables life satisfaction and social support and dependent variable successful performance in graduate school. The three research questions for this study are: What is the association between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school? What is the relationship between social support and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school? Is the relationship between the independent factors of life satisfaction and social support and the dependent variable successful performance while enrolled in graduate school moderated by religiosity? The study utilized the theoretical framework of the bottom-up approach to life satisfaction. This life satisfaction theory proposes that a person’s satisfaction with life occurs because of several different factors (Heller et al., 2004; Pavot & Diener, 2008).
The information gathered and evaluated in this chapter was a vital component of the foundation for determining the connections between the variables of life satisfaction and military wives' quest for a graduate degree comprising of master’s and doctorates. Most of the sources in this chapter are from the last 10 years of scholarly research. However, seminal works, historical data, reports, and articles from reputable sources have also been included to add valuable insights and contexts into the subjects covered in this paper. Since there is a limited body of current literature focusing on military wives, this literature review consists of all military spouses, including males and females.

Exploring current relevant sources surrounding topics related to the military culture and lifestyle offers a researcher a stronger sense of social support's impacts on the military wives' academic pursuits. With the backing from current empirically supported sources, the main topics under consideration in this literature review are the theoretical framework of the study, the uniqueness of military culture, geographic Mobility in the military, the background of the military family life, the military wife, life satisfaction, social support, educational and career pursuits of adult learners, academic challenges and opportunities of military wives, and distance learning options for military wives. Included is a summary of the topics and how they relate to the present study.

**Theoretical Framework**

Academic resources posit life satisfaction encompasses several specific components. As such, life satisfaction refers to a total of all the areas of life (Headey et al., 1992; Cummins, 1996). Currently, there is no consensus on all the required domains which comprise life satisfaction. However, Diener (1984) proposed two general life satisfaction approaches; namely the bottom-up and the top-down. Scholars have adopted both satisfaction with life approaches during the past
decades (Pavot & Diener, 2008; Erdogan et al., 2012; Lachmann et al., 2017). The bottom-up approach is the theoretical framework of this paper. This theory proposes the overall life satisfaction is a function of various situations and conditions (Heller et al., 2004; Pavot & Diener, 2008). To expound on this perspective, theorists include numerous factors, such as satisfaction with self, family, housing, income, job, leisure time, health impact, and general life satisfaction within the domains (van Praag et al., 2003; Loewe et al., 2014; Kuykendall et al., 2015).

The literature further explains the bottom-up suggests that life satisfaction is not merely additive (Rojas, 2006). Erdogan et al. (2012) maintain that individuals hold differences in how they view different life satisfaction domains. Hence, life satisfaction is subjective to each person, making the concept of life satisfaction complex to understand. Therefore, life satisfaction for individuals may be due to their emphasis on personal life preferences over another area (Erdogan et al., 2012).

Different terms refer to specific aspects of life satisfaction. The terms segmentation, compensation, and spillover effects describe the intricacies between distinct life satisfaction elements and overall life satisfaction (Rojas, 2006). Segmentation implies that adjustments in one area have no impact on an individual’s overall life satisfaction (Erdogan et al., 2012). The compensation effect indicates a negative impact, as opposed to spillover, which implies a positive relationship between life satisfaction factors and overall life satisfaction (Rojas et al., 2006).

Contrasting the bottom-up theory is a top-down theory, which proposes that personality dispositions, including extraversion or neuroticism, could determine life satisfaction (Lachmann et al., 2018). Individual interpretations of the domains assess their satisfaction with life (Diener, 1984). For instance, if a person has a high attachment motivation, they will place a higher assessment on work and family differently than someone who places value on achievement (Rojas,
This approach proposes the dispositional factors establish the degree to which an individual feels satisfied with life. One perspective of research findings suggests that there are positive links between extraversion and life satisfaction. The other proposes the association between neuroticism and life satisfaction is usually negative (Diener, 1984).

Life satisfaction varies within cultural contexts. Markedly, people focus on their feelings, goals, and interest above their family or friends in an individualistic culture. In contrast, people in collectivist cultures emphasize the harmonious relationship with others rather than their interests or personal goals. Findings of studies suggest that people in individualist cultures experience higher life satisfaction than those in pluralistic cultures due to the individuals taking responsibility for setting and reaching their goals and their failures and success along the way (Schimmack, 2002).

Both approaches to life satisfaction have empirical support. However, as alluded to earlier, this current archival study leans toward the first perspective, the bottom-up approach. The military wives represented in this current study live in an individualist society, where multiple factors, including but not limited to personal motivations, financial constraints, and service member deployment, frequent geographic relocation, assistance from one’s own internal resources, external support, and financial stressors all contribute to one’s level of life satisfaction (Lester & Flake, 2013).

Lachman et al. (2017) found specific life satisfaction variables such as leisure and personality influence overall life satisfaction. Further, life satisfaction variables can change based on cross-cultural effects. Although the research conducted by Lachman et al. (2017) adds to the current literature on life satisfaction, the study had a few limitations. One such drawback is the study could not determine a causal relationship among the variables included. Additionally, the
data collection was completed through participants’ electronic devices like tablets, personal computers, and smartphones. This data collection approach limited the eligible participants who were unfamiliar with or reluctant to use or share information on such electronic devices.

**Related Literature**

The two main variables for this study are life satisfaction and social support. Understanding the influences of social support and life satisfaction on military wives’ pursuit of a graduate degree is crucial to this research. The uniqueness of the military lifestyle; the background of a military family; the military wife; educational pursuits of adult learners; persistence in education; barriers to the pursuit of military wives’ education and career pursuits; academic challenges and opportunities of military wives; and distance learning options for military wives are the primary headings examined in this chapter.

**The Uniqueness of the Military Culture**

The United States Armed Forces comprises six branches: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Space Force, consisting of all-volunteer members since 1973. Defense Manpower Data Center (2020) reports the total number of service members in each of the branches further divided into Active Duty, Reserve, and Guard (from Army, Navy, Marines, and Airforce), and Coast Guard. There are 1,360,602 Active Duty, 801,714 Reserve and Guard, and 42,103 Coast Guard military personnel (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020).

The military population is comprised of Active Duty, Reserve, and Guard service members and their families. Clever & Segal, 2013). Within the military, there is a distinction between the Active duty members (full-time service members), and Reservist and Guard military service members who hold civilian jobs and report for military duty once a month or when called for training active service.
In the military mindset, the needs of the unit supersede those of the individual. The goals of the mission, devotion to duty, and emotional restraints are core values taught and upheld in the military (Weiss & Coll, 2011). The military members undergo ongoing training for readiness for the mission. Military culture, at its core, is authoritarian rather than democratic. Moreover, the service member vows absolute commitment to the military and the service member’s unit, secrecy, and sometimes living in isolation for extended periods apart from the civilian society (Hall, 2016). Notably, the military has a tremendous influence on the life of service members. Moreover, military culture encompasses the warrior ethos mentality of stoicism, which means military personnel refrains from expressing their emotions or feelings openly since another military member may interpret such expressions as showing weakness (Hall, 2016).

Markedly, every military branch embraces its specific mission and core values that impact the service members' mindset and behavior. The Air Force’s core values comprise integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all; the Army values are loyalty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage; the Navy, and Marine Corps, share the same fundamental values of honor, courage, and commitment. The Coast Guard members, core values are honor, respect, and devotion to duty (Redmond et al., 2015).

**Geographic Mobility in the Military**

Active duty service members and families move from one military installation to the next, termed permanent change of station (PCS), approximately every two or three years (Mailey et al., 2018). Due to the military's authoritarian structure, service members have limited input in their duty station assignment. In order words, the needs of the military generally dictate the geographic location of service members. As such, these moves may not necessarily accommodate the service members' personal preferences or their families’. Therefore, in many cases, the family members do
not know their next duty station's location until the service member receives official orders, often a few weeks before the move date (Bellou & Gkousgkounis, 2015).

Clever and Segal (2013) write active duty service members and families are typically linked directly to military installations. Moreover, active duty military families move, on average, 2.4 times more than their civilian counterparts. The next duty station may be in the continental United States or overseas. Guard and Reserve families are typically not required to move, and their residence and relocation patterns are more like those of civilian families.

The highest concentrations of active duty military service members are on the East coast, the South, California, and Hawaii. Approximately 82% of active duty personnel are within the continental United States. Clever and Segal (2013) report 5% Hawaii, Alaska, and U.S. territories; 5% in Europe, 4% in the Pacific and East Asia; less than 1% in Central and South America, and North Sub-Saharan Africa; and 3% are in undistributed locations including Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, South Korea and undisclosed locations (Clever & Segal, 2013). When military service members are sent overseas, even to non-combat areas, most family members stay stateside. Of the two million total military dependents, 94% reside in the U.S. and territories (Clever & Segal, 2013).

**Background of the Military Family**

Military service members, on average, marry and begin a family earlier than their civilian counterparts. Some of the reasons for this occurrence include financial incentives, such as increased housing allowances, improved living options outside the barracks, and medical insurance for married military couples (Leidy, n.d). Lufkin (2017) reports that 75% of service members will be married by the time they have served for eight years. In a similar vein, Trump et al. (2015) found 56% of military members are married. As part of their duty, as alluded to earlier, military
members are called to serve in various capacities within the continental United States and overseas despite their marital status. Military personnel and families understand and accept that military mission, military demands, and obligations are priorities for service members (Clever & Segal, 2013). Additionally, since September 11th, 2001, approximately 2.6 million United States military members (the majority with children) have been deployed multiple times to support ongoing conflicts in the Middle East (Borah & Fina, 2017; Steenkamp et al., 2018).

Military couples are like other couples in many aspects. They experience marital issues and divorce. However, military couples tackle unique challenges that their civilians do not face, such as deployments and family separations (Bakhurst, 2017). The military lifestyle is also demanding for military personnel and their families (Lim & Schulker, 2010). The four unique aspects of military life which also result in stress for the entire family discussed by Agazio et al. (2014), are family separation, also known as deployment, geographic Mobility, the ongoing fear of the service member’s injury or death, and the individual’s need to adapt to the military lifestyle. Hall (2016) adds deployment stages may last for several months. Civilian counterparts rarely, if at all, face similar concerns in their daily lives. The results of a study done with National Guard soldiers found the transition stages of pre-and post-deployment with Army National Guard soldiers impact all family members' emotional well-being (Collins et al., 2016). Deployment occurs with tremendous personal and marital sacrifice (Merolla, 2010). Further, Hall (2016) observe that both married partners experience a range of feelings of fear, anger, and depression, which negatively impacted their relationship and well-being.

