



Influences on Job Search Self-Efficacy of Spouses of Enlisted Military Personnel

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	1
Introduction.....	2
A Model of Job Search Self-Efficacy.....	4
Self-Efficacy and Job Search Behavior	4
Potential Antecedents of JSSE.....	4
Theory and Hypotheses	6
Factors Directly Influencing JSSE.....	6
Characteristics Influencing CCC	8
Employment Assistance Programs and JSSE	9
Methods.....	10
Sample.....	10
Analysis and Results	11
Discussion.....	19
References.....	23

ABSTRACT

In this study we examined the influence of employment status, family characteristics, childcare conflict (CCC), and employment assistance programs on job search self-efficacy (JSSE) of 6411 spouses of enlisted military personnel. Structural equation modeling indicated that the number of children five years of age or younger, annual income, and spouses' perceived family financial situation, all positively predicted CCC. Furthermore, annual income and financial situation also positively influenced JSSE, while CCC negatively predicted JSSE. We also found that employment status and education level significantly predicted spouses' JSSE. Additionally, the use of employment assistance programs was found to increase spouses' JSSE even after considering the above factors. Limitations and future research directions are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

While some research has examined the relationship between self-efficacy and job search behavior (Saks, & Ashforth, 2000; Eden & Aviram, 1993) factors influencing job search self-efficacy (JSSE) have been relatively under-explored. In particular, no work has looked at the relationship between job seeking self-efficacy and work-family issues. Nowhere is this issue potentially more relevant than for those families that have one parent enlisted in the military while the other is trying to maintain a career in the civilian world (Bourg & Segal, 1999). Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine the influence of family characteristics, individual characteristics, and childcare conflict (CCC) on the job search self-efficacy (JSSE) of spouses of enlisted military personnel. Additionally, we will examine whether JSSE can be positively influenced by employment assistance programs when work-family issues are negatively affecting JSSE.

Being in the military not only affects the military member; membership also affects the military member's spouse. The military, as much as any other occupation can often create a situation where couples' conflicting career requirements can be a source of work-family conflict and this issue can be particularly salient when families have children and CCCs arise (Brett, Stroh, & Reilly, 1992). Often the military lifestyle results in families having to move regularly (Gill, Haurin, & Phillips, 1994). Finding new childcare accommodations is often one of the dual career family's most pressing needs (Eby et al., 1997). This process can often increase the stress felt by the spouse in charge of childcare responsibilities (Ozer, 1995). In addition to potential childcare conflicts, such as needing to find new childcare accommodations, frequent relocation can have possible negative consequences for the spouse's career (Eby, 2001). Military families tend to benefit from dual employment (Rosen, Ickovics, & Moghadam, 1990; Thoresen & Goldsmith, 1987), and research has shown that relocation is one of the most serious problems facing employed family members (Galinsky & Stein, 1990). For example, when the military member is transferred to a new location, not only is the entire family uprooted, but also the non-member's career will most likely be disrupted, resulting in the spouse needing to search for a new job. As a consequence of the uncertainty that comes with being in the military it is easy to see that having strong job seeking skills can be vital to non-military spouses' chances of finding new employment (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999).

In light of the importance of job seeking for these spouses, their level of self-efficacy in these undertakings can play a critical role in the success they experience in securing acceptable employment (Kanfer, & Hulin, 1985). There are many potential individual factors that could impact spouses' JSSE including spouses' employment status, their level of education, their annual income, and issues relating to the spouse's job search skills such as knowledge of how to prepare a resume and where to look for employment (Kanfer & Hulin, 1985). To help military spouses in this regard, the United States Armed Forces offers a range of employment assistance programs designed to improve the spouses' job search skills, however, the impact these types of programs have on job-search self-efficacy has not been completely examined. Additionally, because spouses who relocate due to partners' job change often bear many of the family responsibilities when relocating (Eby, DeMatteo, & Russell, 1997), we expect that CCC and

various family characteristics, such as the family's financial situation, will influence the spouse's JSSE. Furthermore, in examining the impact of CCC on JSSE, we also will explore factors that could directly influence CCC. These factors include number and the ages of children in the family, as well as the two financial variables of annual income and perceived family financial situation which, as pointed out earlier, we also expect to directly impact JSSE.

This paper contributes to our understanding of JSSE in many important ways. First, while previous work on JSSE has mainly focused on those people who are unemployed (e.g. Eden & Aviram, 1993; Kanfer & Hulin, 1985), this study also considers the JSSE of those people who have employment, and in particular those people who view themselves as underemployed. Questions regarding the effect of employment status and specifically underemployment have been relatively unexplored in the JSSE literature.

Second, this study examines JSSE of a large diverse set of job-seekers where as the majority of research on JSSE has focused either on recent college graduates (e.g. Saks & Ashforth, 2000) or a small sample of recently unemployed workers. As a result of the larger and more diverse sample in this study, findings may prove to be more generalizable than previous work.

Finally, the majority of previous research has studied JSSE as an independent variable (Saks & Ashforth, 2000; Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Eby, DeMatteo, & Russell, 1997; Kanfer & Hulin, 1985). Only a few studies have focused on determinants of JSSE, although much of this previous work has focused on generalized self-efficacy and self-esteem in relation to job search activity (e.g. Eden & Aviram, 1993; Ellis & Taylor, 1983). This paper examines antecedents to JSSE from a broader perspective compared to past research, and we focus specifically on JSSE. Additionally, we not only determine influences of JSSE, we also explore the effectiveness of specific programs thought to improve JSSE in a diverse field setting. To summarize, we examine the relationship between JSSE and individual characteristics, family characteristics, CCC, and employment assistance programs. By further exploring determinants of JSSE we hope to gain a better understanding of what steps can be taken to improve people's JSSE which, as previous work has indicated, is an important predictor of job search success (Saks & Ashforth, 1999).

