

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Factors Influencing a Health Promoting Lifestyle in Spouses of Active Duty Military

Padden, D. L., Connors, R. A., Posey, S. M., Ricciardi, R., & Agazio, J. G. (2013). Factors influencing a health promoting lifestyle in spouses of Active Duty military. *Health Care for Women International*, 34(8), 674-693.
doi:10.1080/07399332.2012.736572

SUMMARY: Health-promoting activities are important for individuals' well-being. Female military spouses completed surveys about their lifestyles in order to examine factors that influence female military spouses' participation in health-promoting activities. Results revealed that social support, stress level, perceived health status, and self-efficacy were all related with female military spouses' health-promoting activities.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Perceived health status, self-efficacy, social support, and participation in health-promoting behaviors were all positively associated with each other and negatively associated with perceived stress.
- Military spouses who perceived lower level of stress and higher level of social support were more likely to participate in health-promoting behaviors.
- Compared to White military spouses, those who were not White were more likely to have lower scores in physical activity, nutrition, and social support.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Educate military spouses about ways to increase their health-promoting activities
- Disseminate information to military spouses regarding resources that may reduce their stress levels and increase their social support
- Develop online modules that teach effective relationship building strategies for Service members and their spouses, especially during deployment

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage the development and continuation of programs that promote well-being of military spouses
- Develop an awareness campaign on military bases regarding health-promoting activities and how high stress levels may reduce such activities
- Recommend training for professionals working with military spouses regarding the unique factors that contribute to military spouses' well-being (e.g., perceived stress, social support)

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.



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- Participants were recruited by posting advertisements at a military primary care facility.
- Participants were surveyed regarding their perceived health status, perceived stress, self-efficacy, social support, and participation in health-promoting behaviors (e.g., spiritual growth, nutrition).
- Data were analyzed to examine the relationship between perceived health status, perceived stress, self-efficacy, social support, and participation in health-promoting behaviors.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 112 female spouses of Active Duty Service members and the average age of the sample was 33.5 years (SD = 7.79).
- Most participants were White (65%), followed by Black (22%), Latino (8%), Asian American (2%), and others (3%).
- The military branches that participants' spouses served in were Army (53%), Navy (19%), Air Force (20%), Marines (3%), and Coast Guard (5%).

LIMITATIONS

- Participants were all female military spouses, so results of the study may not be generalized to male military spouses.
- Participants were all recruited from a medical clinic, which represents an increased likelihood that they have poorer health compared to a non-clinical sample and may not reflect the broader population of military spouses.
- The cross-sectional design of the study made it impossible to investigate the causal relationship between perceived stress and health-promoting activities.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Include both male and female military spouses so that the results can be better generalized to the broader population of military spouses
- Conduct longitudinal studies to explore the potential causal relationships between stress and health-promoting activities
- Examine other factors (e.g., number of children, education level) that may influence military spouses' health-promoting activities

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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