Researchers have employed instruments such as Military Lifestyle Demand to measure various aspects of military life's meaning. Some areas included in this measure are geographic Mobility, the frequency of the family moves; deployment and its impact on the family and the
marriage; the anxiety for her husband’s well-being, including the possibility of injury or death that the wives experience when the husband is away from home or serving overseas in a combat zone (Bellou & Gkouskgounis, 2015).

Military service members have engaged in wars and conflicts for many decades. However, society began to acknowledge the essential contribution of military personnel during World War II, and most recently, after the events of 9/11 (Hisanick & Little, 2015). The general health, well-being, and success of military families are a priority for the military and government. Presidents, including Barack Obama, maintain military families’ support should remain a top national security policy priority (Clever & Segal, 2013). With this background and military culture mandates and lifestyle, to thrive, military family members need to adapt to the military lifestyle (Agazio et al., 2014).

**The Military Wife**

As explained in the previous section, having some insight into the military culture fosters a clearer perspective of the military wife's life. Borah and Fina (2016) conducted a qualitative study with a total of 22 active duty and veteran military wives to evaluate the military lifestyle from the spouse's perspective. The findings add a valuable contribution to the current literature. For instance, some of the study spouses stated that individuals interested in learning about military culture should not merely focus on generalities they may expect from the military. Instead, they should focus on the inner workings of the military lifestyle and culture. Borah and Fina (2016) observe that overall, the military wives articulated they want the civilian world to view them as competent individuals within their household and the rest of military culture, not as wives of low intellect.
A military wife is a woman over 18 years of age, not in the military, married to a United States Armed Forces member (Hisnanick & Little, 2015). In 2018, there were approximately 641,439 military wives (The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2018). About one-half of military service members are married. Noticeably, most of the military spouses are female (Marnocha, 2012). The roles and expectations of the military wife are extensive (Harrell, 2001).

The military wife performs various ongoing duties and responsibilities for her family. She serves in military-related organizations and the broader community while being the constant presence in her family (Marnocha, 2012). Preparing and focusing on the mission is of the utmost importance to military families. Thus, despite the numerous obligations of the military wife, Clever and Segal (2013) conclude the military wife's central role revolves around supporting her husband and his mission while simultaneously managing the household. The entire family then has an added responsibility to help the service member to prepare and maintain readiness to complete his mission (Wadsworth & Southwell, 2011).

**Historic and Current Changes of Military Wives**

From a historical view from the Civil War Era and prior, military wives have played a crucial role in their spouse’s lives. Bleser and Gordon (2001) explain that military wives felt frustration, anxiety, loneliness, and isolation during the Civil War, while their husbands were on the battlefield. There are also documented incidents where some wives prayed while waiting for their husbands to return home from war (Bleser & Gordon, 2001). The conditions and communication channels, standards, and frequency were different from today. During the Civil War, the spouses communicated, mainly via mail. Besides, there were long gaps between the time one spouse wrote the letters to when the other received them. The wives longed to receive news about their husband’s and unit progress during that time. Commanders’ wives assumed unique
burdens and petitioned for updates on their husbands’ welfare (Bleser & Gordon, 2001). Similarly, the husbands also anticipated news from their wives and the developments with their children and other home-related news. Akin to contemporary military wives, Civil War wives assumed both mother and father's roles while the service member was fulfilling his military obligations.

Before 1988, the military demanded the family accommodate them in more ways than today. The traditional military wife participated in activities and events regarding her husband’s assignment, duties, and promotions. For instance, officer wives, who were civilians, had a significant influence on official military functions and even officer evaluations. The military command expected the wives to host events and ceremonies and supported their husbands' units in various ways (Harrell, 2001). Sometimes wives were discouraged from having jobs or embarking on the journey of their professional endeavors. They were expected to volunteer numerous hours with the military (Harrell, 2001). The officer's wife grew into an extension of the officer. As such, the military remained the priority of the entire military family.

The military lifestyle involves incredible sacrifices for both service members and wives. Eubanks (2013) describes the spouse as often viewed from her relationship with the service member spouse rather than as her own person within the military perspective. This practice refers to the military's emphasis on the armed services personnel rather than the nonmilitary spouse. In the 1980s, the military began to view wives as distinct from their service member spouses in some regards. However, the benefits and services the wife receives are tied to the service member's spouses. For instance, the military spouse needs to provide the service member’s identification, like his social security number and other information, before receiving medical care. This specific practice can lead to frustration in some spouses, who feel they do not have their own identity.
Nevertheless, Gleiman and Swearengen (2012) emphasize that the contemporary military spouse comprises a diverse group of individuals who make significant intellectual and market capital contributions. Eubanks (2013) states that military wives have increased frustration and reduced life satisfaction because the military officials' perspective mostly ignores military spouses' identities. Therefore, Eubanks (2013) proposes that while the focus is on the service member spouse, the wives would do well to find other opportunities to pursue their purpose in life, thus improve their satisfaction.

Throughout the years of her husband’s service, the life of the military wife is writhed with uncertainty, new responsibilities, varied experiences, and excitement. Eubanks (2013) observes that successful military spouses display courage, honor, and commitment to adjusting to the military lifestyle's rigors. They also embrace certain beliefs and principles, which allow them to become resilient in their lives (Blakely et al., 2012). Military families develop practical tools to face and endure numerous hardships generated by the lifestyle (Skomorovsky et al., 2014).

**Life Satisfaction**

Generally, life satisfaction refers to a global assessment of an individual’s quality of life according to their chosen criteria (Diener et al., 1985). Life satisfaction consists of several domains. However, these domains are weighted on significance based on the individual (Rojas, 2006). Various theorists propose similar domains, as well as variations in their approach. Flanagan (1978) suggest 15 components of life satisfaction as follows: material well-being and financial security, health and personal safety, relations with a spouse having and raising children, relationships with parents, siblings, and other relatives, relationships with friends, activities related to helping or encouraging other people, activities associated with the local and national government, intellectual development, personal understanding occupational role (job), creativity
and personal expression, socializing passive and observational recreational activities, and active and participatory recreational activities. Headey and Wearing (1992) suggest marriage, leisure, health, friendships, sex life, work are standard living components. In contrast, Cummins (1996) proposes seven life satisfaction domains: health, safety, material well-being, productivity, emotional well-being, intimacy, and community. While there is no consensus on the exact number of parts that make up life satisfaction, the researchers acknowledge the associations between life satisfaction and the domains of satisfaction are intricate.

Factors that Influence Life Satisfaction

Several factors influence individual perceived and actual life satisfaction. Pavot and Diener (2008) suggest a combination of personality traits, personal experiences, life events, and cultural norms influence an individual’s life satisfaction. An individual’s childhood upbringing, emotional intelligence, and education help them cope with stress. Consequently, effective management of stress positively impacts life satisfaction (Ruiz-Aranda et al., 2014). From a sample of 264 university students, Ruiz-Aranda et al. (2014) found a positive relationship between high emotional intelligence, low perceived stress, and life satisfaction. The main explanation for this conclusion is emotionally intelligent individuals ascribe lower stress levels to life situations. Consequently, they enjoy greater happiness and satisfaction with life. Employment also contributes to life satisfaction in military spouses. Blakely et al. (2012) explain that spouses have higher life satisfaction when they are employed and engage in volunteer activities than when they are not.

Marital Satisfaction

There have been dramatic shifts in the institution of marriage in the United States in recent decades. For the last century, America has seen a decline in marriage, as well as an increase in individuals choosing to cohabitate or marry later in life (Ruggles, 2015; Schneider et al., 2018).
Regrettably, most marriages have a high likelihood of ending in separation or divorce (Bramlett & Mosher, 2006). Cohen et al. (2002) report that 72 percent of marriages end in divorce in the first 14 years. Many divorced individuals remarry, of which 40% of the remarried will end in marital dissolution. However, there seems to be a leveling-off stage in divorce rates. Despite the plateau in divorce rates, the United States still has one of the highest rates among developed countries (Bramlett & Mosher, 2006; Balswick & Balswick, 2014).

Not surprisingly, an increase in marital satisfaction is associated with increased life satisfaction (Berkos & Denham, 2017). Berkos and Denham (2017) describe marital satisfaction as the extent to which couples are content with relationship quality. Carr et al. (2014) explain that marital quality directly impacts global well-being, which refers to feeling happy in life and experienced well-being, which describes “happy days.” Study results suggest marital satisfaction influences life satisfaction more than any other variable of life (Heller et al., 2004). Carr et al. (2014) provided insights into the variables of marital quality and life satisfaction. Life satisfaction had a positive association with marital satisfaction. Individuals with greater life satisfaction also experienced greater marital satisfaction.

Be et al. (2013) conducted a two-year longitudinal study to evaluate marital adjustment and life satisfaction relationships. The results imply a bidirectional association between partners' marital adjustment and life satisfaction. These outcomes point to the more significant the marriage adjustment, the higher life satisfaction. Comparably, the partners who had higher marital adjustment showed higher life satisfaction.

The results provided insight into the variables measured: marital adjustment and life satisfaction (Be et al., 2013). Additionally, the findings underscore the interdependence of marriage where one spouse's marital adjustment and life satisfaction influence their partner’s
marital adjustment and life satisfaction over time. However, one drawback was the study participants were couples middle-aged and older, highlighting the developmental differences between older and younger couples. As couples age, their social interactions tend to decrease. Hence, these results have limited generalizability to all populations. Also, the participants of the study were from England. Thus, the ethnic and cultural composition might not reflect the demographics found in American society.

There are gender distinctions between how a man views marital and life satisfaction and his wife’s perspective (Carr et al., 2014). Carr et al. (2014) also observed the difference between men's and women’s marital appraisal and well-being. A woman’s wellbeing does not depend on marriage so much in older years as in younger. Interestingly, the converse is not the same for men. Marriage becomes increasingly significant to men’s well-being after retirement age. A noteworthy finding of Carr et al. (2014) was even when a man perceives his marriage as unsatisfactory, he may still experience high levels of satisfaction with life, even if his wife is dissatisfied in the union.

