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Postmilitary Life Satisfaction and Social Support, Educational Attainment, and Length of Service

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Abstract

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MS, Walden University, 2013

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The U.S. military has downsized since the early 2000s and has plans to continue to decrease their forces. There are negative implications many veterans experience after discharge. Using the transition theory as the framework for this study, the purpose of this between-groups study was to explore the differences in life satisfaction scores between voluntarily- and involuntarily-discharged U.S. service members and the associations between educational attainment, social support, and length of service. The participants were honorable discharged U.S. service members. A total of 182 participants were included in this study; 141 were voluntarily discharged and 41 were involuntarily discharged. The participants were recruited through Walden's participant pool, flyers, and Facebook. The Satisfaction with Life Scale, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, and a demographic questionnaire were used to identify participants' life satisfaction scores, amount of perceived social support, and personal information. Based on the results of *t* tests and hierarchical linear regressions, there were no differences in life satisfaction scores between voluntarily and involuntarily discharged service members. Social support and educational attainment were statistically significant predictors of life satisfaction for discharged service members. The positive social change implications of this study include increasing mental health workers' awareness of U.S. service members and the factors that affect life satisfaction after discharge.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Derrick, and our children, Jay, Zachary, Gregory, and Emmalee, who have been supportive and understanding throughout graduate school. This study is also dedicated to my parents Rick, Corrine, Kevin, and David, and to my amazing grandparents, Marge and Scotty, and my aunt Pat who have been my role models of hard work and dedication and taught me that I can accomplish anything I set my mind to.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The military has downsized since the early 2000s. According to MacLean et al. (2014), service members who are discharged involuntarily may not be as prepared to transition into civilian life as those who discharge voluntarily. According to Castro (2013), increased numbers of service members reported suicidal ideations as a result of the military downsize. Castro reported that many service members who were discharged due to the enlisted retention boards (ERB, 2012) experienced suicidal thoughts. Robertson and Brott (2013) reported that not being prepared to discharge to civilian life affected their life satisfaction. There is a lack of research on the relationship between life satisfaction and whether a service member was voluntarily or involuntarily discharged. Previous scholars have not examined whether or not there was a difference in life satisfaction based on the type of discharge of U.S. veterans. This research is necessary because the number of involuntary discharges has increased over the last 15 years.

Taylor, Pietrobon, Tavermiers, Leon, and Fern (2011) that showed education influences life satisfaction. Worthern, Moos, and Ahern (2012) discussed that social support was a crucial factor while transitioning out of the military, and MacLean et al. (2014) that found length of service was connected to having a difficult adjustment outside of the military. Each of these factors influences life satisfaction.

According to Robertson and Brott (2013), service members who are voluntarily discharged make a choice to leave their service career and are more likely to be prepared to enter civilian life. However, involuntary-discharged service members are forced to leave their service career and are often not prepared for civilian life. Leaving the military

means new housing, new job, and even a new identity (Herman & Yarwood, 2014). Herman and Yarwood (2014) found that the younger a service member is when he or she enlists, the more difficult it is for him or her to cope with the change to civilian life. Bringing an awareness to the difference in life satisfaction between these two groups of veterans is important because there are adverse effects on service members who were not prepared to discharge (Robertson & Brott, 2013). Service members who have engaged in combat related to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) are more likely to have suicidal ideations, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and even commit suicide (Jakupack & Varra, 2011). Many service members who served during OIF and OEF suffer from PTSD because of the combat that they experienced while deployed (Jakupack & Varra, 2011).

Family, friends, spouses, employers, and landlords are impacted by how well a service member transitions back into civilian life after being discharged from the military. If the service member does not transition successfully, he or she is more likely to struggle to obtain and keep a job, maintain social supports, pay bills, and take care of his or her family (Van Til et al., 2013). Taylor et al. (2011) identified the connection between the hardiness of mental and physical health of service members. Many of these service members have chosen to leave their military career; however, many were also discharged involuntarily because of budget cuts and medical reasons (Meeks & Murrell, 2001). There is a lack of research on the effects of life satisfaction based on discharge type. According to scholars (MacLean et al., 2014; Taylor et al., 2011; Worthern et al., 2012), each of these factors can influence life satisfaction.

The purpose of this study was to examine if a comparison, through a quantitative between-groups design, existed between educational attainment, social support, and length of service and the life satisfaction of voluntarily and involuntarily discharged service members. I also wished to increase mental health professionals' awareness of the effects of the degree of life satisfaction of discharged service members. I measured the life satisfaction of voluntarily discharged service members compared to those who were involuntarily discharged. I also investigated the association between fewer than 16 years of educational attainment, social support, and length of service on life satisfaction. These variables were chosen based on Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory. The findings of this study will add to the existing body of research on the protective and risk factors and life satisfaction for Canadian veterans associated with adjustment after military discharge.

This chapter contains the introduction, background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, hypotheses, theoretical foundation, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance, and summary.

Background of the Study

All branches of the U.S. military have downsized, resulting in the involuntary discharge of thousands of service members (Strassmann, 2014). Active duty service members are no longer able to count on a life-long military career, and many do not have an advanced education, which leaves them unprepared for a civilian career after serving 10 years or more in the military. According to Radford (2011), only 0.7% of active duty service members earned an undergraduate degree between 2007-2008, and 3% were

veterans, compared to 95% of the graduating students who were not associated with the military. Overall, 33% of the veteran population attended some college, but only 15% of veterans had earned a bachelor's degree (Holder, 2007). According to the National Survey of Veterans (2010), 69% of veterans were married, 45% were working, and 26% made between $20,000 and $40,000 a year.

Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are more likely to return home from deployment with PTSD due to combat exposure compared to service members who did not serve a tour in Iraq or Afghanistan (Cassels, 2010). Wilk et al. (2016) found that 59% of the diagnoses were not reported to the electronic health records because of the stigma related to PTSD. Fortney et al. (2016) studied college students and the prevalence of help-seeking behaviors and mental health. and discovered that 33% of the veteran participants attending college screened positively for depression compared to participant nonveterans. More veteran participants also screen positive for PTSD, which was 25.7 % compared to 12.6 % of nonveteran participants (Fortney et al., 2016). Finally, 19.2% of the veteran participants reported suicidal ideations compared to 10.6% of the nonveteran participants (Fortney et al., 2016). According to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2015), one out of 10 Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans return home with problems with drugs or alcohol. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, many veterans hide their symptoms of PTSD with substance use. It is important to help veterans identify mental health resources within their community.

According to Steele (2012), the Navy discharged more than 3,000 sailors in 2011, and the Army has released plans to reduce the number of soldiers by 80,000. According

to the Voice of America News (2011), the Marines plan to decrease their forces by 20,000. Castro (2013) stated that veterans reported their own fears of being released from their contract, which made them worry for their family; those fears were accompanied by suicidal ideations. Castro suggested that the military downsize has created adverse effects on enlisted active duty service members including worrying, stress, and fear of losing their job. Many people who are involuntarily discharged built their life around a military career and did not prepare for civilian life.

MacLean et al. (2014) studied factors that were connected to having a difficult adjustment to civilian life outside of the military. MacLean et al. found that the length of service was connected with having a difficult adjustment out of the military. Service members who served fewer than 10 years and discharged from their military career were found to have higher suicide rates compared to veterans who retired from the military (MacLean et al., 2014). Involuntary and midcareer discharges are also associated with a difficult adjustment to civilian life (MacLean et al., 2014). MacLean et al. also discussed social support to be a protective factor after transitioning from the military to civilian life among Canadian service members. Soltani, Karaminia, and Hashemian (2014) found that social support directly affects a person's life satisfaction. The more satisfied a person is with his or her life, the better his or her mental health.

Lee and Lee (2013) studied the correlation between educational attainment and life satisfaction among a population of 4,152 older adults. Lee and Lee found that postsecondary education often increased income, tangible items, and social economic status, which increased a person's life satisfaction. Educational attainment has a

connection with life satisfaction among the civilian population (Lee & Lee, 2013). Service members who have fewer than 16 years of educational attainment, less social support, and a shorter length of service may be less satisfied with life compared to service members who were voluntarily discharged from the military.

Several studies have been conducted on aspects of personnel service discharge. Van Staden et al. (2007) evaluated the adverse effects on United Kingdom's service members after discharging from the military too early. Such outcomes included unemployment, mental illness, imprisonment, and homelessness (Van Staden et al., 2007). Van Staden et al. found that those who had a longer sentence length were more likely to use the educational opportunities available to them, thereby decreasing their poor outcomes once they were discharged to the civilian world. Van Staden et al. found that 56% of the participants were disadvantaged after the follow-up interview, identifying them as having poor outcomes. In addition, Van Staden et al. discovered that 53% of the group of participants had some degree of mental illness compared to 15% of the civilian population who only reported mental illness.

Lemos (2005) conducted a qualitative study and interviewed veterans who had been previously homeless. The most prevalent factors that contributed to becoming homeless were problems with their personal relationships, mental health, and alcohol dependency (Lemos, 2005). Ray and Heaslip (2011) concluded that service members needed increased interpersonal, social, and psychological support to ease the transition from military life back into the civilian world. Lemos identified that social support and understanding of the veterans' feelings from their spouse was a factor during the

transition out of the military. However, if the spouse is not supportive of the veteran, it can negatively affect their relationship. Deployments to combat zones can affect a service member's transition into civilian life and increase the odds of becoming homeless because of the trauma that was associated with combat (Lemos, 2005; Ray & Heaslip, 2011).

Mansfild et al. (2011) discussed a correlation between combat exposure and suicide, self-harm, substance abuse, and resilience. However, social support had been linked to being the most crucial factor of resilience against suicidal ideations, PTSD, and depression (Mansfild et al., 2011). Many service members experience adverse effects, such as stress and anxiety, during and after their military discharge. Thus, service members should engage in counseling before and after discharge to decrease psychological distress. Britton, Ouimette, and Bossarte (2012) examined depression and life satisfaction of 57,905 men who served in the military. Britton et al. suggested this research be duplicated to confirm these results with men who have a history of military service.

Kroenke et al. (2009) used the Personal Health Questionnaire Depression Scale (PHQ-8) to screen each participant for depression. Kroenke et al. showed that men who were not depressed and had a history of military service were more satisfied with life compared to men without a history of military service. Further, Kroenke et al. found a connection between depression and a history of military service affecting life satisfaction. Seligowski et al. (2012) researched 562 combat veterans averaging 70-years-old. Seligowski et al. also studied other stressors that may affect a person's life satisfaction

including physical and mental health, combat exposure, and worries about retirement in veterans who are older. Robertson (2013) stated that the service member's financial security was often impacted when the individual transitioned from military to civilian life. Service members who take longer to transition out of the military might have lower income than those who transitioned in a shorter amount of time. As a result, a longer transition period increases the need for support from family and friends.

Education can influence a service member's life satisfaction. According to Tayloret al. (2011), having an education maybe a protective factor against PTSD. Men and women newly discharged from the military often struggle to fit back into society and that may include going to college to complete their education. Recently discharged service members may be less likely to seek assistance from to their school counselor for individual concerns (Livingston, Havice, Cawthon, & Fleming, 2011). Zinger and Cohen (2010) studied service members' adjustment to college life after military discharge and found that some of the participants reported struggling with the adjustment to college because of feeling alone, lack of support, overwhelmed, and because of symptoms of PTSD (anxiety, depression, and reliving the trauma). Although there is more literature on veterans enrolling in college after discharging from the military, there is a lack of research on the effect educational attainment has on service members who have been involuntarily discharged.

Robertson and Brott (2013) explored service members' satisfaction with life after transitioning out of the military and gaining new employment in civilian life as teachers. According to Robertson and Brott, transitioning into a new career after serving in the

military can influence a person's life satisfaction. Starting over in a new career can affect life satisfaction, as a service member leaves behind rank and entitlement earned during active duty and may have to reestablish him or herself in a new civilian position. Robertson and Brott identified the importance of how different a transition is for each person, how it will affect them, and their perception of the change. Some of the participants' attitudes regarding the transition out of the military directly impacted their life satisfaction (Robertson & Brott, 2013).

Theiss and Knobloch (2014) found that when couples communicate their needs and conflicts, it improves their relationship satisfaction. The level of satisfaction with their spousal relationship, as well as the support from family and friends, could affect their transition. Social support is an important factor because having a spouse's support and engaging in open communication is crucial during times of uncertainty. Further, there is a lack of research addressing the importance of social support on the type of discharge in the U.S. military. According to Worthern et al. (2012), service members who receive support from their family after transitioning out of the military frequently experience fulfillment in life. Researchers have addressed the importance of social support and the effect that lack of support can have on service members as they transition from active duty to civilian life (Scharf, Mayseless, & Kivenson-Baron, 2011; Worthern et al., 2012).

Van Staden et al. (2007) stated that some of negative effects include imprisonment, homelessness, and unemployment. According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (2016), 11% of the U.S. homeless population are veterans and have insufficient support from friends and family. Veterans who have a lack of support from

friends and family are the most at risk of becoming homeless (Veteran Affairs, 2016). Cunningham, Henry, and Lyons (2007) stated that 70% of veterans who are homeless struggle with substance abuse, and 45% suffer from a mental illness. Veterans are twice as likely to become homeless compared to nonveterans because of poverty and lack of support (Veteran Homelessness Facts, 2016).

Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietzak, and Southwick (2012) found that service members who had returned from Iraq and Afghanistan suffered from PTSD and were more likely to have greater difficulty functioning socially, have less social support, and have less satisfaction with relationships and life. Service members who served post 9-11 or who were seriously injured had more difficulty transitioning; some factors Van Staden et al. (2007) found that may affect the service member's transition included religious beliefs, educational achievements, or rank.

Previous researchers have discussed some of the struggles that service members face transitioning into the civilian world, such as beginning a new career and the importance of having social support (Robertson, 2013). Other researchers have focused on the impact combat exposure and discharging too early can have on the service member's life satisfaction and its association with depression (Mansfield, Bender, Hourani, & Larson, 2011). However, there is no previous research related to service members' life satisfaction in connection to the type of discharge (e.g., voluntarily or involuntarily). According to Gilberd and Wilson (2013) and Graves (2005), service members who have been involuntarily discharged have been found to have decreased psychological wellbeing and increased suicidal ideations. According to Arditi and

Bartolomeo (2011), between the years 2010 and 2015, every 36 hours, a veteran committed suicide.

This study is needed to address how being involuntarily discharged affects veterans' life satisfaction and to educate clinicians who work with individuals about how all of these variables interact with one another, thereby influencing life satisfaction. Clinicians who have increased awareness of these issues will be able to provide service members and veterans with access to resources, which could contribute to improved mental health. This study was needed to fill a gap in research and increase an awareness of the difference in life satisfaction scores among U.S. service members who were voluntarily discharged compared to those who were involuntarily discharged and the effects of educational attainment, social support, and length of service on their life satisfaction scores.

Problem Statement

The U.S. military has decreased their forces and plans to continue to downsize over the next several years, causing high numbers of service members to be involuntarily discharged. This discharge can negatively affect these men and women's psychological wellbeing. According to Van Staden et al. (2007), some of these negative effects include imprisonment, homelessness, and unemployment. Tsai et al. (2012) showed that those who suffer from PTSD were more likely to have more difficulty functioning socially, have less social support, and have less satisfaction with relationships and life.

Wisco et al. (2014) studied the prevalence of PTSD and comorbid psychiatric disorders among a sample of 3,157 U.S. veterans and found that 87% of the veterans

reported that they had experienced one or more traumatic event. The most common risk factors for PTSD reported were sexual abuse and sudden death of a loved one. Wisco et al. discussed that the protective factors for PTSD included parental support, resilience, engaging with people in the community, and other psychosocial factors. Xue et al. (2015) stated that veterans were more likely to be exposed to at least one serious trauma that can result in being diagnosed with PTSD. Some of the risk factors that were identified in the analysis were age, gender, marital status, education level, the branch of service, prior traumas, combat exposure, and postdeployment support (Xue et al., 2015). Service members who were divorced were found to be at risk for PTSD compared to those who were married (Xue et al., 2015).

There is a gap in research on life satisfaction of prior military service members who have been voluntary discharged compared to those who have been involuntarily discharged. Although Robertson (2013) and Britton et al. (2012) assessed the effects of social support on life satisfaction, it will be beneficial to explore whether these factors contribute to service members' life satisfaction based on their type of discharge (i.e., voluntary and involuntary). There is a lack of research on service members' life satisfaction based on his or her length of service. In this study, I filled the literature gap by comparing service members' life satisfaction scores and the effect of educational attainment, social support, and length of service on life satisfaction of those voluntarily discharged compared to those who were involuntary discharged.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative, between-groups study was to measure the effect of the independent variables (educational attainment, social support, and length of service) on the dependent variable (life satisfaction) among voluntarily and involuntarily discharged military personnel. The aim of this study was to educate the military community on the factors that influence life satisfaction and to fill a gap in the research on how these variables affect type of discharge. Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin's (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was used to measure the overall quality of life scores of voluntarily and involuntarily discharged service members and the differences in scores between the two groups. Quantitative research methods were used to collect and analyze the data from the SWLS. Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley's (1988) multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS) was used to measure the overall perceived social support of voluntarily and involuntarily discharged service members and the differences in scores between the two groups.

The findings of this study will provide a foundation for future studies and educate service members, veterans, and mental health professionals who work primarily with the military on the difference of life satisfaction scores based on voluntary and involuntary discharge. It is important that professionals are aware that there may be a difference in how satisfied a person is with life based on his or her type of discharge. Identifying the factors that contribute to service members' life satisfaction will bring awareness to service members and those working with the service members, thereby helping to increase adjustment outside the military.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1. Are service members who were involuntarily discharged less satisfied with life than service members who were voluntary discharged?

$H1_0$: Service members who were involuntarily discharged will not be less satisfied with life than service members who were voluntarily discharged as measured by the SWLS.

$H1_A$: Service members who were involuntarily discharged will be less satisfied with life than service members who were voluntarily discharged as measured by the SWLS.

RQ2. Are service members involuntarily discharged with fewer than 16 years of educational attainment less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more than 16 years of educational attainment as measured by the SWLS?

$H2_0$: Service members involuntarily discharged with fewer than 16 years of educational attainment will not be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more than 16 years of educational attainment as measured by the SWLS.

$H2_A$: Service members involuntarily discharged with fewer than 16 years of educational attainment will be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more than 16 years of educational attainment as measured by the SWLS.

RQ3. Are service members involuntarily discharged with a shorter length of service less satisfied with life than voluntarily discharged service members as measured by the SWLS?

$H3_0$: Service members involuntarily discharged with shorter lengths of service will not be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with longer than 10 years length of service as measured by the SWLS.

$H3_A$: Service members involuntarily discharged with shorter lengths of service will be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with longer than 10 years length of service as measured by the SWLS.

RQ4. Are involuntarily discharged service members with less social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged as measured by the SWLS?

$H4_0$: Service members involuntarily discharged with less social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends will not be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends as measured by the SWLS.

$H4_A$: Service members involuntarily discharged with less social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends will be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends as measured by the SWLS.

RQ 5. Is discharge type, social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends, fewer than 16 years of educational attainment, and shorter than 10 years of service predictors of satisfaction with life as measured by the SWLS?

$H5_0$: Discharge type, social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends, fewer than 16 years of educational attainment, and shorter than 10 years of service are not predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS

$H5_A$: Discharge type, social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends, fewer than 16 years of educational attainment, and shorter than 10 years of service are predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS

RQ 6. Can life satisfaction be predicted by discharge type, age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status as measured by the SWLS?

$H6_0$: Discharge type, age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status are not predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS.

$H6_A$: Discharge type, age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status are predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS.

Theoretical Foundation

Service members who discharge from the military are embarking on the transition from military to civilian life. Transitioning can be difficult for many service members, whether it is planned or not, because the service member is leaving behind a part of his or her identity. A transition is a change in relationships, roles, or perceptions; transitions occur many times throughout a person's life (Schlossberg, 1981). Service members transitioning back into the civilian world will likely experience a change in their role as an employee, and relationships with family and friends may change. How a discharged service member feels about the change could affect his or her overall levels of life satisfaction. If the service member feels negatively about the transition and does not

agree with the change, it could lead to depression and anxiety. Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory guided this study as it was designed to help researchers gain an understanding of the challenges related to events that arise from a variety of transitions during a person's life.

The transition theory supports the independent variables (educational attainment, social support, and length of service) and the effect they have on the dependent variable (life satisfaction) of voluntarily and involuntarily discharged service members. The transition theory applied to this quantitative approach because it provided a framework in which a set of hypotheses relating to the research questions were tested. The theory was applicable to this study because service members transitioning from their military career into the civilian world change in many areas of their life.

Robertson (2013) used the SWLS to identify the participants' life satisfaction. Robertson found that the variables family and social support, control, and confidence had a statistically significant positive correlation with life satisfaction. Griffin and Gilbert (2015) used Schlossberg's transition theory to understand the effect institutions have on service members who are transitioning into higher education and found that veterans want to have resources available to them to help them control the situation. Griffin and Gilbert identified the importance of having social support on campus that may help the veteran to cope with the situation. Griffin and Gilbert discussed the importance of psychological support because the veteran should discuss how each individual identifies him or herself.

A veteran can successfully transition from the military into civilian life as a student. Diamond (2012) used Schlossberg's transition theory to identify service members' feelings of the transition between military to higher education. Diamond found that that many veterans transitioning from the military into higher education struggle with social problems, negative perceptions, and finical difficulties. Wheeler (2012) used Schlossberg's transition theory as a framework and found that all of the participants' military backgrounds helped to make their college experience positive.

The transition theory includes the 4Ss in the model: self, situation, strategies, and support (Schlossberg, 1981). I applied this theory to the variable, social support, to understand whether the service members were getting what they needed in terms of support. The transition theory also includes the importance of situation, self, and strategies. The theory can also be applied to the variables of educational attainment and length of service because it is important for the service members to identify strategies to cope with the change. Finally, I examined a service member's self-esteem as it relates to voluntary versus involuntary discharge. In this study, the situation was the discharge; self meant showing how the individual's role has changed in life because of the transition, and strategies referred to educational attainment. The transition theory provided the theoretical foundation for this study as the service members' assumptions of civilian life are connected with changes in role, relationship, and routine that may affect the service member's ability to cope with the transition. I examined the effect of not being prepared to transition (i.e., lack of education and social support) and the effects it has on the

service members' life satisfaction. Chapter 2 will provide a more in-depth review of past literature on the transition theory.

Nature of the Study

A quantitative study was used to quantify the link between life satisfaction and voluntary versus involuntary discharge. By using this design, the findings were transferable, which allowed for a more representative sample. Thus, I was able to identify the effect of educational attainment, social support, and length of service on life satisfaction of voluntarily versus involuntarily discharged service members.

The participants in this study were discharged active duty service members from any of the four branches of the U.S. military. This study was advertised online via Walden's participant pool, Facebook (Appendix A), and flyers (Appendix B) distributed to privately funded and nonprofit organizations for veterans in Southern California. Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS questionnaire was distributed to the participants, and the data were collected using SurveyMonkey. The participants were encouraged to refer other potentially eligible participants to partake in this voluntary study. The participants' identity was anonymous. A demographics form was used to identify factors (ie., the amount of social support, the length of service, age, gender, marital status, branch, income, voluntary or involuntary discharge, and educational attainment) that are associated with life satisfaction after discharging from active duty. Diener et al.'s SWLS was distributed through SurveyMonkey to prior active duty service members. The focus of the questionnaire was to gain a better understanding of the life satisfaction of

voluntarily discharged service members compared to those who were involuntarily discharged on a self-rated scale.

I used MacLean et al.'s (2014) survey to address the overall perceived health, satisfaction with life, and education among Canadian service members who were associated with a difficult transition to civilian life. I used a multivariable regression to analyze the variables using SPSS software to analyze the data. I conducted *t* tests and two hierarchical linear regressions to assess the data.

Definitions

Discharged: The completion of a service member's military service (Discharge, 2015).

Education: "A person's understanding, knowledge, and skills gained from attending school" (Education, 2015, para 4).

Educational attainment: The highest education level a person has earned (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Enlisted Retention Board (ERB): A term to describe one area of military budget cuts. The is board made up a panel of individuals who were part of the decision-making process. Officers and chiefs reviewed service records of enlisted service members' (E4 – E5 and E6-E8) personal files to gain an understanding of who is most likely to receive retention quotas based on performance (ERB, 2012). Service members who were discharged from active duty were involuntarily released from their contracts and were not allowed to fulfill the time remaining on their contracts (America's Navy, 2011).

Involuntarily discharge: Active duty service members separated from their military career due to an executive decision (Military, 2015).

Length of service: The amount of time a person has been employed (Length of Service, n.d.).

Life satisfaction: "A person's perception of being happy" (Performwell, 2015, para 1).

