

Father Involvement and its Effect on Wives' Marital Satisfaction

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Abstract

Does increased father involvement in childrearing increase marital satisfaction of wives in newlywed couples? Is a marriage more stable if the husband changes more diapers, reads more bedtime stories, and wipes more runny noses? Are married women happier in their marriages if their husbands cuddle their children more often? My results suggest this is true.

With increased knowledge about how fathers' involvement effects marital satisfaction, interventions can be structured to promote father involvement. In turn, this will foster healthier marriages. The healthier a marriage is, the more likely the family is to have strong relationships. Children raised in productive marriages tend to have similar marital relations, thus contributing to more healthy families.



Introduction

I surveyed 190 wives and 159 husbands in this study. Below is some significant demographic information.

• Couples surveyed had been married between 4 years, 2 months and 5 years, 6 months.

Educational Status	High School or Less	Technical School	Some College	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate Degree
% of Respondents	18.3%	5.1%	63.6%	73.0%	40.0%

Work Status	Full Time	Part Time	Working & Student	Full Time Student	Full Time Homemaker	Unemployed
% of Respondents	49.3%	11.3%	7.2%	3.3%	26.3%	2.7%

Annual Income	Under \$10,000 - \$29,000	\$30,000 - \$59,000	\$60,000 - \$89,000	\$90,000 +
% of Respondents	13.8%	47.4%	30.3%	8.7%

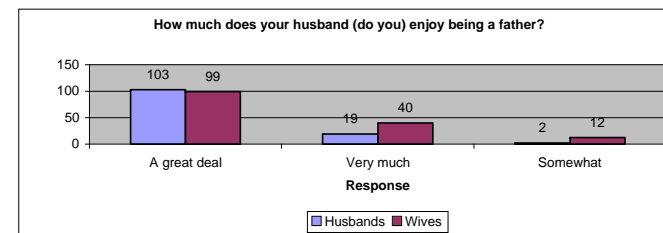
Methods

- My research was conducted as the second wave of a research survey administered by Dr. Thomas Lee.
- Couples were selected randomly from all Utah marriage license applicants in 2003.
- Couples were surveyed as individual spouses. The husbands answered questions about themselves while wives answered questions about their husbands.
- We measured husband's involvement by the questions found on the handout. Because these questions were found reliable, I combined them into a single independent variable.
- We measured wife's satisfaction by the questions found on the handout. Because they were all found reliable, I combined them into a single dependent variable.



Results

- Most husbands and wives I surveyed ranked their satisfaction between "somewhat satisfied" and "very satisfied."
- The majority of husbands reported that they often have enough energy to meet their child's needs. Most wives reported the same of their husbands.
- 92.8% of husbands reported they are very close or extremely emotionally close to their child. 86.1% of wives indicated their husbands are very to extremely emotionally close to their child.
- 55% of wives said their husbands are often available to spend time with their child in activities. 69.4% of husbands indicated the same of themselves.
- The following graph shows one of the most significant responses of husbands and wives:



Conclusions

- A husband's involvement in childcare responsibilities is definitely associated with his wife's stress in parental duties.
- A husband's involvement in childcare responsibilities is also closely related with her marital satisfaction.
- A wife's stress in parental duties is very closely related to her marital satisfaction.
- Most husbands enjoy being a father a great deal and most wives report the same for their husbands.
- Marital satisfaction of most couples is very high.

Although I was not able to determine causation between fathers' involvement, wives' stress in parental responsibilities, and wives' satisfaction, determining that these items are correlated is still very significant. With further investigation, I may be able to prove causation between these variables.

If this is the case, this discovery could lead to better interventions for struggling marriages and families such as **therapy models focused on parenting strategies**. With better guidance and skill-building, more families can remain intact and have healthy relationships.

Acknowledgements:

Utah State University Honors Program
 Utah State University Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development
 Utah State University Office of the Vice President for Undergraduate Research
 Utah State University Undergraduate Research Fellows Program
 Dr. Thomas R. Lee, Professor and Department Head of Family, Consumer, and Human Development
 Roxane Pfister, Data Manager, Utah State University
 Adam Galovan Benjamin Thomander Daniel Gudmundson Candace Whiteley

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