

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Geographic Relocation Frequency, Resilience, and Military Adolescent Behavior

Weber, E., & Weber, D. (2005). Geographic relocation frequency, resilience, and military adolescent behavior. *Military Medicine*, 170(7), 638-642. doi:10.7205/MILMED.170.7.638

SUMMARY: This study evaluated parental perceptions of the effects of multiple relocations on military adolescent behavior by using an augmented subset of questions from the National Health Interview Survey on Child Health. The adolescent behavior measured included behavior problems (as measured by the Behavioral Problems Index) and academic adjustment (as measured by psychological evaluation, school problems, and school suspension).

KEY FINDINGS:

- The majority of parents (75%) thought that relocations were advantageous to their children. Consistent with this belief, parental reports of behavioral problems decreased as the frequency of relocations increased.
- As the children experienced a greater frequency of moves, they had improved behavior, when controlling for age.
- No significant differences between low and high relocation groups were reported for three of the four objective measures of school problems (suspensions, repeated grades, and psychological evaluations).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Include information for parents and children on the potential effects of relocation on child behavior problems and resilience
- Incorporate content targeted to build resilience among youth, given that relocation may be associated with adverse outcomes for some youth
- Consider developing and implementing activities that engage families who have relocated in order to integrate them into program offerings and connect them with neighborhood resources and supports

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage screenings for children who attend schools on military installations and are experiencing their first relocations to identify those who may need additional services or support
- Recommend military parents enroll in workshops to learn strategies on how they can help their children adjust to relocation
- Promote the development of structured leisure activities for military families at installations who recently relocated

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METHODS

- Families who attended secondary schools that received Military Impact Aid (i.e., supplemental federal funds allocated to schools with a large proportion of military attendees) were contacted and invited to participate in a mailed survey.
- Families at four secondary schools from geographically separate regions of the United States were recruited for the study.
- Based on parents' reports, children were placed into one of four groups based on the number of moves they have experienced in their lifetime: zero to two, three or four, five or six, and more than seven.

PARTICIPANTS

- One hundred seventy-nine parents provided survey data on the behavior of their children (55% were female) who were between the ages of 13 and 19 years old ($M = 15.8$, $SD = 1.21$).
- Families represented the following service branches: Army (40%), Navy (31%), Air Force (27%), and Marine Corps (2%).
- No other demographic information was provided.

LIMITATIONS

- The study's conclusions, based on a non-random, self-selected sample, may not be representative of the larger military population.
- The low response rate (51%) is not explained, and non-response may limit the generalizability of the findings.
- The reliability and validity of some non-standardized measures used in the study have not been established, perhaps causing some effects to appear non-significant.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine the long term effects of frequent relocations longitudinally, with a focus on children's developmental milestones
- Explore if multiple relocations impact outcomes (e.g., academic achievement, behavioral functioning) differently among younger children than among older children
- Develop assessment measures that allow children and youth, not just their parents, to answer questions about their perceptions on how multiple relocations impact various outcomes

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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