A MODEL OF JOB SEARCH SELF-EFFICACY

Self-Efficacy and Job Search Behavior

Bandura (1977) found that expectations of personal efficacy determine the level of effort exerted on a given task and how long this effort will be sustained in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences. More specifically, self-efficacy has been defined as “a person’s estimate of his or her capacity to orchestrate performance of a specific task” (Gist & Mitchell, 1992: 183). The importance of self-efficacy has been clearly demonstrated in numerous areas of career research including career choice (Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1987), dealing with difficult career related tasks (Stumpf, Brief, & Hartman, 1987), the relationship between training and newcomer adjustment (Saks, 1995), job performance (Kozlowski, Gully, Brown, Salas, Smith, & Nason, 2001), as well as job searching behavior (Eden, & Aviram, 1993; Kanfer, & Hulin, 1985; Saks, & Ashforth, 2000).

Previous work examining JSSE has indicated that higher levels of JSSE have a positive impact on important job search outcomes. Edin & Aviram (1993) demonstrated that training unemployed subjects to increase their level of self-efficacy resulted in increased job search activity and greater reemployment. Saks & Ashforth (2000) found that people with higher JSSE reported more frequent job search behavior, had lower levels of anxiety, and had a higher number of job offers. Because self-efficacy deals with a person’s perception of how competent he or she is at a given task, it is important to gauge JSSE of individuals in relation to the various skills required while searching for a job. In particular, research has found that perceived competence at important job search skills, such as being able to prepare a good resume and knowing where to find job openings, strongly reflected a person’s overall level of JSSE (Ellis & Taylor, 1983; Kanfer, & Hulin, 1985; Saks, & Ashforth, 2000). The current study utilizes a similar approach to studying JSSE by aggregating subject’s perceptions of a set of their job search skills, including their ability to prepare a resume and how well they know the job market, to form an overall measure of JSSE.

Potential Antecedents of JSSE

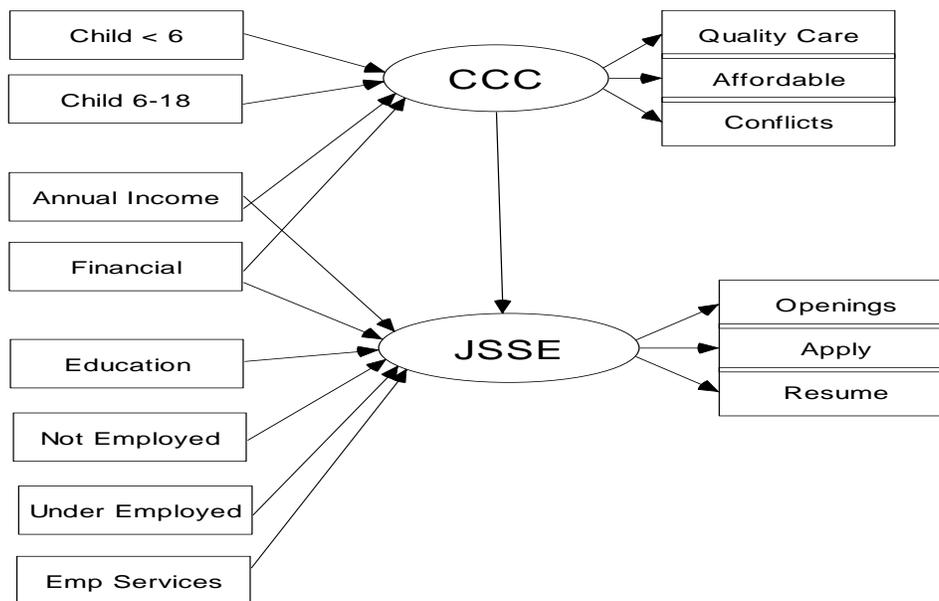
Factors influencing notions of JSSE are relatively unexplored. Most research to this point has focused of JSSE as an antecedent of job search behaviors while relatively little work has examined potential factors that might promote or hinder JSSE. Of course, consistent with other types of self-efficacy, job search self-efficacy is determined by perceived competence at specific task related skills, job search skills in this case, and how a person views his or her job search skills should be influenced by personal and environmental factors. Because previous research has indicated that past experience influences a person’s self-efficacy at a given task (Bandura, 1977), and that a person’s confidence in their job search is higher for those people who successfully find employment (Kanfer & Hulin, 1985) we expect that spouses’ current employment situations will influence their JSSE. Also, because employment is often determined by a person’s education level we expect the spouse’s education level to also influence JSSE.

Next, although we found no research examining the impact that characteristics of family situation have on JSSE, research in the work-family literature clearly indicates the importance of

family characteristics and work-family conflicts, like CCC, on job attitudes (Arthur & Cook, 2003; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Major, Klein, & Ehrhart, 2002). Consequently, we expect that spouses' perceived levels of CCC should have a negative impact on spouses' JSSE. Additionally, we examine how family factors such as the number and ages of children in the family, and the family financial situation, influence CCC, thus exacerbating CCC's negative effect on JSSE.

We first discuss those factors that directly impact JSSE, starting with individual characteristics of the spouse. Second, we will consider the impact of CCC on JSSE. Next, we will address family variables that indirectly influence JSSE through CCC. Finally, we will explore whether or not JSSE can be improved through employment assistance initiatives and what programs, if any, seem to be most effective at increasing this type of self-efficacy.

Figure 1
Model of Factors Influencing JSSE



THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Factors Directly Influencing JSSE

Employment Status. One of the immediate factors relating to JSSE should be a person's current employment status. Previous job search research has clearly shown that people who successfully attain employment exhibit higher levels of JSSE than those who are unemployed (Kanfer & Hulin, 1985). As a result, those who have experienced past success in job seeking should have a greater belief that they will be successful in future job searches. Being employed, however, can take different forms.