Medical discharge: A person is separated from active duty due to physical or psychological impairments because of a significant interference with his or her fitness for duty (GI Rights Hotline, 2015).

Military: An active duty service member in one of the four military branches including Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force (Military, 2015).

Military reserve: A person who has received military training, however, is not active duty, but can be called upon to serve.

Perceived social support (PSS): A fulfillment of a person's needs for support, feedback, and information (Procidano & Heller, 1983).

Physical readiness test (PRT): The PRT is used to maintain the physical fitness standards by each branch of the U.S. military including Navy, Marines, Army, and the Air Force (Smith, 2015).

Social support: Emotional, informational, or instrumental support given from one person to assist another (Seeman, 2008).

Voluntarily: The defined by the military separation section code 536 as "unacceptable performance of duty" and code 539: "warrant to receive retirement status" (Powers, 2015).

Assumptions

It was assumed that that each participant served in the U.S. military and was voluntarily or involuntarily discharged. I assumed that the participants could complete Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS and respond to each question truthfully based upon his or her satisfaction with life according to his or her personal experiences. It was assumed that the participants in this study will partake in this study voluntarily. The primary assumption of this study was that service members achieve life satisfaction when they are voluntarily discharged as opposed to involuntarily discharged.

Scope and Delimitations

The focus of this study was on the relationship between life satisfaction and voluntary versus involuntary discharge from the armed services. This was measured by Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS. To accurately answer this study's research questions, the variables educational attainment, social support, and length of service were studied. Internal validity refers to the cause and effect that occurs within a study (Trochim, 2006). An issue of internal validity that may arise in this study would stem from a participant being a reservist rather than an active duty service member. A reservist is not considered an active duty service member, as the reservist is only required to serve one weekend a month or 2 weeks out of the year. The integrity of the survey would depend on whether the involuntary discharge was honorable or dishonorable. Involuntary, dishonorable

discharge is a result of the service member's actions. However, involuntary discharge for reasons such as the ERB or medical discharge result from decisions that are out of the service member's control. The population included discharged service members from the U.S. military. The populations that were excluded from this study were service members who were dishonorably discharged, members of the military reserve, and service members who served other countries.

A number of theories were considered for this study including the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). Seligman's (2002) authentic happiness theory was also considered as a theory for this study. The final theory considered for this study was the transitional model for stress (Lazarus, 1966). The attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) was considered for this study as it describes protest, despair, and denial. The attachment theory relates to this study because service members may experience feelings such as stress, fear, and separation anxiety during the completion of their military career. Service members may also experience distress as a result of discharge from the military and grief related to the end of their service career. Feelings of fear, separation anxiety and stress may be associated with life satisfaction before and after their military discharge. The attachment theory was not chosen for this study because using it would create a threat to the external validity; the focus of the theory is on interpersonal attachments as opposed to attachments to objects or occupations. In the authentic happiness theory, Seligman discussed aspects of happiness including meaningful life, pleasant life, and good life. The authentic happiness theory was considered for this study because a person's happiness directly relates to life satisfaction only. However, this theory was not chosen because I

researched dissatisfaction and satisfaction with life. The happiness theory includes a focus on happiness, and using this theory would create a threat to the external validity. The transitional model for stress (Lazarus, 1966) was another theory considered. In the transitional model for stress, Lazarus (1966) discussed positive and negative stress of a situation and how the stress affects thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. However, this theory would create a threat to the external validity because the construct of the transitional model for stress includes variables outside the scope of this study.

Instead, the transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981) is focused on the 4S's. The transition between military and civilian life can change relationships, roles, and perceptions, thereby affecting a person's satisfaction with life. This theory was best suited to guide this study. Schlossberg's transition theory can be adapted to pertain to service members who are involuntarily discharged. The research questions were derived from this theory because transitioning out of the military back to civilian life is a change that can be difficult for many service members. The theory focuses on strategies to cope with the change whether it be anticipated or not.

The delimitations are the selections such as the population, research questions, and the theoretical foundation established by the researcher that support the variables for this study. The research was delimited to voluntary and involuntary discharged U.S. military service members and excluded reservists. The findings can be extended to other populations to include dishonorably discharged service members and service members who served in the U.S. Reserves.

Limitations

A variety of events can affect a person's mood, such as a conflict with a friend or family member or a poor test grade. The internal validity of the study was directly related to the reliability of the participants' responses because a person's mood could affect his or her responses on Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS. As this survey is a self-report questionnaire, the replies of the participants were out of my control. A confounding variable is an unrelated variable that affects the variables being studied (Creswell, 2009). The participant's mood could then confound the findings.

A threat to external validity was that the participants were limited to the service members who were previously active in the U.S. military and not those who served in the Reserves. A weakness of this quantitative study was the number of the participants in the sample. Participants were limited to discharged service members who had access to a computer and Internet, as well as actively participating in support groups on Facebook.

Construct validity refers to the accuracy of the test instrument used to measure the variables within a study (Creswell, 2009). Participants who completed Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS questionnaire online reported lower satisfaction with life compared to those who completed the questionnaire through telephone or in person interviews, in which people may report higher levels of life satisfaction (Van Beuningen, 2012). A limitation of asking participants to respond yes or no if they have social support in their life on the demographic questionnaire is that it is not a valid scale. My bias regarding being involuntarily discharged from the U.S. military was a limitation that could influence this study.

To address the limitation about the participants' mood as related to the accuracy of their responses on Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS online, I relied on the honesty of each participant. To address the limitation of the measurement validity of identifying social support, I relied on the participants' responses because, although a valid scale is not measuring social support, the participants indicated their perceived support. Finally, I resolved my bias by relying solely on statistical analysis and not interpretations of the gathered data.

Significance of the Study

The aim of this study was to focus on life satisfaction as affected by educational attainment, social support, and length of service of voluntarily discharged service members compared to those who were involuntarily discharged. I addressed some factors that increase and decrease life satisfaction after active duty. The potential contributions of this study were to raise awareness of the effect of involuntary discharge on a service member's life satisfaction. H. Robertson (personal communication, December 8, 2014) indicated a gap in research regarding the type of discharge (e.g., voluntarily compared to involuntary separation from the service) and the difference in life satisfaction. H. Robertson suggested that there is a different dynamic in relation to an involuntary loss of a service member's career. The results of this study provided different outcomes than others studies on life satisfaction in correlation with the military.

Significance to Practice

The findings of this study advanced the field of psychology by better understanding service members' perception of their life satisfaction based on the type of

discharge. By increasing an awareness of the difference in life satisfaction, mental health professionals working with active and discharged service members may foster an awareness of the need for strategies for involuntarily discharged service members to cope with the transition. Awareness will be increased through the knowledge of the factors that affect life satisfaction following military discharge including educational attainment, social support, and length of service.

There is a potential for military personnel who are involuntarily discharged to be less satisfied with life compared to those who are voluntarily discharged. The findings will contribute to the scholarly literature by increasing awareness of the differences in life satisfaction between voluntary and involuntarily discharged service members. There is an insufficient amount of literature on social support, length of service, and educational attainment combined with voluntary and involuntary discharge. Service members who are less satisfied with life and are depressed have a lack of motivation and may exhibit decreased self-care, hopelessness, and helplessness.

Significance to Social Change

The U.S. military has discharged thousands of active duty members and has plans to downsize further. Upon completion of this study, the Veteran Affairs regional offices throughout the United States will be informed via e-mail of the findings of this study. Government officials will have the opportunity to improve and increase their support for U.S. service members. The results of this study may bring awareness to life dissatisfaction with life after being involuntarily discharged, thereby allowing individuals to seek therapy to improve their adjustment to life outside of the military. The findings of

this study may improve the services offered to service members before discharge. The factors of educational attainment, social support, and length of service may affect service members' life satisfaction. This study's findings may increase awareness of factors that contribute to life satisfaction for military personnel who are preparing to discharge. Service members and veterans might be more likely to engage proactively in the factors that may affect their life satisfaction, such as earning a higher education degree or joining a support group. Increasing awareness throughout the military and veteran community will help service members and veterans access resources, which could contribute to improved mental health. As mental health services become more salient in the armed forces, resources will be dispersed throughout the community using media advertisements and through personal communication. The information will increase resources to decrease barriers that affect the quality of life.

Summary and Transition

Since 2012, the U.S. armed forces have withdrawn from multiple wars, resulting in a significant decrease in their need for soldiers. I compared the difference between the life satisfaction of involuntarily discharged service members to those who were voluntarily discharged and the effect of educational attainment, social support, and length of service on life satisfaction. I obtained the participants' life satisfaction scores using Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS. Because this is a self-report scale, there were some limitations to this questionnaire. However, it was assumed that the participants would answer the questionnaire honestly and to the best of his or her ability based on his or her experiences.

This study is significant as no other researchers have addressed the effect of social support, educational attainment, or length of service on U.S. service members' life satisfaction in connection with being voluntarily or involuntarily discharged. It is hypothesized that voluntarily discharged service members who earn a higher level of education, have social support systems, and longer length of service will be more satisfied with life than service members who were involuntarily discharged from their service career

Chapter 2 includes the literature review and will contain the introduction, literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, a literature review related to key variables, summary, and conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative, between-groups study was to measure the effect of the independent variables (educational attainment, social support, and length of service) on the dependent variable (life satisfaction) among voluntarily and involuntarily discharged military personnel. There is a lack of research on service member's life satisfaction based on his or her length of service. The amount of time a person serves his or her country may affect his or her lifestyle and difficulty upon return to the civilian world. The U.S. military has downsized in the last few years, affecting thousands of service members throughout the United States.

Involuntary discharge is often a negative life event, which affects overall life satisfaction (Marum, Clench-Aas, Nes, & Raanaas, 2014; Robertson & Brott, 2013). Negative life events that lead to lower life satisfaction can increase the odds of a person becoming depressed (Diener et al., 2013). Involuntary military discharge can create physical and psychological problems (Graves, 2005) and increase suicidal ideations in veterans (MacLean et al., 2014). Many service members who served during wartime, such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, are later diagnosed with combat-related PTSD (Cassels, 2010), which can compound the difficulty of transitioning back to civilian life. According to Kahneman and Deaton (2010), both psychological health and physical health are factors affect life satisfaction. Prior researchers (Jakupack & Varra, 2011; MacLean et al., 2014; Robertson, 2014) found that the variables of social support, length of service, and educational attainment affected a discharged service member's transition.

In the United States, earning a higher education is an accomplishment (Meeks & Murrell, 2001). According to Fryberg (2013), higher education leads to enhanced life satisfaction. The more postsecondary education a person has, the more likely she or he is to gain a higher paying job. Higher income has been found to increase life satisfaction (Deaton, 2008). There is a connection between education and life satisfaction among the general population. Researchers (Deaton, 2008; Fryberg, 2013) addressed the struggles that service members face returning to college after discharge. Ray and Heaslip (2011) discussed that having an education is important for veterans returning to the civilian world. However, more research is needed to address the effect that educational attainment has on life satisfaction among veterans.

Social support is a protective factor for veterans who are transitioning from the military to civilian life; a lack of social support can decrease veterans' psychological wellbeing (Bruno, 2016; MacLean et al., 2014). Sprague (2007) reported the importance of a strong support system for veterans, especially those who are diagnosed with TBI or PTSD to improve symptom management.

Fewer researchers have explored the effect that length of military service has on life satisfaction. The happier a person is with his or her job, the longer he or she will stay in that career, which directly affects life satisfaction (Al Muftah & Lafi, 2011; Henne & Locke, 1985; Saari & Judge 2004). According to MacLean et al. (2014), the length of service is connected to how successfully a person transitions out of the military. Those who served fewer than 10 years before being discharged are more likely to have suicidal ideations.

In the literature review, I explore how educational attainment, social support, and length of service affect life satisfaction. In addition, I will explain how Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS was used as a tool to assess life satisfaction of veterans in my research. I also explain why Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory was the best framework for this study. This chapter consists of the introduction, literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, literature review related to key variables, summary, and conclusion. The literature review on educational attainment, social, support, length of service, life satisfaction, and how these variables relate to a population of voluntary and involuntary discharged service members will be explained in the literature review.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted the literature search by accessing multiple databases in the Walden University Library, including PsycInfo, PsycArticles, PsycTESTS, SAGE Premier, ERIC, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, Homeland Security, Digital Library, Military and Government Collection, Thoreau Multi-Database Search, Business Source Complete, ProQuest Central, and Google Scholar. I searched peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2016. I found minimal research on the length of service for military personnel. The search engines that I used included the Business Source and Military and Government Collection, with the following keywords: *voluntary discharge*, *involuntary discharge*, *United States*, *length of service*, *employment tenure*, *life satisfaction*, *military discharge*, *social support*, *educational attainment*, *honorable*, and *military*. I found few studies addressing civilian employment and the effect that length of employment years employed has on job satisfaction. I found no articles when searching for voluntary and

involuntary U.S. military discharge. I aimed to examine the last 5 years of literature published from 2010 through 2016; however, some literature dated back to 1945.

Theoretical Foundation

Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory provided the framework for this study. In the transition theory, Schlossberg recognized the relationship between how much support people have in their lives and their successful transition to different roles. The transition theory includes fostering strategies to deal with change. U.S. military service members may not be prepared to transition back to civilian life; Schlossberg suggested that being prepared to transition is important. Both education and social support are strategies for a successful transition. According to the transition theory, the variable length of service is a significant factor during life changes. I will use Schlossberg's transition theory to examine the roles of support, coping strategies, and being prepared to transition among discharged service members. Because unexpected transitions can change routines, relationships, roles, and assumptions, those who are involuntarily discharged will have less coping skills than those who choose to be discharged.

Schlossberg developed the transition theory in 1984 to explain how people adjust to transitions during their lives. Schlossberg (1981) defined a transition as "an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships" (p. 5). People deal with change differently; one person may perceive a job loss as a new start; whereas. another person may see job loss as an end and may feel a lack of self-worth (Schlossberg, 1981). A person's perception of the transition is crucial for a successful transition. If a

person has successfully transitioned through a similar experience, that event lead to a person developing a positive attitude about the current transition; however, if the person was overwhelmed by a similar transition in the past, the current situation may result in negative emotions and a lack of ability to cope (Schlossberg, 1981).

Schlossberg (1984) emphasizes the 4S's: self, situation, strategies, and support. Self is how a person has changed because of the transition. Situation includes what the event is, what happened, the timing of the event, and whether the person transitioning has control over the event. It is important to identify the individual's role in the change and the amount of time the transition took from the beginning to the end. The transitions may affect peoples' income, life outcomes, and perceived support (Robertson, 2013). Schlossberg (1981) found that participants who were laid off from their jobs and lacked interpersonal support systems had increased stress and health problems. Next, Schlossberg (1984) indicated how people responded to the change by identifying their coping strategies. Finally, a person's support system is vital factor to coping effectively and adapting to change (Schlossberg, 1981). Interpersonal support is often found among family and friends. People who have a strong family support system during a transition reported lower stress and felt less overwhelmed (Schlossberg, 1981). Friends also reduce stress during a difficult transition. According to Schlossberg (1981), friends can ease one another and "cushion a sudden shock" (p. 11).

The U.S. military has its own culture, and transitioning out of the military can be difficult for many service members (Taylor, 2011). I used Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory to frame the factors affecting service members' transition from their military

careers into the civilian world (Borus, 1973). The veterans will likely have to make many adjustments in their lives. The veterans'' social support system and coping strategies will affect their outcomes and life satisfaction after discharge.

Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory correlated with the research questions in this study because the theory includes the importance of (a) being prepared to transition, (b) having support, and (c) having a plan to cope with the changes. I used the theory as the foundation for these research questions. I used transition theory in the study to build on the existing research by asking whether discharge type affects postdischarge life satisfaction, as those who are voluntarily leaving have a perceived greater amount of control over the transition than those who are involuntarily discharged.

Several scholars have applied the transition theory to examine service members. Service members often have difficulty transitioning if they have a negative perception of the transition, such as their view of the length, onset, or timing of the transition. Robertson (2013) found that the length of service could affect veterans' financial stability. Griffin and Gilbert (2009) used Schlosberg's theory to explain participants' perception of efficiency, confidence, views, and strength regarding their transition. Griffin and Gilbert showed that the service member's perception of the transition related to how well he or she dealt with the change. The more optimism, value, and self-efficiency the service member exhibits, the easier the transition into civilian life.

Robertson (2013) conducted studies to gain a better understanding of life satisfaction among service members. Robertson used Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory to gain a clearer comprehension of service members' life satisfaction after

transitioning out of the military into civilian life. Robertson found that the length of service members' transition and their social support were both factors connected with how satisfied they were with life.

Robertson and Brott (2013) discussed life satisfaction among male service members who had been discharged and were beginning a teaching career. Additionally, Robertson and Brott looked at the service members' perception of "readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence (p. 69). Internal and external factors affected service members' ability to adjust to the transition (Robertson & Brott, 2013). Robertson and Brott found a correlation between increased life satisfaction and being prepared to discharge from their military career to a new civilian life.

Robertson (2014) measured the life satisfaction of prior service members who transitioned into teaching careers. Robertson combined Schlosberg's transition theory with Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS. Some participants reported that their achievements from their service career had increased their life satisfaction after transitioning to a teaching career; however, others reported that there was not a connection between their military transition and life satisfaction (Robertson, 2014). Robertson discussed that Schlossberg's transition theory was an acceptable framework because the theory focuses on getting through the transition process. Robertson showed that the majority of the participants were satisfied with life as second career teachers.

Robertson (2013) researched the effect that support and income has on service members during their transition from military to civilian life. The availability and use of transition assistance programs (TAP) that were formulated to help service members

prepare for life outside of the military were beneficial and helped their transition (Roberts, 2013; Vacchi, 2012). Despite the availability of the programs and high service members' participation, service members still had difficulty transitioning into a new career outside of the military (Robertson, 2014). Family support, as well as being financially secured, increased success after their military career was completed (Robertson, 2013; Robertson & Brott, 2013).

Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory was chosen for this study because I aimed to understand the factors that affect service members' life satisfaction after transitioning from the military into civilian life. Each service member discharged will go through the transition process; some people will cope with the challenges of transitioning better than others. Military transitions can be challenging for service members because they are not only leaving a job behind, but also leaving a way of life behind (Ray & Heaslip, 2011). When service men and women are on active duty, they receive a housing allowance; medical benefits; and support from programs, such as Operation Homefront (Operation Home Front, 2016). Some service members who were honorably involuntarily discharged are given medical benefits for a short period after their discharge; but, these benefits are not always offered to their dependents, which increases stress to both the service member and their family (Guina, 2015). It can be difficult for veterans to cope with the loss of these active duty benefits, especially if the veteran is in need of assistance and does not have a new job or benefits to support him or her after military discharge (Guina, 2015). The transition theory provides a framework for this study, as it can be used to explain why some people have easier transitions than others.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

In this literature review, I will evaluate, compare, and contrast the most recent literature on the variables included in this study. The variables included voluntary and involuntary discharge, life satisfaction, educational attainment, social support, and length of service, as well as some demographic characteristics. I explore how the independent variables (educational attainment, social support, and length of service) can affect a person's life satisfaction. An involuntary discharge can be considered a negative life event (Marum et al., 2013) that may create stresses, such as anxiety and other worries (Lunney, 2014) and affect psychological wellbeing, increasing depression and decreasing life satisfaction (Gilberd & Wilson, 2013). MacLean et al. (2014) reported that involuntary discharge resulted in a more difficult transition to civilian life among Canadian service members. There is, however, a lack of research on the effect that involuntary discharge has on U.S. service members.

Social support is an essential factor, especially while experiencing an adverse life event that can predict life satisfaction (Marum et al., 2013). Service members diagnosed with PTSD who have strong support systems are better able to cope with the symptoms of PTSD and have an easier time functioning socially (Tsai et al., 2012). In the United States, a person's educational attainment can be viewed as an accomplishment that will likely raise his or her income, thus enhancing his or her life satisfaction (Fryberg, 2013). People who have achieved higher degrees of education often report increased levels of life satisfaction compared to those without advanced degrees (Meeks & Murrell, 2001). There is a lack of research on the effect that the length of a person's military service has

on his or her life satisfaction, and there is evidence that career tenure can influence satisfaction (Sarker, Crossman, & Chinmeteepituck, 2003).

Impact of Job Loss

Being discharged, whether voluntary or involuntary, is the same as any other type of career transition. An involuntary loss of a person's job not only happens in the military, but also occurs in the civilian world. According to Schlossberg (1981), men who recently lost their jobs reported feelings of shock and fear, and they felt it was more difficult than any other crisis they had experienced in their life. However, these same men were interviewed 3 months later, and one man discussed, in the beginning, that the loss of his job was more difficult than his divorce, but then realized he had an opportunity for a new career (Schlossberg, 1981). These opportunities may not have presented if he had not lost his job.

Young (2012) researched the relationship between job loss and wellbeing. Young discussed that the loss of a job affects everyone differently. One person may be stressed and struggle with the loss, but another person may not feel the same negative effect. Those who endure longer unemployment periods have a more difficult time coping with the loss.

Blustein, Kozan, and Connors-Kellgren (2013) explored the effects of unemployment. One of the participants reported that he was having difficulty coping with the loss of his job because his primary support system was at work. The participant further discussed that his coworkers were his closest friends because he did not socialize outside of his job. However, the participants who reported a strong social support system

had a more positive view of the job loss, seeing their unemployment as a way to start over or as a growing experience. The loss of a job can also cause financial stress and insecurities; Blustein et al. found that the participants who had other means of income viewed their job loss positivity compared to those participants who suffered financial hardship and suffered distress because of the loss of their job.

Classen and Dunn (2012) examined the connection between suicide and employment status. Classen and Dunn found that lengthy periods of unemployment over 15 weeks can decrease self-esteem and lead to depressive symptoms that can produce thoughts of suicide in men and women. Lundin, Lundberg, Allebeck, and Hemmingsson (2012) found similar results and claimed that suicide and unemployment had a connection if the unemployment lasted for more than 3 months. Lundin et al. found that the people who were at risk of becoming unemployed because of health problems or who were currently unemployed had greater risks of being depressed and having suicidal ideations.

Deb, Gallo, Ayyagari, Fletcher, and Sindelar (2011) researched the connection between job loss and alcohol use and being overweight. The data were collected from the Health and Retirement Survey, a national representative sample of 20,557 men and women over the age of 50 years old. Deb et al. discussed that the loss of a job is often a stressful event in a person's life because it could cause financial strain. Further, if a person engages in unhealthy behaviors before the job loss, such as overeating and excessive alcohol consumption, he or she is more likely to increase these unhealthy behaviors after the loss of his or her job.

Salm (2009) explored the possibility of a connection between unemployment and a person's health. The population included three separate samples over a period of 4 years. The data were collected from questionnaires. The first sample included 12,654 men and women between the years 1994-2002, the second sample in 1998 included 20,396, and the final sample included 6,867 men and women (Salm, 2009). Salm did not identify a connection between job loss and psychological or physical effects on the unemployed person or his or her spouse.

An involuntary release from a career is not always a negative event. According to Eby and Bunch (1995), the perception of the person who lost his or her job and the level of stress the person has can create a welcome change. Mandal, Ayyagari, and Gallo (2013) studied the connection between depression and involuntary job loss. Mandal et al. used longitudinal data among a population of 12,652 unemployed men and women over the age of 45 and their spouses. Mandal et al. discussed that employment is an income source, identity, and social environment. The amount of unemployment in the United States has increased by 3 million since 2009. Mandal et al. showed that layoffs due to downsizing had a connection with mental health problems. People who are involuntarily unemployed have increased chances of developing symptoms of depression, and the insecurities that a person has about his or her job predicts unemployment. Lower education contributed to diminishing mental health and overall wellbeing among people who involuntarily lost their jobs (Mandal et al., 2013).

The involuntary loss of a job is an unpredictable life event that decreases psychological and physical wellbeing, which can create feelings of shame, insecurity, and

anxiety (Brand, 2015). Brand (2015) found that in 2009, approximately 12 % of households in the United States had one unemployed family member. People who have been laid off may have a more difficult time obtaining new employment because employers often view layoffs as a way of letting employees go during economic growth because of lack of productivity, and their character and competence may be questioned (Brand, 2015). People who lose their jobs involuntarily experience longer unemployment periods, which can cause financial stress, decreased life satisfaction, and decreased psychological and physical wellbeing. Further, the loss of a job increased the likeliness of divorce between couples and lower self-esteem in children (Brand, 2015).

Yergler (2011) researched the trauma that is associated with involuntary job loss. Yergler found that a loss of a job affects a person's support system, including family and friends, as well as contributing to increased psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and decreasing self-esteem. PTSD is associated with an involuntary job loss among civilian organizational leaders (Yergler, 2011). Although support from family and friends is crucial, it is important for people to develop supportive relationships outside the workplace to protect against potential trauma developed from an involuntary job loss.

