

ABSTRACT

- VRC guides military connected student's (MCS) overall well-being throughout their college career and facilitate success throughout all domains
- 96% of students in higher education include military members, Veterans & their families (MCS)
- Program evaluation was aimed at studying the subpopulation of military connected children (dependents)
 - Examine the overall well-being of military-connected children on a college campus based on their utilization of services at the VRC.
- Sample consisted of 427 MCS, 161 participants were military connected children (38 %)
 - Instrumentation: 2019-2020 academic year satisfaction survey
 - no relationship found in the data between the well-being status and the utilization of services
 - relationship was found in the well-being status in the emotional/relational and social domains based on the frequency of visits to the VRC

INTRODUCTION

Veterans Resource Center (VRC)

- Led by other MCS volunteers & mission is creating a culture where all can feel connected to each other & the university
 - Encourages a sense of satisfaction personally, socially, academically, and professionally
- VRC services:
 - Veterans Ambassador Program (VAP): outreach activities
 - Titan Warrior Wellness Program (TWW): builds social/cultural community & comradery
 - Academic Support Services: helps shape professional goals
 - VA Processing & Certification Program: navigation of federal and state benefits/resources
 - Emergency Financial Assistance (EFA): financial assistance
 - Vet-Forward Program: professional development

Significance of Program Outcome Evaluation

- assess the impact that the various VRC programs have on the well-being status of military-connected children
- the difference in well-being status based on VRC program utilized

Purpose

- By evaluating the effect that the various programs have on the student's wellbeing, the overall impact and importance of this program will be evident

Program Evaluation Question

- What is the well-being status of military-connected children who use a college campus Veterans Resource Center (VRC)?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Challenges for MCS (dependents)

- Relational & Emotional Challenges
 - multiple deployments/duty relocations of caretaker cause lack of stabilization among the family unit (Hathaway et al., 2018; Riggs & Riggs, 2011)
 - Distress, attachment disturbances, externalized symptoms for mental health disorders (Hathaway et al., 2018; Riggs & Riggs, 2011)
 - combat stress, physical/psychological injuries, PTSD from the parent indirectly transferred onto the child as secondhand trauma (DeVoe et al., 2012; Hathaway et al., 2018)
- Community & Social Challenges
 - Schema of ideology of sacrifice & patriotism adopted (Hathaway et al., 2018; Riggs & Riggs, 2011)
 - larger community becomes a strong protective factor for overall wellbeing/quality of life due to a common shared goal by society (Mancini et al., 2015; Riggs & Riggs, 2011).

LITERATURE REVIEW CONTINUED

Evidence of Effectiveness

- Individual support
 - interventions promote self-efficacy and empower academic preparation that indirectly minimizes nonacademic stressors (Risberg et al., 2014; Williams-Klotz & Gansemer-Topf, 2018)
- Community perspective
 - On campus Veterans Resource Centers are community centric, focusing on family similarly to that of the military community (Heineman, 2016; Risberg et al., 2014; Williams-Klotz & Gansemer-Topf, 2018)

MATERIALS & METHODS

Research Design

- secondary quantitative data collected from the survey
- cross-sectional, non-randomized post-test design to measure the participation in VRC services and events
- convenient sampling was used
- response rate of 427 participants (16%)
- This program evaluation focused on the subpopulation of Military Connected children (dependents), N=161

Instrumentation

- 2019-2020 year-end assessment (web-based survey) that measured the demographics, utilization/satisfaction of services, and rates the overall well-being among the various students who utilized the VRC within the academic year 2019-2020
 - total of 11 sections of closed-ended questions w/some open-ended questions allowed participants to respond w/comments about specific programs @the VRC
- VRC assessment survey participants (2,645) comprised of military-connected students between the ages of 18 to 49 who provided data for the participation in various services and events offered by the VRC

Variables

- Demographics: military status, marital status, gender identity, ethnicity, age, and family size
- Independent Variables (utilization of College Campus VRC)
 - "VRC on campus services" and "Educational Benefits (GI Bill, Vocational Rehab, CalVet)"
 - Frequency in which the participant visited the VRC on the CSUF campus
- Dependent Variables (well-being status)
 - satisfaction with the VRC processing/certifying of federal/state education benefits
 - social well-being, focusing on sense of connectedness to the college campus, military culture and community
 - comfortability/confidence in professional and personal mindset about the future
 - transition to CSUF including financial stability
 - assessment of CSUF staff, administration, and the university