Recent research has begun to examine an important, yet understudied, category of employment status, those people who see themselves as underemployed (Borgen, Amundson, & Harder, 1988; Feldman, 1996). Underemployment is defined as an inferior or lower quality of employment either in relation to others with common or similar experience or in relation to a person's own previous education and work history (Feldman, 1996). The question this elicits is whether or not those people who successfully gain employment might still experience lower JSSE as a result of feeling underemployed? This category is particularly relevant for military spouses who often must change jobs as a result of a move. Research has shown that people who have been unemployed, and have had to find new jobs often accept jobs which result in them being underemployed (Buss, & Redburn, 1983; Leana & Feldman, 1992). In one study, 85% of re-employed workers were making 40% less money than in their previous jobs, and 70% indicated that they were receiving fewer fringe benefits, all of which are indications of underemployment, (Leana & Feldman, 1992). Further it has been found that each time a military family moves the spouse experiences a permanent 2.8% wage decrease (Gill, et al., 1994). Since spouses of military members often find themselves in a situation of re-employment as a result of the relocation of their partner, the probability of these people being underemployed is, as illustrated above, potentially quite high.

Underemployed workers are found to have lower levels of self-esteem (Prause & Dooley, 1997) and have higher incidents of depression (Dooley, Prause, & Ham-Rowbottom, 2000), both of which can be related to decreased self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; Bandura, Pastorelli, Barbaranelli, Caprara, 1999). Moreover, it has been found that those people who are underemployed tend to have more negative perceptions of their abilities to make good career decisions in the future and they tend to also have diminished beliefs in their ability to "realize their dreams" (Burris, 1983; Feldman, 1996). As a result, underemployed military spouses may view their job search activity as being a potential failure, and they may question their ability to make sound career decisions. These doubts may result in lower JSSE which would hamper their future attempts to find a job. Consequently, we expect that both unemployment and underemployment will negatively impact JSSE.

Hypothesis 1a: Spouses who are currently unemployed will have lower JSSE.

Hypothesis 1b: When employed, spouses who view themselves as underemployed will have lower JSSE.

Education Level. Considering that more educated individuals typically are more easily employed and earn more money (Treiman & Terrell, 1975), higher education levels should influence beliefs about job searching, leading to higher JSSE. The link between education level and success at finding quality employment has been clearly illustrated (Hyman, Wright, & Reed, 1975; Treiman & Terrell, 1975). Similarly, those who are more highly educated experience a higher level of perceived personal control and experience lower levels of psychological distress such as depression compared to those who are less educated (Ross & Van Willigen, 1997). As a result, we would expect spouses who have higher levels of education to have higher confidence in their ability to find a job.

Hypothesis 2: A spouse's level of education will be positively related to his or her level of JSSE.

The Impact of Annual Income and Financial Situation on JSSE. As with spouses' employment status, it is expected that a family's perceived financial situation and the spouse's past annual income will have a positive influence on JSSE. That is, the greater the income of spouses and the more secure they perceive their family's financial situation, the higher their JSSE should be. Research also has shown that there is a positive relationship between a family's financial condition and the global self-esteem of the parents (Mayhew & Lempers, 1998). Given self-esteem is positively related to global self-efficacy, it seems likely that perceived financial condition could also affect JSSE (Eden, & Aviram, 1993). Thus spouses who perceive their families as experiencing financial difficulties may have lower levels of JSSE. Financial hardship also can increase psychological distress, as struggling to pay bills and provide for children can often lead to malaise and depression (Ross & Huber, 1985) again decreasing self-efficacy in general and JSSE specifically.

Hypothesis 3a: There will be a positive relationship between the spouse's annual income and his or her JSSE.

Hypothesis 3b: There will be a positive relationship between the spouse's perception of his or her family's financial situation and JSSE.

In addition to the perception of the family's financial situation, other family characteristics should directly predict spouses' JSSE. In particular, it is important to focus our attention on CCC, a specific family issue that should affect a military spouse's JSSE.

Childcare Conflict. Our study defines CCC as the work-family conflict associated with the difficulty in finding or affording supplemental childcare. As previously stated, for military spouses, CCC is a salient concern because of frequent relocations. We expect that CCC will predict JSSE and that certain family characteristics will influence this specific form of work-family conflict. CCC falls within the broad area of research of work-family conflict as it is "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985: 77). Researchers have identified CCC as a major domain of work-family conflict; the number and age of children and

the lack of quality or affordable childcare can contribute to conflicts between work and parental or family responsibilities (Arthur & Cook, 2003; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Hansen, 1991; Glass & Estes, 1997). When work-seeking or working spouses find it difficult to locate childcare, increased childcare responsibility may reside within the family. Ozer (1995) found that more childcare responsibility tends to decrease multiple types of self-efficacy including work-family self-efficacy and spousal enlistment self-efficacy. Although the specific relationship between JSSE and CCC has not previously been examined, there is reason to believe that CCC can have implications for the JSSE of military spouses.

High levels of CCC have been shown to result in spillover (Matsui, Ohsawa, & Onglatco, 1995), which is when feelings from one domain permeate into the other (Arthur & Cook, 2003). If spouses are experiencing negative feelings because of family related issues, such as problems finding childcare, these emotions can also carryover to feelings concerning work (Williams & Alliger, 1994) which should also affect spouses' JSSE.

CCC also may lead to role overload (Cooke & Rousseau, 1984). When spouses experience role overload, they possess the general sense that they cannot effectively perform all of their role demands adequately (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Erdwins et al., 2001). A role overloaded spouse may feel besieged by his or her work responsibilities and may experience higher levels of stress and anxiety (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999) both of which can have a negative relationship with JSSE (Saks & Ashforth, 2000). This type of role conflict is caused by a lack of compatibility between work-family roles (Arthur & Cook, 2003).

Beyond increasing levels of stress, role conflicts demand that spouses' time and energy be split between the competing domains (Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). Consequently, childcare conflicts arise out of the frustration accompanying scheduling conflicts of family versus work (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Wallace, 1997). The perception of job search skills, or the spouse's confidence in his or her efficacy to succeed in the job search process, may be impeded by a spouse having insufficient time or energy to devote to these activities (Menaghan & Parcel, 1990; Saks & Ashforth, 2000). The CCCs spouses are forced to manage should adversely affect JSSE since the more time people devote to practicing a task, the better they become and the greater their self-efficacy for that task (Lee and Klein, 2002).

