Association of Neighborhood Social Context and Perceived Stress among Mothers of Young Children

Visit Article

Chronic parental stress may negatively impact health among both parents and children. Adverse neighborhood social conditions like crime may increase stress while a supportive neighborhood may buffer stress and promote well-being. Our objective was to examine associations between neighborhood social factors and stress among mothers of young children. We surveyed 300 mothers/female caregivers of Medicaid-enrolled 2-4-year-old children in Philadelphia. Maternal stress was measured via the 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (range 0-40). Mothers' perceived neighborhood safety and collective efficacy were assessed using validated scales. Addresses were geocoded to link census tract-level violent crime rates. We used multivariable linear regression to examine associations of neighborhood safety, collective efficacy, and crime with maternal stress, adjusted for demographics, household socioeconomic status, and neighborhood poverty. Among mothers (mean age 31, 60% Black/African American), higher perceived neighborhood safety and collective efficacy were associated with lower stress scores after adjustment for covariates. Each 1-point increase (on a 5-point scale) in perceived neighborhood safety was associated with a 2.30-point decrease in maternal stress (95% CI: -3.07, -1.53). Similarly, each 1-point increase in perceived collective efficacy was associated with a 3.08-point decrease in maternal stress (95% CI: -4.13, -2.02). Police-recorded violent crime rates were not associated with maternal stress. Mothers of young children who perceive their neighborhood social environment more favorably report less stress compared to those who feel their neighborhood environment is less safe and cohesive. Future work is warranted to investigate whether interventions that increase perceived neighborhood safety and collective efficacy reduce stress.

Journal:

Academic Pediatrics
Authors: Mayne SL, DiFiore G, Hannan C, Virudachalam S, Glanz K, Fiks AG

Related Content

- Associations of Neighborhood Safety and Collective Efficacy with Dietary Intake among Preschool-Aged Children and Mothers
  Article
  Oct 2021
- Neighborhood Safety and Social Connections: What's the Potential Impact on Caregiver and Child Diet?
  Blog Post
  Apr 14, 2022