

Well-being of Adolescents in Military Families: Examining the Intersections of Resilience and Vulnerability

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Modeling the Contributions of Extracurricular Activity and Social Support to the Well-being of Youth from Military Families

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Hypotheses

1. Participation in extracurricular programs is positively associated with adolescents' perceived level of social support.
2. Participation in extracurricular programs is associated with positive well-being .
 - A) Participation (Y/N) → Positive Well-being
3. Social support mediates the relationships in Hypothesis 2.



Theory

- The Relationship Functions Framework
 - stems from Weiss' (1974) social provisions
 - emphasizes the connection between social interaction and psychological well-being (Mancini & Blieszner, 1992)
 - encompasses both the functions of social networks as well as the consequences of relational deficits as people experience change and transition
 - resonates with adolescents from military families who frequently experience change in close relationships within a mobile military family unit



Measures

Participation

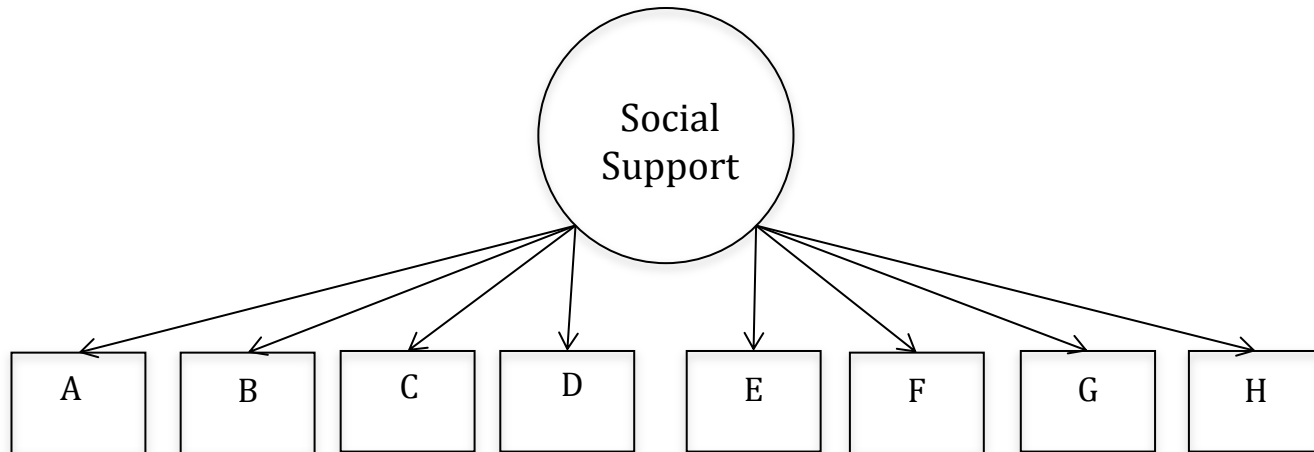
- Measured dichotomously (Y/N); Did you participate in any program or activity on- or off-post?
- Measured again, but as to whether the participant participated in certain types of activities (e.g. Fine Arts, Sports & Health, Life Skills and Citizenship, or Academic)

Well-being

- Depression (CES-D): “I was bothered by things that usually don’t bother me.” (Weissman et al., 1980)
- Anxiety (SCARED-R): “I worry about being as good as other kids.” (Sherer et al., 1982)
- Self-efficacy (G-SES): “If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it.” (Muris et al., 1999)



Social Support



A Other people do not think I am good at what I do.

B I do not think other people respect my skills and abilities.

C There are people who recognize my skills and abilities.

D There is no one that likes the things I do.

E There are people who enjoy the same social activities I do.