Hypothesis 4: There will be a negative relationship between CCC and JSSE.

To further demonstrate how the construct CCC negatively influences spousal JSSE, it is important that we examine the factors that directly influence CCC: age of children, annual income, and financial situation. The next section will demonstrate that these three factors work to directly explain CCC as well as work to indirectly influence spousal JSSE.

Characteristics Influencing CCC

Presence of Children. Research has indicated that the presence of children in a family has a significant impact on the career choices and outcomes of parents (Glass & Estes, 1997). This effect is pronounced for younger children who require more care. For example, Wallace (1997) found a negative relationship between the presence of preschool-age children and the number of hours worked by their parents. Ozer (1995) found that percentage of time used on infant

childcare responsibilities was greater than the percentage working mothers devoted toward job related responsibilities. Therefore, it is expected that a greater number of younger children in a household will lead to increased CCC (Meyers, 1993). Therefore, we expect that children not of age to attend school full time, those who are five years of age and younger, have a greater impact on CCC than children 6-18 years of age.

At the same time, we expect that children over 5 will influence CCC. Previous research has indicated that the presence of children, regardless of their age, still raises the potential for CCC and stress (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Collins, 2001; Lundberg, Mardberg, & Frankenhaeuser, 1994). Regardless of age, parents are still responsible for their children. Parents will therefore be less able and less likely to devote as many hours to work activities as those without children at all (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000). The more children a family has, the more time parents must devote to childcare responsibilities or finding alternative childcare.

Hypothesis 5a: The number of children younger than six years of age in a family should be positively related to CCC.

Hypothesis 5b: The presence of children 6-18 years of age should have a positive relationship with CCC but not as strong as those with children under six years old.

Impact of Annual Income and Financial Situation on CCC. A family's financial situation and a spouse's annual income have already been depicted as directly affecting JSSE. We also believe they will contribute to CCC. Research has found that spouses with lower income tend to have greater CCC because families with less disposable income are more likely to have a demand for childcare yet they are usually faced with fewer quality options (Lehrer, 1983, 1989; Lehrer & Kawasaki, 1985). Moreover, spouses who are experiencing financial difficulties will have fewer options for providing their children with supplemental childcare (Hofferth & Wissoker, 1992). Thus, with financial constraints the potential for CCC is greater.

Hypothesis 6a: There will be a negative relationship between a spouse's annual income and the spouse's level of CCC.

Hypothesis 6b: There will be a negative relationship between the spouse's perception of his or her family's financial situation and the spouse's level of CCC.

Employment Assistance Programs and JSSE

Despite all the factors that have been demonstrated to negatively influence JSSE, we now turn our attention to examine whether steps that are taken to help spouses seek work can positively affect levels of JSSE. In order to help spouses find employment after relocation, military services provide a host of employment assistance programs designed to improve spouses' job search skills and to help them gain contacts within the community to facilitate the job search process. A sample of these services include training in how to write a resume, training in job skills, announcements of job openings, and one-on-one assistance with individual job searches. The positive link between training and self-efficacy has been well established, both in general (Bandura, 1986) and for job search behavior (Eden & Aviram, 1993; Saks, 1995). Also, research on relocated spouses' has found that JSSE impacts the need for employment assistance (Eby,

DeMatteo, & Russell, 1998). The question arises, however, whether military employment assistance programs are sufficient to affect JSSE after we take into account the potential negative influences of employment status, family characteristics, and CCC discussed above. If employment assistance programs are correctly focused and delivered, such training should be able to increase JSSE even in the face of these other negative forces. We test this question in two ways. First, we examine whether employment assistance program use of any sort is related to higher levels of JSSE, after taking into account the influences of the employment, individual, and family variables on JSSE. We expect that spouses who utilize military employment assistance programs will experience improved JSSE, and the increase of JSSE should occur despite the previously mentioned JSSE factors. Second, we examine specific types of employment assistance programs and their relation to JSSE. Given the variety of programs available, we expect that some will be more effective in raising levels of JSSE than others. This issue, however, will be examined as a research question without a priori predictions.

Hypothesis 7: Spousal use of employment assistance programs will be positively related to JSSE, after controlling for the influence of the employment, individual and family variables.

Research Question: What types of employment assistance programs are most effective at improving spouses' JSSE?

METHODS

Sample

The sample was drawn from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) 1997 survey of spouses of enlisted personnel. This survey collected information regarding employment attitudes, behaviors, and needs of non-military spouses of active-duty members. DoD sent surveys to a selected sample of 23,162 spouses, of enlisted military members (pay grades ranging from E1-E5). Of these, 8,386 spouses returned surveys that were deemed usable for a total return rate of 36.21% of the initial selected sample. Using this database, we selected a sample of spouses who were qualified to be in our study, resulting in a sample size of 6,411. In order to qualify for inclusion, the spouses had to report being a civilian currently married to an active-duty member of the armed services pay grade E-5 or below, and subjects had to report being either employed or currently searching for employment. Of the 6,411 subjects, 94% were female, 40% reported themselves as minorities, and the average age was 27 years.

Measures

Job search self-efficacy. Items measuring JSSE in previous research typically focus on subjects' perceptions of competence related to job searching skills (Ellis & Taylor, 1983; Kanfer & Hulin, 1985; Saks & Ashforth, 2000). In this study, spouses' job search self-efficacy was measured using three items including: "I know how to find out where job openings exist" (Openings), "I know what type of job to apply for" (Applications), and "I know how to prepare a good resume" (Resume). While this is a somewhat limited list, we were restricted to what was available in the DoD survey, yet each of these items is similar to items in other JSSE measures. A principal components factor analysis of the three items revealed one factor with an eigenvalue greater than

one. The three items loaded on the factor at 0.60 or above and exhibited acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.72$).