Marital satisfaction fluctuates at different times in life based on various factors. Both women and men experienced enhanced marital satisfaction when they engaged in pleasant and intimate moments. There are additional strains and demands placed on military families (Carroll et al., 2013). As expected, these pressures challenge military marriages. Financial hardships negatively impact the marital quality and romantic interactions between military spouses (Ross et al., 2017). Deployments and distance away from the family of origin increases marital strain and decreased marital satisfaction (Merolla, 2010; Bellou & Gkouskounis, 2015). Moreover, decreased marital satisfaction is associated with the deployed military members' job performance (Carter et al., 2015). Additionally, one or both spouses’ depressive symptoms negatively impact marital health (Trump et al., 2015). Women in civilian and military populations have significantly
higher risks of screening positive for depression than men (Haskell et al., 2010). As discussed throughout this paper, military wives have unique challenges, including deployment, which translates to additional burdens on the wife, with limited support. These factors contribute to the wives' likelihood of developing depression (Mansfield et al., 2010). Notably, these personal struggles have adverse marital consequences for both husband and wife (Stroud et al., 2011).

Allen et al. (2010) conducted a study with 434 Active Duty spouses and their civilian wives to investigate the association between recent deployment, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and marital functioning. The study results on recently deployed husbands showed more PTSD symptoms than those who did not deploy. Consequently, PTSD negatively impacted both spouses' marital functioning (Allen et al., 2010). These findings highlight aspects of military life, specifically PTSD symptoms, which are an adverse consequence of deployment (Allen et al., 2010). Not surprisingly, PTSD symptoms have deleterious impacts on military marriages. Enhanced marital relationship satisfaction directly influences resilience, military readiness, the renewed enlistment of the enlisted service members, or continued commission of the officer (Bakhurst et al., 2017).  Social support networks are family members, friends, and other military members who have multifaced roles (Merolla, 2010). This network provides support, an outlet to relieve stress, and a source of advice for military wives to cope and manage their lives when the spouse is deployed.

**Role of Religiosity on Coping and Satisfaction with Life**

Having a husband deployed in combat is a stressful period for military wives. However, religion provides support, hope, and guidance for religious people during these challenging times (Braun-Lewensohn & Bar, 2017). Braun-Lewensohn and Bar (2017) evaluated the health status, mental health, life satisfaction, and overall well-being of 100 wives of the Israeli military six
months after their husbands' redeployment. The study results found that religious wives utilize positive reframing and self-distraction to cope, understand, and give meaning to life (Braun-Lewensohn & Bar, 2017).

Van Praag et al. (2010) found the wives with religious backgrounds cope better during adversity and become more resilient than those who do not have such a background. Furthermore, religion contributes to an individual’s happiness. Since the study was conducted in a non-Western culture with the respondent comprising Jews and Arabs, these demographics limit its generalizability in the United States.

Thomas (2016) found religious people who practiced certain rituals and were part of a faith community enjoyed extended physical and cognitive health benefits. Also, faith contributes positively to mental fitness and resilience (Thomas, 2016). Self-reports have associated greater religiosity with increased life satisfaction (Archuleta et al., 2011).

**Satisfaction with Life Scale**

Researchers have utilized the SWLS various with various population samples, including adults, students, elderly caregivers, male prison inmates, military veterans, doctoral students, and military wives (Pavot & Diener, 1993). The studies using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) had sample sizes ranging from 16 to 472 participants (Pavot & Diener, 2008). Kees et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative study using SWLS with 20 military spouses to evaluate the effectiveness of the Homefront Strong intervention in reducing depressive symptoms and increasing life satisfaction, social support, and optimism. The results indicate that a spouse’s individual narrative about deployment influenced their life satisfaction. Spouses who had positive thoughts of deployment experienced higher life satisfaction rates than those who had negative thoughts experienced the opposite effect.
Social Support

Social support refers to a multidimensional concept (Cohen et al., 2000). The idea of social support implies the availability of individuals on whom one can rely on and from whom one feels loved and valued (Sarason et al., 1983). Social support can be further broken into several forms, such as perceived or received, both formal and informal, from nonprofessional sources (Cohen et al., 2000). Social support forms comprise both material and emotional support from family, friends, and military personnel (Borah & Fina, 2017). However, the types, source, and timing of social support, the individual's developmental level, and needs determine social support effectiveness (Cohen & McKay 1985). To this end, if the social support does not match the needs or is unsolicited, the gestures might be unhelpful, ineffective, or even be counterproductive (Bonanno & Diminich 2013; Song & Chen, 2014).

Numerous deleterious consequences can follow military wives' lack of social support. For military veterans and their families, social support is an essential component of their lives (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009; DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011). Military spouses often do not seek support, and they keep up with a facade that they control their circumstances (Mailey et al., 2018). However, when they receive social support, military spouses show resilience (Skomorovsky, 2014). Some of the individuals who comprise the network of social support for military wives, especially during the husband’s deployment, are family members, friends, and fellow military spouses (Merolla, 2010).

Impacts of Social Support on Military Wives’ Behavioral and Mental Health

There is an abundance of academic research suggesting the association between social support and physical and psychological well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Bonanno & Diminich, 2013; Mailey et al., 2018). Social support is associated with psychological and physical health in
women and men (Conforte et al., 2017). These experiences are consistent with the findings of Cohen and Wills (1985) that perceived availability of social support is a buffer against influences levels that lead to less cardiovascular stress in individuals. Conversely, the lower an individual’s social support, the more prone the person is to certain diseases and shorter life expectancy. Individuals who are socially isolated have a higher likelihood of having specific physical illnesses.

Similarly, studies have suggested that a deficiency in social support can lead to mental health disorders (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013). Military wives battle behavioral and mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and other somatic concerns. A lack of social connection, financial pressures, and stress during deployment, such as parenting demands, are linked to the military spouse’s health behaviors such as physical activity and eating a healthier diet (de Burgh et al., 2011; Mailey et al., 2018). Military wives often experience stress and worry when home with children during their husbands' deployment (Runge et al., 2014). Moreover, depressive symptoms can arise due to the military lifestyle's various ongoing challenges (Dimiceli et al., 2010; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2012). Pre-deployment stress can also exacerbate depressive symptoms (Collins et al., 2017). Military spouses experienced stress due to the military lifestyle, yet they support their service member spouses. Military families often feel isolated and unsure who to contact in time of need. The Military Lifestyle Survey conducted by Blue Star Families (2019) underscored the isolation military families often feel. The study found 35% of active-duty military families do not have someone in the civilian community to ask for assistance. Furthermore, 39% of active-duty military families report they do not have friends to talk to in the local civilian community.

**Impacts of Social Support on Academic Achievement**

Social support has been an essential component in doctoral students’ academic achievement. Doctoral student cohort groups and faculty interactions create a community setting
for learners and buffer against isolation and enhance connectedness (Cockrell & Shelley, 2011). Professionals in academia and other fields can serve military spouses well by offering support and assistance to spouses to feel connected and develop a sense of autonomy, adjust, and thrive in the military lifestyle (Blakely et al., 2012).

Military veterans pursuing higher education who received social support from their families and family encouragement reached high levels of academic accomplishments (Smith-Osborne, 2009). Karp (2011) observes social support assisted military students in creating relationships, increasing persistence in developing college know-how, providing a community safety net, clarifying aspirations, and increasing commitments.

**Social Support and Religiosity**

Moll and Card (2014) maintain that human beings have an innate biopsychosocial desire to seek and be in a relationship with God and each other. Being a religious community member enables an individual’s healthy lifestyle and provides social support (Hass, 2012; Moll & Card, 2014). People in faith communities believe in offering social support to those in need or facing other challenges (Hodges, 2012). Chaplains and spiritual leaders have an essential role in helping military families who have experienced tremendous stress and trauma due to the military lifestyle (Thomas, 2016).

**Social Support Scale**

The Military Spouse Deployment Survey is a 32-item instrument used to assess perceived social support. Additionally, the scale utilizes items to measure marital discord and the Depression and Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) to measure stress, anxiety, and depression. The survey uses a four-point Likert Scale from 0 to 3. It has demonstrated high internal consistency (Asbury & Martin, 2012; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995; Parkitny & Mcauley, 2010). Henry and Crawford
(2005) explain that the Military Deployment Survey has demonstrated high internal consistency and construct validity. Researchers have utilized the Military Spouse Deployment Survey to evaluate military wives’ perceived social support (Asbury & Martin, 2012).

**Successful Performance in Graduate School**

Previous studies conducted with archival data utilized GPA, retention, and graduation to measure successful graduate school performance (Mould & DeLoach, 2017). Generally, adult learners take responsibility for their lives, work independently, and have the internal motivation (Allen & Zhang, 2015). Motivation is the process of individuals beginning and maintaining goal-directed pursuits (Cook, 2016). There is a negative association between educational attainment and employment. Graham and Paul (2010) report that individuals with lower academic achievement have higher unemployment rates. Conversely, the higher educated have lower levels of unemployment and enjoy higher standards of living.

Women who have achieved education beyond a high school diploma are more likely to seek employment (Lim & Schulker, 2010). Earning a college degree offers a definite advantage to individuals seeking work in the U.S. labor force. More recently, Valetta (2015) reported that the wage gap between individuals with a high school diploma and those with a college degree has been widening since the 1970s. The earnings gap is even more significant between those with high school education and individuals with post-graduate degrees.  

**Doctoral Learners’ Motivation**

Doctoral learners have various motivations to pursue their studies. Wiegerova (2016) found the motivation for pursuing postgraduate studies stemmed from a student’s personal decision, interactions with professors, and interest in scientific studies. In another study, the results indicate
that the participants’ primary motivation for pursuing a doctoral degree was personal reasons, including the joy of study, personal development, and intrinsic interest (Tarvid, 2014).

Doctoral degree programs have incredibly high attrition rates. Despite the enthusiasm for learners to begin their program, historically, approximately 50% of doctoral learners do not complete their degrees (Kennedy et al., 2015). There are several factors related to this statistic on earning a doctoral degree. Kennedy et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative study with former doctoral students who left the program without completing it. The researchers found the key factors the study participants revealed were the lack of administrative program advisor support, and lack of dissertation advisor support during the dissertation phases of their program. Further, factors that prevented students from completing their program, which led to dropping out of their program, were problematic chair relationship, feeling the loss of autonomy in their program but felt assertive at work, so they preferred their work environment over their academic one (Willis, & Carmichael, 2011).

**Persistence in Education**

Student persistence in education is one factor related to academic success. Satisfactory advisor-student relationships, academic support, and student satisfaction influence persistence (Cockrell & Shelley, 2011). Additionally, social support services like learning communities, student cohort groups, and student engagement and involvement are essential for student satisfaction and persistence towards degree completion (Roberts & Styron, 2010).

To create a foundation and environment for doctoral student success, Kennedy et al. (2015) recommend higher learning institutions implementing program support when students can understand and navigate their doctoral education. Specific practice strategies like resources with
guidelines and roadmaps through the dissertation phase, student cohorts, and dissertation student communities with adequate directional supervision will aid in that endeavor.