A gap in the literature exists on the possible traumatic effects of involuntary discharged on service members. When a service member is not given the opportunity to reenlist, he or she may experience feelings of fear, anxiety, and stress about transiting back into the civilian world. The military is a culture all on its own, and when a person transitions out of that world, there are many changes within his or her personal relationships and routines; the person may experience identity confusion.

Voluntary and Involuntary Discharge

There are two main types of discharge from the military: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary discharge refers to service members who have chosen to leave their service career (Military, 2015). Involuntary discharge refers to service members who have been chosen by the military to be discharged (Military, 2015). Some of the reasons service members are involuntarily discharged include medical problems, budget cuts, not meeting physical fitness requirements, or not advancing in rank. The military has a history of downsizing after wars. Even as early as 1778-1800, the military downsized to merely 10,000 active duty service members (Boot, 2012). After the Civil War, the U.S. military dropped from approximately a million service members to 50,000 (Boot, 2012). Before WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and 9/11 attacks, the service increased their forces, and after each war, the forces downsized (Cloud & Fritze, 2014). After the end of WWI, the military downsized from over 2 million to 250,000 (Boot, 2012). In the 1970s, the military downsized again from over 3 million down to 2 million (Boot, 2012).

The military increased forces after 9/11 by 84,000 service members (Olson, 2012). According to Olson (2012), decisions to downsize the U.S. military in 2011 were made because of the high costs of the increased numbers of active duty service members. The government plans to save $150 billion each year until 2020, adding up to over a trillion dollars (Friedman & Preble, 2010). The Army plans to decrease costs by $500 million by discharging 80,000 service members by 2022 (Banco, 2013). The anticipated downsize may cut the forces down to the smallest size since before World War II (Burns, 2014).

The United States planned to release 80,000 service members between 2013 and 2017 (Banco, 2013). Approximately 10% of the involuntary budget cuts included service members who were forced to be discharged (Zoroya, 2014). Many of these service members had been deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq and suffered physical and/or psychological injuries and were still involuntarily discharged (Zoroya, 2014).

Involuntary discharge can have a number of effects on veterans. Veterans who were involuntarily discharged were more likely to have a variety of issues, including lower income, suicidal ideations, and physical and psychological problems (MacLean et al., 2014). MacLean et al. (2014) found that service members who voluntarily discharged, or who had served the required amount of time to receive retirement from the military, had a smoother transition into civilian life. Cowling (2015) discussed that there are several steps that can be taken to have a smooth transition out of the military. Some of the steps Cowling recommended included networking with friends and potential employers, modifying their resume for each company, and setting realistic employment goals. Collins (2015) discussed that using strategies, such as spending time with a person's support system (family, friends, and support groups for veterans) and engaging in enjoyable activities can make the transition from military to civilian life smoother. Schmidt (2011) discussed that the military offers tools through the TAP to make service members' transition smoother. Some of the tools TAP offers include counseling, financial planning, and techniques for writing a resume (Schmidt, 2011). Baruch and Quick (2009) researched the transition from military to civilian careers of U.S. Navy admirals. A successful transition means being ready to discharge and leave a military

career in the past (Baruch & Quick, 2009). The participants who were prepared to discharge reported higher levels of career and life satisfaction (Baruch & Quick, 2009).

For many active duty service members, the fear of being involuntarily discharged from one career can increase stress, anxiety, and depression (Gilberd & Wilson, 2013). The effect of military downsizing can create stress and increase the risk of suicide because of the readjustment and uncertainty many service members feel transitioning back into the civilian world (Wilson, 2013). According to MacDonald and Officer (2014), a person's identity is a factor when transitioning back into the civilian world. MacDonald and Officer explored the military identity and adjustment and discussed that not all of the participants in the study let go of their military identity entirely, but created new civilian identities. However, when a veteran struggles to let go of his or her military identity, it can make it more difficult to transition into the civilian world (MacDonald & Officer, 2014). Veterans who were ready to discharge leave behind their military identity (MacDonald & Officer, 2014). It is important for professionals who work with veterans to promote a positive civilian identity.

Service members and their family can have feelings of increased anxiety surrounding finding a new job after being involuntarily discharged from the military (Lunney, 2014). When a service member is active, the individual receives a guaranteed paycheck every 1st and 15th of the month. However, when a service member finds out that he or she is being discharged, many concerns arise, because once discharged from the military, he or she will no longer receive a paycheck. Hence, the individual may worry about where the next source of income will come from. Schlossberg (1981)

identified coping strategies as being crucial during transitions. Interpersonal support is effective factor for people who are transiting into new areas of life; however, further studies are needed on adaption for professionals to assist people in transition.

Many service members and their families are concerned about the possibility of being separated from the military. When a person is unable to provide for his or her family after the loss, it can affect his or her feelings of self-esteem and self-worth. Simmelink (2004) described an unwanted career transition as an involuntary change, which can affect how a person perceives him or herself. A person's perception of the transition appears to affect how the individual feels about the change. Graves (2005) concluded that officers who felt forced to retire believed that they were not making their decision, and they had more difficulty transitioning into the civilian world. It is difficult to foresee those service members who will have a difficult time adjusting to civilian life after their transition from the military (Graves, 2005). Officers who retired early, as opposed to officers who retired at the typical time, reported less life satisfaction because of financial strains (Graves, 2005). Knesek (1988) discussed that officers who have made their decision to retire from the military are more successful upon entering into a civilian life. Despite the negative feelings many people have after the loss of their job, the loss may be viewed as a way of enhancing career growth. Knesek found that veterans felt that they had been treated unfairly. MacLean et al. (2014) revealed that involuntary discharge increased the odds of having a more difficult transition leaving the military. To give the service members time to prepare for new employment, the Army informed deployed

soldiers that were selected for involuntary discharge 10 months before their discharge date (Sheftick, 2015).

According to Reger et al. (2015), the U.S. military suicide rates have almost doubled in the last 10 years. Reger et al. found that the suicide rates between service members deployed supporting OIF and/or OEF were not significantly higher than those service members who did not deploy. Reger et al. found that an increase of completed suicides occurred among service members who had a dishonorable discharge or those service members who served fewer than 4 years, demonstrating a connection between discharge and suicide.

Voluntary and Involuntary Discharge

There were large numbers of involuntary discharges from the U.S. military, and there are plans to continue to downsize the military. Researchers discussed the difficulties that an involuntary discharge had on the service members transitioning out of the. An involuntary military discharge can affect a person's psychological wellbeing, increasing depression, stress, anxiety, suicidal ideations, and even completing suicide. Many service members enter into the military with thoughts of retirement and seeing the world. However, when a person is involuntarily discharged, it diminishes those plans. Being a service member is not only a job, but for many, it is an identity. Limited research has been conducted on military identity and discharge. The military identity can be challenging for service members to leave behind and create new civilian identities, making it difficult to transition back into the civilian world. Veterans are more likely to have suicidal ideations because of the stress of being involuntarily discharged from the

military. Many service members are not able to resist those ideations as seen by the increased suicide rate over the last decade and amongst the Army and Marines. However, there is a gap in the literature on the effect of life satisfaction on involuntary discharges of U.S. veterans.

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction can be determined by identifying how happy a person is with his or her life overall, including his or her physical and psychological wellbeing (Roser, 2016). The happier a person is with life, the higher his or her life satisfaction and he or she will report enhanced relationships and overall wellbeing (Park, 2004). People who have decreased life satisfaction often struggle with behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties (Park, 2004). Lang, Wiss, Gerstof, and Wagner's (2013) assessed the accuracy of the participants' prediction of life satisfaction over a 5-year period and found that younger people were more likely to rate their future life satisfaction higher than older people because they were more hopeful about what the future will hold as opposed to being realistic. A pessimistic outlook will influence life satisfaction, and as individuals get older, they often underestimate how satisfied they will be later in life (Lang et al., 2013). Those who have higher incomes and better health will often have an optimistic outlook on life (Lang et al. 2013). Borg et al. (2008) used the Older American's Resources Schedule (OARS), the Life Satisfaction Index Z, and the Self-Esteem Scale to research the relationships between health, physical activities, self-esteem, finances, social resources, and life satisfaction. Borg et al. reported that life satisfaction was decreased in

many people who had lower ADLs abilities as opposed to life satisfaction being reduced due to decreased social or financial factors.

Marum et al. (2013) researched how adverse life events affected the life satisfaction of Norwegians over 16 years of age. The factors that were addressed were sex, education, age, and income (Marum et al., 2013). Negative life events bereavement, arguments with social support, and psychological or physical distress (Marum et al., 2013). Marum et al. concluded that all variables, except the death of a loved one, were associated with psychological distress and connected with the participants' life satisfaction. Marum et al. identified that the loss of a job creates psychological distress and affects life satisfaction. Financial hardships are often accompanied by the loss of a job, and financial hardship was found to be the largest predictor of decreased life satisfaction (Marum et al., 2013). Although Marum et al. studied life satisfaction among a different population from my study, job loss among any population will affect financial security and may affect life satisfaction. Deaton (2008) stated that higher incomes are associated with life satisfaction. There are many aspects of a person's life that he or she may not be satisfied with, but depending on his or her current emotional state and experience of that day, he or she might report overall life satisfaction.

Measuring Life Satisfaction

In previous methods to measure life satisfaction, scholars have employed only a single question, but this cannot measure a person's complete life satisfaction and is only applicable to specific populations (Diener et al., 1985). Diener et al. (1985) developed a scale that would measure a person's total life satisfaction, the SWLS. The SWLS

measures a person's life satisfaction scores based on his or her cognitive perception of his or her life satisfaction. The SWLS is a self-reported, 5-item questionnaire to uncover a person's current level of life satisfaction. To test the psychometric properties of the SWLS, Diener et al. conducted three quantitative studies. The populations of the first two studies consisted of college students, and the third study consisted of a population of elderly men and women (Diener et al., 1985). The SWLS has been used in a variety of studies and has been found to be a valid and reliable measure for identifying a person's current state of satisfaction. According to Diener et al. a person's life satisfaction is based on how happy they are with their life. Although a person's responses can change based on his or her recent or current situations, the scales are consistent overall, as they have repeatedly been tested and have had similar results (Dickson, McCarthy, Howe, Schipper, & Katz, 2013).

The SWLS has been used with college students, the elderly, older people diagnosed with a TBI, and the general population (Heinemann, 2010). Researchers have found similar rates of reliability (Diener et al., 2013). The scales' validity has a Cronbach alpha of .80 or higher (Diener et al., 2013). Diener et al. (2013) reported that twin siblings typically scored similar results on the SWLS, which is an indication of how a person feels about his or her life genetically. Kong, Zhao, and You (2012) conducted a quantitative study using a population of undergraduate Chinese college students between 17- and 23-years-old and found the SWLS to have a Cronbach alpha of 0.82.

Peterson, Park, and Seligman (2005) measured life satisfaction based on adult volunteer participants reporting pleasure, engagement, or meaning of life online. Peterson

et al. used the SWLS, and most participants were found to be somewhat happy with life. However, those who rated low on the pleasure, engagement, and meaning of life scales were likely to be depressed (Peterson et al., 2005).

Emotions, mood, and measuring life satisfaction. Extremera and Fernandez-Berrocal (2005) studied perceived intelligence and life satisfaction among a population of Spanish undergraduate students. Extremera and Fernandez-Berrocal found that mood could directly affect how satisfied or unsatisfied people are with their lives, and depression was a predictor of life satisfaction. Eriksson, Kottorp, Brog, and Tham (2009) studied the relationship between life satisfaction, depression, and occupational gaps among people who have suffered a brain injury. Eriksson et al. found that people who suffer from depression were more likely to report lower life satisfaction. A person's negative mood can increase his or her stress level, affect those around him or her, and influence his or her perceptions on life (Eriksson et al., 2009). If a person is unhappy with his or her work hours or too much time has passed since the transition, a person might respond to a survey more accurately (Silva, 2011).

Bipolar disorder, like depression, may affect a person's life satisfaction (Pavlickova et al., 2013). Pavlickova et al.'s (2013) participants were all diagnosed with bipolar disorder and were receiving outpatient treatment. When a person was depressed, he or she had difficulty identifying enjoyable things in life or even protective factors such as family, friends, or other reasons to live. Pavlickova et al. found that being psychologically ill not only affects a person's life satisfaction, but his or her mood and self-esteem. It is important for a person to have the ability to effectively regulate his or

her mood to promote life satisfaction (Extremera & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2005). According to Diener et al. (2013), the SWLS can be influenced by a person's mood; physiological associations with life satisfaction; and significant life events, such as the death of a loved one. However, typically, a person's responses can be controlled. A person's satisfaction with life tends to be constant over short periods of time.

Mental health, life satisfaction, and military service. Deployment to a war zone affects each person differently. One service member may return from war without any change, while others suffer psychological injuries (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). One in every four service member suffers from a mental health disorder (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2016). According to Cassels (2010), many veterans who served a tour in Iraq or Afghanistan returned home with a diagnosis of PTSD. However, service members stated that the treatment they received for TBI, PTSD, and other mental health disorders resulting from the war had been ineffective (Cassels, 2010; Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008).

Martin, Lu Helmick, French, and Warden (2008) explored TBI that veterans attained during the Afghanistan and Iraq war. Martin et al. reviewed the importance of nurses' roles in taking care of veterans diagnosed with TBI. One side effect of both TBI and PTSD is irritability. Irritability not only affects the veteran, but also can affect his or her relationship with his or her family and friends because it can be difficult for a person to regulate his or her mood (Martin et al., 2008). Shively and Perl (2012) discussed that many service members returning home after deployments from OEF and OIF were diagnosed with combat-related TBI, often experiencing irritability and struggling to control their mood.

Military service can be associated with TBI and emotional problems, which can affect life satisfaction. However, many veterans do not seek help for mental health problems because of the stigma surrounding mental health by the military culture or because they do not realize help is available (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2010). People whose mental health needs go untreated experience negative outsomes, such as physical and psychological health problems, conflicts with their primary support system, homelessness, and suicide (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). Service members returning home after being deployed to war zones often have difficulty transitioning (Grinker & Spiegel, 1945). This is often because of problems with their support system or struggling with their physical or psychological wellbeing. It is important to understand how satisfied or dissatisfied with life veterans are because of the high rates of suicidal ideations and depression among this population of veterans (Nakashima Brock, 2013).

Life stressors and life satisfaction. Many types of stress can affect a person and influence his or her life satisfaction, including physical, chemical, mental, emotional, nutritional, traumatic, and psycho-spiritual (Haas, 2010). Korkelia, Kaprio, Rissanen, Koskenvuo, and Sorensen (1998) revealed that increased levels of stress can affect a person's physical or psychological wellbeing, such as weight gain and headaches. Schnurr and Spiro (1999) found in that intense traumas in a person's life, including childhood, were associated with heart disease, cancer, strokes, and chronic bronchitis. The perception of stress is based on each individual. Alleye, Alleyne, and Greenidge (2010) found that lower life satisfaction was connected with higher levels of perceived stress. Stress can cause large amounts of strain on a person and affect their ability to

successfully perform in their daily life because they tend to focus on the stressor (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The American Psychological Association (2016) stated that if the stress in a person's life is severe enough, it can interfere with a person's ability to successfully engages in his or her daily life and can even cause physical problems. Decreased physical or psychological health can increase stress in a person's life and can ultimately decrease his or her overall life satisfaction (Marum et al., 2013).

Money is a necessary part of life to buy food, have shelter, transportation, and much more. Financial satisfaction predicts life satisfaction (Diener et al., 2013; Ng & Diener, 2014). Kahneman and Deaton (2010) found that lower income had been connected to how a person evaluates his or her life.

Veterans and life satisfaction. People who report lower life satisfaction are more likely to be depressed. Diener et al. (2013) found lower scores to be predictors of future suicidal ideation and completed suicide. Approximately 20% of all suicides in the United States are completed by veterans, although only a fraction of the U.S. population is made up of veterans (Gallagher, 2014). Veterans who have been diagnosed or who suffer from depression, anxiety, and PTSD often have more difficulty transitioning from the military into a civilian career (Van Til et al., 2013). Van Til et al. (2013) reported that these populations are often diagnosed with anxiety, PTSD, substance use disorders, and stress disorders. War is often difficult for all service members, but service members who have killed others during deployment have a higher risk of suicidal ideations after homecoming (Nakashima Brock, 2013). The stress that service members experience while in a war zone is different than any other stress they will experience in their life, and

many service members are unable to adjust (Grinker & Spiegel, 1945). When a service member is under a large amount of stress, it can impair his or her ability to function during warfare, increasing the likelihood of injury and death (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The military offers TAPS to increase service members' knowledge of what to expect after the transition to civilian life, such as job training, the cost of living, and health care options. Service members who partake in the TAPS program were more likely to gain employment after transitioning out of the military because of professional resumes, mock interviews, and preparation (Silva, 2011). The longer a person was active in the military, the more likely the individual engaged in these classes (Silva, 2011). Some service members have stated that the TAPS program is not helpful (Robertson & Brott, 2013). Robertson and Brott (2013) claimed that one veteran stated, "the transition program offered by the military is close to worthless" as these programs do not prepare a person psychologically to transition into the civilian world (p. 73).

The civilian world is a different entity than the military culture, and it can be difficult to prepare for such a change. Hayden, Ledwith, Dong, and Buzzetta (2014) reported that service members' opinions should be taken into account when creating career development programs to improve assistance to the service members. Robertson and Brott (2013) uncovered that counselors are included as a part of the military's TAP; however, therapy would be also help the service member identify his or her strengths to increase transition success. When a person has higher life satisfaction after exiting the military, it is likely an indicator that his or her transition was successful.

Literature synthesis of the variable life satisfaction. Many factors influence a person's life satisfaction, including money, physical, and psychological health. Higher stress levels have been linked with lower life satisfaction and increased negative physical implications. When a person makes less income, he or she may have difficulty purchasing items that are necessary to have in life, such as food, shelter, and clothing. Psychological and physical health also affects life satisfaction. Those suffering from both physical and mental health issues report lower life satisfaction and have more negative outcomes. Some service members fear they will not be able to find a new job after they are discharged from their service career.

Educational Attainment

In the United States, earning a higher education is considered an accomplishment that can increase a person's job satisfaction (Fryberg, 2013). Rodgers (2015) stated that education affects how a person feels about himself or herself and how satisfied the individual is in life. Meeks and Murrell (2001) found that older people who received a higher education were found to report higher life satisfaction. People who have positive influences and receive more support as a child are more likely to have higher degrees of educational attainment (Meeks & Murrell, 2001). Cunado Gracia (2011) discussed that people who have higher levels of education typically have higher paying jobs, which has shown to increase happiness. However, unemployed people with higher education levels were less satisfied than people who had lower levels of education. Cunado Gracia concluded that there is a direct link between a person's subjective wellbeing and his or her educational attainment.

Mandemakers and Monden (2013) researched the effect of an involuntary job loss on psychological distress. People who lose their job with less educational attainment are more likely to have more psychological distress than those who have higher educational attainment (Mandemakers & Monden, 2013). Because people with higher education usually have more opportunities for work, it creates a buffer against psychological distress in relation to job loss. However, people who involuntarily lose higher status jobs will experience increased levels of psychological distress compared to people who make a satisfactory income (Mandemakers & Monden, 2013).

Income has been found to be a predictor of a person's life satisfaction (Deaton, 2008). People who earn an advanced degree, such as an associate or bachelor's degree, can increase their earnings by approximately 12 % (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). However, Melin, Fugl-Meyer, and Fugl-Meyer (2003) discussed that the national representative of the Swedish population a person's educational level did not have an influence on his or her life satisfaction. Melin et al. concluded that those who gained an education from a university reported to be less satisfied with life than those who had less education, such as solely a high school diploma among adult participants in Sweden (Melien et al., 2003). Behlau (2010) examined the life satisfaction of graduate compared to undergraduate students in the United States. Behlau stated that undergraduate students reported slightly higher overall life satisfaction scores than graduate students. According to Behlau, this may be because many undergraduate students have support emotionally and financially, and they often do not have the same responsibilities as graduate students.

Lee and Lee (2013) examined connections between life satisfaction, functioning, and level of education among elderly adults. Lee and Lee's participants' level of life satisfaction was obtained using Dinner et al.'s (1985) SWLS. Social engagement was measured with the Korean Longitudinal Study on Aging (KLOSA), and the psychological functioning was measured with the Korean Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE-K). Lee and Lee discussed that higher educational level often means higher income, home ownership, and higher social economic status, which are linked to increased life satisfaction. Lee and Lees showed that people with higher educational levels reported less depression and functioning limitations and higher life satisfaction than those with less education. However, people who had less engagement involving physical activity and fewer interactions with friends were more likely to have more limitations with their ADL, regardless of the level of education (Lee & Lee, 2013). Lee and Lee stated that engaging with friends is a significant predictor of life satisfaction.

Education and the military. The military downsizing has led to significant numbers of veterans enrolling into colleges using their GI Bill (Vacchi, 2012). The post 9/11 GI Bill is an educational benefit that service members earn for serving after September 11, 2001 (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009). The post 9/11 GI Bill covers the tuition for classes, stipend for books and school supplies, a one-time relocation if necessary, and a housing allowance based upon the zip code of the school for up to 36 months (Military.com, 2016). Many service men and women have used the GI Bill to earn a higher education (Bennett, 1996).

Ray and Heaslip (2011) examined issues transitioning from the military to higher education. The military promotes comradely, and school life often encourages independence; therefore, it is often difficult for service members to attend school after discharging from the military (Ray & Heaslip, 2011). Zinger and Cohen (2010) explored veterans' adjustment from the military to a college student after deployment. Zinger and Cohen found that service members who returned to college after discharging from the military had many struggles that civilian students do not face. Some of the participants reported feeling alone, overwhelmed, and not supported at school (Zinger & Cohen, 2010). Student veterans may need more assistance compared to civilian students while attending college, such as transitioning from the military or returning from deployment (Vacchi, 2012).

Griffin and Gilbert (2009) discussed that many service members who attend college after discharging from their military career struggle to do well because they feel unsupported by others. Resources are in place for veterans, such as the veteran's services offices, career counseling, and psychological counseling on college campuses to help military men and women cope with the stressors of college life. The veterans' services include assistance reregistering for classes, assistance transitioning from the military into school, and support regarding educational concerns and difficulties (Ackerman, DiRamio, & Mitchelle, 2009). Burnett and Segoria (2009) stated that, on some college campuses, peer-support has shown to be effective because veterans feel safe and supported by their peers. Despite the financial assistance that is offered to veterans returning to school, only 20% of colleges have services that assist veterans with transiting from the military to

becoming a student (Ryan, 2010). Because education represents one way to buffer the impact of a transition and is linked to increased life satisfaction, accounting for level of education among veterans is important.

Literature synthesis of the variable educational attainment. Despite the services that colleges offer veterans, students might struggle to do well in school or feel comfortable on campus. A growing number of discharged service members are taking advantage of the GI Bill to obtain higher education followed by a postmilitary career. Although there is literature on the assistance programs, such as the GI Bill and the counseling services that colleges offer to veterans, there is a gap in the literature about the effects that obtaining a higher education has on life satisfaction postdischarge. Scholars have discussed the struggles that combat veterans go through attempting to transition from the military into civilian life students. Many service members have difficulty returning to college after their military discharge because of the cultural difference between the college and military life. Some veterans also struggle to do well in school because they do not feel supported, but strive independently as they had previously been trained to work as a unit. Service members are more likely not to ask for help, and because each person is different, the college may not be meeting each individual's needs. It is essential for veterans to stay connected with the VA, as well as have peer support during college to increase educational success among veterans. It is important to explore the effect educational attainment has on life satisfaction of discharged service members.

Social Support

Life satisfaction and social support have been found to be associated with one another (Marum et al., 2013). Social support is a relationship in which one person cares for, is supportive of, and is there for another person (Towey, 2013). Depending on the type of negative life event, increased social support can provide comforts for the person experiencing the event (Marum et al., 2013). Social support includes interpersonal relationships with family, friends, and spouses that assist in resources tangible and psychological (Cohen &Wills, 1985). Cohen and Wills (1985) discussed that social support does affect wellbeing. Cohen and Wills found that there are many types of stress, and depending on the situation, having a strong support system to communicate feelings can help to shield against the effect of the stress. Emotional, close, self-esteem, ventilation, and expressive are types of support that assist in coping with a stressful situation.

Although social support was not found to protect against adverse life events, the quality and quantity of supportive people in a person's life could affect his or her psychological wellbeing and the negative life event (Marum et al., 2013). According to Kong et al. (2012), people who have higher emotional intelligence and more social support are more likely to have less psychological distress and will have higher life satisfaction scores.