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

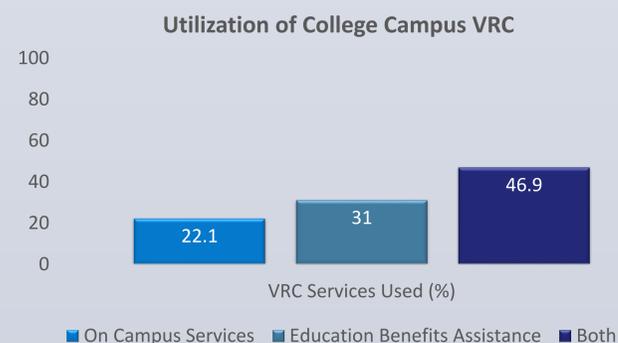
- N= 161 Military connected children, MCS
- Females MCS were the large majority (68.9%) as compared to males (30.1%)
- Largest ethnic group: Hispanic/Latinx (31.0%), followed by one or more ethnicities selected (21.5%)
- The majority of MCS reported to be between the ages of 21-29 (63.1%).
- 91.3% of the participants reported never married and the majority did not report having children.
- Independent variables
 - Most participants (46.9%) received both on campus services and education services
 - The frequency of those who visit the VRC is highest (40.9%) among those who attend once a semester

Inferential Statistics

- A chi-square test was calculated comparing the satisfaction levels of the participants based on the frequency of visits to the VRC for services
- No statistical significance was found in the relationships of specific services utilized and satisfaction level among any domain, therefore the hypothesis was inconclusive

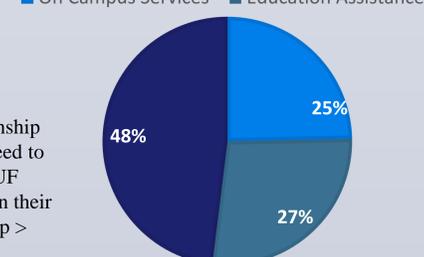
Non-Hypothesized Significant Statistical Relationship

- found among the frequency of visits to the VRC and satisfaction domains:
 - for those who visited the VRC once a semester,
 - 90% reported satisfied with the processing of federal/state benefits
 - 90% reported they were satisfied with the education benefits assistance.
 - For those who visited the VRC daily,
 - 80% socially felt connected to the CSUF campus
 - 100% felt a sense of belonging to the college campus as a whole
 - 100% felt supported by the administration and staff at CSUF.



- Clinically significant relationship found among those who agreed to feeling connected to the CSUF Campus community based on their utilization of these services, $p < 0.05$

AGREED TO FEELING CONNECTED TO CSUF CAMPUS COMMUNITY



DISCUSSION

Major Findings

- Relational Problems
 - Relationship found of students who felt a "sense of belonging to the CSUF campus" is consistent w/the frequency of visits to the VRC
 - Supports the need for this subpopulation to receive relational and emotional stabilization (Hathaway et al., 2018)
- Community & Social Challenges
 - 80% of the MCS who frequented the VRC daily reported they "felt connected to the CSUF campus community"
 - No clear relationship of which specific programs/services provided the sense of community as data was not clear
- Navigation of government/financial assistance
 - 100 % who frequented the VRC daily were satisfied with the VRC's processing/certifying of education benefits
 - Findings were not consistent with the satisfaction of MCS who utilized the education benefits services
- University/Staff Support
 - 100% of the MCS agreed that when they frequent the VRC daily, they feel the support from CSUF staff & administration
 - Need to understand/provide interventions that support/develop programs that cater to the 'military friendly' culture (Heineman, 2016; Risberg et al., 2014; Williams-Klotz & Gansemer-Topf, 2018)
 - Ideology of "completing the mission" will encourage values of determination, persistence, and motivation (Moon & Schma, 2011; Williams-Klotz & Gansemer-Topf, 2018)

Strengths and Limitations

- Strengths
 - Self-reported satisfaction structured around emotional, financial, academic, and social domains (well-being)
 - Inclusivity of the population that encompasses all subpopulations of the military-connected student community
- Limitations of the Instrumentation
 - Limited information provided by the open-ended question responses
 - Questions were not mutually exclusive, new variables were created
 - "Check all that apply" questions caused a discrepancy amongst values allotted to the data analysis
 - Contingency questions were skipped, follow up questions went unanswered, no utilization of services were properly captured
- Recommendations
 - Restructure the survey to mutually exclusive options per each question
 - Develop a survey that evaluates program utilization
 - Create separate satisfaction surveys for this subpopulation

IMPLICATION FOR FUTURE STUDIES

- Develop a survey that will evaluate program effectiveness
- Initiate additional program evaluations that focus on connectedness to the University based on specific services utilized

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