**Educational Challenges and Opportunities of Military Wives**

Military spouses place a priority on higher education. One reason for this phenomenon is that the military emphasizes service members’ education and training (Ott et al., 2018). Over half of military wives who participated in a survey had a college degree (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2017). Some of the factors discussed in the successful performance in graduate school and careers also apply to the military wife. Nevertheless, military spouses encountered challenges that impact their educational goals, which their civilian peers do not (Gleiman & Swearengen, 2010; Heaton & Krull, 2012; Hosek & Wadsworth, 2013). Also, several military spouses with degrees reveal that the military lifestyle poses challenges to advancing their careers (Lim & Schulker, 2010).

Burke and Miller (2018) disclose the spouses in the study made personal and professional sacrifices to support their service member's spouse. Despite their flexibility and resilience through challenges, there are still barriers to military wives setting and achieving educational and career goals (McBride & Cleymans, 2014; Runge et al., 2014). Notably, minority military spouses' family needs and culture pose more limitations to their education and career choice than nonminority spouses (Ott et al., 2018). Their employment status impacts military wives' life satisfaction. Lufkin (2017) concludes military spouses of higher income levels or higher education have reduced life satisfaction when they are unemployed. Thus, employment remains essential to wives who have achieved higher educational goals and received career training.
Support for the Military Student

A military student can refer to Active Duty, Reserve, Guard, retired service members, spouses, or dependents (Brown & Gross, 2011). The support they receive impacts their career and educational goals and life satisfaction. Contemporary military wives engage in activities of personal development such as career and educational advancement. However, many wives have chosen not to advance their career and educational goals due to economic constraints. Thus, the DoD instituted Military Spouse Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) to provide $6000 of financial support for lower-ranking active duty service member spouse’s degree programs and licensure (Military.com, 2020). Another military-based program that impacts military wives' career and life satisfaction is the Military Spouse Preference in Employment, offering mental health and social support to military spouses searching for employment and experiencing depression (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2019). These programs are a valuable resource for military spouses to increase their education, training, and certification in different fields and earn up to a bachelor’s degree (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2019).

The introduction of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, the GI Bill in 1944, was one way of showing gratitude to active duty and military veterans for their contributions and sacrifices during wartime. Using this service, they could pursue higher education rather than merely entering the labor force after the end of their period of service and discharge from the military (Humes, 2006). Later, in 1984, Congress updated the Bill to the Montgomery GI Bill (Asch, 2000). The updated version of the Post-9/11 GI Bill has a similar concept as a means of compensation for the military personnel for their contribution and sacrifices while serving in the military. One significant addition to this legislation was immediate family members would be able to fund their education using this same program (Mentzer et al., 2015). Thus, military spouses can fund their
education based on the amount available. One major shortcoming of this assistance is that if the service member uses this program, there might not be sufficient funds left over for the spouse to complete a graduate degree. The military spouses can use the MyCAA program and Post 9/11 GI Bill for in-person and online educational settings.

**Barriers to Military Wives Educational and Career Attainment**

Graduate students include both master’s level and doctoral learners. As such, briefly highlighting the issues doctoral learners face is essential to the richness of detail provided in this section. For military wives, the doctoral journey includes more factors than their civilian counterparts (Caruth, 2018). The U.S. Chamber of Commerce (2017) observes that only 52% of military spouses were employed. As asserted earlier, spouses who are involved with volunteer activities or are employed have a higher likelihood of being satisfied with life than those who are not (Blakely et al., 2012). Also, financial burdens prevent military spouses from furthering their education (U.S. Department of Defense, 2009). Blue Star Families (2014) explains that 84% of spouses in the study indicate that the military lifestyle results in harmful career consequences.

In the 1980s, the typical military spouse was younger than 32 years old and well educated. Despite these facts, military spouses have a significantly higher unemployment rate than civilian spouses. These rates rose to four times higher than those of the civilian sector (Kersey, 2013). Currently, military spouses' earnings are still impacted by military life. In another survey done by the Blue Star Families (2019), 35% of spouses of active-duty members found that employers would not accommodate them due to their military affiliation. There is also a reduction of about 2% in military spouses' annual earnings (Clever and Segal 2013). Military wives earned 67% lower income and worked 34% fewer hours than their civilian peers (Meadows et al., 2015). Lim & Schulker (2010) expand on the disparity between military and civilian wives in employment.
Military wives have a higher propensity of not looking for work, or unemployed, underemployed, employed part-time, or mismatched in their position than their civilian counterparts primarily associated with the military lifestyle.

Impacts of Geographic Mobility on Career, Education, and Life Satisfaction

Military families are sometimes referred to as “tied migrants” or “tied stayers” (Cooney et al., 2011). The tied migrants comprise spouses and children who move with the military personnel to keep the family unit intact. However, the results are a loss of social support, education, and career opportunities for the spouse. The same family members become tied stayers because, on most occasions, they remain in the location with the service member. Further, many installations (bases) are located near impoverished or low-income areas of the community. Thus, the circumstances with tied stayers give rise to more obstacles to the spouse's employment prospects and educational goals and attainment (Cooney et al., 2011).

The family’s new location due to service members' careers may hinder spouses’ job and education pursuit and attainment (Lim & Schulker, 2010; Hisnanick and Little, 2015; Meadows et al., 2015; Mailey et al., 2018). Borah and Finah (2017) found that several military spouses explained how the ongoing military assignments requiring geographic relocation has negatively impacted their professional licensure status. Furthermore, spouses may begin to feel anxious and ill-equipped to take care of the household alone. While PCS might be a source of both excitement for new friendships, cultural diversity, and learning new languages, the anxiety brought about by the unknown factors may ensue as well (Clever & Segal, 2013). These issues, individually or combined, influence military wives’ life satisfaction.
Distance Learning Options for Military Wives

Over recent decades students and academic leaders alike have accepted online learning as a valid option for educational advancements (Allen & Seaman, 2016). Due to the frequent geographic relocations and other military life factors, military wives have benefited from distance learning or online programs to pursue their educational goals and success. For the military personnel and wives, the flexibility and convenience of this format work well and fits in the military culture and lifestyle demands (Steele et al., 2010). Further, military wives are active contributors to their educational setting. They add varied experiences and perspectives to enrich discussions in their degree program (Weatherly, 2011; Gleiman, 2013).

The majority of online learners are women (Harrell et al., 2004). As described earlier in this paper, most military spouses are female. Therefore, military wives often adjust well in the online classroom. Online learning platforms require interactions on discussion boards. Even if learners are in separate locations, they can support each other because they share similar goals and interests. This setting provides an added benefit of social support for military wives. Military wives who interact online develop and maintain beneficial friendships and a positive outlook on life, especially during their husbands' deployment periods (Rea et al., 2015).

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of military lifestyle and culture, the military wife, and her roles and responsibilities. The literature review detailed several variables associated with the military lifestyle demands and constraints to the military wives’ graduate educational pursuits and successful performance. Issues of marital strain, mental health issues like anxiety and depression, loneliness, and social isolation can result from the family's frequent PCS, impacting social support
and life satisfaction. Further, social support and general life satisfaction influence military spouses' family life, education, and career choices.

The military lifestyle is demanding and fraught with challenges and unique demands and expectations for the service members and family. The wife’s education, how well she copes with additional responsibilities in the absence of her service member spouse, and overall life satisfaction have essential ramifications for the military family and the military. These issues influence the service member’s decisions to remain in the military and DoD readiness (Wadsworth & Southwell, 2011). To this end, military family members may feel an additional burden to conduct themselves in specific ways not to jeopardize the Armed Forces member's readiness and job performance.

Many wives who pursue their graduate degrees struggle with financial constraints, frequent change of geographic locations, lack of social support, and decreased life satisfaction. Consequently, they choose to forgo their career and educational goals. Notwithstanding these genuine challenges, the evidence points to the fact that military wives have a vested interest in higher educational attainment. They are overall higher educated than their civilian counterparts (Heaton & Krull, 2012). Even with those struggles stemming from the military lifestyle's demands and uniqueness, the preponderance of the research shows the military wife is a stabilizing factor in her household.

Military wives, alongside their husbands, make tremendous sacrifices, which are detailed in the literature. With the number of military wives in the US, and their significant roles in their families and the military, conducting studies that would increase their knowledge on their lives, needs, and struggles are warranted and well worth the time spent. However, in the literature evaluated in this chapter, none answer the research questions posed for this study. Therefore, this study filled the research gap on the impacts of life satisfaction and social support on military
wives’ successful performance in graduate school. This study evaluates the factors impacting military wives’ successful performance in graduate school. GPA in the graduate program measures successful performance in graduate school. GPA rates of 3.0 or higher are considered as successful.

The factors reviewed in this section highlight the need for universities to develop methods of serving this distinct population more effectively. These methods will positively impact life satisfaction and social support, thus decreasing the attrition rates. Further, developing and implementation of government-supported programming geared explicitly towards spouses who want to pursue advanced degrees will yield positive results (Ott et al., 2015). Legislation to create and fund the MyCAA program changes include extended benefits for education to spouses and family members (Military.com, n.d), which benefit military wives of enlisted and lower-ranking officers for specific degree programs. Thus, with the appropriate support, military wives can overcome barriers related to life satisfaction and social support and build and maintain motivation to pursue success in their chosen graduate program.

The purpose of this archival study is to examine the association between life satisfaction and social support on military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school to include both master’s and doctoral degree programs. This current study also seeks to determine if the relationship between life satisfaction, social support, and successful performance is moderated by religiosity while enrolled in graduate school.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This study followed ordinary least squares (OLS) research design to examine the relationships between life satisfaction, social support, and successful graduate school performance. The theoretical foundation for this study is the bottom-up theory of life satisfaction. Various studies have found that financial struggles, military deployment, and permanent change of station (PCS) slow down military spouses’ (both male and female) educational goals, career aspirations, and achievement (Cooney, 2011; Meadows et al., 2015; Mailey et al., 2018). To date, researchers have not yet analyzed the specific relationships between life satisfaction and social support on military wives' performance in graduate school. The study also determined if religiosity had a moderation effect on the independent and dependent variables. The elements included in the subsequent pages are the research design, research questions, hypotheses, participants and setting, instrumentation, procedures, the definition of the variables, statistical analysis, and data analysis.

