

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Associations of Contextual Risk and Protective Factors with Fathers' Parenting Practices in the Postdeployment Environment

Davis, L., Hanson, S. K., Zamir, O., Gewirtz, A. H., & DeGarmo, D. S. (2015). Associations of contextual risk and protective factors with fathers' parenting practices in the postdeployment environment *Psychological Services, 12*(3), 250-260. doi:10.1037/ser0000038

SUMMARY: Post-deployed fathers' who served in the National Guard and Reserves, involvement and effective parenting were examined. Pre-intervention data were used from fathers participating in the After Deployment, Adaptive Parenting Tools (ADAPT) randomized control trial. Parenting practices were obtained from direct observation of father-child interaction and included measures of problem solving, harsh discipline, positive involvement, encouragement, and monitoring.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Higher levels of National Guard and Reserves families' income were associated with higher levels of effective parenting.
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- Younger National Guard and Reserves parents demonstrated more effective parenting than older parents.
- Risk and protective factors were associated with prosocial parenting domains of positive involvement and skill encouragement.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Develop cost-effective high quality short term child care options for military families with a deployed family member
- Offer post-deployment programs to support and foster strong father-child relationships
- Provide programs for deployed fathers that focus on effective parenting strategies

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend education of child care and after-school providers on the possible effects of parent-child relationships during deployment and post-deployment
- Encourage awareness among psychological providers on protecting crucial parenting functions to strengthen the next generation of military families
- Develop an awareness campaign around military dads and parenting

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METHODS

- This study examined a subset of data from a larger longitudinal prevention study that included 336 families with 282 families having deployed fathers.
- The randomly assigned treatment group (60% of families) received the ADAPT parenting program. The other 40% of families received the usual services.
- Study measures included the Life Events Questionnaire, Deployment Risk and Resilience Inventory, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) Checklist, Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Parenting Support Index, and observations of fathers' parenting practices.
- Path regression analyses using structural equation modeling examined the hypothesized risk and protective factors' association to domains of father's parenting.

PARTICIPANTS

- Eligibility criteria included having a child between age 4-12 years and one parent who had deployed to the current conflicts.
- Participants were fathers (n = 282), 87.6% of whom were married, 89% of whom were White, and almost 50% completed at least their bachelor's degree.
- Most (60.3%) participants were deployed with the Army National Guard, 12.1% with the Army Reserves, and 9.9% with the Air National Guard.

LIMITATIONS

- Due to this being a cross-sectional study direct linkages between measures cannot be inferred.
- The sample was limited to National Guard and Reserves families with school-age children; therefore, not representative of the entire military population.
- Generalizability is limited to other military populations due the focus on the National Guard and Reserves population.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Replicate the study with a more diverse (i.e. race and branch) group of military and civilian families
- Explore different aspects of the deployed father-child relationship within military families
- Address the long-term effects on father-child relationships post-deployment

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