

Perceived Job demands during military deployment: What soldiers say in Afghanistan

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Military deployment is inherently demanding and military organizations have to prepare their personnel for a broad range of operational demands. So far, it remains unclear how perceptions of operational demands differ between distinct military units. Using a cross-sectional design, this study explored operational demands during the International Security Assistance Force for Afghanistan (2009-2010). A total of 1413 Dutch soldiers, nested within four types of units (i.e. combat-, combat support-, service support-, and command support units) filled out a 23-item self-survey in which they were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceived an item as demanding. Exploratory factor analysis identified 6 underlying dimensions of demands. Kruskal Wallis tests, followed up by post-hoc tests, were performed to determine between-group differences. What that was perceived as most demanding during deployment differed between the four types of units. Most notable findings are that combat units and combat support units reported the highest demands from powerlessness and ambiguity, whereas boredom and isolation on the other hand, was most pronounced for medical support- and command support units. These insights can be used in developing new training and support systems that help military personnel deal with and adapt to a broad range of operational demands.