Research Design

The study utilized ordinary least squares (OLS) regression and moderation models. Correlations were also made in this study. A correlational model is appropriate for nonexperimental research to measure the extent to which variables are associated in the same population or two populations (Heppner et al., 2016). This study used archival data gathered in 2014 from one of the largest Christian universities in the Southeastern United States with students in both classroom and online forums. The variables under consideration in this study were life satisfaction, social support, and successful graduate school performance, and the moderator was religiosity. The Hayes PROCESS analysis was conducted to determine if religiosity moderated between the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable.
The sample included wives of commissioned officers and NCOs of various ethnicities, economic, geographic, and other backgrounds who share how their life satisfaction and social support have impacted them working towards a graduate degree. Further, this archival study determined if religiosity moderated the independent variables, life satisfaction, social support, and the dependent variable's successful graduate school performance.

Research Questions

The study asked three research questions to gain a more in-depth knowledge of the connections between life satisfaction and social support on successful performance while enrolled in a graduate program. The study also ascertained if religiosity had a moderating effect on the independent and dependent variables. Successful performance while enrolled in graduate school is the dependent variable, and the independent variables are life satisfaction and social support. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What is the association between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school?

RQ2: What is the relationship between social support and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school?

RQ3: Is the relationship between the independent factors of life satisfaction and social support and the dependent variable successful performance while enrolled in graduate school moderated by religiosity?
Hypotheses

The preliminary proposal for the study aimed to evaluate the relationship between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance in graduate school, social support, and determine if religiosity moderated life satisfaction and social support.

**H1:** There is a positive association between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school.

**H2:** There is a positive relationship between social support and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in a graduate school.

**H3:** The effect of life satisfaction and social support on graduate school academic performance will be moderated by religiosity.

**Participants and Setting**

This study utilized archived data from a convenience sample of 101 military wives enrolled in a large university in the southeast of the U.S. The researcher obtained access to the sample through the university where the study took place. Participants selected in the sample were wives of service members from different branches of the United States Armed Forces, including Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve. Participants needed to meet the eligibility criteria for the study (Heppner et al., 2016). To this end, this study's minimal requirement was military wives 18 years of age or older enrolled in graduate programs. The participants were wives of either enlisted/NCO or commissioned officers currently serving in the US military.

**Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

Inclusion criteria for participants' data analysis are (a) participants must be female, 18 years or older; (b) currently married to Active Duty, Reserve or Guard service member; and enrolled in a graduate program. Exclusion criteria include (a) male spouses, (c) individuals under
the age of 18, (c) individuals who are married to retired service members, and (d) wives who are service members themselves.

**Instrumentation**

The archival data comprised a survey from anonymous participants with information on the variables and participants’ demographics. Only a number identifies the survey respondents. In this study, the researcher submitted all the archival data to Excel and Statistical Produce and Services (SPSS) version 26 for analysis. The study excluded military wives who are not currently enrolled in a graduate degree program.

**Scales**

A scale is a group of items combined to create a composite score to reveal the levels of theoretical variables that cannot be otherwise observed directly (DeVellis, 2012). Using instruments with high reliability and validity to measure the variables is essential in a quantitative study (Heppner et al., 2016). All three scales employed in this study demonstrate excellent reliability and validity. The following section includes the three short scales used in the study, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), Military Spouse Deployment Survey, and the Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10).

**Satisfaction with Life Scale**

Life satisfaction generally describes an individual's global evaluation of their quality of life, based on their specific criteria (Diener et al., 1985). There are several domains in life satisfaction scales. The domains vary from one theorist to the next. However, it is the individual who ascribes significance to life satisfaction (Rojas, 2006).

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al. 1985) is a five-item instrument developed in 1985 as a brief assessment of a person's perceived satisfaction with life (Pavot &
Diener, 2008). The instrument uses a Likert scale for questions ranked from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree), with the suggesting higher scores indicating greater levels of personal life satisfaction. Two sample questions on the SWLS are “So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life” and “The conditions of my life are excellent.” The SWLS has excellent internal validity and test-retest reliability, and responsiveness to life occurrences (Cann et al., 2010, Shepherd et al., 2015).

**Social Support Scale**

Support refers to the material and emotional support individuals receive from other people, making them feel valued and loved (Sarason et al., 1983). Conforte et al. (2017) observe social support influences people’s physical and psychological health.

The Military Spouse Deployment Survey is a 32-time scale of perceived social support measured on a 4-point Likert Scale, ranging from 0 (Does not apply to me) to 3 (Applies to me very much, or most of the time). The Military Spouse Deployment Survey includes items on marital discord, Depression, and Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) to measure anxiety, depression, and stress. Two sample questions are “My friends provided empathy and support” and “I engage in activities that provide social interaction” (e.g., clubs, church, etc.). The Military Spouse Deployment Survey has shown high internal consistency for measuring a range of feelings such as depression, anxiety, and stress that the at-home spouse experiences during the deployment period (Asbury & Martin, 2012). The Military Spouse Deployment Survey has been used in various studies to accurately capture the extent of perceived social support in military wives (Asbury & Martin, 2012).
**Religious Commitment Scale**

Religious commitment describes the extent of involvement an individual has in his or her religion. Thomas (2016) explains religious people who practice their faith and share in a faith community experience various cognitive and health benefits. The Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10) is a brief 10 item religious screen assessment created and evaluated in 1988 and revised in 2003 (Worthington et al., 2003). The RCI-10 uses a 5-point Likert scale rating from 1 (Not at all true to me) to 5 (Totally true to me). The scale measures the extent to which a person maintains their religious values, beliefs, and practices in their daily lives. RCI-10 evaluates interpersonal commitment (4 items) and intrapersonal religious commitment (6 items). Two sample items are “I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization” “and “Religious beliefs influence all my dealings in life.” The RCI-10 is an objective and accurate tool in quantitative studies since it is fast and easy and scored with good internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Worthington et al., 2003).

**Procedures**

The researcher reviewed the literature on the topic to find a gap. The hypotheses and research questions were then formulated for this study. Additionally, the instruments for this study were comprised of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and Military Spouse Deployment Survey (MSDS) for social support, and the Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10), and the archival data. Therefore, the researcher screened for eligible participants.

The researcher retrieved all the data for this archival study from research completed in collaboration with a single university. After successfully defending the proposal, the researcher received approval from the primary researcher of the archival study. The researcher accessed the data set and began analyzing the archival data set in SPSS version 26.
Study Variables

This study consisted of two independent, one dependent, and one moderating variable. The following section details these factors. Also included are the scales for measuring these variables. All scales used in this study have been used in previous studies and demonstrated excellent internal and external validity.

Independent Variables

An independent variable (X) influences or predicts the dependent variable (Y) (Warner, 2013). The independent variables employed in this study are life satisfaction and social support. Life satisfaction was measured by the SWLS and social support by the Military Spouse Deployment Survey.

Dependent Variable

The dependent or outcome variable (Y) is the variable that the researcher measures in the statistical analysis (Warner, 2013). GPA evaluated the dependent variable in successful performance in graduate school. GPA of 3.0 or higher was considered successful. In most academic institutions, 3.0 is a B letter grade in graduate programs. The GPA of 3.0 has been used in previous scholarly studies to indicate academic success (Day, 2018).

Moderator

The moderator is religiosity, which was measured by RCI-10. A moderator, also referred to as a moderating variable (W), changes the direction or strength of the effects between the independent (X) and the dependent variable (Y) (Hayes, 2018). In other words, a moderation analysis examines whether the sign or size of the effect of X on the outcome Y interacts with a moderator (W) (Hayes & Preacher, 2014).
Data Analysis

This section of this document provides details on the methodology utilized for the data analysis of the study. The study obtained data from a previously unpublished survey study. After obtaining access to the already coded data, the researcher downloaded the information into Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) 26 for detailed analysis.

Variables and Research Models

The factors assessed were life satisfaction, social support, academic success measured by GPA, and religiosity (Figure 1). Using moderation analysis, each of these variables was evaluated. Hayes (2018) describes moderation as the effect of the independent variable ($X$) on a dependent variable ($Y$) as moderated by a moderator ($W$). This moderator changes the direction or strength of an effect between variables $X$ and $Y$. The subsequent chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the moderation models.

Hayes PROCESS Model 1: Overview

- $X_1$: Life Satisfaction
- $X_2$: Social Support
- $W$: Religiosity
- $Y$: Successful Performance while Enrolled in Graduate School (GPA)

Figure 1. Hayes PROCESS Model 1: Overview
Life Satisfaction and Successful Performance while Enrolled in Graduate School

The first moderation analysis was conducted on the independent variable of life satisfaction and the dependent variable of GPA (Figure 2). The analysis was performed to establish if religiosity would have a moderation effect on life satisfaction and GPA.

Hayes PROCESS Model 1: Life Satisfaction

A moderation analysis was completed on the independent variables, social support, and the dependent variable GPA (Figure 3). The analysis sought to determine the moderating effect of religiosity on the independent variables of life satisfaction and social support and the dependent variable of GPA.
Analysis Procedures

The analysis dictates the most appropriate statistical design to use in the study. Warner (2013) explains that the most common type of sampling in journals is convenience or accidental sampling. The t-test is an appropriate measure for nonexperimental research when comparing naturally occurring groups. Warner (2013) suggests a researcher would use parametric statistics for the quantitative dependent variables that are at least approximately interval/ratio; the scores on the quantitative variable are normally distributed, and there is equal variance across the groups. The statistics include analysis of means, variances, and sums of squares, such as t-test and ANOVA, and a minimum N per group of about 20 or 30 (Warner, 2013). Although the sample met some of these requirements, in this current study, the t-test could not be utilized because the data was not normally distributed.
Pearson’s Correlation

Two groups were used to examine the comparison means. They are as follows: (1) wives who are successfully performing in graduate school, and (2) wives who did not successfully perform in graduate school. A correlation design was used to examine the associations between the two groups (Warner, 2013; Heppner et al., 2016). Correlational design is utilized to assess the extent to which variables are associated (Heppner et al., 2016). The correlation coefficients range from +1.00, which signifies a positive relationship with -1.00, which indicates a very strong negative relationship (Heppner et al., 2016). Thus, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is a good measure of the strength of the relationship between wives who were successful in a graduate program and those who were not. The Pearson’s (r) correlation was used for this analysis if the variables meet the following assumptions: the scores of the variables X and Y are independent of other scores, the scores are quantitative, scores on Y have a linear relation to the scores on X, and X, Y shows a bivariate normal distribution (Warner, 2013).

Moderation Analysis

Researchers evaluate data in moderation effects to determine if the relationship between two variables is conditional on a third variable (Aguinis & Gottfredson, 2010). Hayes PROCESS is an appropriate macro compatible with SPSS employed for assessing conditional process models. The study utilized a moderation analysis (Model 1; Hayes, 2018) to analyze the data.

