Parenting Practices, Child Adjustment, and Family Diversity


**SUMMARY:** The associations between parenting practices and child outcomes are well documented, however, the generalizability of the association across different race/ethnicity, family structure, education, gender, and family income is still unknown. The study examined the issue in two age groups: 5-11 years (wave one) and 12-18 years (wave two), and results supported the notion that optimal parenting did not vary across family contexts.

**KEY FINDINGS:**
- Parents’ report of support and avoidance of harsh parenting in wave one were associated with children’s better adjustment, higher school grades, higher self-esteem, and fewer problem behaviors in waves one and two.
- Parental monitoring at wave one predicted less adolescent deviance in wave two.
- Effective parenting practices can be generalized across a range of social context such as race/ethnicity, family structure, and family income.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:**
Military professionals could:
- Educate military parents about best practices in parenting
- Reach out to military families that are struggling with parenting issues, and offer assistance with their parenting problems

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:**
Programs could:
- Design workshops and curricula for military parents to improve their parenting practice
- Host peer support groups for military parents to provide each other support regarding difficult parent experiences

**IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:**
Policies could:
- Raise awareness of the importance of good parenting (e.g., sufficient support, monitoring, avoidance of harsh punishment) on military youth’s well-being
- Continue to support parent education programs for military families

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.

www.reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu
METHODS
- The data used in the study were part of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH).
- Families were assessed at two time points: wave one (1987-88) and wave two (1992-94); about 22% of families dropped out of the analysis between each data collection.
- Parents were interviewed in wave one regarding their parenting practices, child behaviors, and children's school success; youth between 10 and 17 years old were interviewed in wave two about their school grades, self-esteem, and deviant behaviors.

PARTICIPANTS
- The sample included 3,400 families with children between 5 and 18 years old.
- The average ages of the children at wave one and wave two were 7.83 years (SD = 1.97, 49% male) and 15.14 years (SD = 1.99), respectively.
- The majority of the participants were White (N = 2,329), followed by Black (N = 680), Latino (N = 221), and other (N = 170).

LIMITATIONS
- Other dimensions of parenting, such as support for autonomy, were omitted from the study, so the scope of the study may be limited.
- The interviews used in the study were not designed to measure parenting practices comprehensively, which limits the strength of the measurements.
- Other race/ethnicity groups, such as Asian-Americans, were not included in the study, which limits the ability to generalize the results.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH
Future research could:
- Examine the relationship between other dimensions of parenting (e.g., democratic control) with children's outcomes
- Recruit families from additional racial backgrounds to increase the generalizability of the study
- Use a comprehensive battery of parenting inventory to have a strong measurement of parenting

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS
Design: Appropriate
Methods: Appropriate
Limitations: Few

For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works