

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

The Relationship of Military Imposed Marital Separations on Maternal Acceptance of Pregnancy

Weis, K. L., Lederman, R. P., Lilly, A. E., & Schaffer, J. (2008). The relationship of military imposed marital separations on maternal acceptance of pregnancy. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 31(3), 196-207. doi:10.1002/nur.20248

SUMMARY: Pregnant women eligible for care on military bases completed questionnaires about deployment, community support, and conflict related to acceptance of pregnancy at three time points during pregnancy. Community support and deployment had significant effects on acceptance of pregnancy. Parental presence and community support are important for pregnancy acceptance during deployment.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Women whose husband or partner were deployed reported a significant increase in the conflict associated with acceptance of pregnancy across all trimesters.
- Women who received more emotional support from their community network had greater acceptance of their pregnancy in all trimesters.
- In the third trimester, women who identified the source of emotional support as an on-base network had greater acceptance of pregnancy than women who identified their source of support as a off-base network.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Create on-base support networks for women experiencing pregnancy, particularly for those whose husband or partner is deployed
- Offer classes for healthcare professionals serving pregnant women affiliated with the military about emotional support and acceptance of pregnancy
- Compile and offer available resources lists for pregnant women on military bases

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage the development of on-base support networks for pregnant women of Service members
- Continue to support programs that offer services to pregnant women of deployed Service members
- Recommend that pregnant women be assessed for acceptance of pregnancy and self-esteem during Service members deployment

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METHODS

- Participants were recruited during obstetrical orientation classes from September 2002 to April 2003.
- The study included pregnant women between 18-35 years receiving prenatal care at one of four military treatment facilities that serve Air Force, Army, and Navy families.
- Pregnant women were surveyed at their first pregnancy appointment, in the second trimester of pregnancy, and in the third trimester.

PARTICIPANTS

- Four hundred twenty-one pregnant women eligible for care in the military medical system participated in this study.
- The military branch of pregnant women included, 56% Non-Active Duty, 34% Air Force, 5% Army, 4% Navy, and 1% Other.
- The majority of women were White (62%) or Latino/Latina (21%), and had an average age of 27 years (SD = 4.5 years).

LIMITATIONS

- The sample was composed of primarily White women and may not be generalizable to women of other race/ethnicities.
- Women were recruited from installations with a training emphasis; stress experienced by families on these bases may be different from that of other bases.
- All data were self-report which may introduce biases.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Consider accounting for other variables that may be related to acceptance of pregnancy, such as length of deployment, length of relationship, and ethnicity
- Examine other characteristics of support networks (e.g., size) in relation to acceptance of pregnancy
- Explore Service members' acceptance of pregnancy in addition to women's perceptions

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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