Cronbach’s Alpha

Cronbach’s alpha was applied to evaluate internal consistency for the three scales included in this study: SWLS, Military Spouse Deployment Survey, and RCI-10. This type of evaluation offers researchers a method to measure the internal consistency and reliability of scales with multiple items. When researchers use Cronbach’s alpha, they can determine how the items on the
scale measure the same factors (Warner, 2013). For this measure, scores in the range of .70 and over indicate good reliability.

**Type I and Type II Errors**

Type I Error occurs after the researcher rejects the null hypothesis when it is correct. In contrast, Type II occurs when the research fails to reject the null hypothesis when it is false (Warner, 2013). To limit Type I Error risk, researchers can take individual steps like cross-validation, limit the number of analyses of significance tests, and use random or representative samples. Due to the nature of this study, as mentioned earlier, the researcher in the archival study used convenience sampling.

The alpha level would be set at 0.05 to limit the risk of Type I Error. Warner (2013) cautions that statistical significance exclusively does not signify the study's usefulness or practical significance. Statistical power refers to the probability of the results indicating a statistical difference between the interventions when there is a real difference (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012). Thus, the researcher will correctly reject the null hypothesis. The factors that reduce the probability of committing a Type II error $\beta$ also increase statistical power $(1 - \beta)$. Researchers aim for high statistical power of .80 (Warner, 2013). Additionally, a larger sample size will increase the statistical power. Consequently, this study aimed for a large enough sample size of military wives who meet the inclusion criteria.

Bonura and Lovald (2015) argue that appreciating military culture's uniqueness is imperative for educational institutions to provide a welcoming and suitable setting for military service members and families to succeed. With this information, the wives can receive more relevant and practical personal and professional support from organizations, including the
Department of Defense (DoD), which benefits military families, local communities, and society by extension.

**Internal and External Validity Aspects**

Two main threats to this study's internal validity are history and selection (Heppner et al., 2016). Data collection will occur within a short period, a few weeks, to reduce history's impacts. Random assignment was utilized to control the latter threat if the study yields a large enough sample size. Notably, researchers need to be aware of the possibility of personal bias when recruiting participants for the study.

One possible threat to external validity is units, which refers to the individual's characteristics, such as ethnicity and intelligence level, which differ from one person to another (Heppner et al., 2016). Outcomes are another threat to the external validity of this study. The outcomes assessed by self-report and opposed to the ones measured by an instrument lead to different findings (Heppner et al., 2016). In this study, the outcomes were based on respondent’s self-report rather than information gained from an interview or one-to-one discussion with respondents. As such, all the outcomes may not be accurate or truthful.

The researcher’s beliefs and values can potentially negatively impact the study. As such, anonymously compiling responses will help reduce research bias and increase external validity. In this study, the researcher predicted that low life satisfaction and low social support negatively impact military wives in pursuing a graduate degree. The data analyzed from this study augmented the body of literature to grasp the possible motivations and hindrances of military wives’ pursuit and success in graduate school. Moreover, different approaches and strategies can grow from the data and analysis to assist this population segment.
Summary

Chapter Three examined the design of the study to include the overview, research design, research questions, hypotheses, participants and setting, instrumentation, procedures, and study variables. The data analysis is comprised of variables, scales, and the analysis procedures utilized in this study. The subsequent Chapter Four details the results, and Chapter Five, the study conclusions.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this archival study was to investigate how the factors of life satisfaction and social support impacted military wives’ success in a graduate program. GPA measured graduate success. This study employed three scales, Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985), Military Spouse Deployment Survey (Asbury & Martin, 2012), and the Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10) (Worthington et al., 2003). The information gathered from the archival data set was utilized to explore the research questions and hypotheses proposed in the study. This chapter will examine the results, the research questions, descriptive statistics (including means, frequencies, and standard deviations), and hypotheses associated with this study.

Research Questions

The research questions explored in this study were as follows:

**RQ1:** What is the association between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school?

**RQ2:** What is the relationship between social support and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school?

**RQ3:** Is the relationship between the independent factors of life satisfaction and social support and the dependent variable successful performance while enrolled in graduate school moderated by religiosity?

Hypotheses

The research hypotheses are as follows:

**H1:** There is a positive association between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school.
**H2:** There is a positive relationship between social support and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in a graduate school.

**H3:** The effect of life satisfaction and social support on graduate school academic performance will be moderated by religiosity.

**Descriptive Statistics**

The subsequent section will discuss the descriptive statistics associated with the participants’ demographics represented in the archival data set. The data set was from a survey study conducted in 2014 at one large South East University comprising 812 military wives. However, participants with missing cases and respondents enrolled in associate's or bachelor’s degree programs were excluded from the study. Participants who reported a GPA of 0.00 were excluded from the data set since this GPA would drastically influence GPA distribution. The data did not specify why the participants reported a GPA of 0.00. However, the 0.00 represents performance that has not yet been measured. Upon further reviewing the dataset, there were fewer than 10, a total of 6 who reported enrollment in a doctoral program, while 101 reported they were enrolled in a master’s program. Therefore, the participants in the doctoral program were identified as outliers and removed from the sample. The final eligible participants were spouses of Active Duty, Reserve, and Guard service members, with a final total of (n= of 101). Most participants were White (n=79; 78.2%). Most of the respondents were wives of Active Duty service members (n=84; 83.2%). Markedly, the largest number of study participants were between the ages of 30-99 (n=51; 50.6%). Table 1 details the descriptive statistics for the demographic characteristics of this archival study.
Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic, Latino, Spanish Origin</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-29</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>50.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-53</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse Military Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Duty</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>83.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The subsequent section provides information on the descriptive statistics of the study respondents for the age category, the independent variables life satisfaction (SWLS), and social support, the dependent variable (GPA), and the moderating variable Religiosity (RCI-10).

Participants (N=101) range in age from 22 to 53 years. Table 2 includes descriptive statistics (range, minimum, maximum, mean) for non-nominal variables (represented as a range of numbers vs. categories). After excluding the participants with a 0.00 GPA, the minimum GPA was 1.75.

The results of the analyses yielded the following results: SWLS (N=101, $M=26.010$, $SD=5.890$); Social Support ($N=101$, $M=10.663$, $SD=3.963$); GPA ($N=101$, $M=3.625$, $SD=.477$); Religiosity (101, $M=18.178$, $SD=3.145$); and Age ($N=101$, $M=34.14$, $SD=6.958$)
Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>31.00</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>53.00</td>
<td>34.14</td>
<td>6.958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.6250</td>
<td>0.477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>26.010</td>
<td>5.890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>10.663</td>
<td>3.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>27.00</td>
<td>18.178</td>
<td>3.145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4 represents a histogram of the distribution of scores for academic performance (GPA), which is skewed to the left, which indicates the scores tended to be generally higher. The most-reported GPA shown in the descriptive statistics was 4.00 (N=28). These results indicate that the sample participants showed successful performance in their graduate program. A Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was performed to assess for normality. The findings demonstrate participants GPA scores were not normally distributed, which was a significant departure from normality \[W(101) = .216, p = .000\]. The extreme values were found at the higher end for GPA. These outcomes indicate significant outliers, which influence the regression equation. All of this may have influenced the significance of the findings. If GPA performance was normally distributed, the findings might have been stronger. Nevertheless, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, the statistic used in the model tests, does not require normality.
The purpose of the study was to examine three research questions: What is the association between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school? What is the relationship between social support and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school? Is the relationship between the independent factors of life satisfaction and social support and the dependent variable successful performance while enrolled in graduate school moderated by religiosity? Hayes PROCESS Model 1 analysis was conducted to evaluate the third question. Pearson’s r correlation test was performed to assess the relationships between the variables provided in Table 3.
Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis examined an association between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school. The hypothesis asserted that the higher the spouse’s life satisfaction, the more successful the spouse’s graduate school performance. Satisfaction with life did not show a significant correlation to successful performance measured by GPA. The first hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 2

The second study hypothesis was whether there was a relationship between social support and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in a graduate degree. The higher the social support, the more successful the wives would be in graduate school. In contrast to the first hypothesis, the second hypothesis’s results indicated social support was significantly positively correlated with life satisfaction ($r=.483$, $p<.001$), which implies the higher levels of social support are associated with higher scores of life satisfaction. Consistent with the hypothesis, the results pointed to social support was significantly positively correlated with GPA ($r=.201$, $p<.05$). These findings suggest that higher perceived social support may be linked to increased academic performance among military wives. The second hypothesis was supported.

Table 3

*Pearson’s r, Means, and Standard Deviations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Satisfaction with Life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Social Support</td>
<td>.483**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Religiosity</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Performance (GPA)</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.201*</td>
<td>-.101</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>26.010</td>
<td>5.890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>10.663</td>
<td>3.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>18.178</td>
<td>3.145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>3.625</td>
<td>.477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).
Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis was to determine if the relationship between the independent factors of life satisfaction and social support and the dependent variable successful performance while enrolled in graduate school moderated by religiosity.

Pearson’s r correlation test was conducted to assess religiosity, life satisfaction, and social support. Findings showed that religiosity is not associated with any of the model variables. Further, Hayes PROCESS Model 1 was the statistical model used to explore this hypothesis. Three hypotheses were developed regarding the moderation models.

H1: There will be a positive association between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school.

H2: There will be a positive relationship between social support and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school.

H3: The effect of life satisfaction and social support on graduate school academic performance will be moderated by religiosity.

Figures 5 and 6 indicate the statistical models that display the results for the analysis. Tables 4 and 5 include the detailed results of these models. These models are utilized and referenced to relate to the hypothesis previously outlined in this study.

H1: Satisfaction with Life Model

It was hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance (GPA) while enrolled in graduate school. In contrast to hypothesis (H1), satisfaction in life did not have a significant effect on GPA ($b = .014$, $SE = .008$, $CI = [-.002$ to $0.030]$). Hence, H1 was not supported (see Figure 4 and Table 4).
These findings did not support the hypothesis life satisfaction was associated with successful academic performance.

Figure 5. Life Satisfaction Moderation Model Results

Table 4

Results for Life Satisfaction Moderation Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>se</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>LLCI</th>
<th>ULCI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance (GPA):</td>
<td>R = .225, $R^2 = .051$, $MSE = .223$, $F(3, 97) = 1.730$, $p &gt; .05$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction (SWL)</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>1.724</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>-.014</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>-.908</td>
<td>.366</td>
<td>-.044</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWL X Religiosity</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>.363</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**H2: Social Support Model:**

Consistent with the hypothesis (H2), social support had a small significant effect on GPA ($b = .024$, $SE = .012$, CI = [.000 to .047]). GPA: $R = .223$, $R^2 = .050$, MSE = .223, $F(3, 97) = 1.689$, $p > .05$. As such, H2 was supported, as shown in Figure 5 and Table 5. Although the findings support hypothesis 2, social support conveyed a small positive direct effect on GPA.

