

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Civilian

## The Longitudinal Effects of After-School Program Experiences, Quantity, and Regulatable Features on Children's Social-Emotional Development

Wade, C. E. (2015). The longitudinal effects of after-school program experiences, quantity, and regulatable features on children's social-emotional development. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 48(1), 70-79.  
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**SUMMARY:** Experiences of 298 children in after-school programs were examined as predictors of social-emotional functioning from first-fifth grade. Results indicated changes in after-school program experiences positively predicted changes in self-control and changes in child-to-caregiver ratios predicted children's after-school program experiences and levels of social-emotional development.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Changes in after-school program experiences positively predicted changes in self-control, but only for boys.
- Children's relationship with their caregiver predicted an increase in social-emotional functioning.
- Fewer externalizing behavior problems existed in children when their relationship was more positive with their after-school program caregiver than when the relationship was more strained.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Examine ways to create positive and personalized relationships with the children involved in these programs
- Collaborate with organizations connected with military parents to emphasize the importance of after-school programming for all families

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Implement a small child-to-staff ratio to enable staff to better support children's social-emotional development and the overall relationship
- Create workshops for military parents to learn about what they can do in the home to promote positive self-control and social-emotional functioning

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Promote and support the use of outside informational sessions and/or materials on best practices for military families and after-school programming
- Recommend that professionals who work with military families increase out-of-school programs on installations

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## METHODS

- Participants were recruited via random sampling method through the Early Child Care Research Network.
- Family income, maternal partner status, and maternal hours of employment were collected when children were in the first, third, fourth, and fifth grades.
- Data analyses were conducted on child-caregiver relationship, social skills, after-school caregiver intake, quantity of after-school program care, and child behavior.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Children (N = 298) who were involved in after-school programs within first-fifth grade were included in the study.
- Participants were recruited after birth from local hospitals.
- Children sampled were White, Black, or Latino. The study did not provide a percentage breakdown for participants. Percentages for gender breakdown were not given in this study.

## LIMITATIONS

- Due to the correlational study, causal relationships cannot be inferred.
- Participants were selected only from hospitals in cities and information on the nature of the cities were not provided, which limits the context within which to interpret and apply the results.
- Study did not explain or include a rationale as to why researchers examined solely maternal characteristics in relation to parent-child relationships.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Provide a sample comparison between rural and urban after-school programs to better understand any differences that exist amongst the two settings
- Include analysis and information about a variety of family structures to gain insight on multiple familial influences
- Explore impact of out-of-school activity participation on social-emotional outcomes in adulthood

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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