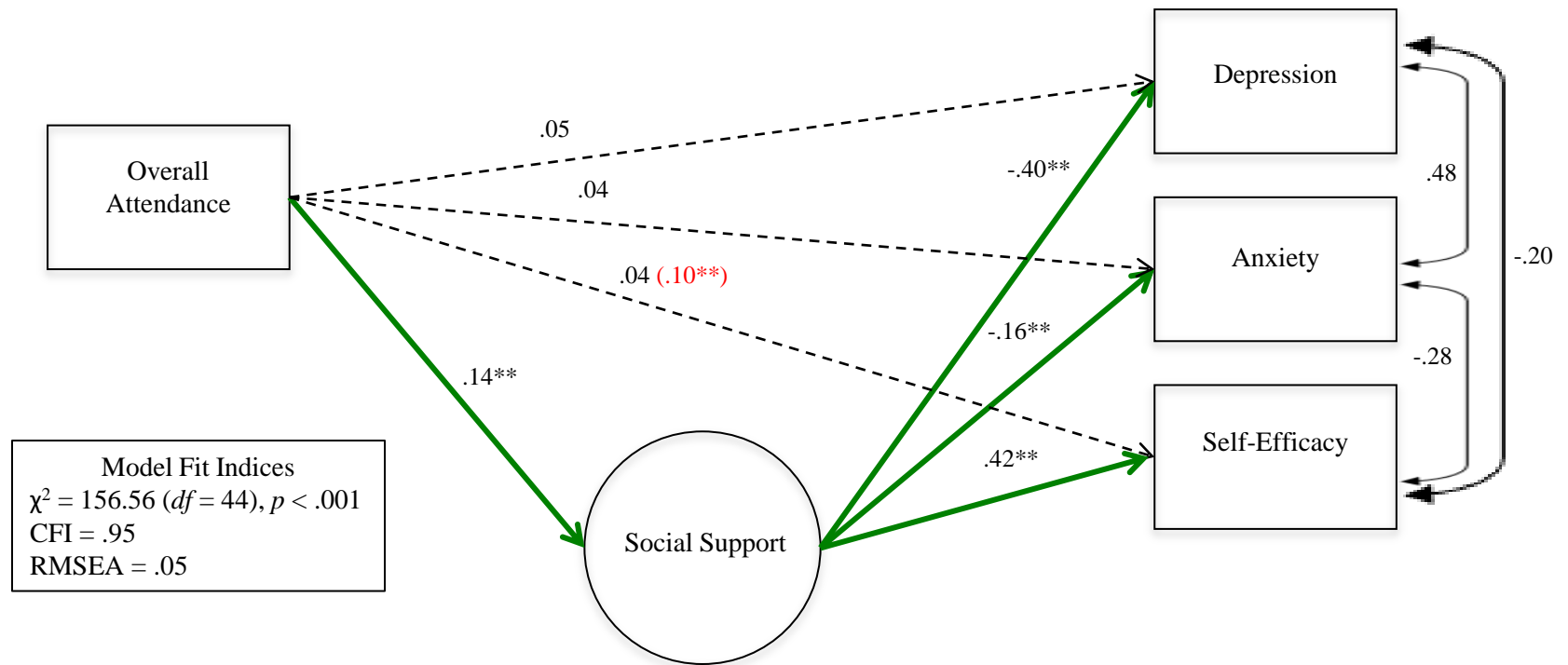
F I feel part of a group of people who share my attitudes and beliefs.

G There is no one who shares my interests and concerns.

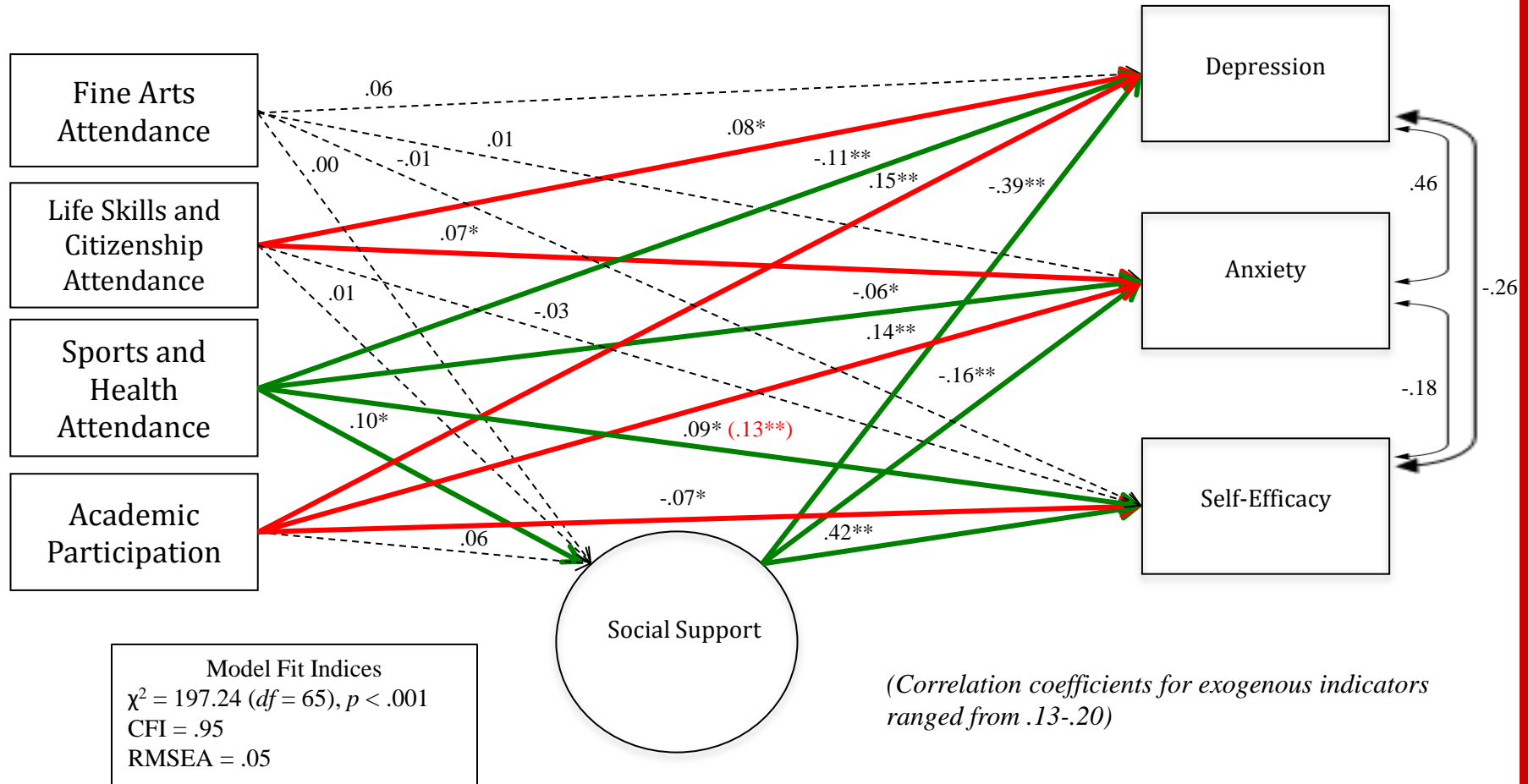
H I have relationships where my abilities and skills are recognized.



