

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Military Deployment and Elementary Student Achievement

Phelps, T., Dunham, M., & Lyons, R. (2010). Military deployment and elementary student achievement. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 33(4), 37-52. Retrieved from <http://www.erquarterly.org/>

SUMMARY: Service members' deployment can potentially influence their children's academic performance. This study assessed the TerraNova test scores of 137 fourth and fifth graders who were dependents of Active Duty Service members in 2006 and 2007. Results indicated that deployment had a negative effect on some children's academic performance but not on others.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Fourth graders (but not fifth graders) with a deployed parent scored lower in the 2007 TerraNova test than fourth graders whose parents did not deploy.
- All students' TerraNova results were within with the national normative range.
- Female students with a deployed parent scored lower than male students who also had a parent deployed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide outreach services that increase awareness of available supports to children with a deployed parent
- Offer academic help and fun activities for children of Service members in order to increase children's physical health, academic performance, and social-emotional development
- Provide parenting classes for Service members and their spouses to increase their parenting skills, especially during deployment

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend that children with a deployed parent be offered additional support as needed (e.g., tutoring, home visits) to improve their academic performance
- Encourage the development of workshops that teach Service members and military spouses how to offer their children additional academic support during deployment
- Recommend professional development for professionals working with children of Service members to better understand the unique stressors they have

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

- Students were recruited from two elementary schools; the method of recruitment was not reported. To be eligible for the study students had to be the dependents of Active Duty Service members.
- Students received the TerraNova test in 2006 and 2007. The TerraNova test included reading, language, math, science, social studies, and spelling sub-tests.
- Students were divided into two groups based on whether or not they had a deployed parent during the study period, and the TerraNova test scores were compared between the two groups.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 137 fourth (n = 87) and fifth (n = 50) graders who were dependents of Active Duty Service members; the average age of the students was not reported.
- Most students (60%) were male, and the majority of students were White (62%), followed by Black (26%), Latino (7%), and other (5%).
- The military service branches that the students' parents served in were not indicated.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample was recruited from two elementary schools on one military base; therefore, caution must be taken to generalize the results to other military bases.
- Certain confounding variables, such as students' socioeconomic status, were not controlled, which may potentially threaten the validity of the study.
- The military service branches that the students' parents served in were not specified, so it is hard to generalize the results to all military branches.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Recruit students from various schools in different military bases to increase the generalizability of the study
- Explore how socioeconomic status may influence the association between parental deployment and students' academic performance
- Examine the effect of parental deployment on children's other outcomes (e.g., mental health, social-emotional development)

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>