Valenzuela, Park, and Kee (2009) researched the effect Facebook has on attitudes and behaviors among U.S. college students. Valenzuela et al. reported that the connections people have with one another influence their perception of their life

satisfaction. People who are involved in a stable and consistent romantic relationship express more satisfaction with life compared to those in casual relationships (Melin et al., 2003). Life is full of daily stressors, and having the positive support of a husband or wife can help manage the stress. Park and Fritz (2014) revealed that when spouses work together at the same job, the support for one another improves because they can understand and relate to what each other's stress and anxiety entails. It is crucial for spouses to support one another, as their partnership revolves around emotional support, understanding, and communication.

Cheng and Chan (2004) researched perceived social support among a sample of school-age children in Hong Kong. According to Cheng and Chan, females have more perceived support from friends and family compared to males. As females get older, their perceived support from their friends increased, as opposed to the support from their family (Cheng & Chan, 2004). Bruwer, Emsley, Kidd, Lochner, and Seedat (2008) found that Caucasian and mixed-race girls reported higher perceived social support than South African boys. Kong et al. (2012) found statistically significant differences between Chinese males and females between ages 18-35 regarding their emotional intelligence, with males scoring higher. Men who have higher scores of emotional intelligence are more likely to believe that they have a decent amount of social support.

McGowan and Cohen (1984) researched the effect of positive life events on negative life events during stressful periods. According to McGowan and Cohen, life changing events can be positive or negative; however, any event can increase stress, anxiety, and emotional wellbeing. Razurel, Kaiser, Sellenet, and Epiney (2013) examined

the relationship between social support, strategies to cope, maternal wellbeing, and perceived stress. Razurel et al. revealed that new mothers could experience depression, stress, and anxiety; however, social support can decrease symptoms of depression. Tanriverd, Savas, and Can (2012) studied perceived social support among a population of 105 cancer patients. Tanrivard et al. used the MSPSS to assess the participants' social support and the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory to assess beneficial changes as a result of their cancer. Tanrivard et al. reported that the MSPSS showed good internal validity and a reliability coefficient of 0.89. Tanrivard et al. discussed that social support after a traumatic event among people diagnosed with cancer can improve adjustment periods. Physical difficulties can contribute to psychological distress, such as anxiety and depression.

Social support has been found to affect an individual's mood during difficult situations. Contrary, Al Muftah and Lafi (2011) reported that some social support causes stress and pressure in peoples' lives. The demands on an individual's personal and professional life can cause him or her to feel a lack of control, thereby decreasing satisfaction (Al Muftah & Lafi, 2011). Conflicts with a family member can overflow into a person's work life, and conflict with a coworker can create stress at home. Al Muftah and Lafi indicated that social, physical, and psychological wellbeing all contribute to life satisfaction. However, Smith et al. (2011) stated that perceived social support and emotional intelligence may increase psychosocial support. Emotional intelligence is defined as a person's perception of how well he or she understood his or her emotions (Kong et al., 2012). MacLean et al. (2014) found that veterans who were discharged

midcareer, involuntarily, or were lower rank, had a more difficult time adjusting to civilian life. Service members who never deployed or discharged voluntarily had more support and were higher in rank had an easier time transitioning into civilian life.

People who interact with others on social media websites report increased life satisfaction because they gain additional social supports (Valenzuela et al., 2009). However, Gunuc and Dogan (2013) found that the Internet does not offer social support, but can decrease the amount of perceived social support. Gunuc and found that the children who spent more time with their family engaging in enjoyable activities together had higher amounts of perceived support and less addiction to the Internet. Technology is used by people of all ages. According to Gunuc and Dogan, the more a child spends online, the more time is taken away from his or her parents, which can increase the odds of Internet addiction and decrease perceived support from those they are closest to in their life. Nonetheless, people who foster interpersonal relationships online were more likely to feel as though they had an abundance of friends and trust others; thus, they reported higher satisfaction with life. Cavallo et al. (2012) encouraged participants through e-mail and Facebook to engage in physical activity. Cavallo et al. found that the participants were active in posting on Facebook, but did not feel increased perceived support, nor did they increase their physical activity. Cavallo et al. concluded that social interaction online does not show higher amounts of perceived social support.

As people age, they often become more susceptible to abuse and mistreatment from health care workers, and social support can serve as a protective factor for abuse (Melchiorre et al., 2013). Melechiorre et al. (2013) revealed that people who had a decent

amount of social support were more likely to receive the quality of care from their loved ones. People who experience symptoms of depression were correlated with a lack of social support (Melechiorre et al., 2013).

Social support and military service. Veterans are a unique population in that there is a much higher prevalence of mental health issues, especially among those who have seen combat (Friedman, Schnurr, & McDonagh-Coyle, 1994). Tsai et al. (2012) found that combat could impact veterans' ability to seek out social supports and use the ones they have. Veterans with PTSD reported lower life satisfaction and would likely benefit from peer support groups (Tsai et al., 2012). Yet, service members who are diagnosed with PTSD often exhibit social avoidance, leading to less support from others. Service men and women are taught to work as a team because it is often essential towards survival while deployed (Lynn, 2014). Lynn (2014) studied veterans' ability to transition out of the military into civilian life and found that bonds that are created between service members are often a strong connection, and leaving the military can feel like a death in the family system. Veteran peer support groups can increase life satisfaction of veterans (Tsai et al., 2012). Having the ongoing support from other service members is favorable during a service member's transitional phase. Veterans who attend peer support groups have the emotional support that their family and friends cannot offer because they cannot understand what the veteran is going through or feeling because of the magnitude of the traumatic event (Tsai et al., 2012).

Seidl et al. (2015) studied factors that are related to life satisfaction among veterans. Seidl et al. discussed that increased numbers of service members returned home

from deployment with a TBI after supporting one of the three operations. Veterans need to have social support after deployments because it directly influences their life satisfaction.

McGraw (2016) examined the effects of gender differences regarding social support, the perception of pain, and psychological health among combat veterans. McGraw discussed that the men and women veterans reported differences in their perceived amount of social support. Women combat veterans reported more concerns about their interpersonal relationships while deployed than men and more problems with relationships after they returned home from deployment (McGraw, 2016). Women also expressed more fears than men about their physical safety while being in a combat zone compared to men, but men reported more combat exposure than women (McGraw, 2016). Historically, women were not allowed to engage in combat, and McGraw discussed that there are still male solders who may not want them there even though they are part of the unit, making the women service members feel excluded. However, women veterans reported being sexually harassed by male service members while deployed (McGraw, 2016). No difference was found between men and women's psychological wellbeing related to combat exposure (McGraw, 2016). A person's perceived social support was found to influence psychological wellbeing among the female combat veterans (McGraw, 2016).

Scharf et al. (2011) researched transition from high school to the military with late-adolescent girls in Israel. Worthern et al. (2012) studied veterans' experiences living with their parents after discharging from the military. Both Scharf et al. and Worthern et

al. examined the support that parents gave to their adult children who were service members. Scharf et al. addressed how young women cope with the transition before leaving home to join the military. Also, Worthern et al. observed the support that service members receive from their parents upon transitioning out of the military and residing in California. At times, people may not recognize the social support they have; therefore, they may not be using these resources. During deployment, service members often need increased support from their family members, such as care packages, letters, phone calls, and video teleconference communication. The support from family members can decrease feelings of anxiety and loneliness during the deployment (Orme & Kehoe, 2011).

Worthen, Moos, and Ahern (2012) researched a population of veterans living with their parents in California. Worthen et al. found that many veterans who had previously served a tour in Iraq or Afghanistan and were transitioning out of the military felt isolated from their support system. Afghanistan and Iraq veterans who are diagnosed with a psychological disorder have higher suicidal completion rates than the rest of the population (Jakupack & Varra, 2011). Often, service members believed the military made them who they are (Demers, 2011).

Military families. Deployment can be difficult on spouses. The roles shift, leaving one spouse to be the sole provider and parent and to make all of life's decisions alone that can cause strain (Andres, 2014). The service member returns after 6 to 12 months, and the family has to readjust. This adjustment can trigger arguments, hard

feelings, and even separation. Due to high amounts of stress, families struggle with this transition and need increased support.

Van Winkle and Lipari (2015) researched how multiple deployments affect active duty spouses. Van Winkle and Lipari found that spouses tend to develop resistance after a couple of deployments. They develop routines and adapt to their spouses being deployed for a certain amount of time (Van Winkle & Lipari, 2015). However, when four or more deployments occur, the stress associated with the deployments increases, and the participants reported higher amounts of stress because it can be difficult to manage recurrent deployments (Van Winkle & Lipari, 2015). However, if a person has children, he or she may be less stressed because he or she may have a larger network of social support. Van Winkle and Lipari stated that the higher a person's perceived social support, the less their level of stress. Andres (2014) researched how social support, psychological distress, life stressors, life conflicts, relationship satisfaction, and communication affects a person's ability to cope during the deployment. The more support a person has tended to create a smoother transitional period during deployments (Andres, 2014). Spouses must communicate and work through problems within the relationship weeks before deployment and increase support systems during the deployment to alleviate some of the stress that is felt during the deployment (Andres, 2014).

Transitioning out of the military. Increased social support has been determined to be a protective factor for service members who are transitioning out of their military career. The more support a person can create while in the military and after he or she

transitions out back into civilian life, the more life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing he or she experiences.

Veterans who served in the Canadian Marine Corps were found to have increased resilience because of the social support they identified with before separating from the military (MacLean et al., 2014). Theiss and Knobloch (2014) researched the uncertainty between interpersonal relationships after deployment. Theiss and Knobloch found that the amount of satisfaction a service member has in his or her spousal relationship could affect how well or not so well the service member transitions.

Psychological distress can create symptoms of depression and/or anxiety, such as worrying, repetitive thoughts, and feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness (Bruno, 2016). Wheeler (2012) found that relationships between family and significant others are often difficult for service members during transitions because they do not understand what the service member is experiencing. Service members may start drinking to cope with feelings of anger after returning from deployment to civilian life (Wheeler, 2012). Service members have also discussed the loss of friendships that they had before deployment. One participant stated that his friends did not understand him after he returned from deployment because he had significantly changed (Wheeler, 2012). However, support from other service members is important because they can relate to what one another have gone through.

When a service member transitions out of the military, psychological distress is often created; however, according to Glasmer, Grande, Braehler, and Roth (2011) increased social support from friends and family eases distress. Hamama, Ronen,

Shachar, and Rosenbaum (2012) found that a lack of support could affect a person's psychological wellbeing and contribute to increased depressive symptoms. Hamama et al. acknowledged that social support influenced increased emotional wellbeing and decreased depression. The people with peer support stated that they had less stress and were happier in their work environment (Hamama et al., 2012). Increased depression can lead to drug and alcohol abuse and facilitate suicidal ideations (Pompili et al., 2010). Support from peers is essential for veterans to decrease negative feelings. Gaining peer support can also be a preventative factor for suicide (Nee, 2013). Langhinrichen-Rohling et al. (2011) researched suicidal behaviors and compulsions among the U.S. active duty Air Force service members. According to Langhinrichen-Rohling et al., service members who have a healthy support system have more gratification in their jobs and are at decreased risk for suicidal ideations.

The amount of perceived support can influence how difficult a transition will be for a service member. Robertson (2013) studied the effect that social support has on service members transitioning out of the military into civilian teaching careers and found that the veterans who sought out support from their peers, friends, and family had more resilience during the transition. Longer transitional periods can be more difficult for a person to cope. Many service members who experience long transition periods express financial strains. Robertson encouraged clinicians to discuss the importance of having a support system and preparing financially for the change before transitioning from the military to civilian life.

When service members are stationed away from family and friends, they have less support and may be depressed. It is important for service members to reach out to peers and support groups or programs that the military offers. Smith et al. (2011) found discussed a correlation between the lack of support system and depression. Kapikiran (2013) researched the relationship between social support, self-esteem, loneliness, and life satisfaction among teenagers between 11 and 15 years old in Turkey. Kapikiran found that increased depression can contribute to feeling lonely, sad, and overall dissatisfied with life, and feeling lonely can be an indicator that a person does not identify with a strong support system.

Many U.S. service members are deployed to war zones and witness horrific events, such as shootings, bombings, injuries, and even death. Returning home can be difficult for some even though many are reuniting with friends and family members. These traumatic events may cause PTSD and lead to some negative physical and psychological effects. The service member may suffer from symptoms of PTSD, such as flashbacks, guilt, depression, fear, anxiety, physical pain, nightmares, isolation, or irritability (Christensen, 2016). These symptoms are difficult for the service member to deal with; it is also difficult for the family and friends to cope with the symptoms of PTSD. Veterans who are diagnosed with PTSD may have feelings that are overwhelming and have a difficult time dealing with changes and transitions in life (Wells, 2016). It is important for service members and veterans to reach out to the community and partake in support groups to decrease excessive worrying; however, Tsai et al. (2012) discussed that if a veteran does not receive community support, the veteran has more difficulty socially

functioning. Tsai et al.'s found that when a veteran is diagnosed with PTSD, the individual is likely to exhibit avoidance behaviors that may impede his or her intimate relations.

Measuring social support. In 1988, Zimet et al. developed the MSPSS. The scale has been used across a variety of populations, including adolescents, college students, aging adults, Hispanic Americans, cancer patients, patients in heart failure, and the elderly. The scale has been translated into several languages, including Chinese, Nepalese, and Pakistani. Tonsing, Zimet, and Tse (2012) studied the properties of the MSPSS with participants living in South Asia using the MPSS Urdu (MSPSS-U) and the MSPSS Nepali (MSPSS-N). The MSPSS is a 12-item questionnaire that uses a Likert scale from 1-7; 1=*very strongly disagree* to 7=*very strongly agree*. The MSPSS includes three subscales to identify the source of perceived social support among significant others, family, and friends. The scale has been assessed and has been found to be reliable and valid assessment tool to evaluate perceived social support.

Chou (1999) examined the validity and reliability of the Chinese version of the MSPSS-C. Chou's study involved a sample of 475 high school students residing Hong Kong. The Cronbach's alpha of the MSPSS-C was 0.89, and the subscales ranged between 0.94 and 0.86, which indicated good reliability. Chou found that a person's perceived social support directly influences how a person perceives support from friends, significant others, or family members. Chou showed a negative association between depression, anxiety, and perceived social support. Chou stated that the results of the study indicated good validity.

Melchiorre et al. (2013) used the MSPSS to understand perceived social support. Melchiorre et al.'s study included a sample of 4,467of older individuals 60- to 84-years-old residing from Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Italy, Greece, and Germany. Melchiorre et al. discussed that social support could be a protective factor for abuse. As people age, they become more susceptible to abuse and mistreatment from health care workers. Thus, people who have a good amount of social support are more likely to receive quality of care from their loved ones. Melchiorre et al. confirmed that people who experience symptoms of depression are correlated with a lack of social support.

Kong et al. (2012) researched a person's perception of his or her social support using the MSPSS and studied the impact that social support has on emotional intelligence which is defined as a person's perception of how well he or she understands his or her emotions, life satisfaction, and psychological distress. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the MSPSS was .91, showing good internal reliability. Kong et al. found that there were statistically significant differences between males and females regarding their emotional intelligence, with males scoring higher. The coefficient for the males was (B = .55), and females were (B = .40), indicating that males who rated elevated emotional intelligence scores were more likely to believe that they had a good volume of social support. Cheng and Chan (2004) also found statically significant differences between genders when using the MSPSS. Cheng and Chan conducted a quantitative study consisting of a sample of 2,105 school age children between seventh and 11th grade. Cheng and Chan discussed that females showed more perceived support from their friends than their family compared to the males in the study. As the females got older, the perceived support from

their friends increased, but the support from their family did not. Bruwer et al. (2008) found similar results between gender differences when using the MSPSS on adolescent participants. Bruwer et al. conducted a quantitative study consisting of 502 participants between 11- and 23-years-old. Bruwer et al. discussed that Caucasian and mixed-race girls reported higher perceived social support than South African boys. Smith et al. (2011) studied the effect perceived social support and emotional intelligence had on psychological impairment. Smith et al. used the MSPSS to measure perceived social support of 87 participants diagnosed with cancer. Cronbach's alpha of the MSPSS in this study was 0.94, and the subscales were (family 0.89) (friends 0.93) and (significant others 0.93), indicating good internal validity. Smith et al. indicated that perceived social support was not associated with psychological impairment. However, perceived social support and emotional intelligence may increase psychosocial support.

Bruwer et al. (2008) examined the link between the PTSD, depression, resilience, stress, exposure to trauma, and social support. Bruwer et al. used a convenience sampling method among schools in Africa. The participants included 787 teenage participants who were asked to complete the MSPSS to identify perceived support. Bruwer et al. stated that the MSPSS was found to be valid across diverse populations, and internal validity had a coefficient of 0.88-0.90 and an overall 0.86 for the entire scale. Bruwer et al. showed that resilience was connected with having social support. Similar to Chou (1999), Bruwer et al. found that social support had a negative connection with the symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Cerit, Filizer, Tural, and Tufan (2012) studied the variables that influence function in patients diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Cerit et al. used the MSPSS to identify each participant's level of perceived social support. The participants included 80 patients diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Similar to studies on the impact of social support on people diagnosed with schizophrenia, social support was found to be one predictor of functioning level in people who are diagnosed with bipolar disorder (Cerit et al., 2012). However, perceived social support was not associated with psychological impairment.

Oztunc, Yesil, Paydas, and Erdogan (2013) researched the possibility that social support can decrease depression and anxiety and increase psychological wellbeing in patients who are diagnosed with breast cancer. Oztunc et al. used the MSPSS to identify the participants' perceived social support and the Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS) to collect data from 85 participants diagnosed with cancer. Both scales were found to be valid and reliable measures. Oztunc et al. reported that larger amounts of social support decreased hopelessness in people diagnosed with breast cancer.

Wang, Hay, Clarke, and Menahem (2012) explorde anxiety and depression factors. The participants included 113 adolescents diagnosed with heart disease. Using the MSPSS, Wang et al. discussed that high amounts of perceived social support were protective factors for reduced levels of anxiety and depression among adolescents and people who were diagnosed with heart disease. Wang et al. stated that the MSPSS was a reliable measure, as it tested above .80 on the Cronbach's alpha.

Edwards (2004) explored the reliability and validity of the MSPSS on a population of 290 Hispanic Americans. Edwards stated that the measure was beneficial towards identifying the participants' perceived support. The MSPSS showed high validity. Further, the MSPSS was correlated with all three of the subscales family (r =.53, p < .001), friends (r=.30, p < .001), and significant other (r = .53, p < .001). The MSPSS also was found to be a reliable measure (Cronbach's alpha .88 and .90) with this population.

Staniute, Brozaitiene, and Bunevicius (2013) explored the effects of social support and stressful events on people's quality of life. The participants included 560 people who suffered from cardiovascular disease. The MSPSS was used to measure the perceived social support. The Cronbach alpha of the MPSS was .88, showing good internal validity. Every person experiences challenging situations in his or her life, such as psychical problems, and Staniute et al. reported that social support was important to have through difficult times. A person's perceived social support may decrease the stressful effect of a difficult life event.

Dickson et al. (2013) examined sociocultural influences on heart failure and self-care. Dickson et al. used the Self-care of Heart Failure Index (SCHFI V 6.2) to measure self-care, the MSPSS was used to measure social support, and the Duke Activity Status Index (DASI) was used to measure psychical abilities. Dickson et al. stated that the MSPSS showed good reliability with a Cronbach a coefficient of .87, .85, and .91. According to Dickson et al., social support outside the home is an important factor in

patients suffering from heart failure because it decreases isolation, which enhances self-esteem.

Liu, Gou, and Zuo (2014) explored the effect that being lonely has on social support and depression. The participants included 320 older Chinese adults. Liu et al. used the MSPSS to identify perceived social support and found that the perceived social support decreases feelings of loneliness and depression. However, lonely elderly people were found to have increased depression (Liu et al., 2014).

Ponizovsky-Bergelson, Kurman, and RoerStrier (2015) explored the factors of resilience, adjustment, filial responsibilities, and relationships of immigrants of the Soviet Union to Israel. Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al. used the SWLS and the MSPSS to identify the participants' life satisfaction and perceived social support. Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al. found that social support can influence resilience and directly affects life satisfaction. Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al. stated that resilience is a factor associated with adjustment in immigrants, and it can reduce adverse outcomes.

Cabriales, Cooper, and Taylor (2013) identified precautionary risk factors and past prescription mistreatment of 435 Hispanic psychology students. Cabriales et al. showed that opioid use was reported most common. However, the participants' views of prescriptions contributed to substance misuse. Perceived social support was found to not be a protective factor against substance misuse, and anxiety was identified as a factor that contributed to misuse.

Literature synthesis of the variable social support. Social support is a factor that can be used as a defense against unpredictable and negative life events. The more

supportive people in a person's life, the more they are able to cope with a difficult situation. The quality of the support is a crucial factor; the more compassionate and reassuring the support person is, the better a person can handle the change. Not only is having a support system important, but how a person perceives the amount and quality of their support are crucial. Social support can increase emotional wellbeing among people suffering from depression, stress, and anxiety, as well as physical problems. Among the military population, social support from peers, friends, and spouses serves as a defense against the symptoms of PTSD for service members. While service members are deployed, increased social support through phone calls and letters reduces their psychological distress and increases the support given to their spouses, which helps the spouses to better manage deployments.

Social support can increase life satisfaction because the more connected people are with one another, the happier they are overall. Social support is a protective factor for veterans transitioning out of the military against decreased isolation, psychological, and psychological wellbeing. The more support service members have, the simpler it is to have an easier transition out of the military as opposed to those without support. Although there is an abundance of research on social support across many populations, there is a lack of research on the effect of social support among voluntary and involuntarily discharged service members.

Length of Service

The length of service is the years a person has held his or her job. Length of service used to mean a lifetime for a military career. However, as time has progressed,

the amount of time a person serves in the U.S. armed forces has become less. In the 1960s, a law was passed to discharge officers who were wounded from the Army, and in the 1870s, another law was passed for service members to retire from their career after 30 years of service, increasing the odds of other service members being promoted (Graves, 2005). In 1992, the Army had a reduction in force by 14% because the cold war had ended, and there no longer was a need for the amount of men and women who were serving in the Army (Oland & Hogan, 2001). The downsize was offered to service members as a voluntary discharge status. Service members who left the military voluntarily under the Special Separation Benefit were offered monetary incentives (Defense Finance and Accounting Service, 2016).

The length of service has been correlated with having a difficult adjustment out of the military (MacLean et al., 2014). According to Lerner (1961), there are advantages to serving longer periods of time in the military, such as medical care, educational benefits, and a guarantee for a home. People who have health problems and a lack of medical benefits may experience less life satisfaction.

Service members who served fewer than 10 years and were discharged from their military career were found to have a higher suicide rate compared to veterans who retired from the military (MacLean et al., 2014). Many service members who were discharged in the middle of their career or were lower in rank were more likely to have health problems (MacLean et al., 2014). Hoge, Castro, Messer, McGurk, Cotting, and Koffman (2004) discussed that in the United States, service members who suffer from decreased psychological wellbeing are more likely not to seek psychological services because of the

mental health stigma. Higher percentages of veterans who were deployed to Iraq suffered from depression, anxiety, or PTSD compared to those veterans deployed to Afghanistan because they were more likely exposed to combat (Hoge et al., 2004).

Impact of length of service on nonmilitary careers. Few scholars focus on the military and length of service and the effect on life satisfaction. However, scholars have researched employment tenure of civilian careers and the effect on life satisfaction. There is a relationship between age, career length, and job satisfaction (Al Muftah & Lafi, 2011). Life satisfaction is connected to how satisfied a person is at his or her job (Al Muftah & Lafi, 2011). People are often happier when they work in a field that they enjoy.

Although few scholars focus on the military, researchers can look at other high-stress jobs, including first responders, to explore how the length of service might affect those in the military. Prati, Pietrantoni, and Cicognani (2011) discussed that the amount of traumatic stress first responders experienced could increase their job dissatisfaction. Prati et al. found that rescue workers were often exposed to high levels of stress and burnout was triggered by elevated amounts of stress for an extended period. Prati et al. discussed that the connection between burnout, compassion fatigue, and stress appraisal had a significant effect on rescue workers' quality of life. According to Antoniou, Davidson, and Cooper (2003), many new doctors had increased anxiety about being unemployed because of the amount new doctors in the field. If a person is unsure of his or her job stability, it can decrease job satisfaction, therefore, decreasing satisfaction with his or her personal life.

Jenaro, Flores, Orgaz, and Cruz' (2011) found no connection between the length of time working as a nurse and job satisfaction. More than 50 % of the nurses from their study suffered difficulties in sleeping, stress, and anxiety from the pressures of caring for their patients (Jenaro et al., 2011). Coomber and Barriball (2007) examined the connection between job satisfaction and turnover among nurses in the United Kingdom. Coomber and Barriball found that the stress that nurses are subjected to makes it the most significant factors to make a person want to leave his or her job. Similarly, Nirel, Goldwag, Feigenberg, Abadi, and Halpern (2008) discussed that paramedics had high amounts of stress due to patient care that negatively affected their job satisfaction and decreased their desire to work as a paramedic. The amount of social support in the workplace was also a factor of how well they coped with stress.