Findings: The Overall Attendance Model



Findings: The Stratified Attendance Model



Discussion

- Is ECA associated with Social Support?
 - Overall, ECA participation was related to higher perceived social support, but...
 - Sports & Health programs were the only type related to higher social support.
 - Partially mediated the pathway between ECA and Sports & Health
 - Bolsters extent research on physical activity and social support (e.g. Chaoqun et al., 2012; Hayashi, 1998; Kleiber & Roberts, 1987; O'Connor & Jose, 2012)



Support for Hypotheses			
(NS-Not Supported, PS-Partially Supported, S-Supported)			
	NS	PS	S
Hypothesis 1: Participation in extracurricular activities positively influences military adolescents' perceived level of social support.	?	X	?
Hypothesis 2: Participation in extracurricular activities positively influences military adolescents' well-being, conceptualized in this study as levels of depressive symptoms, anxiety, and self-efficacy.	?	X	?
2a: Youth who participate in at least one program will have higher self-efficacy and fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety than those who do not participate in at least one activity.	?	X	?
2b: Youth who participate in Fine Arts, Life Skills and Citizenship, Sports and Health, and/or Academic programs will have higher self-efficacy and fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety than those who do not.	?	X	?
Hypothesis 3: Participation in extracurricular programs indirectly positively influences military adolescents' well-being through the mediating effect of social support.	?	X	?



Discussion

- Is ECA related to Well-being?
 - Attendance in programs → Higher efficacy
 - Only Sports & Health programs → Positive Well-being
 - Supports extant research on protective effects of sports participation against depression and anxiety (Babiss & Gangwisch, 2009; Johnson & Taliaferro, 2011; Strong et al., 2005) and to aid in promoting efficacy (Larson, 2000).
 - Life Skills & Citizenship and Academic participation → Higher anxiety and depression
 - “Play- like” (Kleiber & Roberts, 1978) vs. work-like activities
 - Does Social Support Contribute?
 - One pathway fully mediated (Overall Attendance & Efficacy)
 - One pathway partially mediated (Sports & Health Attendance & Efficacy)
- ***Missing link(s) between ECA and WB
- Without the indirect influence of social support, well-being may have even been *reduced* by participation, perhaps revealing relative incompetence within the activity.



Symposium Summary

- All vulnerabilities are not equal
- Resist equating change with decline
- Going against the grain
 - Counter-intuitive interactive effects
- Risk leads to poor outcomes but can be altered by social relationships
- Family structure as a vulnerability
- The influence of formal programs on child outcomes appears to operate through the provision of social support



Future Considerations

- Measurement
 - Conceptualizing how youth spend their time
- Practical points of intervention
 - Family support
 - Ties or connection to others outside the home
 - Involvement in programs and engagement in community activities