Individual and family characteristics. There were five different individual and family characteristic variables used in this study. The first was highest level of education (1= 12 years or less with no diploma, 6= graduate or professional degree). The second and third were annual income, as indicated by spouses' total earnings in the tax year 1996, and perceived financial situation, as indicated by spouse's response to "which of the following best represents your financial condition" (5 = very comfortable, 1 = in over my head). The fourth family characteristic variable was the number of children in the family five years of age or younger. The final variable was the number of children in the family between the ages of six to 18 years old.

Childcare conflict. A measure of CCC was developed using 3 items that focused on childcare in response to the question: "In the last 12 months, how much of a problem has each of the following been for you personally in looking for or holding a job?" The three items, (measured with the scale 0 = not a problem, 1 = minor problem, 2 = a major problem) included: "finding quality child care," "finding affordable child care," and "conflicts between work and parental or family responsibilities. All items had factor loadings at .49 or above.

Employment status. Three categories of employment status were examined: (1) not employed but seeking employment; (2) underemployed; and (3) fully employed. Spouses were classified as underemployed or fully employed based on their reports about the extent to which their current jobs: (1) utilized their skills and training; and (2) matched their qualifications. Spouses were classified as underemployed if they reported that their current job allowed them to use their skills and training only "to a minor extent" or "not at all", and they reported themselves as "greatly overqualified for the work" they do. Spouses were deemed to be fully employed if they reported that their job allowed them to utilize their skills and training "to a large extent", and they reported that their qualifications were "appropriate for the work" they did or that they were "somewhat under qualified for the work" they did.

Overall use of employment services. Spouses were deemed to have utilized military employment assistance programs if they reported that they had used at least one of the 12 listed available services, for example training in "how to write a resume" (for complete list see table 3).

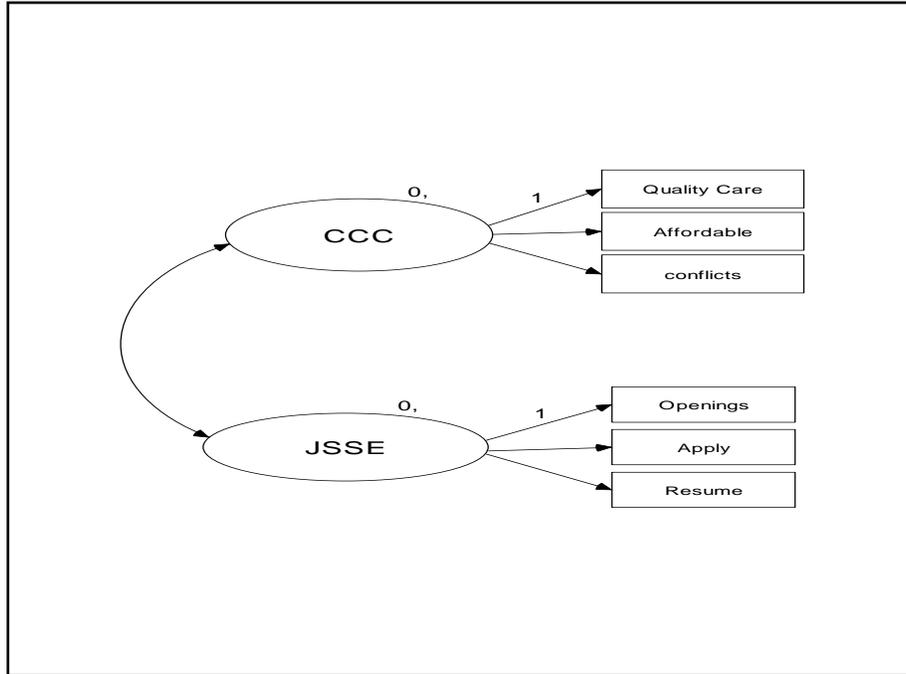
Use of individual employment services. Spouses indicated whether they had used each of the 12 specific employment services.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

We employed structural equation modeling to test both direct and indirect relationships between measured variables and our latent constructs. We used a two-step approach when employing this analytical technique, as suggested by Anderson & Gerbing (1988), where we first tested a measurement model to validate our constructs and then a structural model to test the hypotheses.

We needed to first ensure that the two constructs of CCC and JSSE loaded on separate factors and the indicators associated with each had significant loadings (See Figure 2).

Figure 2
Measurement Model of JSSE & CCC



We performed the two-factor confirmatory factor analysis by using AMOS 5 (Arbuckle, 2004). Fit indices indicated that our constructs were indeed separate. Indicators of CCC had loadings greater than .40: Ability to find quality care (.89); Ability to afford childcare (.93); and Work-family conflicts concerning childcare (.49). Indicators of JSSE reported loadings greater than .60: Openings (.67); Applications (.81); and Resume (.60).

For hypothesis testing, we employed a structural model with CCC influencing JSSE and other measured variables influencing both constructs in the theorized directions. Structural equation modeling allows for assessment of the fit of the data to the hypothesized model and a comparison of fit among alternative models. We compared an unrestricted model with various nested models, which restricted one or more relationships. Since we predicted that both the financial variables, financial situation and annual income, would directly influence JSSE and CCC, we chose to look at nested models varying the relationship between the two measured variables and the two latent constructs of JSSE and CCC. We wanted to rule out any possibility of a mediated effect occurring in our model, and we used nested models to observe potential mediating effects using the method outlined by Barron & Kenney (1986) to find which model captures the most variance.

Theoretically, we hypothesized that a model which allowed both financial situation and annual income to directly influence both constructs would work best. Using a Chi-Square difference significance test in AMOS 5, we found that our hypothesized model provided a significantly better fit than the restricted nested models at the $p = .0001$ level (See Table 1).

To ensure our hypothesized model was the best fitting model of our data, we also tested two non-nested models: a regression model (with all variables directly influencing JSSE) and an independence model (with no direct relationships among the variables). The primary reason we tested these non-nested models was to provide evidence that including both direct and indirect effects adds depth to our understanding of how our variables work together to influence the constructs of interest. Both the regression model and independence model resulted in inadequate fit indices whereas our unrestricted hypothesized structural model resulted in adequate goodness of fit measures (See Table 1).