Naveed, Usman, and Bushra (2011) examined if a promotion can predict job satisfaction in employees of glass companies in Pakistan. Naveed et al. reported that the length of time a person holds the same job improves the chances that the individual will earn a promotion and increased pay. People who have been promoted are more likely to be satisfied with their job (Naveed et al., 2011). Job satisfaction improved with promotions and salary increases in the automotive industry (Sarwar, Mirza, Ehsan, Khan, & Hanif, 2013). The happier a person is at his or her job, the more likely the individual will stay long-term.

Oshagbemi (2000) examined a population of university professors and found that professors who had held their job at a university for a short period were more likely to hold a second job at another university; professors who held their job at a university for a

long period were more likely only to have one job. Job security is a piece of job satisfaction.

Literature synthesis of the variable length of service. The length of time a person holds his or her job is dependent upon how satisfied he or she is with his or her career, which is connected with life satisfaction. Military members with a shorter length of service often struggle to adjust outside of the military. There is a lack of research between the connection of the length of service and life satisfaction among the U.S. military. In Canada, a connection between length of service and life satisfaction was found. Veterans who served 10 years or fewer and who discharged from their service career were more likely to commit suicide. The length of time a person has at a job made a difference in how happy a person is in life. There have been studies conducted that focused on the length of employment or service and its role in satisfaction among civilian and military populations; still, a gap in the literature remains when it comes to the effect that length of military service has on life satisfaction of involuntarily discharged U.S. service members.

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, I reviewed the link between life satisfaction and educational attainment (Meeks & Murrell, 2001; Rodgers, 2015), social support (Kong et al., 2012), and the length of time at one job (Al Muftah & Lafi, 2011). The time of transitioning into a new phase of a person's life, including out of the military, is stressful; yet, limited research has been conducted as to how these factors come together.

The majority of scholars reported that social support is a critical factor for a person to have in his or her life during transitions in life (Robertson, 2013; Theiss & Knobloch, 2014), as it increased psychological wellbeing (Glasmer et al., 2011; Hamama et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2014; Orme & Kehoe, 2011). For service members, issues they might have faced during their service, as well as the level of stress during the discharge process, compounds these transitions. After deployment, many service members feel isolated from their support system because of the level of stress they endured during their deployment (Andres, 2014; Worthen et al., 2012). Many service members disclosed that their support system does not understand what they are feeling or what they experienced during deployment (Worthen et al., 2012). The types of social supports and the amount of social support for service members needs to be studied more to see how it affects their life satisfaction.

Education has been found to be beneficial because the higher a person's degree is, the more accomplished he or she feels, which can enhance his or her life satisfaction and improve emotional wellbeing (Meeks & Murrell, 2001). However, Melin et al. (2003) reported that educational attainment does not influence a person's life satisfaction. However, when a person leaves the military and goes to college, it can be difficult because the military culture encourages teamwork, where schools promote self-sufficiency (Ray & Heaslip, 2011). Limited research has been conducted regarding how the education level of a service member affects their overall life satisfaction.

A lack of research remains on the length of service and U.S. service members' life satisfaction after their military discharge. MacLean et al. (2014) found that when

Canadian service members discharged before serving 10 years, they had higher chances of committing suicide compared to veterans who retired from their service career. The length of a person's employment from other careers has been linked with life satisfaction as has the stressors from the job. The longer a person holds his or her job, the more likely he or she is to have promotions, and his or her income increase when enhances job satisfaction (Naveed et al., 2011; Sarwar et al., 2013). Conversely, Jenaro et al. (2011) found no connection between length of employment and job satisfaction.

Many service members had been honorably discharged; however, many service members have been involuntarily discharged from their service career before they were ready because of budget cuts, physical fitness, or not making rank in a timely manner (Military, 2015). Those who were involuntarily discharged had higher rates of suicidal ideations (MacLean et al., 2014; Wilson, 2013). Veterans in the United States complete 20% of all suicides, but only a small portion of the population is made up of veterans (Gallagher, 2014). The stress from fear of being involuntarily discharged can decrease psychological wellbeing, increasing anxiety and depression (Wilson, 2013). The increased anxiety and stress can not only stem from the discharge, but can increase due to fear of not finding a new job (Lunney, 2014).

Life satisfaction can be affected by many factors of current mood or situation (Diener et al., 2013). According to Lang et al. (2013), people often become more pessimistic as they get older. According to Borg et al. (2008), the decreased optimism may be due to decreased ADLs. The loss of a job was found to affect life satisfaction and increase depression (Marum et al., 2013).

Diener et al. (1985) reported that SWLS was a valid and reliable scale used to measure life satisfaction among a vast variety of populations. It is important to use a measure that has been adapted to a variety of cultures and situations to accurately measure the amount of life satisfaction. Although researchers have shown that issues can arise around the current state of mind and perceptions of satisfaction (Extremera & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2005), others have found that life satisfaction tends to be consistent over short periods of time. Therefore, their responses on the self-rated scale can be controlled (Diener et al., 2013).

Zimet et al.'s (1988) MSPSS is a self-reported questionnaire that has been found to be a valid and reliable measure across many populations. Kong et al. (2012) identified differences between males and females' amount of perceived of social support. Cerit et al. (2012) reported that mental illness has no impact on a person's perceived social support. Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al. (2015) found that social support affects life satisfaction. The MSPSS was used in my study to measure the perceived social support of veterans.

There is a lack of literature on the effect on life satisfaction of U.S. service members due to involuntary discharge. My study will fill a gap in the literature in regards to the effect length of service has on discharged service members' life satisfaction. MacLean et al. (2014) and Al Muftah and Lafi (2011) found that the length of service could affect people; however, there is limited literature on length of military service and the effect on their life satisfaction. Similar to Graves (2005), I researched the effect of discharge type on life satisfaction.

I used Schoenberg's transition theory because service members who have discharged, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, from their service career face many struggles. The transition theory provides a framework to discuss the effects of social support, the timing of the transitioning, a person's role in the transition, and how well a person can cope with the situation or change in his or her overall life satisfaction. I used transition theory to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence the service members' wellbeing after the transition. I focused on how educational attainment, social support, length of service, and discharge type affects a person's overall life satisfaction. Further, I filled a gap in the research in regards to life satisfaction of voluntarily and involuntarily discharged U.S. service members. This study will add to the existing body of research on the protective and risk factors and life satisfaction of veterans associated with adjustment after military discharge.

Robertson (2013) and Theiss and Knobloch (2014) showed that having a support system was crucial for a variety of life transitions. Scholars have also shown a connection between educational attainment and life satisfaction (Meeks & Murrell, 2001; Rodgers, 2015). This study will add to the research by detecting if educational attainment has an effect on veterans' life satisfaction. Limited research has been studied on the effect that service members' length of service has on life satisfaction. Therefore, this study filled a gap by researching the effects that veterans' length of service has on their life satisfaction. Finally, I examined life satisfaction of voluntarily discharged service members compared to those who were involuntarily discharged, as well as investigated

the effect of educational attainment, social support, and length of service on life satisfaction.

In Chapter 3, I will outline the introduction, research design and rationale, methodology, threats to validity, and summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Downsizing the U.S. Armed Forces has impacted thousands of service members, leaving many discharged involuntarily from their service career (Steele, 2012). The purpose of this quantitative, between-groups study was to measure the effect of the independent variables (educational attainment, social support, and length of service) on the dependent variable (life satisfaction) among voluntarily and involuntarily discharged military personnel. This study provides a foundation for future research and may educate service members, veterans, and mental health professionals who work primarily with the military regarding the differences in life satisfaction between voluntarily and involuntarily discharged service members. This could lead to resources being allocated to services that help service members overcome the barriers to life satisfaction following military discharge.

In Chapter 3, I explain the methodology used for this study, including the rationale for the method, the study population, the instruments used, the sampling strategy, and an overview of the statistical analysis conducted. This chapter also contains threats to validity, ethical procedures, and a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

Research assessing service members' life satisfaction based on the type of discharge they received (voluntary versus involuntary) from their service career is limited. I examined the relationship between type of discharge, voluntary compared to involuntary, and the dependent variable of life satisfaction, while controlling for the

variables educational attainment, length of service, and level of social supports, all of which have been shown to effect veterans' life satisfaction level (Marum et al., 2013; Valenzuela et al., 2009). The participants' age, gender, the branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status were included as potential factors in the dependent variable of life satisfaction. Each covariate was evaluated to determine if it was a moderator, mediator, or did not affect the outcome of the study. The design of this study was a quantitative, between-groups comparison of two samples. I used Calculators (2015) to calculate my sample size. According to Calculators (2015), my sample size should be 85 voluntarily and involuntarily discharged service members.

The quantitative design was appropriate for this study as it allows the researcher to compare data between the two groups in a systematic way and make generalizations to the larger population. Quantitative methods allow for the objective measurement of attitudes and experience (Babbie, 2010). Past researchers (Diener et al. 1985; Getanda, Papadopoulous, & Evans, 2015) used quantitative methods to examine the difference between groups, similar to what I did in this study. A quantitative design allows for a more representative sample because the results can be generalized to all of the population of service personnel who are discharged. The research questions guiding the study were as follows:

RQ1. Are service members who were involuntarily discharged less satisfied with life than service members who were voluntary discharged?

RQ2. Are service members involuntarily discharged with fewer than 16 years of educational attainment less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more than 16 years of educational attainment as measured by the SWLS?

RQ3. Are service members involuntarily discharged with a shorter length of service less satisfied with life than voluntarily discharged service members as measured by the SWLS?

RQ4. Are involuntarily discharged service members with less social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged as measured by the SWLS?

RQ 5: Is discharge type, social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends, fewer than 16 years of educational attainment, and shorter than 10 years of service predictors of satisfaction with life as measured by the SWLS?

RQ 6: Can life satisfaction be predicted by discharge type, age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status as measured by the SWLS?

Using Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS in this study, I advanced the knowledge in the discipline by increasing awareness of how educational attainment, social support, and length of service affect the life satisfaction of discharged service members. I did not conduct any interventions during this study. There were no expected time or resource constraints for this quantitative study.

Methodology

Population

U.S. veteran's population. The target population for this study was all honorably discharged U.S. service members from any branch (Navy, Army, Marines, or Air Force). It was estimated that there were 21.8 million veterans living in the United States in 2012 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), with approximately 1.3 million U.S. veterans who served during the Gulf War Era, Vietnam Era, Korean Conflict, and World War II (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The sample was drawn from the overall population of discharged U.S. service members who had a Facebook account and Internet access. The population may be varied in gender, years in the service, age, ethnicity, and educational attainment.

People participate on Facebook to connect with family and friends and engage in cyber groups based on mutual interests (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). In 2015, more than a billion people logged onto Facebook each month (Smith, 2015). Approximately 4 million active duty and veteran service members registered to Facebook (Cameron, 2014). Because veterans reside all over the world, using Facebook as a method to collect data increased the number of eligible participants. Thus, Facebook presented a unique sampling opportunity, as it considered of self-identified veterans who were part of a community that focuses on veterans' issues. It not only allowed for initial contact with users, but also presented the opportunity to use snowball sampling to find other veterans.

The sample frame was dependent upon whether the potential participants had access to a computer, Internet, and interact with others on social media. In the survey, I

asked participants to honestly self-report their discharge type and branch of service. Through these questions, only those who were honorably discharged were included in the study. The veteran must speak English and know whether their discharge was voluntary or involuntary.

The exclusion criteria included non-U.S. service members, dishonorably discharged service members, non-English speaking people, members of the reserves, and those who were not on Facebook. This study was advertised on 22 Facebook web groups (Appendix A). The target Facebook groups were those designed for members who were U.S. veterans. If a veteran was not part of one of the targeted Facebook groups or did not receive a forwarded message, that person did not know about the study and did not have the opportunity to participate. However, if a veteran did learn about the research outside of Facebook, met the study criteria, and wanted to participate, that veteran was provided the opportunity and given access to the questionnaire. Attached to the flyer was the link to log into and to access the questionnaire.

I recruited Facebook users who were members of identified veteran groups. In a post, I gave a brief explanation about the purpose of the study and provided the link to the survey, which was hosted in SurveyMonkey, an online software company. Once the participants clicked on the link, they were brought to a consent to participate form that both served as the consent form, as well as the screening tool, to ensure that participants met the inclusion criteria.

Snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is often used in studies to reach populations that are difficult to locate (Heckathorn, 2011). The trust that exists among

potential participants is one of the benefits of using a snowball sampling technique (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). The research is given validity through the process of referral to other members of the population. For the purpose of this study, the snowball process occurred through the sharing of the Facebook post by veterans who saw the post and passed it on to other veterans in their social media circle. Another benefit of using a snowball technique is that qualified participants are able to help the researcher identify other possible eligible participants (Sadler et al., 2010).

One weakness to a snowball sample is the need to filter through potential new participants and ensure eligibility. Perez, Nie, Ardern, Radhu, and Ritvo (2013) stated that many of the referred respondents in their quantitative study were older, less educated, and were not employed fulltime compared to participants recruited by the researchers directly.

Sample size. The minimum sample size for the hierarchical linear regression was 128 discharged service members, with the goal of 64 from each group. A confidence level of 5% and an *SD* of 3.8 was determined; a priori sample size calculator was used with a power of 0.80 with 11 predictor variables and a power of 0.80, f=0.25, as suggested by Soper (2017). The planned level of precision was (p = .05). The power was (1 – *beta* = .95). The planned effect size was medium f =0.15, which supported the sample size (Soper, 2017).

Response Rate

Calculating the response rate for an Internet snowball sample survey can be difficult. Cook, Heath, and Thompson (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of response rates

in Internet surveys. Cook et al. reported that higher response rates were found among the Internet surveys when the researcher had a larger number of private contacts. One limitation of using Facebook to collect online data is that there is no way to know how many people will see this study's advertisement and decide to click on the link compared to those who choose not to click on the link. The standard response rate of online surveys is 30 % when no follow-up procedures are used compared to pen-and-paper questionnaires that have a typical response rate of 55 % (Cook et al., 2000).

Lefever, Dal, and Matthiasdottir (2007) identified the advantages and limitations of online data collection. The participants of the study included 2, 093 students and 423 teachers. Lefever et al. identified the questionnaire response rates for the students were 24%, and the response rate for the teachers was 48 %. Lefever et al. identified similar response rates to Cook et al. (2000) discussed above. The participants were recruited via e-mail and were asked to complete an online questionnaire (Lefever et al., 2007). Their response rates were on par with other recruitment strategies, such as mail-in surveys.

Akard, Wray, and Gilmer (2015) conducted a quantitative study on the convenience of recruiting parents of children diagnosed with cancer by advertising on Facebook. Similar to the methods of my study, the potential participants clicked on the advertisement and were directed to the survey (Akard et al., 2015). Each of the participants were entered into a drawing to win a prize (Akard et al., 2015). The Facebook advertisement resulted in a 27% response rate (Akard et al., 2015). The study was advertised 3,897,981 times over a 10-week period, and 1,050 people clicked on the advertisement, 106 people were eligible participants, and 67 people started the

questionnaire, but only 45 participants completed the questionnaire (Akard et al., 2015). Akard et al. reported a limitation of the study was the low response rate of completed questionnaires. The low response rate was a result of the participants not submitting the survey when completing the questionnaire (Akard et al., 2015). Incentives, electronic reminders, and more personal contacts were found to be factors that affect response rates of online data collection (Cook et al., 2000). I made the study's advertisement sharable and "bumped" the advertisement, moving the advertisement to the top of each Facebook group feed to create reminders and increase the odds of group members seeing the advertisement.

I mirrored these two studies in order to help calculate my own response rate. The response rate was calculated using the number of people who liked each of the Facebook pages on which my study was advertised. Only the individuals who liked the page were calculated as part of the group. I will then divided this number by how many people completed the questionnaire to calculate the response rate. Once the participant started the questionnaire, SurveyMonkey tracked how many people were disqualified and how many people partially completed and completed the questionnaire. I used SurveyMonkey's margin of error calculator to estimate the possible margin of error. In the calculator, I input the total number of likes from each Facebook page where I advertised my study. Next, I input my sample size of 128, which was estimated using G power (see full calculations under sampling and sampling procedures). I input a confidence level of 95%, and it was determined that there will be a margin of error of 9%. According to Mercer (2016), the margin of error is important because it is guided by

the sample size. The larger the sample size, the smaller the margin of error. Posts on Facebook had about a 20% view rate for any given group, so this also was taken into consideration in calculating the response rate (Klaassen, 2009).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment Procedures

This study was advertised through flyers that were posted in organizations for veterans in Southern California (Appendix B), online via Walden's participant pool, and on Facebook. The identified groups on Facebook were support group pages for service members and veterans (Appendix A). A post with a short explanation of the study and link to the survey was placed on Facebook pages to access potential participants who interacted online. A full list of the Facebook pages, on which this study was advertised, can be found in Appendix A. Group members were asked to forward or tag the invitation to friends who had served in the U.S. military to increase participation. Additionally, individuals who took the survey were asked to forward the survey link to family and friends who were also discharged veterans via e-mail and other social media formats. By using several methods to recruit participants, I connected with a larger number of veterans.

These varied methods also helped increase the sample size. However, using multiple sampling strategies can introduce method bias. Varied samples may attract different age groups. To address this potential bias, I included a variable within the demographic questionnaire for respondents to identify the source of recruitment method. Significant difference were found between the samples, which are reported in Chapter 4

and 5. This recruiting method increased the connection with a large number of veterans as opposed to the sampling methods, as recruitment strategies, such as solely flyers and contacting local groups, did not allow for a national sample, limiting the generalizability of the findings of the study to a local population. Harding, Lampe, Molloy, and Sherr (2015) conducted a comparative analysis of an Internet-based sampling method and a clinic sample. The Internet sample was recruited through a web-based survey, and the clinic sample was recruited from five HIV clinics (Harding et al., 2015). Harding et al. presented several differences between the two groups: The Internet sample was younger, had higher employment rates, and had increased psychological symptoms compared to the clinical sample. However, sampling bias was found in both samples. Harding et al. suggested including a demographic variable in Internet surveys because of the differences found between the two groups. There might be sample bias when using multiple strategies to recruit participants (Harding et al., 2015). To overcome this limitation, I included a demographic questionnaire for respondents to complete alone with the survey (Harding, 2015).

Sampling online, including through social media. Social media and Internet sampling have become a common and valid way to conduct research. Social media is an easy way to engage in a snowball sampling technique, which would have participants forwarding the opportunity to participate to other veterans, increasing the sample. Because of the geographical disbursement of veterans across the United States and the world, using this sampling technique can increase access to diverse geographical areas that would not be accessible through more standard sampling methods. Data collected via

the Internet often gathers larger sample sizes, and some participants may respond more truthfully to their computer compared to in-person questions (Birnbaum, 2004).

Research method textbooks have justified online research; although they do have pitfalls (see limitations), this technology has been validated for most of this century. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) discussed the use of online data collection. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias stated that researchers who use a combination approach of mail-in surveys and online surveys access potential participants who could be reached who do not have access to the Internet. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias further discussed that similar response rates were found between the two methods. Researchers who use online data collection have the potential to reach almost anyone anywhere in the world. There are advantages of online data collection over telephone and mail-in-questionnaires. These benefits include access to large sample sizes, time efficiency, and cost effectiveness.

Casler, Bickel, and Hackett (2013) conducted a quantitative study among 86 undergraduates to compare the traditional pen-and-paper data collection method with the Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and social media. The participants' ages differed significantly between the three recruitment techniques; the participants recruited via word-of-mouth were between 18- and 23-years-old, those recruited from social media were between 19- and 73-years-old, and members recruited the MTurk ranged from 18- to 60-years- old (Casler et al., 2013). Casler et al. used multiple recruitment strategies including word of mouth on a college campus, social media, and posting on MTurk. The participants recruited via word of mouth completed a pen-and-paper survey, and the

participants who were recruited via social media and the MTurk completed online questionnaires (Casler et al., 2013). The MTurk respondents were more varied demographically than those recruited via social media or the word-of-mouth (Casler et al., 2013). Otherwise, Casler et al. reported no other differences between the multiple recruitments and testing conditions. Casler et al. stated that because of the lack of differences, the groups should not be considered three different samples of participants. Casler et al. reported a benefit to the traditional pen-and-paper technique is the researcher can observe the participants behaviors. However, when observation is not necessary, the MTurk was a useful strategy to recruit and respond online because of the large demographic diversity (Casler et al., 2013). According to Casler et al., distributing surveys online saves time, money, and has become an increasingly popular and trusted method of data collection among researchers. There are also limitations. Often, participants have to speak English. and participants often desire incentives to fill out an online survey (Casler et al., 2013).

People are growing with new-age technology. Brenner and Smith (2013) claimed that more than 70% of adults in the United States use the Internet to social network, and over 40% are older adults. Accessing these populations through the Internet and social media is a viable data collection strategy. In addition, Shawver et al. (2016) stated that in 2012, almost 80 % of people used the Internet; therefore, it is easier to obtain larger participant pools. Online surveys have shown increased response rates because communication through e-mails and the Internet have enhanced over time. Further, online studies can peak the interests of participants, which also increases response rates. When a

respondent takes an online questionnaire, there is no perceived pressure, so participants are apt to feel more comfortable and give honest answers. As the Internet becomes more popular, more researchers are reporting increased benefits to conducting online data collection over limitations. Grieve, Witteveen, and Tolan (2014) reported that online test administration had less missing data, and participants disclosed personal information more openly when surveys were administered online. King, O'Rourke, and DeLongis (2014) stated that social media might be the most efficient strategy to recruit participants. Online data collection, combined with social media advertisement, can decrease the amount of time collecting data to reach populations.

Online data collection also has limitations. Some limitations of online data collection include the researcher's inability to control the setting, the respondents' taking the survey, participants giving inaccurate demographic information, the respondent taking the same survey multiple times, apprehensions regarding the reliability and validity of online data collection, and existing concerns about the study's population and if it can be a representative of the general population (Shawver et al., 2016). Respondents of online data collection may report answers differently than they would if they were responding to traditional pen-and-paper assessment (Grieve et al., 2014).

Additional limitations that have been identified with Internet surveys include nonresponse bias and the inability to reach people who are elderly, lower income, and who have less education (Bailey, 2011). The use of multiple strategies (ie., telephone, mail, and probability-based sampling methods) to recruit participants can decrease some of the limitations of online data collection. Convenience sampling is another method that

researchers can use to collect data online successfully (Bailey, 2011). Convenience sampling allows potential participants the opportunity take part or chose not to become a participant in the study. Convenience sampling has shown similar limitations to other traditional sampling methods (Bailey, 2011).

Internet participants are more likely to report negative political views, telephone participants were more apt to discuss concerns about discrimination, and participants are more prone to state they are content with their support system compared to online participants (Keeter, 2015). An advantage of using online data collection is that participants are more likely to report honest answers about sensitive topics. However, a disadvantage is the sample of online participants is different types of people (i.e., minority, less education, lower income) than other survey methods might access; therefore, it may not be a broad representative of the population.

Leng (2013) reviewed the methodological limitations of collecting data online and on social media. According to Leng, it is uncertain whether or not the findings can be generalized to the overall population. Lefever et al. (2007) stated that a downfall of some online surveys is that the questionnaires are too long, and participants choose to not fully complete the survey. Lefever et al. discussed that long surveys using pen-and-paper methods increase the odds of human error during data entry; however, participants using online data collection directly input their responses into Excel, which reduces this limitation. Recruitment through e-mail could introduce ethical issues because e-mail addresses are private. Lefever et al. also discussed that researchers using online data collection methods might not be able to generalize the findings to the overall population.

To overcome this limitation, Lefever et al. changed the setting of the online questionnaire to public and sent e-mails to people who were part of their target population. Lefever et al. reported that obtaining the target population sample continues to be challenging for pen-and-paper and online data collection methods.

Weigold, Weigold, and Russell (2013) completed two studies to evaluate the similarities of pen-and-paper surveys and online data collection. Weigold et al. stated that selection bias is one limitation of online data collection because only people who have Internet access are allowed to become participants in the study. Other limitations include not having contact with the researcher, participant protection, and response differences between pen-and-paper surveys and online surveys (Weigold et al., 2013). According to Weigold et al. differences have been found when participants are not chosen randomly, which causes methodological concerns to arise. Participants who completed the pen-and-paper surveys reported differences from online data collection; however, mail-in surveys also had differences from online data collection methods (Weigold et al., 2013). Researchers have allowed participants to choose which data collection method to use (e.g,. online, mail-in, or pen-and-paper); according to Weigold et al., self-selection produces a bias towards any of these methods.

