

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Deterrents to Participation in Parenting Education

Johnson, D. C., Harrison, B. C., Burnett, M. F., & Emerson, P. (2003). Deterrents to participation in parenting education. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 31(4), 403-424. doi:10.1177/1077727X03251075

SUMMARY: While many parenting education programs have been shown to improve parenting skills and behaviors, programs often have difficulty getting parent participation. This study surveyed parents of children in daycare about demographic information and deterrents to participating in parent education. Findings suggest some demographic factors may relate to the five identified parent education deterrents.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The most commonly reported reasons for not participating in parenting education opportunities were trouble finding childcare, being unaware of opportunities, and inconvenient times offered.
- Five themes of deterrents to parent education were identified (i.e., lack of parent confidence, lack of relevance, parent personal problems, pragmatic concerns, time concerns).
- Parents who were Black, unemployed, or had lower levels of education or income were more likely to report factors related to a lack of confidence as deterrents to parent education.
- Time was a large deterrent for parents with more children and older children, while personal problems were a bigger deterrent for unemployed and low-income parents.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with programs for military families to inform parents of available parenting education opportunities and promote participation
- Attend workshops about deterrents to parent education specific to military families in order to enhance their ability to provide more accessible programs to military parents

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Disseminate information to military families to increase parenting self-efficacy and decrease confidence concerns about attending parenting education opportunities
- Offer childcare and transportation to military families attending parent education classes

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Promote the development of online parenting education programs to allow military parents to participate with reduced concerns related to transportation, time, and childcare
- Recommend education for providers working with military families regarding the associations between demographic factors and parent education participation

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METHODS

- Families were recruited from daycare facilities in a rural Southeastern United States county.
- Seven of 18 eligible daycare facilities agreed to mail surveys to families, and 112 of the 249 families randomly selected to receive surveys responded (45% response rate).
- A parent from each family completed a survey regarding demographic information and deterrents to participating in parenting education opportunities.
- Associations between demographic variables and parent education deterrents were examined.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included 112 parents, who were 95% female and had an average age of 30.2 years.
- Parents identified as 51% White, 44% Black, 3% Latino, 2% Native American, and 1% Asian-American.
- Parents reported relatively low levels of education (23% less than a high school degree, 51% high school degree, 26% college degree), employment (34% unemployed, 16% employed part-time, 51% employed full-time), and income (52% less than \$15,000 per year total income).

LIMITATIONS

- Participants had relatively low levels of employment, education, and income, and results may not generalize to the larger population of parents of young children.
- Response rates were low, and parents who responded may differ from parents who did not, particularly in regards to levels of program participation.
- Mostly females responded, and male parents may differ in their deterrents to parent education.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Compare differences in deterrents to parent education between male and female caregivers
- Examine reported deterrents to parent education and actual program participation rates to understand which reported barriers are most predictive of non-participation
- Investigate parent education program participation rates with and without childcare and transportation provided by the program

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