Findings suggest a 5% variance can be attributed to social support.

![Diagram of the Social Support Moderation Model Results](image)

**Figure 6. Social Support Moderation Model Results.**

**Table 5**

*Results for Social Support Moderation Model*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>$se$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$P$</th>
<th>LLCI</th>
<th>ULCI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance (GPA): $R = .223$, $R^2 = .050$, MSE = .223, $F(3, 97) = 1.689$, $p &gt; .05$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support (SS)</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>1.988</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>-.012</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>-.791</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS X Religiosity</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.349</td>
<td>.728</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
H3: Moderation by Religiosity

It was hypothesized that the relationship between life satisfaction and social support on graduate school academic performance (GPA) would be moderated by religiosity. Contrary to these expectations, the interaction of satisfaction with life and religiosity \((b = .002, SE = .002, CI = [-.00 to .007])\), and the interaction of social support and religiosity \((b = .001, SE = .004, CI = [-.007 to .009])\) did not convey a significant effect on academic performance (GPA).

The findings of the models suggest neither the interaction of life satisfaction and religiosity \((R^2 = .008, F(1,97) = .834, p = .363)\), nor the interaction of social support and religiosity \((R^2 = .001, F(1,97) = .122, p = .728)\) significantly predicted variation in academic performance (GPA). As such, the findings did not support H3 of the models since religiosity did not moderate the direct effects of either model.

Summary

After a thorough statistical analysis, the results showed that life satisfaction was not a predictor of successful graduate school performance. The study outcome supported that social support may be a factor in military wives' academic performance while enrolled in graduate school. Findings from the social support model test were consistent with Pearson’s \(r\) correlation results, which suggested that social support was positively correlated with academic performance (GPA). However, the study's outcome failed to corroborate the assumption that religiosity would statistically moderate the direct relationship between life satisfaction or social support on academic performance and the direct effect of life satisfaction on academic performance. Finally, the results indicated that social support had a small significant positive direct impact on academic performance.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This chapter discusses the archival study results, which explored the impact of life satisfaction and social support on military wives’ successful graduate school performance. The topics under review in this section are the discussion, implications, limitations, and future study recommendations. Moreover, the discussion section will revisit the purpose, research questions, hypotheses, literature, and study results. The implications include the possible impacts on the counseling field, how the Christian worldview relates to the topic, and its impacts on future studies. Finally, the limitations and summary describe potential avenues to develop and improve the previous chapters’ research.

Discussion

This study intended to investigate the impact of life satisfaction and social support on military wives’ successful graduate school performance. Military wives make tremendous personal and professional sacrifices to accommodate their spouse’s careers (Burke & Miller, 2018). Military wives continue to support the military members, the unit, and the military mission. Regrettably, military wives face constant adverse conditions, including disruptions in their life satisfaction and social support (Castaneda & Harrell, 2008; Bonanno & Diminich, 2013). Compounding these challenges are the obstacles in career and educational advancement military wives endure and need to overcome (Cooney, 2011; Meadows et al., 2015; Mailey et al., 2018). In many situations, military wives do not receive employment opportunities because of their ties to the military, especially the expectation that their employment will be brief, considering the required PCS for active duty service members (Hosek & Wadsworth, 2013).
Participants in this archival study were graduate students enrolled in a large southeastern university in the United States. For this study, the total sample size of the data set was 812. However, the final participant number, 101, was lower than the total sample due to the exclusionary criteria adopted in the study. Likewise, participants who were enrolled in a doctoral program, those with missing cases, and those with a GPA of 0.0 were excluded from the study.

No previous studies examined the relationships between the independent variables of life satisfaction and social support and whether religiosity was a moderator between independent and dependent variables.

**Research Question 1**

Research question one inquired about the association between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school. Hypothesis One proposed a positive relationship between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school.

Contrary to expectations, this current study's results found that satisfaction with life did not show a significant correlation with performance in graduate school measured by GPA. These results highlight that military wives can perform successfully in the graduate program despite the varying degrees of life satisfaction. Since this study represents a gap in the literature, no published studies suggest a relationship between military wives' life satisfaction and academic performance. However, these findings emphasize the bottom-up theory, the theoretical framework of this study, which explains life satisfaction as comprised of various factors. Notably, the life domains that an individual finds most significant influence their life satisfaction vary (Loew, 2014). The academic resources suggest life satisfaction is based on an individual’s subjective experiences (Rojas, 2006; Erdogan, 2012).
Research Question 2

The second research question explored if there was a relationship between social support and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in a graduate degree. Hypothesis Two proposed a positive relationship between social and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school.

This current study results were consistent with the hypothesis of a small significant positive correlation between social support and successful performance in graduate school GPA. These results may suggest that higher perceived social support may be associated with increased academic performance amongst military wives. These findings reflect previous research results that social support in various forms originating from family, friends, faith communities, military, or community members is a critical factor of military wives’ academic success (Smith-Osborne, 2009; Karp, 2011). The correlation test findings indicate that the only significant correlations were between social support and life satisfaction and social support and GPA.

Research Question 3

Research question three asked if the relationship between the independent factors of life satisfaction and social support and the dependent variable successful performance while enrolled in graduate school would be moderated by religiosity.

The Three Hypothesis for the Moderation Models

Three hypotheses were developed about the moderation models. There are as follows: there will be a positive association between life satisfaction and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in graduate school; there will be a positive association between social support and military wives’ successful performance while enrolled in a graduate degree; the effect of life
satisfaction and social support on graduate school academic performance (GPA) will be moderated by religiosity.

This current study found that satisfaction with life did not have a significant effect on GPA. However, social support had a small significant effect on GPA. Findings from the social support model test consistent with Pearson’s r correlation results demonstrate social support was positively correlated with academic performance (GPA). Regarding the final hypothesis, in contrast to expectations, the interaction of satisfaction with life and religiosity and social support and religiosity did not significantly affect academic performance (GPA). The findings did not yield support for the third hypothesis. That is, religiosity did not moderate the direct effect of either model.

Previous studies suggest religious military wives had higher life satisfaction than wives who were not religious (Braun-Lewensohn & Bar, 2017). Religious wives coped better during the adversity of military personnel deployment, thus developed resiliency after hardships (Van Praag et al., 2010). Graduate education pursuit combined with military life yields several layers of challenges to military wives, which they must work through and overcome to succeed. One of the practical ways they cope with and overcome adversity is through religious beliefs and support. However, this study's findings were contrary to predictions that religiosity had a significant effect on the variables examined.

**Implications**

This archival study indicates statistically significant relationships between social support and military wives’ success in graduate school. The implications reflect the literature findings that military wives’ social support is essential to military wives’ resilience. Social support also extends to military wives' professional and academic life. However, the study failed to show statistically
significant relationships between life satisfaction and military wives’ success in graduate school. Similarly, religiosity did not have a moderating effect on military wives’ success in graduate school.

Although the outcome of the study did not indicate a statistically significant relationship between life satisfaction and success in graduate school, the results provided further knowledge to counselors on the specific challenges military wives face, which impact marriages, mental health, life satisfaction, and social support. Thus, clinicians and other human service professionals can collaborate with military wives and their families to tailor treatment plans for individual, marital, and family therapy needs. Additionally, Pastoral and lay counselors would be more sensitized to military wives and their families' needs with this information outlined in this study. As a result, these individuals and organizations can create and execute appropriate customized support programs and services for military families who require assistance.

Social support is vital to military wives’ success in their chosen graduate program. As the published scholarly literature reveals, social support builds resilience in the military wives whose lives may involve moving to various geographic locations, thus dismantling existing social support systems. As such, military officials may be aware of this need and make efforts to help military families build social support from other avenues outside of family and friends who may not be geographically close. In collaboration with military families, the DoD and stakeholders can develop strategies to mitigate the effects of loneliness and strain, deficits, and potential losses of military wives' social support systems.

Local churches play significant roles and make critical contributions to the lives of all believers in Christ despite their background. God calls His people to fulfill the second greatest commandment after loving Him above all is to love one’s neighbor as oneself (Mark 12:31,
English Standard Version). Individuals love their neighbors by displaying kindness, humility, patience, and tenderness. In showing these fundamental Christlike attributes, congregants will become more welcoming and volunteer to carry some of their military wives' burdens. In this manner, they can meet their social and spiritual support. With these measures implemented, military wives’ life satisfaction will also increase. Consequently, these actions will help draw those who do not yet know Christ to accept His love, grace, and salvation. Similarly, military wives who are followers of Christ will be encouraged and continue to grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18, ESV).

**Christian Worldview**

This section outlines how the Christian worldview is an indispensable aspect of the study. The relevance is even more pronounced when both the service member and wife are followers of Christ. God created human beings in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:27, ESV). He made humans perfect, but they sinned against Him in the Garden of Eden. However, God provided a Redeemer, Jesus Christ, to save them from the fall of sin and death. The Creator proclaimed it was not suitable for a man to be alone; therefore, he created a woman, Eve, out of the man, Adam’s rib, to be his wife (Genesis 2: 16-18, ESV). Scripture establishes that God designed marriage between and man and a woman to last a lifetime. The Lord declared that a man, a woman henceforth, should leave both parents and become joined as one flesh (Genesis 2:24, ESV).

Despite their various shortcomings due to sin, the Lord gave the man and woman their unique roles in the family and the church. Though performed and lived on earth, marriage between a man and woman is a metaphor of Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:32, ESV). The husband is the authority and leader who is to live in subjection to God. The Lord also requires the husband to love his wife and provide for her (Kostenberger & Jones, 2010; Ephesians 5:23, 25-33). The wife is a suitable helper for the husband who respects him, nurtures the children, and manages her
household (Kostenberger & Jones, 2010; Ephesians 5:22-33, KJV). If both spouses practice these biblical principles, they will enhance their marital satisfaction. To this end, marital satisfaction enhances life satisfaction and complements both spouses when they mutually love and support each other (1 Corinthians 11:11, English Standard Version).