The first study that Weigold et al. (2013) conducted consisted of 256 undergraduate college students divided into four groups. One group took the pen-and-paper survey at home, and the other group completed it in a lab. The third group completed the web survey at home, and the last group completed the Internet survey in the lab. Weigold et al. discussed that the at-home, Internet survey participants had more

missing data than the other participants; however, the amount of data missing was not significant. Weigold et al. also reported that the participants who completed the at-home pen-and-paper survey took more time to finalize the questionnaire than the other participants. Weigold et al. indicated that the different methods of survey administration were found to be comparable.

Weigold et al.'s (2013) second study included 203 participants from two undergraduate colleges. The participants were divided into two groups: the first group was instructed to complete a mail-in, pen-and-paper survey, and the second group was told to fill out the survey online. Weigold et al. indicated good internal consistency for both forms of data collection. There was a higher nonresponse rate for the mail-in-surveys. Weigold et al. reported that 22% of the participants did not return their mail-in survey compared to the 16% of online participants who did not complete their questionnaire. Weigold et al. described differences between response rates among the two data collection methods; however, Weigold et al. concluded that self-reported Internet surveys give similar results to the traditional pen-and-paper methods. This conclusion was made based upon a population of college students, and the same results may not generalize to all populations.

Howell, Rodzon, Kurai, and Sanchez (2010) identified the quality of the Internet version of the SWLS compared to the traditional pen-and-paper version. The Internet version had higher dropout rates than the traditional method. However, all measures showed similar means, standard deviation, validity, and reliability. Howell et al. discussed many benefits of using the Internet method, including having the ability to

identify a more geographically diverse sample with a broad range of ages. Internet surveys are efficient and cost effective, and the researcher can target adult populations (Howell et al., 2010). I used the SWLS in this study, and although not every Internet questionnaire has been proven valid and reliable, the SWLS was one online questionnaire that has been shown to produce similar validity, generalizability, and reliability results as the traditional pen-and-paper SWLS survey, which will strengthen the limitations of online surveys as Howell et al. and Shawver et al. (2016) discussed.

Russell, Weigold, and Weigold (2013) researched Internet data collection compared to in-person surveys and found that the two methods were equivalent forms of data collection. Although there are some disadvantages, such as subject pools being limited to those who have phone numbers, these constraints have been shown to parallel those of other sampling methods, such as telephone surveys. There are additional advantages to Internet data collection, however, especially when using snowball sampling, as it is easier for subjects to pass on the survey to others in the target group, and it provides true anonymity for participants. Trepidation by some mirrors the fears when phone sampling was introduced, and it was found to be overcome through understanding potential response biases.

Blau, Petrucci, and McClendon (2013) identified the effect of the participants' life satisfaction of employment loss by assessing the variables length of unemployment, coping resources, reemployment expectations, the effort of job search, and demographics. Blau et al. used online questionnaires and snowball sampling methods. The link for the study was found in professional groups on Linked In website. In the Linked In groups,

the study's advertisement was posted between 3,000 to 600,000 members, and in 5 weeks, 438 respondents participated in the survey study. Blau et al. stated that many people who lose their jobs are unemployed for extended periods of time, which can impact their life satisfaction. Blau et al. discussed that using self-report measures was a limitation to the study and conducting a longitudinal study would be more beneficial to access the effect on the individual and the impact of his or her job search. Another limitation was the self-selection sample. To overcome this limitation, Blau et al. discussed using online survey software to online data collection. I decreased this limitation by using SurveyMonkey. Similar to my study, Blau et al. assessed the participants' life satisfaction using Diener et al.'s satisfaction with life scale. Blau et al. discussed that the snowball sampling method was a necessary tool to use because unemployment stigma is a sensitive topic.

Andrews, Kacmar, and Kacmar (2014) stated that using SurveyMonkey in their quantitative study might have created limitations. Andrews et al. researched the relationship of mindfulness and the factors of job satisfaction among 341 participants. An online questionnaire was used, and participants were asked to spread the word about the study to increase the sample size. Andrews et al. noted that to decrease this limitation, only participants from a single organization should be used in future studies opposed to participants from multiple organizations.

Leng (2013) also discussed the importance of identifying the differences between the members of online social media and nonmembers. Online members have Internet access, are confident using technology, and may be younger than nonmembers. People

living in impoverished countries do not have as much access to the Internet or engage on social media websites. Researchers must evaluate the targeted population's participation on social media forums because if the target population has low levels of activity, the researcher's advertisement for the study may not have enough views by eligible participants. To address this limitation, I identified 25 Facebook pages that veterans are members of and actively engage on. Participants can create fake accounts to generate anonymity, which can invalidate the results of the study. Leng discussed that researchers should be aware of any reasons participants have to report dishonest responses. For example, social media respondents who are not anonymous are less likely to respond truthfully about humiliating behaviors. To overcome some of the limitations, Leng suggested that researchers identify how many people post on each social media web page and acknowledge the quality of each post. This will assist in determining any intentions the participants may have to respond untruthfully on the questionnaire and will contribute to ensure characteristic responses. I identified how many people were a part of each Facebook group that my study was advertised on and reviewed the posts on each page. This was accomplished by detecting the number of likes each page had to minimize this limitation.

A growing number of peer-reviewed researchers (Blau et al., 2013; Leng, 2013) use social media as a recruitment tool, as well as using online surveys (Choi et al., 2017). Scholars who use online recruitment tools also frequently use online data collection methods, which is what this study was mirroring. Additionally, using social media to conduct a snowball sample for online data collection is also becoming common among

dissertations. Walden University publications included at least 29 studies using online surveys to collect data (e.g., Bell, 2015; Brace, 2015; Canty, 2015; Charley, 2015). In 2016, Walden University publications included at least 30 dissertations using this method (e.g., Bertini, 2016; Britt, 2016; Brown, 2016). In 2017, Walden University publications included at least four Walden University dissertations using online surveys to collect data (Gaud, 2017; Kofmehl, 2017; Mesimo-Ogunsanya, 2017; Weiss, 2017).

Online data collection of the U.S. military. Given the dispersion of veterans in the United States geographically, the use of online sampling and data collection with this population is becoming more common. Kulesza, Pedersen, Corrigan and Marshall (2015) examined stigmas regarding mental health and seeking help. Similar to my study, Kulesza et al. targeted the veteran population who were discharged from one of the four main branches of the U.S. military: Army, Navy, Marines, or Air Force. Kulesza et al. targeted veterans who were active during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Kulesza et al. used Facebook to recruit participants. Kulesza et al. gained 779 participants who were instructed to click on the study's advertisement from Facebook, linking them to the online consent form and questionnaire. If the participants completed the questionnaires too quickly, it indicated that they possibly fabricated the data (Kulesza et al., 2015). The demographic questionnaire was used to identify the respondents' branch of service, discharge date, and pay grade to ensure they qualified to participate (Kulesza et al., 2015). Kulesza et al. used screenings to identify current mental health symptoms and disorders for each participant, including PTSD, depression, general anxiety disorder (GAD), alcohol use disorder, and cannabis use disorder. As part of the questionnaires, a

Likert scale was used to ask participants how they felt about seeking treatment for mental health disorders. Kulesza et al. used regression models to analyze the data and assessed the demographic variables age and gender using SPSS.

Kulesza et al. (2015) found that participants may be misrepresented using online data collection, and concerns about the researcher's ability to confirm participants' eligibility were reported. To overcome this limitation, Kulesza et al. discussed that screenings were used to validate the participants' eligibility. I used the demographic questionnaire to screen each participant for eligibility. Kulesza et al. stated that many veterans might not want to seek mental health assistance because it is instilled in service members to be strong and reliant, and many veterans believe that they would be considered weak if they sought out mental health support. As much as 50% of veterans reported psychological symptoms; however, they do not take advantage of services that are offered even though they are desperately needed (Kulesza et al., 2015).

Sampling on Facebook

There are strengths and weaknesses to using Facebook as a source of a sample. There is a significantly large population that is on Facebook, including veterans. People who engage on Facebook are more likely to be open about their true personalities as opposed to attempting to appear to be someone they are not. Although Facebook allows researchers the ability to reach out to a larger population of potential participants, this does not always mean the sample will be generalized to the entire population.

Grieve et al. (2014) measured data obtained from social media compared to the traditional pen-and–paper method. The sample included 193 participants from an

Australian university and other members of the community with a mean age of 33-years-old (Grieve et al., 2014). The participants from the college were younger than the community participants, but the Internet and pen-and-paper participants did not differ in age (Grieve et al., 2014). The participants completed surveys on ethical position, social desirability, emotional intelligence, emotional manipulation, psychopathy, and interpersonal cognition (Grieve et al., 2014). The participants were given a choice to complete a traditional pen-and-paper assessment or an online questionnaire via a Facebook link (Grieve et al., 2014). Grive et al. discussed that the majority of the participants chose to engage in the Facebook link opposed to the pen-and-paper method. Grieve et al. used a snowball sampling method and advertised their study online via Facebook. The participants were directed to a separate website to respond to the questionnaire (Grieve et al., 2014). Grieve et al. reported that this was a strength of the study because the participants were redirected to a new webpage that generated feelings of anonymity. To overcome the limitation of not being able to assess the response rates and personalities of the nonresponders Grieve et al. discussed that online data collection allows for a more representative sample. Online samples are more diverse, and the gathered data were found to be better quality because participants were more prone to submit honest answers (Grieve et al., 2014). Grieve et al. stated that the online participants reported increased ethical relativism, indicating that they were more apt to determine their ethical decisions based on each situation compared to their morals. Otherwise, Grieve et al. identified similar findings between the pen-and-paper surveys and the online Facebook surveys.

King et al. (2014) reviewed two studies that used online data collection and advertisement via social media. The first study included adults with bipolar disorder from 30 countries. The second study included emergency medical services and their spouses from Canada. The participants from both studies were recruited from Facebook, and then redirected to a new webpage to respond to the questionnaire. King et al. reported that online recruitment was cost effective and allowed the researchers to identify inaccessible populations. King et al. discussed that Facebook advertisement is the most effective method of recruitment, and participants are more demographically diverse. In my study, I advertised on Facebook, Walden University's participant pool, and I posted flyers in nonprofit offices that serve veterans. According to Kind et al., older adults between 65-74-years-old engage online as much as younger people. Kind et al. also noted that online questionnaires should have fewer than 200 questions and take fewer than 45 minutes to complete to ensure that the respondent finishes the survey. As social media becomes more popular, the benefits of using online data collection are outweighing the limitations. However, there are still limitations that should be taken into consideration. Some people do not feel comfortable engaging on social media, and according to Kind et al., some individuals who suffer from social anxiety may experience high levels of stress using social media such as Facebook.

Kosinski, Matz, Gosling, Popov, and Stillwell (2015) reviewed the obstacles and benefits to researchers using Facebook to collect data online. The analysis was based on the feedback from the administrators of Facebook research methods. Kosinski et al. discussed many benefits to using Facebook's online data collection. Researchers have

access to large, diverse samples. Snowball sampling can increase the sample size. For example, Kosinski et al. reviewed a study that contained 150 participants, and those participants were encouraged to share the study with their friends. As a result of snowball sampling, Kosinski et al. stated that the response rate more than tripled in size. Kosinski et al. explained that the data collected were self-reported and found to be honest and after evaluation. However, Kosinski et al. advised that not every study would have the same positive results. Another limitation of using Facebook data collection method is that Facebook users are typically younger, have more education, and live in areas that approve social media usage (Kosinski et al., 2015). What the researchers discuss in Amish country technology is not assessable; therefore, Facebook samples are not a complete representative of the population. Further, according to Kosinski et al., snowball sampling can create bias in the study because friends often have similar personality traits, but because Facebook reaches a large, diverse population, it is no more biased than traditional data collection methods.

Gittelman et al. (2015) explored the use of Facebook likes as a method of online data collection. Gittelman et al. researched Facebook likes as predictor factors of lifestyle behaviors, mortality, and health. Gittelman et al. collected data across the United States over a 1-year time frame. The results of the study were compared to and found similar information to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). Gittelman et al. discussed benefits to using online data collection including time and cost effectiveness. Gittelman et al. also discussed one limitation of online data collection, stating that there was not enough data to test the models from small demographic locations.

Using Facebook for obtaining the sample has advantages. Baltar and Brunet (2012) used Facebook as a sampling strategy with the aim of contacting populations that are more difficult to reach. Baltar and Brunet claimed that they had increased response rates from the participants compared to the conventional snowball sampling methods because they were able to follow-up with the people who did not respond to the survey on Facebook. This can be done through tracking how many people are part of the group on Facebook and calculating the return rate. Further, Baltar and Brunet discussed that the questionnaires were duplicated less often, and the sample stretched across the United States. Baltar and Brunet further explained that participants might have more confidence responding to surveys advertised on Facebook because the researcher's personal information is available to the potential participants through their Facebook profile. Dissertation scholars have used Facebook to advertise studies and to recruit participants. For example, in 2015, Walden University publications included at least three studies using Facebook to advertise their study and recruit participants (Leischner, 2015; Stapp, 2015; Ward, 2015). In 2016, Walden University publications included at least six studies using Facebook to advertise and recruit participants (Alqatawni, 2016; Brown, 2016; Gilmore, 2016; Jackson McClary, 2016; Loar Sage, 2016; Lowry, 2016).

There are several limitations to this sampling process. Seniors are less likely to have computers and be on social media than younger people (Smith, 2014). This might limit the inclusion of veterans from WWII, Korea, and possibly Vietnam, as they may not know about the survey. The recruitment procedures restrict the sampling to those who are part of the target groups on Facebook, a member of one of the nonprofit agencies flyers

were posted, or a student at Walden University to respond through the participant pool, which may limit the generalizability. Marginalized veterans' populations, including homeless vets, would also not be part of this sampling process.

Data Collection

Once the potential participant clicked on the link, he or she was directed to a new web browser to complete the informed consent page. The participants were advised that the survey was anonymous and voluntary, and they may choose not to partake in the study at any time by closing out of the survey. Participants were informed of the 24-hour crisis number for veterans in case they felt they needed help. To establish eligibility to participate in the study, the respondent must have completed the demographic questions. Each potential participant must be over 18-years-old, a U.S. military veteran, and speak English. If respondents did not meet the inclusion criteria, a thank you page appeared, and their survey ended.

After consenting, the participants were asked demographic information: age, gender, length of service, branch, educational attainment, marital status, income, social support, honorable or dishonorable discharge, and voluntary or involuntary discharge (Appendix D). Following the demographic questions, Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS was given to assess the participants' life satisfaction (Appendix E). After completion of the SWLS, the respondents were given Zimet et al.'s (1988) MSPSS to determine their perceived social support (Appendix F). Finally, the participants were thanked for taking part in the study and informed that no debriefings or post follow-ups were conducted after completion of the questionnaire. Winerman (2005) stated that data collection often

takes longer than expected to gain the minimum sample size, and researchers should double the time frame they expect to have all the participants. Therefore, the time frame for data collection for this study was 90 days or when 128 participants were reached, whichever came first, as suggested by Soper (2017).

The survey data wre collected through an online survey company. Many benefits have been found using electronic surveys to collect data including flexibility, time management, and cost effectiveness (Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004). SurveyMonkey is one of the largest online survey collection companies, and it is used for research such as this study. Edwards, Greaney, and Palmer (2016) identified emotional reactions and intimate partner violence. Data were gathered from two studies: The first study included 74 participants who engaged in an in-person survey study, and the second included 178 participants who completed online surveys (Edwards et al., 2016). The participants were directed to SurveyMonkey to fill out the informed consent form, and if they met the study's criteria, they were forwarded to the online survey (Edwards et al., 2016). Edwards et al. discussed a limitation to the traditional pen-and-paper survey was the sample size because the researchers were not able to code the qualitative responses. Edwards et al. asked the participants the best way to reach adults in the community, and 60% of the participants stated online or social media, 21% said using e-mail was a good way to advertise a study, and 13% said word of mouth. Edwards et al. stated that many participants had more access to the Internet, phone, and computer; therefore, it is important for researchers to use these technologies.

Shawver et al. (2016) discussed strategies to overcoming some of the limitations of online data collection. A strategy to overcome some of the limitations of online data collection is using online software to collect data (Shawver et al., 2016). SurveyMonkey is a software package that I used in my study that tracks the respondents' e-mail to decrease the likelihood of participants taking the survey multiple times (Wright, 2005). SurveyMonkey also tracks participants' responses and prevents the respondents from submitting their answers if there are any questions left blank; this feature limits missing data (Wright, 2005). Shawver et al. also discussed advantages to using online data collection. Some of the benefits include efficiency, cost effectiveness, and time effectiveness.

A disadvantage of using the Internet to collect data is one person could fill out multiple questionnaires (Strickland et al., 2003). However, additional software can be used to identify the respondent's domain address, thus preventing the same respondent from answering the questionnaire multiple times (Strickland et al., 2003). SurveyMonkey enables the administrator to allow participants to submit responses once. Cookies are sent to the participants' computer with a message informing them they have already participated in the study. This protocol was used for this study.

SurveyMonkey, as well as other online survey collection tools, are becoming common in peer-reviewed research. They are also becoming more common for dissertations. For example, in 2015, Walden University publications included at least three studies using SurveyMonkey (Conner, 2015; Hung, 2015; Isaacs, 2015). In 2016,

Walden University publications included at least three studies using SurveyMonkey (Perry, 2016; Tatah, 2016, Wojtara-Perry, 2016).

Instrumentation of Constructs

Satisfaction with Life Scale. The SWLS was created by Diener et al. (1985), and it consists of 5-item, self-administered questions that are scored on a Likert rating scale from 1 *strongly disagree* to 7 *strongly agree*. Examples of the questions include "In most ways my life is close to ideal." Diener et al. developed the SWLS to measure cognitive decisions of a person's satisfaction with life. Diener et al.'s SWLS is a copyrighted instrument; however, permission to use this scale is granted to professionals with the agreement that all credit was given to the developers (Diener & Smiley, 2009; Appendix E).

The SWLS is a validated instrument used to assess the participants' life satisfaction scores. A person's life satisfaction is a sign of how well a person adapts to change (Glaesmer, Grande, Braehler, & Roth, 2011). The SWLS is used more often than other instruments to detect life satisfaction (Glaesmer et al., 2011). It has been shown to have consistent internal validity. According to Diener et al. (1985), the internal reliability of the SWLS has an alpha coefficient of .87 and a retest of .82 after 2 months. Pavot and Diener (2008) determined that the SWLS was a reliable and valid measure to establish a person's personal evaluation of their life. Robertson (2010) used the SWLS with military participants to explore life satisfaction of service members who discharged and went into the teaching profession. Robertson explained that the alpha coefficient scores of the SWLS indicated that it was a reliable measure for military personnel.

The SWLS has also been found reliable on a variety of other populations. Shelef, Zdaka, and Barak (2015) studied happiness related to the mental health of officers in Israel's Department of Defense. Shelef et al. concluded the total mean score of the SWLS 24.29 ± 5.22 and found a statistically significant correlation between income and life satisfaction (p=0.0109). Gouveia, Milfont, Da Fonseca, and Coelho (2009) found the SWLS to be valid across the Brazilian population; the internal consistency across the samples was M=0.81. Gouveia et al. stated, "The results showed a range of 0.83 to 0.54 over 2weeks to 4years, and the alpha coefficients ranged from 0.79 to 0.89" (p. 268). Glaesmer et al. (2011) researched the psychometric properties, factorial structure, and invariance across gender and age of the general German population. Glaesmer et al. reported good internal consistency of the SWLS with a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .92. Researchers identified a positive relationship between life satisfaction and social support.

Siedlecki, Tucker-Drob, Oishi, and Salthouse (2008) studied a variety of variables connected to cognitive, demographic, and personality to determine if any were predictors of life satisfaction using the SWLS. Siedlecki et al. stated that education is not a predictor of life satisfaction, but those who had more knowledge had higher life satisfaction.

Toker (2012) studied the connection between life satisfaction among educators in Turkey using the Turkish version of the SWLS. Toker reported that the scale had good internal reliability of .80 to .89. Cronbach alpha of 0.83. Toker found that the professors with the longest length of service above 20 years had increased life satisfaction compared to professors who held their job between 6 and 10years.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. Zimet et al. (1988) developed the MSPSS to measure to measure the participants' perceived social support. Permission to use the scale is granted as long as the others are credited (Zimet et al., 1988; see Appendix F). The MSPSS has been used in a variety of populations and has been translated into over 20 languages (Zimet et al., 1988). Zimet et al. found that the overall total score of the subscales for the MSPSS was .85, revealing good internal reliability.

Dahlem, Zimet, and Walker (1991) examined the internal reliability and validity the MSPSS on urban college students. The MSPSS total scale score was .91, indicating good internal reliability (Dahlem et al., 1991). Dahlem et al. concluded that a person's perceived support from friends is different from family because the support a person receives from family becomes steadier as time goes on. Stanley, Beck, and Zebb (1998) tested the psychometric properties of the MSPSS; however, unlike Dahlem et al., the participants in Stanley et al.'s study were made up of older adults. One of the groups of adults was diagnosed with GAD, and the other group of participants was not diagnosed with a disorder (Stanley et al., 1998). The subscales for the MSPSS were calculated separately in this study. The internal consistency of the MSPSS for the samples 0.46-0.75 for the participants diagnosed with GAD and 0.30-0.53 for the control group, showing good internal consistency of the MSPSS (Stanley et al., 1998). The test-retest reliability scores for the subscale friends ($r = 0.73$), family ($r = 0.74$), and a total score for the MSPSS of the control group ($r = 0.73$) indicated good test-retest reliability. Stanley et al.

concluded that the participants without a diagnosis reported more perceived social support than those who were diagnosed with GAD.

Demographics. The variables educational attainment, social support, length of service, and life satisfaction were measured using the SWLS. The scores represented if the variables in this study affected a person's life satisfaction. The scores for social support represented a 1 for support and 2 indicating no support. The scores for length of service were input for the number of years the respondent reported that he or she served on active duty in the U.S. military. The scale scores for educational attainment represented how many years of currently attained education each respondent reported (ie., a 12 for high school, 14 for AA/AS, 16 for BA/BS, 18 for MA/MS, or 20 for a doctorate).

Operationalization of Constructs

Operationalization refers to identifying the method used to measure a variable, when a variable is a concept that is usually unmeasurable (Mueller, 2013).

Date of discharge: Participants were asked what year they were discharged from the military. The date of discharge allowed me to see if the amount of time out affected life satisfaction by subtracting that year from 2016.

Discharged: The completion of a service member's military service (Discharge, 2015). Participants were asked to indicate whether they were honorably discharged and then whether the discharge was voluntary or involuntary on the demographic questionnaire.

Education: "A person's understanding, knowledge, and skills gained from attending school" (Education, 2015). Participants were asked to indicate their highest level of education. The independent interval variable, educational attainment, was obtained from the demographic questionnaire.

Involuntary discharge: Active duty service members separated from their military career due to an executive decision (Military, 2015).

Length of service: The amount of time a person has been employed. This independent ratio variable indicated how many years a service member served on active duty in the U.S. military.

Life satisfaction: This dependent internal level scale variable was used to determine participants' life satisfaction. Participants were asked to fill out the SWLS indicating life satisfaction. The responses from the participants were obtained on a Likert rating scale 1 being *strongly disagree*, 2 *disagree*, 3 *slightly disagree*, 4 *neither agree nor disagree*, 5 *slightly agree*, 6 *agree*, and 7 *strongly agree*.

Social support: Emotional, informational, or instrumental support given from one person to assist another (Seeman, 2008). This nominal independent variable was used to identify individuals' perceived social support. Participants were asked fill out the MSPSS to identify social support.

Data Analysis Plan

The statistical analysis software for the data analysis was Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 21 (Field, 2009). The data were cleaned and checked for coding errors. Data cleaning is a part of data collection to identify and fix any errors

(Frankfort-Nachmias & Frankfort, 2008). Missing data can occur if a participant does not respond to a question or if the data are input incorrectly into the dataset. I visually reviewed the data for any errors and used SPSS, which can further be used to identify any missing data by conducting a frequencies analysis.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample and show how closely it mirrored the larger veteran population. An independent sample *t* test was used to test for a relationship between discharge type and life satisfaction (Imdadullah, 2011). A *t* test was also used to test Research Questions 1 through 4.

A hierarchical linear regression was used to estimate the degree of association between the predictor variables on the dependent variable after controlling for the covariates. The analysis is executed in multiple steps; the researcher inputs a new group of independent variables during each step to identify possible effects of the independent variables while predicting a dependent variable (Laerd Statistics Premium, 2016). A hierarchical linear regression was used to analyze RQ5 and RQ6. To assess the prediction of life satisfaction, the variables were assessed in multiple blocks. In Block 1, the demographic variables were entered (age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status), Block 2 was length of service, Block 3 was educational attainment, Block 4 was social support, and in Block 5, discharge type was entered.