Table 1
Results for Tested Models

Model	CFI	RFI	NFI	TLI	RMSEA	χ^2/df
Measurement model testing the two factors of CCC and JSSE (CFA)	.99	.98	.99	.98	.04	12.33*
Unrestricted structural model with both Financial variables directly and indirectly influencing CCC and JSSE	.96	.91	.95	.92	.05	16.05*
Nested structural model restricting the relationship between Financial Situation and CCC to zero	.94	.89	.94	.89	.06	20.62**+
Nested structural model restricting the relationship between Financial Situation and CCC to zero and the relationship between CCC and JSSE to zero	.94	.89	.94	.89	.06	20.39**+
Nested structural model restricting the relationship between Annual Income and CCC to zero	.95	.91	.95	.92	.05	16.39**+
Nested structural model restricting the relationship between Annual Income and CCC to zero and the relationship between CCC and JSSE to zero	.95	.91	.95	.92	.05	16.24**+
Independence model	.00	.00	.00	.00	.17	184.33*
Regression model with JSSE as the dependent variable	.92	.85	.91	.85	.06	25.57*

(*) $p < .0001$

(+) significantly different from the hypothesized unrestricted model at the .0001 level

It should be noted that a good fitting model is expected to have a non-significant χ^2 and a $\chi^2/df \leq 2$. As can be observed, all of our tested models have a significant χ^2 and a ratio greater than 2. However, χ^2 tests are biased against large sample sizes (Bryne, 1998); with large sample sizes these tests tend to not result in a non-significant χ^2 . Thus, because we used such a large sample size for our analysis, it is unlikely that our tested models would produce a non-significant χ^2 . Nevertheless, we took χ^2/df ratio results into account when comparing both nested and non-nested models along with other fit indices to fully observe which model explained the most variance in our data (see Table 2).

Overall, our hypothesized model reported the best fit indices and was shown to be significantly different from the nested models (by using the above mentioned chi-square difference test). Additional results of correlations and descriptive statistics of our observed and latent variables are shown in Table 2.

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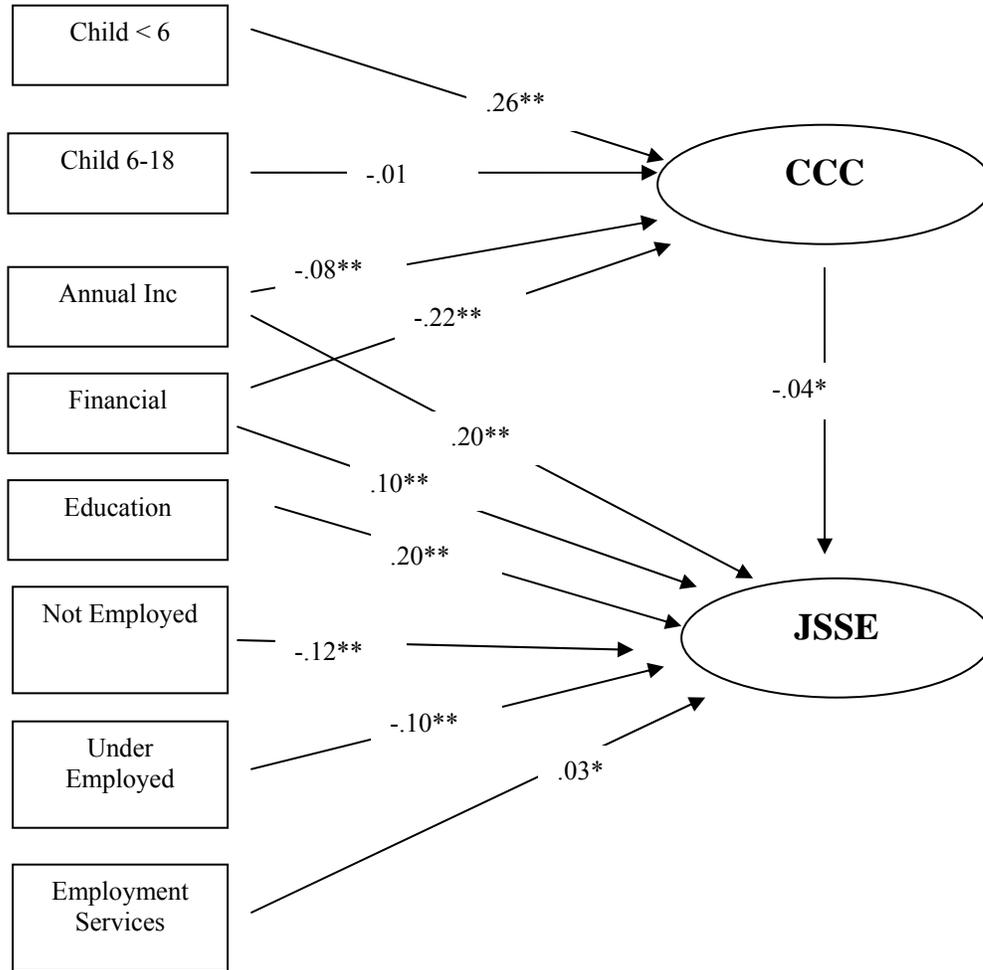
Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	Mean	SD	FINANCIAL	ANNUAL INC	Child < 6	Child 6-18	Emp Services	UNDEREMP	NOTEMP	EDUCATION	CCC	JSSE
FINANCIAL	3.02	.96	1.00									
ANN INC	2.07	1.84	.17**	1.00								
Child < 6 (+)	1.05	.71	-.10**	-.20**	1.00							
Child 6-18 (+)	.60	.82	.01	.12**	-.45**	1.00						
Emp Services (+)	.12	.32	-.02	.02	-.01	.04*	1.00					
UNDER EMP (+)	.29	.45	-.01	.01	-.02	-.00	.01	1.00				
NOTEMP (+)	.28	.45	-.20**	-.30**	.15**	-.08**	.00	-.42**	1.00			
EDU	3.64	1.44	.12**	.24**	-.09**	.03	.09**	.03	.13**	1.00		
CCC (+)	.71	.72	-.25**	-.14**	.27**	-.10**	-.00	.03	.11**	-.02	1.00	
JSSE	3.69	.86	.17	.29**	-.10**	.04*	.06**	-.03	-.17**	.28**	-.15**	1.00

*p < .05
**p < .01
+ indicates a categorical variable

Hypotheses were tested by analyzing the parameters and the significance levels associated with each of the relationships (See Figure 3 for path coefficients). We first addressed direct relationships to JSSE. Hypothesis 1a and 1b respectfully predicted that spouses who are currently unemployed or underemployed will have lower levels of JSSE. Using path analysis, it was found that both relationships were significant in the expected direction. That is, those spouses who were either unemployed or felt they were underemployed reported lower levels of JSSE. Hypotheses 1a and 1b are supported.