The scholarly literature suggests that many military wives rely on their faith and their religious believes in traversing difficulties they encounter in life (Archuleta et al., 2011, Thomas, 2016). The Christian life is referred to in scripture as a soldier fighting a battle (2 Timothy 2:4, ESV). Paul teaches Christians to put on God's full armor (Ephesians 6:11-18, ESV). Scripture details the importance of the physical and spiritual battles. The word describes physical battles fought by men that the Lord chose to lead His earthly people Israel. There are extensive recordings of King David and the Israelites (1Chronicles 18, KJV). Therefore, a soldier must be trained, equipped, and prepared to engage the enemy in battle, whether spirituals or physical battles. The wife, the helpmeet, has a vital position of influence and support in the husband’s life (Genesis 2:18, KJV). The Christian military wife chooses to honor her husband, remain committed, and make daily sacrifices to maintain the bond of the covenant marriage ordained by God.

Contemporary women have a more visible presence and impact in academia, the labor force, and other critical segments in society than they did not hold in previous generations (Donnelly et al., 2016; Haines et al., 2016). Therefore, they are essential contributors to their family’s economy as well as societal growth and advancement. Additionally, the advancement of education can extend the wives' influence, contribute to the family's financial stability, and exemplify the virtues, strengths, and behaviors of a woman who fears the Lord (Proverbs 31:10-31, ESV). Notably, wives in the workforce have ongoing opportunities to share the gospel with people that they contact in their profession.
Not surprisingly, the wife and mother’s attitude impacts her children, the next generation, and her husband’s morale and military performance. The family is the main avenue when individuals share their religious beliefs and faith values (Vermeer, 2014). These goals, aspirations, and service of godly wives are congruent with Scripture. Followers of Christ seek to do His will and honor him with their life choices. Equally, seeking knowledge is commendable in the sight of the Lord. The world teaches, “An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge” (Proverbs 18:15, ESV). “How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver” (Proverbs 16:16, ESV).

Pursuing a graduate degree necessitates tremendous self-discipline, patience, diligence, and other factors that align with the Lord’s Word (Galatians 5:22-23; 1Timothy 1:7, ESV). When wives are tested and approved by life’s challenges, they display a positive testimony for their husbands, other military wives, colleagues, church members, and others with whom they may interact in various social sectors. The literature outlines extensive evidence to support military wives' struggles, including face loneliness, anxiety, and isolation (Bleser & Gordon, 2001; Bellou & Gkouskgounis, 2015). However, the wives can reflect on Bible verses for necessary joy and hope. One such verse is “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer” (Romans 12:12, ESV).

Social support is one significant way in which believers in Christ can help build, encourage, and motivate each other. Encouraging and building each other up and carrying each other’s burdens is essential for brothers and sisters in Christ (1Thessalonians 5:11; Galatians 6:2, ESV). Religious institutions are crucial sources of such social support for families (Dollahite et al., 2018). With ongoing and shared support, believers' communities can motivate each other in love and continue to do what is right (Hebrews10:24, ESV).
An individual who has faith in God rests in his promises and hopes in Him. Like the apostle Paul, believers in Christ need to be content despite their circumstances (Philippians 4:11, ESV). It is Christ who can satisfy every aspect of a person’s life. Consequently, relying on Him will be the only way to succeed in a graduate program and other life aspects. No human being, program, or part can fully satisfy the heart and soul of another. However, others can be there to the point that person to the one who can. With inevitable disappoints, military wives can believe the Lord’s promises in His world that will never fail. God will never leave or forsake His children (Hebrews 13:5, ESV). As such military wives can memorize, meditate upon, and pray Scriptures like Philippians 4:13 (ESV), “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me; and Philippians 1:6 (ESV) “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” Military wives can aspire to use their personal, professional, and academic success to continue giving God glory. Ultimately, their entire military family would be successful and please the Lord if they chose to follow the commands of the Lord to remain healthy, courageous, unafraid, and undaunted because the Lord will never leave or forsake them whatever their geographic location in this life (Joshua 1:9, ESV).

Limitations

Similar to previous studies, this current study faced some limitations. The greater extent of the limitations was related to demographics, sample size, and concerns associated with self-reporting, and internal and external validity. The data set was obtained from a single, large Christian University in the southeastern United States, limiting its generalizability to other universities, thus external validity. Students were enrolled in online programs. Additional issues with demographics and external validity were that most military wives were White, representing the military overall. However, the specific challenges the respondents in the study faced may not be the same for students of other ethnicities. Thus, the results may not represent the experiences
military wives of different ethnicities contend with at universities, including secular institutions throughout the United States.

An additional limitation is based on convenience sampling and demographic questions posed in the survey, limiting internal validity. Consequently, the researcher could not determine whether any of the wives are in a same-sex union. This current archival study utilized data from convenience sampling, which included a self-report survey method. As such, the convenience sampling method limits the study's generalizability. However, self-reports provided the researcher with ready access to participants and ease of data collection. Nevertheless, as in other studies using the self-reporting method, there is a likelihood that some of the information respondents provided may be inaccurate, limiting the external validity of the study.

In this study, the only measure for success was a GPA of 3.0. In this sample, the means obtained for GPA indicated that most of the respondents were successful in graduate school. Therefore, there was not much variation in success. Having another avenue to evaluate success in the sample would probably impact the findings. Previous studies discussed earlier highlight that military wives are generally high achievers and resilient. This attitude of independence and resilience in life and positive attitudes lend to their success in graduate school.

Information on the ranks of participants' service member spouses was not used in this study. The participants did not include the ranks, or rank was not identified, or they did not choose a rank for their spouse. Thus, making any meaningful comparisons between the spouses of varying ranks was not possible in this study. In a similar vein, the data did not specifically indicate the service member's branch within this group, restricting the ability to discuss similarities or differences among the military branches' wives.
**Recommendations for Future Research**

Considering the vital role military wives play in serving members of their unit, the military, and the country, future research should focus on ways military wives can support and serve while simultaneously having more ready access to help them achieve their educational goals. First, additional research should explore the differences and characteristics of older and younger military wives’ academic pursuits and achievements. Having a range of age groups and making comparisons would provide critical information to shine a brighter light on military wives' needs and successes.

Secondly, Rea et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative study with a small sample size of 10 military spouses to explore social media's influence on the spouses during their military partner's deployment. Future research with a larger sample size would help explore how social networks influence military wives who pursue online graduate degrees. Studies with participants from multiple universities would be a valuable endeavor as well. That way, researchers may potentially receive diverse views and experiences from the participants. Additionally, there is also a need for additional studies comparing the relationships of social support and life satisfaction on two military wife groups, enlisted and officer. Although military wives share similar experiences, the officer and enlisted service member wives also have differences. The main distinctions are their husbands’ rank, wives' responsibilities to the military, expectations of the military and vice versa, how the wives relate to each other.

Another recommendation for research is focusing on the demographics of the different military branches to compare for means of success among the other groups. For instance, looking at the variations, if any, between means of success of the Airforce, Army, Marines, Navy, Coastguard, and Space Force wives would provide additional pertinent knowledge. As such,
individuals who work with these specific branches can apply the knowledge to serve them better. Adding another measure of success, such as retention or graduation, would be a beneficial future study.

Using a scale that explicitly measures social support would also assist with a mixed-methods study. One such scale is the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Support (MSPSS). The MSPSS was developed in 1988 and evaluated an individual’s perceived social support (Zimet et al., 1988). The MSPSS is a 12-item scale of perceived support measure on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). Two sample questions from the MSPSS are “I can count on my friends when things go wrong” and “I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.” Further, the MSPSS has been used in various populations. Smith et al. (2011) utilized the social support scale with 1874 Marines, 1021 men, and 826 women. The MSPSS shows excellent internal reliability, test-retest reliability, scale validity, construct validity, and factorial validity (Zimet et al., 1988).

There is a gap in qualitative and longitudinal studies on what government-based interventions are most valuable to military wives pursuing and completing a graduate degree. Longitudinal research will provide accurate information at different stages of the military wife’s educational journey rather than the snapshot presented in a quantitative study. Qualitative studies with tailored interviews and follow-up questions would be worthwhile since the results might reveal more extensive and diverse information that the quantitative study may not be able to capture, like missing responses or respondents inadvertently clicking on the wrong option. In that way, the interviewer can verify and correct inaccurate information at the onset, rather than excluding this respondent from the study during analysis, as occurred in this study.
Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2018 has severely negatively impacted many individuals, families, and society worldwide (Spinelli & Pellino, 2020). These effects extend from the physical and emotional to the psychological (North, 2020). With this in mind, researchers can further investigate how the pandemic influences military wives in life satisfaction domains including, finances, health, social support, and how these areas are associated with their resilience and academic pursuits and achievements.

**Potential Questions**

Several gaps exist in the literature regarding life satisfaction, social support, and military wives' educational pursuits. To this end, some potential questions researchers can explore further include the following:

(a) Are there any statistically significant differences between older and younger military wives’ academic pursuits and achievements?

(b) How do social networks influence military wives who pursue online graduate degrees?

(c) Is there a difference in social support received by enlisted wives and officer wives?

(d) What are government-based interventions that are most valuable to military wives pursuing and completing a graduate degree?

(e) Are there significant differences in life satisfaction and social support of military wives who attend Christian universities and those who attend secular universities?

(f) Does life satisfaction impact military wives’ retention in a graduate program?

(g) What is the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and military wives’ resiliency, and performance in their graduate program?
Conclusion

The main goal of this archival study was to investigate a gap in the literature on the association between life satisfaction and social support on military wives’ success in graduate school. Various concerns and challenges of military wives were documented in the preceding chapters. Military wives continue to support their husbands and make ongoing sacrifices for their families while supporting their husbands in serving the country. This paper outlined the many aspects, including the critical segments overview, background, problem statement, purpose statement, the significance of the study, theoretical framework, literature review, research questions, hypotheses, the study variables, instrumentation, the findings, limitations, and recommendations for future research. Although two of the findings did not support the hypotheses, the information in these pages will add to the ongoing attention and voice to the issues directly impacting a unique and significant part of the US population, military wives. Furthermore, the results lend support to the significance of social support in the lives of military wives. As such, wives have a voice for their pressing concerns regarding the study variables and must receive the required assistance to achieve their personal, professional, and academic goals.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Permission to Use – Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

(Retrieved from https://eddiener.com/scales/7)

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The scale is copyrighted but you are free to use it without permission or charge by all professionals (researchers and practitioners) as long as you give credit to the authors of the scale: Ed Diener, Robert A. Emmons, Randy J. Larsen, and Sharon Griffin as noted in the 1985 article in the Journal of Personality Assessment.
Appendix B: Military Spouse Deployment Scale (Asbury & Martin, 2012)

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