

High Divorce Rates among Military Service Members

Your Name

Name of Institution

Date

High Divorce Rates among Military Service Members

The military has seen an endemic in divorce rates due to a number of credible reasons. Military divorce and separation rates are higher than those in other professions, with divorce filing cases initiated by female military service members being significantly higher, opposing to the cases initiated by their male counterparts. The divorce rates are remarkably higher for active duty soldiers, with the most likely explanation being the risk these soldiers face in their line of work. Deployments to both Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, which contributed to an increase of 78% more military separations and divorces in 2005 than in 2003. This presents a concerning trend considering that the number of soldiers remains relatively constant over time (Lundquist, 2007). If this divorce trend continues, divorce rates will likely continue to increase if wars continue to emerge. The reason for this will be that more soldiers will need to be on active duty, which could lead to an increased number of military divorce cases.

Families undergo increased stress when a spouse is involved in war, as the high risk of death or permanent disability makes an active-duty military job one of the riskiest today (Angrist & Johnson IV, 2000). Another contributor to the divorce trend is the adjustment and difficulties soldiers face when returning home from active duty in war zones. Careers have been known to break families down, particularly where demands placed on service members are very high. Military service members face problems with adapting to their own home environments after being deployed for an extended period, particularly considering that they have been exposed to tremendous trauma and stress.

While it is difficult to point out the exact reasons why some soldiers decide to file for divorce, it is clear that many factors contribute to these decisions. The reasons that are provided

this decision vary from personal issues, the stress and commitment of repeated deployments, the difficulty that comes with trying to re-adapt to the home environment after a long deployment, stress from trauma during service, and the soldiers' perceived lifestyles. Another reason provided is related to the military lifestyle as well as the commitment that this occupation requires (Angrist & Johnson IV, 2000). New couples are affected by this the most, as they might have been together for a long time prior to one of them being deployed for active duty. The nature of military work, which requires working long hours or even remaining away from home, even when not deployed on active duty, can cause situations where couples simply fall out of touch with each other.

Another challenge faced by military couples trying to stay together is when both spouses serve in the military. Lifestyle has a tendency to play a major role in rising divorce rates, in this case. Spouses, who are deployed at different times and different places can easily lose touch with each other. This is due to them rarely getting chances to spend time together with work stressors and the high likelihood of trauma or even death being causes for concern.

Yet, another major factor in military divorce rate increases is societal pressure, particularly as it pertains to female service members (Lundquist, 2007). In this case, the nature of military work does not consider gender, but considers females equal to their male counterparts. This lack of role differentiation in society can lead to divorce, because many female soldiers find it difficult to settle back into assuming their regular gender roles when not on active duty. This can introduce added pressure in a marriage, which can lead a couple down a path for divorce, due to the difficulties presented by the situation.

Another issue for concern is that a failing marriage is a source of stress, which can affect soldiers' job performance, which in turn can affect the performance of an entire military unit. This can prove dangerous to soldiers, particularly when on active duty.

Based on this, military interest has risen for dealing with the causes of divorce in the military, as well as stress among soldiers. The result has been the development of healthy relationship programs for married soldiers (Lundquist, 2007). These programs include special weekend retreats that are organized by army to help curtail the divorce rate. The result is a better peacekeeping military force that is keen on ensuring the nations safety from external aggression at all times.

High military divorce rates is a problem affecting families and one that should be considered, with the aim of developing ways of lowering the recorded divorce rates. This is possible with such initiatives as the military developing marital counseling to ensure their personnel remains married. The number of families that lose either a father or mother is increasing and this presents a problem to society. Therefore, it needs to be ensured that soldiers are encouraged to stay married, in spite of problems associated with marriages among people in the military profession.

Divorce leads to such problems as who will take custody of the children and who will provide for them. Overall, the aforementioned reasons present some factors responsible for increasing military divorce rates. Solutions should be developed to ensure that these problems are eventually eliminated.

References

- Angrist, J. D., & Johnson IV, J. H. (2000). Effects of Work-Related Absences on Families: Evidence From The Gulf War. *Industrial & Labor Relations Review*, 54(1), 41-58.
- Lundquist, J. (2007). A Comparison of Civilian and Enlisted Divorce Rates during the Early All Volunteer Force Era. *Journal of Political & Military Sociology*, 35(2), 199-217.
- McCone, D., & O'Donnell, K. (2006). Marriage and Divorce Trends for Graduates of the U.S. Air Force Academy. *Military Psychology*, 18(1), 61-75.