Figure 3
Standardized Effect Sizes



*p < .05
**p < .01

Hypothesis 2 proposed that educational level would be positively related to JSSE. Results indicated that the more educated military spouses also exhibited higher levels of JSSE.

Hypotheses 3a and 3b predicted that a spouse's annual income and perception of family financial situation would positively influence levels of the spouse's JSSE. Both relationships were shown to influence JSSE in the appropriate direction. These results suggest that the amount of money a working spouse makes and the extent that he or she feels the family is in good financial standing increases the spouse's level of JSSE. The spouses who are not concerned about their families' incomes seem to be more confident in their ability to find a job.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that a negative relationship would exist between CCC and JSSE; those that have more conflict concerning childcare would have a lower sense of job search self-efficacy. This relationship was found to be significant in the predicted direction. This relationship also helps illustrate how variables which influence CCC can indirectly affect JSSE.

Hypotheses 5a and 5b suggested that the number of children families have will be positively related to higher levels of CCC. We tested the relationship between those who had children under the age of six and those who had children between the ages of six and eighteen and the corresponding levels of CCC. A positive significant relationship was found between those with younger children and CCC, but a non-significant negative relationship existed for those with older children. Hypothesis 5a is supported whereas hypothesis 5b is not supported. However, continuing to include the variable of older children in our model helped improve overall fit. Therefore, we have decided that while it may not have a significant relationship in predicting CCC, it has some influence on the proposed model.

Additionally, hypotheses 6a and 6b predicted that there will be a negative relationship between the financial variables of annual income and financial situation and CCC. Both relationships were identified in the model as having the predicted significant relationships in the appropriate direction. Spouses who had a higher income and who felt secure in their families' financial situation do not feel the same level of childcare conflict as those who make less or may not feel as financially secure. Both financial variables directly influence both JSSE and CCC. No mediation effects were found.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that spouses who participated in an employment assistance program would also experience higher levels of JSSE than those who choose not to participate in such programs. According to our results, military spouses could improve their JSSE through job skill training, a finding that supports hypothesis 7.

Finally, our research question examined what types of employment assistance programs are most effective at improving spouses' JSSE. In examining this research question, we focused our analysis on a sample of spouses who had reported themselves as using one or more of the employment assistance programs and reported that a specific program was

Influences on Job Search Self-Efficacy of Spouses of Enlisted Military Personnel

available to them (n = 758-880 depending on program). Table 3 illustrates the results of t-tests conducted to examine the difference of JSSE means for those who used specific programs compared to those who did not. Results indicated that for nine of the twelve employment assistance services available to spouses, users of the services displayed higher mean levels of JSSE than non-users.

Table 3
Relationship of Employment Service Programs to Job Search Self Efficacy

Employment Services	Mean Self-Efficacy Service <u>Not</u> Used	Mean Self-Efficacy Service <u>Used</u>	t-value
Orientation on job searching skills/services	3.72	3.84	2.04*
One-on-one assistance with job search	3.73	3.90	3.07**
Help deciding what kind of work to do	3.78	3.75	0.43
How to write a resume	3.73	3.88	2.88**
How to interview for a job	3.75	3.90	2.27*
Job search support group	3.77	3.83	0.51
Referrals to “temp” agencies	3.74	3.89	2.18*
Advice on how to dress for job interviews	3.77	3.84	1.16
Announcements of job openings	3.59	3.88	4.74**
Job fairs	3.74	3.87	2.11*
Help in completing job applications	3.75	3.89	2.19*
Use of word processing equipment for preparing job search materials	3.69	3.94	4.28**

*p<.05
 **p<.01

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine factors that contribute to JSSE of military spouses and to explore the effects of employment assistance programs on this form of self-efficacy. Using structural equation modeling we examined the influence of the spouse's individual characteristics, family characteristics, and CCC on the spouse's JSSE. Results indicated that each of the factors do impact spouses' JSSE either directly or indirectly. Furthermore, we found that people who used employment assistance programs reported higher levels of JSSE than those who did not. Together, these findings suggest some interesting insight into JSSE and the factors that influence it.

In considering the findings of this paper, it is important to keep in mind that the subjects in this study were not members of the military themselves, and as such these findings have practical applications not only for military organizations, but for non-military organizations as well. The application of our findings to non-military organizations is illustrated when we consider that a great number of workers from a variety of occupations across the economy will change jobs, organizations, and even careers with some regularity (Hall & Mirvis, 1995; Murphy & Jackson, 1999). This trend has been spurred on by numerous factors including the fact that organizations have turned to downsizing and rightsizing, in response to competitive demands to increase efficiency and reduce costs. As a result, in order to combat unstable market demands, companies are employing fewer permanent employees while becoming more dependent on a contingent workforce (Ilgen & Pulakos, 1999; Hulin & Glomb, 1999; Rousseau & Wade-Benzoni, 1995). Thus, employees are faced with increasingly unstable employment relationships, resulting in a stressful employment environment wherein job loss, layoffs, and relocations are common (Smithson & Lewis, 2000).

