

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Maternal Emotion Regulation: Links to Emotion Parenting and Child Emotion Regulation

Morelen, D., Shaffer, A., & Suveg, C. (2014). Maternal emotion regulation: Links to emotion parenting and child emotion regulation. *Journal of Family Issues*, 35, 26-Jan. doi:10.1177/0192513X14546720

SUMMARY: Mother-child dyads participated in a self-report and observational study examining the associations between mothers' emotional regulation, parenting behaviors, and children's emotion regulation. Observed maternal emotion regulation was negatively associated with unsupportive parenting. Self-reported maternal emotion dysregulation was positively associated with unsupportive parenting and child emotion dysregulation.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Maternal emotion regulation (as reported by the mother) was negatively associated with unsupportive parenting.
- Maternal emotion dysregulation was positively associated with unsupportive parenting and with child emotion dysregulation.
- Maternal emotion dysregulation was negatively associated with child adaptive emotion regulation.
- Parenting behavior partially mediated the link between maternal emotional regulation and child emotion regulation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Facilitate support groups for military mothers struggling with emotional regulation
- Collaborate with other professionals in the field regarding ways to promote emotional regulation and supportive parenting among military parents

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer parenting classes focused on developing military parents emotion regulation skills
- Offer support groups to help military parents cope with parenting-related stress

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support parenting programs for Service members and their families
- Encourage professional development for service providers working with military families regarding implementing empirically supported parenting interventions

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METHODS

- Newspaper advertisements were used to recruit families where English was the primary language and the caregiver had lived with the child for the previous two years.
- The dyads were videotaped while completing four sequential interaction tasks (discussing conflicts they have); interactions were coded by researchers.
- Mothers completed questionnaires about their emotion regulation, parenting behavior, and their child's emotion regulation. Children completed a questionnaire about emotion regulation.

PARTICIPANTS

- Sixty-four mother-child dyads participated; the majority of families were Black (52%) or White (41%).
- The majority of children were female (59%) and the average age was 9.50 years (SD = 1.04 years).
- Most participants (92%) identified as the biological mother of the child; 44% were married or cohabitating and 36% were never married.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample consisted primarily of Black and White dyads; the findings may not generalize to other ethnic groups.
- The data are cross-sectional, and therefore causal conclusions are not appropriate.
- Composite scores of parenting were used; subscale scores would allow for a more nuanced description of the findings.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Investigate parental characteristics associated with supportive parenting behaviors among military families
- Examine how paternal emotional regulation influences child emotional regulation and coping
- Examine the effectiveness of parenting programs offered to military families aimed at enhancing parental emotional regulation skills

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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