This was done to determine if one of the independent demographic variables was a predictor of the dependent variable life satisfaction. According to Creswell (2009), confounding variables are factors that affect the variables being studied. These potential

covariates are included in the analysis because they may have an effect on the dependent variable.

If the relationship is significant, then the model will predict the dependent variable (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). During each step, I assessed the change inr^2 to interpret any variance in the dependent variable that is uniquely associated with the variable entered during that step. Model level statistics (F-Test, r^2, and change in r^2) were used to test if the variables can account for significant proportion of variance in levels of reported life satisfaction.

To approach RQ 1: Are service members who were involuntarily discharged less satisfied with life than service members who were voluntary discharged?

$H1_0$: Service members who were involuntarily discharged will not be less satisfied with life than service members who were voluntarily discharged as measured by the SWLS.

$H1_A$: Service members who were involuntarily discharged will be less satisfied with life than service members who were voluntarily discharged as measured by the SWLS.

- DV: Life satisfaction
- IV or groups: voluntary and involuntary
- Level of precision (alpha = .05)
- Power (Beta = .20) the same as 80% power
- Effect (small to medium = .35)
- Statistical test for analysis: *t* test

- G-power calculates minimum sample size: 128 [Group 1 = 64 & Group 2 = 64]

RQ 2: Are service members involuntarily discharged with fewer than 16 years of educational attainment less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more than 16 years of educational attainment as measured by the SWLS?

$H2_0$: Service members involuntarily discharged with fewer than 16 years of educational attainment will not be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more than 16 years of educational attainment as measured by the SWLS.

$H2_A$: Service members involuntarily discharged with fewer than 16 years of educational attainment will be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more than 16 years of educational attainment as measured by the SWLS.

- DV: Life satisfaction
- IV or groups: Educational attainment
- Level of precision (alpha = .05)
- Power (Beta = .20) the same as 80% power
- Effect (small to medium = .35)
- Statistical test for analysis: *t* test
- G-power calculates minimum sample size: 128 [Group 1=64 & Group 2=64]

RQ 3: Are service members involuntarily discharged with shorter than 10 years length of service less satisfied with life than voluntarily discharged service members as measured by the SWLS?

$H3_0$: Service members involuntarily discharged with shorter than 10 years length of service will not be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with longer than 10 years length of service as measured by the SWLS.

$H3_A$: Service members involuntarily discharged with shorter than 10 years length of service will be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with longer than 10 years length of service as measured by the SWLS.

- DV: Life satisfaction
- IV or groups: Length of service
- Level of precision (alpha = .05)
- Power (Beta = .20) the same as 80% power
- Effect (small to medium = .35)
- Statistical test for analysis: *t* test
- G-power calculates minimum sample size: 128 [Group 1=64 & Group 2=64]

RQ 4: Are involuntarily discharged service members with less social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged as measured by the SWLS?

$H4_0$: Service members involuntarily discharged with less social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends will not be less satisfied with life

than service members voluntarily discharged with more social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends as measured by the SWLS

$H4_A$: Service members involuntarily discharged with less social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends will be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends as measured by the SWLS

- DV: Life satisfaction
- IV or groups: Social support
- Level of precision (alpha = .05)
- Power (Beta = .20) the same as 80% power
- Effect (small to medium = .35)
- Statistical test for analysis: *t* test
- G-power calculates minimum sample size: 128 [Group 1=64 & Group 2=64]

RQ 5: Is discharge type, social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends, fewer than 16 years of educational attainment, and shorter than 10years of service predictors of satisfaction with life as measured by the SWLS?

$H5_0$: Discharge type, social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends, fewer than 16 years of educational attainment, and shorter than 10 years of service are not predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS

$H5_A$: Discharge type, social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends, fewer than 16 years of educational attainment, and shorter than 10 years of service are predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS.

- DV: Life satisfaction
- IV or groups: discharge type, educational attainment, social support, and length of service.
- Level of precision (alpha = .05)
- Power (Beta = .20) the same as 80% power
- Effect (small = .20)
- Statistical test for analysis: Hierarchical linear regression
- Block 1= demographic variables will be entered (age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status), Block 2 = length of service, Block 3 educational attainment, Block 4 = social support, and Block 5 = discharge type
- G-power calculates minimum sample size: 91

RQ 6: Can life satisfaction be predicted by discharge type, age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status as measured by the SWLS?

$H6_0$: Discharge type, age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status are not predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS.

$H6_A$: Discharge type, age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status are predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS.

- DV: Life satisfaction

- IV or groups: discharge type, age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status
- Level of precision (alpha = .05)
- Power (Beta = .20) the same as 80% power
- Effect (Small = .08)
- Statistical test for analysis: Hierarchical linear regression
- Block 1 = age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status; Block 2= discharge type
- G-power calculates minimum sample size: 91

The data were interpreted with a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of 5%. This will indicate that I will be 95% confident in the probability of the observed estimate falls within the population parameters. Thus, calculated probability value of $p<0.05$ was used in this study to reject the null hypothesis, indicating a statistically significant difference between means (Green & Salkind, 2011).

Threats to Validity

External Validity

Threats to external validity occur when researchers generalize to people and settings that are not in their study (Creswell, 2009). Limiting the study to previously active service members in the U.S. military and not those who served in U.S. Reserves could limit the generalizability of the study. One potential threat to the external validity was selection bias. Selection bias threatens the study from being generalized from the sample to the population because the groups in the study were not similar

(Dissertation.laerd.com, 2015). The participants in this study were kept anonymous; therefore, there was no way to know who participated and who decided not to participate. Although this was a valid threat, it is also a common one in all research and will be noted in the discussion when comparing this to other research on military vets.

Internal Validity

Trochim (2006) stated, "Internal validity is the approximate truth about inferences regarding cause-effect or causal relationships" (para 1). The factors that affect drawing accurate conclusions from the population and the data are threats to the internal validity (Creswell, 2009). In this this study, I was only able to draw correlations because many factors could also be related to life satisfaction, so this type of threat to validity was limited. It was assumed that participants' responses were honest reflections of their experiences, but this may be a threat to the internal validity. To address this limitation, I trusted the participants' responses. Additionally, the anonymity of the study increased the likelihood of honest answers.

Research mortality occurs when participants drop out of the study because it is too time-consuming (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). To address this threat, the participants were given the SWLS, a demographic questionnaire, and the MSPSS, which are all short questionnaires that can be completed in a short amount of time. The participants were prompted to complete the SWLS based on their current feelings related to their life satisfaction and not based on their time in the military. However, the participants' mood could interfere with their responses to their overall satisfaction with life (Diener et al., 2013).

Construct Validity

Construct validity refers to the accuracy of the test instrument used to measure the variables within a study (Creswell, 2009). A threat to construct validity can become clear upon reviewing prior research. Van Beuningen (2012) revealed that participants who participate in the SWLS questionnaire online may report lower satisfaction with life compared to participants who were involved in telephone or face-to-face interviews. However, according to Van Beuningen, this may be because of the difference in samples and between the ways the information is relayed to the respondent. Having all participants take the survey online mitigated this threat.

Ethical Procedures

It is essential to protect all of the participants' privacy. The Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) human subject guidelines were followed, and IRB approval was obtained before collecting data (IRB Approval # 07-20-17-0310167). I adhered to the APA ethical guidelines in regards to the treatment of human participants beneficence, to respect people, and justice (APA, 2010).

The research was conducted online, and all of the all surveys were completed anonymously. There were no anticipated concerns about the study being conducted online or completed anonymously. The participants were asked not to input any identifying information, such as name or their address. Participants were only asked to disclose demographic information: age, gender, years of service, branch, years of education, marital status, income, social supports, and type of discharge. Before responding to the questionnaire, the participants completed the informed consent. On the

informed consent page, the participants were informed of the purpose of the research, expectations of participants, risks involved, benefits of research, confidentiality, and that their participation was voluntary. Each participant had the option to stop taking the study at any point without any consequences. Some participants can become distressed because of adverse memories that may arise during the questionnaire. Participants were encouraged to contact their local counseling office or the 24-hour crisis hotline for veterans upon exiting the study to process any uncomfortable feelings that arose to provide increased support.

The committee and myself had access to the data collected for this study. I was also given permission from the IRB to use a statistician from Walden University. The data will be stored in my home on a personal computer and protected by a password that I created. The data are password-protected electronically and backed up on a removable hard drive. The removable hard drive will be placed in a locked box without any of the participants' identifying information to protect the participants' confidentiality. I am the only person with access to the lockbox, and the data will be available to me for 5 years and then destroyed. I relied solely on the statistical analysis and not interpretations of the gathered data. This study was not conducted in my work environment, nor were there any other anticipated ethical issues. Further, no incentives were given for participating in this study.

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative, between-groups study was to measure the effect of the independent variables (educational attainment, social support, and length of

service) on the dependent variable (life satisfaction) among voluntarily and involuntarily discharged military personnel. The convenience sampling of 260 discharged service members was obtained through Facebook, Walden's participant pool, and veteran organizations in Southern California. The questionnaires were distributed through a link on Facebook for service member groups. To participate in this study, the service members must have been honorably discharged from one of the four branches: Army, Navy, Marines, or Air Force of the U.S. military. The data were collected online using Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS and Dahlem et al.'s (1988) MSPSS via SurveyMonkey. Each eligible participant was asked to sign an informed consent form before participation. Participants were given access to emergency telephone numbers upon completing the questionnaire.

Chapter 4 will include an introduction, data collection, results, and the summary.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative, between-groups study was to measure the association with the independent variables (educational attainment, social support, and length of service) on the dependent variable (life satisfaction) among voluntarily and involuntarily discharged military personnel. Independent sample *t* tests were conducted in this study to test Research Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4. Two hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted for Research Questions 5 and 6 to estimate the degree of prediction the independent variables had on the dependent variable. The research questions and hypotheses are discussed below.

The research questions and hypotheses that were tested in this study were

RQ1. Are service members who were involuntarily discharged less satisfied with life than service members who were voluntary discharged?

$H1_0$: Service members who were involuntarily discharged will not be less satisfied with life than service members who were voluntarily discharged as measured by the SWLS.

$H1_A$: Service members who were involuntarily discharged will be less satisfied with life than service members who were voluntarily discharged as measured by the SWLS.

RQ2. Are service members involuntarily discharged with fewer than 16 years of educational attainment less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more than 16 years of educational attainment as measured by the SWLS?

$H2_0$: Service members involuntarily discharged with fewer than 16 years of educational attainment will not be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more than 16 years of educational attainment as measured by the SWLS.

$H2_A$: Service members involuntarily discharged with fewer than 16 years of educational attainment will be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more than 16 years of educational attainment as measured by the SWLS.

RQ3. Are service members involuntarily discharged with a shorter length of service less satisfied with life than voluntarily discharged service members as measured by the SWLS?

$H3_0$: Service members involuntarily discharged with shorter lengths of service will not be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with longer than 10 years length of service as measured by the SWLS.

$H3_A$: Service members involuntarily discharged with shorter lengths of service will be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with longer than 10 years length of service as measured by the SWLS.

RQ4. Are involuntarily discharged service members with less social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged as measured by the SWLS?

$H4_0$: Service members involuntarily discharged with less social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends will not be less satisfied with life

than service members voluntarily discharged with more social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends as measured by the SWLS.

$H4_A$: Service members involuntarily discharged with less social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends will be less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends as measured by the SWLS.

RQ 5. Is discharge type, social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends, fewer than 16 years of educational attainment, and shorter than 10 years of service predictors of satisfaction with life as measured by the SWLS?

$H5_0$: Discharge type, social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends, fewer than 16 years of educational attainment, and shorter than 10 years of service are not predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS

$H5_A$: Discharge type, social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends, fewer than 16 years of educational attainment, and shorter than 10 years of service are predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS

RQ 6. Can life satisfaction be predicted by discharge type, age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status as measured by the SWLS?

$H6_0$: Discharge type, age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status are not predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS.

$H6_A$: Discharge type, age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status are predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS.

Data Collection

The data collection and recruitment were 90 days. This survey was mistakenly shut down for 4 days; therefore, 4 days was added to the data collection timeframe. This study was advertised on Facebook (see Appendix A) and Walden's participant pool; flyers were also distributed to organizations in Southern California (see Appendix B). The majority of the responses were obtained through Facebook (178); two people logged on to SurveyMonkey from the web link, and a total of six people attempted to complete the surveys from Walden's participant pool.

Descriptive Characteristics

All of the data were reviewed to ensure each participant was qualified and the questionnaires were complete. I found that 186 people attempted to complete this survey; however, five were disqualified because they did not meet the qualifications; therefore, they were not included in the study. Six participants did not complete the questionnaires entirely; however, they were still included in the data. In total, 141 voluntarily discharged service members and 41 involuntarily discharged service members were included in the results of this study. The number of participants who completed the demographic questionnaire was (N = 141) voluntary and (N = 41) involuntary. The number of participants who completed the SWLS and the demographic questionnaire were voluntary (n = 139) and (n = 40) involuntary. The number of participants who completed the demographic questionnaire, SWLS, and the MSPSS was voluntary (n = 136) and (n = 40) involuntarily discharged service members. Gender was male (n = 73) and female (n = 109). Participants ranged in age from 18-years-old to 82-years-old and were discharged

from the U. S. military between the years of 1959 and 2017. The majority of the participants reported that they earned above $50,000 annually (*n* = 83, 45.6%), next $20,000- $50,000 (*n* = 66, 36.3%), and 0-$20,000 (*n* = 33, 18.1%). The mode of the variable annual income was three. Participants reported that their employment status was full time (*n* = 97, 53.3%), disability (*n* = 30, 16.5%), unemployed (*n* = 28, 15.4%), and part time (*n* = 27, 14.8%). The mode of the variable employment status was 1. The majority of the participants reported that they earned an AA/AS (*n* = 53, 29.1%), MA/MS (*n* = 44, 24.2%), BA/BS (*n* = 42, 23.1%), high school diploma (*n* = 31, 17%), and doctorate (*n* = 12, 6.6%). The mode of the variable educational attainment was 2. The majority of the participants reported that they were married (*n* = 111, 61%), divorced (*n* = 27, 14.8%), single (*n* = 22, 12.1%), cohabitating (*n* = 12, 6.6%), separated (*n* = 9, 4.9%), and widowed (*n* = 1, .5%; Table 1). The mode of the variable marital status was 1 (Table 2).

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages for Nominal Demographic Data

Variable	*N*	%
Gender		
Male	73	40.1
Female	109	59.9
Employment Status		
Full time	97	53.3
Part time	27	14.8
Unemployed	28	15.4
Disability	30	16.5
Education		
High school	31	17.0
AA/AS	53	29.1
BA/BS	42	23.1
MA/MS	44	24.2
Doctorate	12	6.6
Marital status		
Married	111	61.0
Cohabitating	12	6.6
Separated	9	4.9
Divorced	27	14.8
Widowed	1	.5
Single	22	12.1

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Continuous Demographic Variables

Variable	*N*	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
Age	182	18	82	42.2	13.2
Year of discharge	178	1959	2017	2004	13.0

Descriptions of Study Scales, Reliability Analyses, and Correlations

The instruments I used in this study were the SWLS and the MSPSS. I used these measures because they have both been found to be valid and reliable instruments. According to Diner et al. (2013), the SWLS is a valid and reliable measure to identify a person's current state of satisfaction. Diner et al. discussed that the Cronbach alpha of the scale is consistently above .80 when duplicated across a variety of populations. The software SPSS was used to test the reliability of the SWLS with the sample from this study. Similar to other studies, the SWLS ($M = 22.63$, $SD = 7.58$) showed a high level of internal consistency, as determined by Cronbach's alpha of .907 (Table 3).

The MSPSS has also been used in a variety of studies (Zimet et al., 1988) and has been found to be a valid and reliable measure to evaluate a person's perceived social support. The Cronbach alpha of the MSPSS has consistently been above .80 in a number of studies (Chou, 1999; Edwards, 2004; Wang et al., 2012), proving over time that this scale is a valid and reliable measure. The software SPSS was used to test the reliability of the MSPSS with the sample from this study. The MSPSS ($M = 652.89$, $SD = 15.14$) had a

high level of internal consistency, as determined by Cronbach's alpha of .945 (see Table 3).

According to Cronbach and Meehl (1955), there are four types of validity for psychological tests: construct validity, content validity, predictive validity, and concurrent validity. Concurrent validity was not an issue in this study, as I did not use a new test; instead, I used instruments that had already has been well established. According to content validity, the instruments used in the study measured all of the information that was intended (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Predictive validity refers to the results the researcher predicts will likely acquire based on a theory (Vogt, King, & King, 2004). Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) discussed that construct validity occurs when the instrument ties in with the study's theoretical framework.

The SPSS version 21 (Field, 2009) was used for the statistical analysis software used for data analysis (Field, 2009). The data were cleaned, and I visually reviewed the data to check for errors and missing data. The independent sample *t* test was used to identify difference between means of two groups. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Frankfort-Nachmias (2008), the significance of correlation can be evaluated by conducting the *F* or *t* distribution. The hierarchical linear regression was used in this study to estimate the degree of association between the predictor variables on the dependent variables. To assess the prediction of life satisfaction, the variables were assessed in multiple blocks. I assessed the change in r^2 for each block to interpret any

variance in the dependent variable that was associated with the independent variables entered in each block.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for SWLS and MSPSS

	Mean	*SD*	Skewedness SE	Kurtosis SE	Cronbach's alpha
SWLS	22.63	7.58	.182	.361	.90
MSPSS	62.89	15.14	.183	.364	.94

Correlation

A Pearson correlation was run to determine the relationship between the variables tested in this study. There was a strong positive correlation between several of the variables. The first correlation was between gender and years of service ($r = .031$, $n = 182$, $p = \leq .05$). Next, there was a positive correlation between the two variables years of service and employment status ($r = .026$, $n = 182$, $p = \leq .05$). There was a positive correlation between the two variables years of service and social support ($r = .010$, $n = 176$, $p = \leq .005$). There was a positive correlation between the two variables type of discharge and employment status ($r = .000$, $n = 182$, $p = \leq .001$). There was a strong positive correlation between the two variables education and social support ($r = .008$, $n = 176$, $p = \leq .05$). There was a positive correlation between the two variables years of service and social support ($r = .010$, $n = 176$, $p = \leq .05$; Table 4).

Table 3

Pearson Correlation

	Age	Gender	Service of years	Discharge type	Employment status	Annual income	Education	Social support	Marital status
Age	1	-.276	.333	-.208	.134	.190	.259	.107	.054
Gender	-.276	1	.031	.146	.110	-.119	.143	-.043	-.126
Years of Service	.333	.031	1	-.005	.026	.193	.197	.010	-.030
Discharge type	-.208	.146	-.005	1	.000	-.057	-.005	-.041	-.027
Employment status	.134	.110	.026	.000	1	-.345	-.041	-.149	-.044
Annual income	.190	-.119	.193	-.057	-.345	1	259	.189	.098
Education	.259	.143	.197	-.005	-.041	.259	1	.008	.054
Social support	.107	-.043	.010	-.041	-.149	.189	.008	1	.478
Marital status	.054	-.126	-.030	-.027	-.044	.098	.054	.478	1

Note. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 and 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Results

Evaluation of Research Hypothesis 1

An independent group *t* test was conducted to analyze Research Question 1 to determine if there were differences in life satisfaction scores between voluntary (n = 139) and involuntarily discharged service members (n = 40). I used Leard (2017) to identify the factors that must be assessed after conducting a *t* test. There were no outliers in the data, as assessed by inspection of a boxplot. Life satisfaction scores were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk'stest. There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances (p = .557). I found that there were no statistically significant differences in the mean life satisfaction scores between service members voluntarily discharged (M = 23.01, SD = 7.39) and service members involuntarily discharged (M = 21.30, SD = 8.15) (t (177) = 1.257, p > .05), with a medium effect size (d = 0.51; Table 5).

Therefore, I fail to reject the null hypothesis, which states that there is no difference in the life satisfaction scores between service members involuntarily discharged and service members who were voluntarily discharged. A posthoc sensitivity using G *power software 3.1.9.2 for means: Difference between two independent means (two groups) was run. The parameters used were tail(s) = 2, alpha err prob (precision) = 0.05, power (1 – Beta err prob) = 0.8, sample size Group 1 = 139, and sample size group 2 = 40. The calculated effect size d = 0.51 (medium).

Table 4

T test of Discharge Type on SWLS

	N	Mean	*SD*	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Voluntary	139	23.01	7.40	1.26	177	0.21
Involuntary	40	21.3	8.15			

Evaluation of Research Hypothesis 2

An independent group *t* test was conducted to analyze the data for Research Question 2. I wished determine if involuntary discharged service members with fewer than 16 years of educational attainment ($n = 76$) are less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more than 16 years of educational attainment ($n = 19$). I used Leard (2017) to identify the factors that must be assessed after conducting a *t* test. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p = .017$). Life satisfaction scores were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$). The statistically significant result showed higher life satisfaction scores between service members voluntarily discharged with more than 16 years of educational attainment ($M = 23.93$, $SD = 7.56$), compared to service members involuntarily discharged with fewer than 16 years of educational attainment ($M = 18.26$, $SD = 8.92$), (Table 6) ($t(93) = 2.81$, $p < .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that service members involuntarily discharged with fewer than 16 years of educational attainment will not be less satisfied with life than service

members who were voluntarily discharged with more than 16 years of educational attainment, can be rejected.

A posthoc sensitivity using G*power software 3.1.9.2 for means: difference between two independent means (two groups) was run. The parameters used were tail(s) = two, alpha err prob (precision) = 0.05, power (1 – Beta err prob) = 0.8, sample size Group 1 = 76, and sample size Group 2 = 19. The calculated effect size $d = 0.72$ (medium-large).

Table 5

T test of Discharge Type by Education on SWLS

	N	Mean	*SD*	*SEM*	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Involuntary < 16 years of education	19	18.26	8.93	2.05	-2.82	93	0.006
Voluntary > 16 years of education	76	23.93	7.56	0.87			

Evaluation of Research Hypothesis 3

An independent groups *t* test was conducted to analyze Research Question 3 to determine if there were differences in life satisfaction scores between service members voluntarily discharged with longer than 10 years length of service ($n = 46$) and involuntarily discharged service members with shorter than 10 years length of service ($n = 25$). I used Leard (2017) to identify the factors that must be assessed after conducting a *t* test. There were no outliers in the data, as assessed by inspection of a boxplot. Life

satisfaction scores were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test. There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances (p = .870). Results of the independent samples t test for Research Question 3 was not statistically significant, and there was no difference in mean life satisfaction between service members voluntarily discharged with longer than 10 years length of service (M = 22.52, SD = 8.11) and service members involuntarily discharged with shorter than 10 years length of service (M = 19.80, SD = 8.39), (t (69) = -1.33, p > .05) (Table 7). Therefore, the null hypothesis, which suggested that service members involuntarily discharged with shorter than 10 years length of service will be less satisfied with life than service members who were voluntarily discharged with longer than 10 years length of service, cannot be rejected.

A posthoc sensitivity using G *power software 3.1.9.2 for means: difference between two independent means (two groups) was run. The parameters used were tail(s) = 2, alpha err prob (precision) = 0.05, power (1 – Beta err prob) = 0.8, sample size Group 1 = 46, and sample size Sroup 2 = 25. The calculated effect size d = 0.36 (small-medium).

Table 6

T-test of Discharge Type by Length of Service on SWLS

RQ3	*N*	Mean	*SD*	*SEM*	*t*	*df*
Involuntary < 11 years of Service	25	19.8	8.391	1.678	-1.334	69
Voluntary > 10 years of Service	46	22.52	8.112	1.196		

Evaluation of Research Hypothesis 4

An independent groups *t* test was conducted to analyze Research Question 4 to determine if involuntary service members with less social support ($n = 76$) are less satisfied with life than service members voluntarily discharged with more social support ($n = 17$). To analyze this research question, participants who scored below the mean on the MSPSS ($M = 63$) were included in the results of this study as having less social support. The participants who scored above the ($M = 63$) on the MSPSS were included in the results of this study as having more social support. I used Leard (2017) to identify the factors that must be assessed after conducting a *t* test. There were no outliers in the data, as assessed by inspection of a boxplot. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p = .143$). The statistically significant result showed that the mean life satisfaction score was much higher for service members voluntarily discharged with more social support from

interpersonal relationships including family and friends (M = 26.24, SD = 6.15) compared to service members involuntarily discharged with less social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends (M = 17.29, SD = 7.43), (t (91) = -5.21,p < .05) (Table 8). Therefore, the null hypothesis that suggested that service members involuntarily discharged with less social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends will not be less satisfied with life than service members who were voluntarily discharged with more social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends can be rejected.