Considering the uncertain employment environment facing spouses of military members as well as the general labor population, this paper offers a handful of important contributions that future research can build upon and that practitioners should take into account. First, this paper illustrates the need to examine employment status as a more complex phenomenon, examining not only whether a person is employed or unemployed but also examining the nature of employment for those who have jobs. Second, we highlight the importance of non-work related factors in understanding how individual's JSSE might be influenced. Finally, this study suggests that actions can be taken to help the JSSE of those seeking employment despite numerous factors that may be detrimental to JSSE. In the remainder of the paper we will discuss these issues as well as offer limitation to the present study and suggest directions for future examination.

As we expected, spouses' employment status proved to have a positive influence on JSSE in that those spouses who were employed exhibited higher levels of JSSE than those who were not. Dissecting the employment construct to include those who are underemployed shed new light on the JSSE construct. Previous JSSE research had taken a more narrow view of JSSE and employment success. Earlier studies have tended to consider the simple attainment of employment as an acceptable outcome while focusing on JSSE as

the antecedent to employment (e.g. Eden & Avrim, 1993; Saks & Ashforth, 2000). The present study differs from this prior work by illustrating a potential reciprocal relationship between employment status and JSSE. We also demonstrate that even though a spouse may find a job, the nature of the work can have implications for JSSE, as those spouses who reported feeling underemployed also reported lower levels of JSSE. Thus, it appears that simply finding a job may not be sufficient, as the nature of the employment also influences JSSE.

We suggest that future research should continue to explore the impact of underemployment, both as it pertains to JSSE and as a construct in general. Further extending this line of research could shed light on other employment attitudes, such as the turnover intentions of those who feel underemployed. For example, the modest relationship research has found between employees' intentions to quit and actual turnover (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000) may be improved by including JSSE as a moderator. Our findings considering underemployment also suggest an issue that organizations should confront within employment assistance programs. Practitioners should take into account that while these programs may help a spouse get a job, the nature of the employment is also clearly important. Thus it is clear that measuring job search success as job attainment is too simplistic of an approach.

In addition to employment status, we found that individual and family characteristics as well as CCC can influence JSSE in working spouses. It is important to note that each of these factors made independent contributions to spousal JSSE. CCC was associated with lower levels of JSSE even after we controlled for individual and family characteristics. Similarly, even though spouses' annual income and perceptions of family financial situation, might affect CCC, these characteristics also influenced JSSE even when we controlled for CCC. We found no significant effects for the presence of older children as a direct predictor of CCC and an indirect predictor of spouses' JSSE; however, younger children did have an indirect significant relationship to JSSE through CCC. These findings suggest a complex set of factors affecting JSSE that future research should further explore.

Unfortunately, we could not examine the dynamic nature of relationship between JSSE and the independent variables due to the cross-sectional nature of the data. Previous studies of job search behavior and attitudes have called for JSSE to be more fully explored and for more longitudinal research to be done to help understand some of these complexities (Barber et al, 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 2000), a point we also agree with. As such, future research should more closely examine the role that various family characteristics have on JSSE over a greater period of time. Longitudinal work examining spouses' JSSE across time and over one or more relocations and or job changes is also necessary. Additionally, the importance of family characteristics should also be examined in relation to other job search behaviors such as the use of employment assistance programs, and intensity of job search.

An encouraging finding for researchers and especially practitioners is that in the face of so many negative influences on JSSE, employment assistance programs still had a

positive effect on JSSE. That is, the use of employment assistance programs was associated with higher levels of JSSE despite the presence of these other negative factors. Looking at specific programs suggests that a variety of measures can help. It appears that programs aimed directly at job searching skills and opportunities are most powerful. For example, programs designed to help with preparing a resume such as how to write a resume and use of word processing equipment for preparing job search materials, as well as programs designed to help people find job openings, proved to be some of the most useful programs. This finding is encouraging considering that the above mentioned programs mirror items of the JSSE measure including “I know how to find out where job openings exist,” and “I know how to prepare a good resume.” These results strengthen the argument for the link between employment assistance programs and JSSE.

These findings also may help to address one of the potential limitations of our study. As we stated earlier, the JSSE measure we utilized, while very similar to that of other studies, was somewhat shorter. Thus we cannot be certain that we have measured the construct comparatively to what other scholars have. However, the fact that our employment assistance program findings tend to complement the JSSE items we used may provide additional support for our JSSE measure. Additionally, the findings further illustrate to both researchers and practitioners the importance of designing employment assistance programs to specifically address JSSE. On the other hand, we can also use the results of the employment assistance programs to help determine what types of programs may be less useful. For example, support groups and discussion of type of work one might pursue seemed to be less helpful in relation to JSSE.

Another potential limitation of this study is the use of single source data. Relations among variables could have been inflated due to common method variance. While we cannot rule out this threat, the concern over common method variance is lessened because many of our items are not opinion or attitude based; rather they are more objective in nature, for example annual income and the number of children a family has, thus reducing the impact of the self-report data (Wanberg, Watt, & Rumsey, 1996). This is further supported by the lack of correlation between variables we did not expect to be related. For example, variables such as CCC and spouses’ education level, CCC and use of employment services, and CCC and spouses’ reports of underemployment showed non-significant correlations.

A final point that we would like to make pertains to the generalizability of the findings. Previous JSSE and job search research has relied heavily on inexperienced job seekers such as students or recent graduates (Barber et al, 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 2000). Thus, one strength of the current study is the great diversity of subjects surveyed. However, questions may still be raised concerning whether these results would apply to populations outside of the often transplanted military spouses. This issue, while important to note may not be a serious problem considering that the spouses are not members of the military themselves, and as such should generally deal with similar JSSE issues as non-military individuals. Furthermore, as we stated earlier, considering that relocation and multiple job changes are becoming more common in today’s business environment than ever before (Hall & Mirvis, 1995), it is likely the case that many non-military affiliated

people are experiencing similar job search obstacles as military spouses do. This final point thus not only illustrates the importance of studying JSSE as it relates to military spouses, but also the growing importance of JSSE, as well as other job search related constructs, for individuals across the entire economy.

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