A posthoc sensitivity using G *power software 3.1.9.2 for means: difference between two independent means (two groups) was run. The parameters used were tail(s) = 2, alpha err prob (precision) = 0.05, power (1 – Beta err prob) = 0.8, sample size Group 1 = 76, and sample size Group 2 = 17. The calculated effect size d = 0.39 (small-medium).

Table 7

T test of Discharge Type by Social Support on SWLS

RQ3	*N*	Mean	*SD*	*SEM*	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Involuntary < 63 social support	17	17.2	7.439	1.804	-5210	91	.143
Voluntary > 63 social support	76	26.2	6.153	.706			

Evaluation of Research Hypothesis 5

Assumptions of the hierarchical linear regression. To approach Research

Question 5, a hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted using a five-model analysis to evaluate the prediction of life satisfaction from age, gender, employment status, annual income, marital status (Model 1), length of service (Model 2), educational attainment (Model 3), social support (Model 4), and discharge type (Model 5). I used Leard (2017) to identify the factors that must be assessed after conducting a hierarchical linear regression. There was linearity as assessed by partial regression plots and a plot of standardized residuals against predicted values. There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of standardized residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. There were no standardized deleted residuals greater than ± 3standard deviations, no leverage values greater than 0.2, and values for Cooks distance above one. The assumption of normality was met as assessed by Q-Q plot. There was independence of residuals, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.141.

Model 1 consisted of five independent variables (age, gender, employment status, annual income, marital status). The adjusted R2 value of .420, $F(5,50) = 8.95$ associated with this regression model shows that this model accounted for 42% of the variation in life satisfaction, which means that 58% of the variation cannot be explained by the independent variables alone. The regression revealed that annual income ($B = 2.90$, 95% *CI* (.556, 5.25) $p < .05$), marital status ($B = 6.88$, 95% *CI* (3.63, 10.12) $p < .05$), and gender ($B = 3.88$, 95% *CI* (.130, 7.63) $p < .05$), were significant predictors of life satisfaction in in Model 1. Similar results were found for Model 2.

Length of service was added to Model 2. The regression coefficient controlled for marital status, gender, and annual income. The adjusted R2 value of .40, $F(1,49) = .04$ associated with this regression model shows that the this model accounted for 40% of the variation in life satisfaction, which means that 60% of the variation cannot be explained by the independent variables alone. The regression revealed that annual income (B = 2.92, 95% CI (.545, 5.30) $p < .05$), marital status (B = 6.89, 95% CI (3.61, 10.17) $p < .05$), and gender (B = 3.912, 95% CI (.113, 7.71) $p < .05$) were statistically significant predictors of life satisfaction. Similar results were found for Model 3.

Educational attainment was added to Model 3. The adjusted R2 value of .40, $F(1,48) = .71$ associated with this regression model shows that the independent variables accounted for 40% of the variation in life satisfaction, which means that 60% of the variation in income cannot be explained by the independent variables alone. The model revealed annual income (B = 3.15, 95% CI (.704, 5.59) $p < .05$), and marital status (B = 6.88, 95% C.I. (3.59, 10.17) $p < .05$) were statistically significant predictors of life satisfaction. Similar results were found for Model 4; however, with the addition of social support, the R2 changed dramatically.

Social support was added to Model 4. The adjusted R2 value of .512 $F(1,47) = 11.49$ associated with this regression model showed that the independent variables accounted for 51% of the variation in life satisfaction, which means that 49% of the variation in life satisfaction cannot be explained by the independent variables alone. The model revealed annual income (B = 2.86, 95% CI (.637, 5.08) $p < .05$), social support (B = .215, 95% CI (.087, .342) $p < .05$), and marital status (B = 4.09, 95% CI (.680, 7.50) $p <$

.05) were all statistically significant predictors of life satisfaction. Similar results were found for Model 5.

Finally, when discharge type was entered into the final block of Model 5, it revealed the adjusted R2 value of .529, $F(1,46) = 2.77$ associated with this regression model. When all nine variables were included in the analysis, it was revealed that the independent variables accounted for 52% of the variation in life satisfaction, which means that 48% of the variation cannot be explained by independent variables alone. The variables social support ($B = .211$, 95% *CI* (.086, .337) $p < .05$), annual income ($B = 2.81$, 95% *CI* (.630, 5.00) $p < .05$), and marital status *(*$B = 3.78$, 95% *CI* (.416, 7.16) $p < .05$) were significant predictors of life satisfaction. Therefore, the null hypothesis, that states discharge type, social support from interpersonal relationships including family and friends, fewer than 16 years of educational attainment, and shorter than 10 years of service are not predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS can be rejected. The calculated effect size using G *power software 3.1.9.2 a posthoc sensitivity test was conducted for linear multiple regression: fixed model, R2 deviation from 0. The parameters used, alpha err prob (precision) = 0.05, power (1 – Beta err prob) = 0.8, total sample size = 56, number of predictors = 9. The calculated effect size $f = 0.33$ (small-medium). Table 9 shows the regression analysis for Models 1 and 2. Table 10 shows the regression analysis for Models 3 and 4. Table 11 shows the regression analysis for Model 5.

Table 9

Regression on Life Satisfaction Models 1 and 2

	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error	Beta
(Constant)	3.218	5.417		3.552	5.672	
Age	0.096	0.063	0.179	0.094	0.064	0.176
Gender	3.881	1.867	0.262	3.912	1.89	0.264
Employment status	-0.719	0.681	-0.123	-0.709	0.689	-0.122
Annual income	2.904	1.169	0.318	2.922	1.183	0.32
Marital status	6.88	1.614	0.464	6.897	1.632	0.465
Years of service				-0.073	0.331	-0.023
Years of education						
Social Support						
Type of discharge						
F			8.953			0.049
Df			5,50			1,49
R^2			0.472			0.473
R^2 Change (F)						0.408

Note. N = 56
*p<.05,**p< 01,
***p<.001

Table 10

Regression on Life Satisfaction Models 3 and 4

Model 3			Model 4		
B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error	Beta
1.254	6.306		-6.615	6.166	
0.087	0.065	0.164	0.044	0.06	0.083
3.803	1.9	0.257	2.628	1.756	0.177
-0.637	0.696	-0.109	-0.395	0.635	-0.068
3.151	1.217	0.345	2.862	1.106	0.313
6.887	1.637	0.465	4.092	1.696	0.276
-0.109	0.335	-0.035	-0.1	0.303	-0.032
1.406	1.665	0.092	0.94	1.514	0.061
			0.215	0.063	0.396
		0.713			11.494
		1,48			1,47
		0.481			0.583
		0.405			0.512

Note. N = 56
*p<.05,**p< 01,
***p<.001

Table 11
Regression on Life Satisfaction Model 5

Model 5 Beta	B	Std. Error	Beta
	-3.923	6.265	
0.083	0.034	0.059	0.064
0.177	3.585	1.817	0.242
-0.068	-0.318	0.625	-0.055
0.313	2.816	1.086	0.308
0.276	3.788	1.675	0.256
-0.032	0.111	0.324	0.035
0.061	0.588	1.502	0.038
0.396	0.211	0.062	0.39
	-3.187	1.915	-0.191
11.494			2.77
1,47			1,46
0.583			0.606
0.512			0.529

Note. N = 56
*p<.05,**p< 01,
***p<.001

To approach Research Question 6, a hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted in a two-model analysis to evaluate the prediction of life satisfaction from age, gender, employment status, marital status, annual income (Model 1), and discharge type (Model 2). I used Leard (2017) to identify the factors that must be assessed after conducting a hierarchical linear regression There was linearity, as assessed by partial regression plots and a plot of standardized residuals against predicted values. There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of standardized residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. There were no standardized deleted residuals greater than ± 3standard deviations, no leverage values greater than 0.2, and

values for Cooks distance above 1. The assumption of normality was met as assessed by Q-Q plot. There was independence of residuals, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.069.

Evaluation of Research Hypothesis 6

Model 1 consisted of five independent variables (age, gender, employment status, marital status, annual income) The adjusted R2 value of .426, $F(5,51) = 9.30$ associated with this regression model showed that this model accounted for 42% of the variation in life satisfaction, which means that 58% of the variation in life satisfaction cannot be explained by the independent variables alone. The regression model revealed that annual income *(B* = 2.83, 95% *CI* (.017, .528) $p < .05$), marital status (*B* = 6.95, 95% *CI* (3.76, 10.15) $p < .05$), and gender (*B* = 3.80, 95% *CI* (.104, 7.51) $p < .05$) were statistically significant predictors of life satisfaction. Similar results were found for Model 2.

After adding discharge type to Model 2, the adjusted R2 value of .446, $F(1,50) = 2.87$ revealed when all six independent variables were included in the analysis, they accounted for 44% of the variation in life satisfaction, which means that 56% of the variation in life satisfaction cannot be explained by the independent variables alone. The results of the analysis revealed that variables annual income (*B* = 2.88, 95% *CI* (.618, 5.15) $p < .05$), gender (*B* = 4.80, 95% *CI* (0.97, 8.63) $p < .05$), and marital status (*B* = 6.66, 95% *CI* (3.50, 9.82) $p < .05$) were predictors of life satisfaction. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states discharge type, age, gender, branch of service, employment status, income, and marital status are not predictors of life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS can be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis can be accepted.

A posthoc sensitivity using G *power software 3.1.9.2 for linear multiple regression: fixed model, R2 deviation from 0. The parameters used, alpha err prob (precision) = 0.05, power (1 – Beta err prob) = 0.8, total sample size = 57, number of predictors = 6. The calculated effect size *f* = 0.27 (small). Table 12 shows the regression on life satisfaction.

Table 12

Regression on Life Satisfaction

	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error	Beta
(Constant)	3.318	5.369		6.255	5.551	
Age	0.101	0.061	0.193	0.085	0.061	0.163
Gender	3.809	1.845	0.258	4.806	1.905	0.325
Employment status	-0.739	0.674	-0.126	-0.614	0.666	-0.105
Annual income	2.835	1.149	0.308	2.886	1.129	0.314
Marital status	6.958	1.592	0.47	6.66	1.573	0.45
Type of discharge				-3.215	1.897	-0.192
F			9.306			2.872
Df			5, 51			1, 50
R^2			0.477			0.505
R^2 Change (F)						0.028

Note. $N = 57$
*$p<.05$, **$p<.01$,
***$p<.001$

Summary

I found that there were no significant statistical differences in life satisfaction between voluntary and involuntary discharged service members. I also revealed that there were no significant statistical differences in life satisfaction scores between length of

service and voluntary and involuntary military discharge. Further, annual income, marital status, and gender were found to be statistically significant predictors of life satisfaction for both voluntary and involuntarily discharged service members.

Chapter 5 will include an introduction, interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess potential differences in life satisfaction scores between two groups: voluntary and involuntarily discharged service members. Further, the goal was to determine the associations of educational attainment, social support, and length of service has on discharged service members' life satisfaction. In Chapter 5, I explain the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future studies, implications, and summary. I found that higher perceived social support and annual income significantly increased life satisfaction scores of voluntary discharged service members.

Interpretation of the Findings

Service men and women who were discharged from their service career when they felt that they were ready to return to civilian life were considered voluntarily discharged. On the other hand, service members who were discharged due to budget cuts, point to service, medical discharge, or other circumstances where the service member did not desire to leave their service career and reenter civilian life were considered involuntarily discharged. In the statistical analysis, I found that there were no significant differences in life satisfaction scores between service members who were voluntary and those who were involuntarily discharged. Discharged type did not impact life satisfaction. Although I did not find any significant differences in life satisfaction, I found that life satisfaction scores for voluntarily discharged service members were slightly higher than involuntarily discharged service members. The results could have been due to the

difference between the group size voluntary (n = 141) and involuntary (n = 41), which will be discussed in the limitation section of this chapter.

Additionally, education did influence service members' life satisfaction after discharge. Voluntarily discharged service members with more education were more satisfied with life than service members who were involuntarily discharged with less education. The results of this study fit with Lee and Lee (2013) who found that higher education increased a person's income and his or her social economic status, thereby enhancing life satisfaction. Active duty service men and women who serve over 90 days in the military are given the GI bill to cover school tuition (Elliott, Gonzalez, & Larsen, 2011). Although this creates the availability for veterans to earn an education, Griffin and Gilbert (2009) and Ray and Heaslip (2011) agreed that there are often difficulties that service members face when returning to college. Some of the struggles veterans encounter when returning to school include not having anything in common with other students, creating a schedule to allow time for their classes, and traumas related to combat such as TBI or PTSD (Elliott et al., 2011). This adds to the body of literature addressing the need for service members to have an education prior to transiting out of the military. It will be crucial to educate service members and professionals who work with the military on the need to earn an education while on active duty opposed to after discharging from the military as it influences life satisfaction.

There were no differences found in life satisfaction between voluntarily discharged service members with more than 10 years of service and involuntarily discharged service members with fewer than 10 years of service life satisfaction. There is

limited research on how life satisfaction is affected by how long a person serves his or her country. This variable was included based on MacLean et al. (2014), who found length of service to be a factor that affected Canadian service members' adjustment upon returning to civilian life. This study differed from MacLean et al.'s study in that those service members who served fewer than 10 years in the military had higher suicide rates compared to service members who retired from the service.

Voluntarily discharged service members with more social support were found to have much higher life satisfaction scores ($M = 26.24$) compared to involuntarily discharged service members with less social support *(*$M = 17.29$). Social support is reported throughout the literature to increase life satisfaction across a variety of populations; however, there are limited studies on the effect of social support based on discharge type of U.S. discharged service members. MacLean et al. (2014) discussed that higher perceived social support before Canadian service members transitioned out of the military had increased resilience, and McGraw (2016) discussed that increased perceived social support of female combat veterans was found to influence their psychological wellbeing. I found that social support was a factor that significantly affected life satisfaction based on discharge type of U. S. service members. Increased social support does increase life satisfaction. Ray and Heaslip (2011) discussed that service members need to have increased interpersonal, social, and psychological support to ease the transition back into civilian life.

Income can enhance life satisfaction (Deaton, 2008). According to Diener and Diener (2002), people living in poverty who have a rise in income are more likely to

report increased happiness. Money is necessary to obtain all human essentials (food, shelter, clothing), as well as purchasing pleasurable things in life, such as cars or vacations. Money can also buy time like having someone to clean a house, cook meals, or do shopping (Mogilner, Whillans, & Norton, 2018), which can increase life satisfaction. According to Marum et al. (2013), final hardship is a predictor of decreased life satisfaction. Contrary to Marum et al., Diener and Diener (2002) pointed out that higher income can also create more stress. In this study, I found a that person's annual income was a predictor of life satisfaction.

Gender was a statistically significant predictor of life satisfaction in the regression analysis. The majority of the participants reported that they were female (n = 109) and male (n = 73). Schnurr and Linney (2008) conducted a quantitative study with a sample of Vietnam veterans (n = 358) diagnosed with PTSD. Schnurr and Linney reported that veterans diagnosed with PTSD had a tendency to report being less satisfied with life compared to people who had experienced a trauma but were not diagnosed with PTSD. Schnurr and Linney discussed that female veterans had increased probability of developing PTSD; however, contrary to the results of this study, Schnurr and Linney found no statistical differences in life satisfaction scores between men and women. Erbes, Meis, Polusny, and Compton (2011) examined how the symptoms of PTSD affect relationship adjustment of service members diagnosed with PTSD. Erbes et al. discussed that the participants who were diagnosed with PTSD reported higher stress levels and struggles adjusting in their intimate relationships. Erbes et al. found that female service members diagnosed with PTSD were more likely to experience difficulties in their

relationships compared to male service members. There is abundance of literature (Erbes et al., 2001; Schnurr & Linney, 2008) on the impact PTSD can have on veterans' life satisfaction. However, there is a lack of research on veterans' life satisfaction and gender differences. Because gender is a factor that influence life satisfaction of discharged service members, it is important to acknowledge and continue to research in future studies.

Ray and Heaslip (2011) discussed that when a veteran has a spouse who is supportive, it helps to comfort him or her during his or her transitional period from the military to civilian life. Worthern et al. (2012) stated that service members who have support from family and friends feel more satisfied with life. This study adds to the existing body of literature and confirms pervious scholars (Ray & Heaslip, 2011; Worthern et al., 2012) who showed that marital status was a predictor of life satisfaction. The majority of the participants reported that they were married (n = 111) compared to participants not married (n = 71). It may be likely that discharged service members who are married had higher life satisfaction scores because they had more social support opposed to a person who is single. This is an area to research further.

Limitations of the Study

After conducting this study, several limitations were identified. The first was the small sample size; a posthoc sensitivity using G power software 3.1.9.2 for means: difference between two independent means (two groups) was run for Research Question 1, looking at the sample of voluntary and involuntary discharge. The parameters used were tail(s) = 2, alpha err prob (precision) = 0.05, power (1 – Beta err prob) = 0.8, sample

size Group 1 = 139, and sample size Group 2 = 40. The calculated effect size $d = 0.51$ (medium). Although multiple strategies were used to recruit participants, the majority of the participants were obtained from Facebook. Only two people from Walden's participant pool and 11 people followed the link from the flyer to participate in the study. Therefore, my ability to analyze service members who do not participate on social media was limited. Due to this limitation, the results of this study cannot be generalized to the entire population of veterans across the United States.

In total, I collected data from ($n = 182$) voluntary ($n = 141$) and involuntarily ($n = 41$) discharged service members. I found that more service members were voluntarily discharged compared to involuntarily discharged, or it could be that involuntarily discharged service members may have had negative feelings and might not feel comfortable volunteering their information.

A person's mood can be affected by a number of reasons, such as a conflict with a friend or a poor test grade, which could affect the participants' responses on Diener et al.'s (1985) SWLS. The surveys in this study were all self-report questionnaires; therefore, the participants' responses were out of my control.

Recommendations

Contrary to the results of this study, previous scholars (Maclean et al., 2014) suggested that voluntarily discharged service members have a smoother transition to civilian life compared to involuntarily discharged service members. Maclean et al. (2014) discussed that involuntarily discharged Canadian service members struggled with lower income, suicidal ideations, and physical and psychological problems. Future studies on

life satisfaction between voluntary and involuntarily U. S. discharged service members using qualitative methods is recommended. Qualitative methods will allow participants provide descriptions of the factors that affect their life satisfaction. Prior scholars (Mansfild et al., 2011) recommended counseling before and after discharge to increase psychological wellbeing, and Schmidt (2011) recommended transition programs that also involve counseling and planning for the future to help prepare for civilian life. McGraw (2016) reported that perceived social support influences the psychological wellbeing of female veterans with combat exposure. According to Wisco et al. (2014), gender was found to be a risk factor of PTSD for service members who were exposed to a serious trauma. Robertson (2013) found gender to be a factor that influenced life satisfaction of service members during their transition from military to civilian life. It is recommended to further research on how and why gender effects discharged service members' life satisfaction.

Implications

Positive Social Change

I found the importance of social support and educational attainment for both voluntary and involuntarily discharged service members. Therefore, the positive social change implications of this study will be to educate service members preparing for discharge and professionals who primarily work with active duty and veterans. This study's findings can identify the importance of pursuing an education before leaving the military and to offer extra support to unmarried service members before and after military

separation. The potential impact for positive social change can improve life satisfaction of service members following discharge.

Theoretical

Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory was used to guide this study because of the challenges Schlossberg discussed that affect people when undergoing transitions in their life. The model did not discuss military to civilian transition specifically, but it did discuss changes from one career to another. The 4S's of Schlossberg's transition theory include situation, self, supports, and strategies. I found that educational attainment and social support were both factors that influenced life satisfaction of discharged service members after leaving their military career. Schlossberg's theory applied to this study, confirming that social support is needed to cope during transitions. Education and length of service can also be viewed as a coping mechanism to deal with change, and these factors can ease the transition from military to civilian life. This study contributes to Schlossberg's transition theory by adding to the existing literature on the effects that social support and educational attainment have on a population of discharged service members' life satisfaction after transitioning out of the military.

Methodological Design

The research method was designed to identify differences in life satisfaction scores between voluntarily and involuntarily discharged service members. I also wished to reveal if any of the independent variables (educational attainment, social support, or length of service) affected life satisfaction. This design allowed me to identify differences in life satisfaction scores and pinpoint the factors that predicted life satisfaction. This

study will contribute to positive social change and has the potential to increase discharged service members' overall wellbeing. Therefore, it is imperative to foster an awareness of the factors that influence life satisfaction and to educate service members, their families, and professionals who work with active duty and veterans of the variables that increase life satisfaction following discharge.

Conclusion

The U.S. military has discharged thousands of service members involuntarily over the last few years and plans to discharge thousands more in the upcoming years. Although I did not show that there was a significant difference in life satisfaction scores between voluntarily and involuntary military discharges, voluntarily discharged service members were slightly more satisfied with life compared to involuntarily discharged service members. Educational attainment, social support, gender, and annual income were shown to predict the life satisfaction of discharged service members. Therefore, it will be important to educate professionals and active duty service members of these factors before discharge as a preventative measure and to increase odds of enhancing life satisfaction.

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Appendix A: Facebook Pages

A link to the survey will be placed on the following Facebook pages:

-
- Military Vets Just For Fun
- Popular military News/Media Website
- Sailors against ERB
- Sailors Against Enlisted Retention Board (ERB) Community
- US Navy Salty Dogs
- Dav
- Veterans Advantage Cause
- U.S. Naval Academy Parent Community
- U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association & Foundation
- Veterans of Foreign Wars VFW
- American Legion Post 264 Lincoln, Ca.
- The Purple Heart Foundation
- The Tailhook Association
- Vets Helping Vets Organization
- Veterans United Network
- Murrieta Talk 24709
- Walden University PhD Student Led Dissertation Support Group
- Walden University PhD
- Kaplan University Psychology Club
- Murrieta Mommies
- Henson & Key Family
- My personal Facebook page (Scott Brunson, n.d.).
- Military Vets MCC

Appendix B: Flyers

Honorably Discharged Service Members Wanted!

Were you discharged honorably from one of the 4 branches of the United States military (Navy, Marines, Army, or Air force)?

Participants for a Research Study on the effect of education, length of service, and social support on life satisfaction of voluntary and involuntarily discharged service members. This research study is part of a requirement for Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Walden University.

We are looking for participants to take a short questionnaire and answer some questions about their life satisfaction. The survey will take between 5 and 7 minutes to complete.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5S8FLSG

Appendix C: Veteran Organizations in Southern California

Each of the organizations gave verbal permission to this researcher to advertise this current study to potential participants by hanging a flyer in their office.

- Veteran Community Services.
- The café on the bulletin board at 8810 Rio San Diego Dr. San Diego, CA 92108
- DAV in Mission Valley CA.
- DAV in Escondido CA.
- Paralyzed Vet American
- American Legion
- Purple Heart
- Veteran of Foreign Wars (VFW) in Temecula Ca.
- Cal state LA campus eellisr@calstatela.edu
- Eisenhower Medical Center, in Rancho Mirage Ca.

Appendix D: Demographic Questions

Age

Branch of service: Army Navy Marines Air Force

Gender: 1) Male 2) Female

How many years were you on active duty in the military?

Type of Discharge:
1) Honorable 2) Dishonorable

1) Voluntary 2) Involuntary

What year were you discharged?

Employment status: 1) Full time 2) Part time 3) unemployed 4) disability

Annual income 1.) $0-$20,000 2.) $20,000- $50,000 3.) Above $50,000

How many years of completed education have you received? For example, a 12for high school, 14 for AA/AS, 16 for BA/BS, 18 for MA/MS, or 20 for doctorate.

Marital status? Married Cohabitating (living together more than 1 year in a committed relationship) Separated Divorced Widowed Single

Do you have support from family, friends, or significant other? 1) Yes 2) no

Are you part of a support group? 1) Yes 2) No

How did you find out about this study? 1) Facebook 2) Flyer 3) Walden University participant pool

Appendix E: Permission to use the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

These scales are copyrighted by Ed Diener and his co-authors. The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) is in public domain, and may be used if proper citation is given. Although copyrighted, t he Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) and Flourishing Scale (FS) may be used as long as proper credit is given. **Permission is not needed to employ the scales and requests to use the scales will not be answered on an individual basis because permission is granted here (Diener & Smiley, 2009).**

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)

The SWLS is a short 5-item instrument designed to measure global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life. The scale usually requires only about one minute of a respondent's time. The scale is in the public domain and therefore 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 F: Permission to use the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

The MSPSS is free to use, researchers simply give credit to this following paper: Zimet G D, Dahlem NW, Zimet SG, Farley GK. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. Journal of Personality Assessment 1988;52:30 -41.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)

The MSPSS is a short 12-item instrument designed to measure perceived availability of support from family, friends, and significant other. The instrument uses a likert scale to rate each participant's responses.