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Time Spent Outside the Home and Marital Conflict

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Relationship Between Time Spent Outside the Home and Marital Conflict

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Problem

The aim of this study was to see if external demands, such as work, school, clubs, etc. increase or decrease marital conflict between spouses. We sampled 245 married couples between the ages of 18 and 50, and asked various questions regarding their relationship and external commitments. Our research procedure consisted of distributing a survey through a convenience sample. Through our study, we hoped to find a correlation between time couples spent apart, and relationship quality. Through study of our results, we hope to determine when the time spouses spend apart begins to stress a marriage. By analyzing these results, we hope to better understand healthy marriages and take our findings to our community in hopes to better society.

Method

Our study specifically focused on young, recently married couples who may or may not work outside the home. The sample for our study primarily consisted of married students attending Brigham Young University and Utah Valley University. By using BYU's online gradebook and messaging system called "Learning Suite," we distributed the link to our survey and asked fellow married students to take it. The surveys sent via Learning Suite were directed towards students outside the School of Family Life in hopes that bias would be reduced and so that our data better reflected the general population. As another means of distributing our survey, we posted the link to our survey on Facebook so that family, friends, coworkers, and peers from various parts of the nation could respond, better generalizing our sample. As our study is an observational study we cannot conclude a cause and effect relationship.



Results

- The correlation between what the participant rated their stress level, and what they rated their stress level had a p-value of 0.00.
- The correlation between communication and stress levels within marriage has a p-value of 0.04.
- Since there is a relationship between communication levels and stress levels and a relationship between communication in marriage and use of electronics at home (p-value of 0.00) it stands to reason that is isn't simply a matter of time spouses spend together at home but the quality of time spent together.
- Of the participants that reported arguing with their spouse 2-3 times a week, a large percentage reported that they themselves (77%) or their spouse (69%) spent 7 or more hours outside the home on average each day.
- Of those few that reported arguing on a daily basis it was split between the participant spending only 1-2 hours outside the home, and participant spending 7-9 hours, and the corresponding time spouse spends away was only in the 8- 10+ hours away bracket. This suggests if one spouse is at home for an extended amount of time each day, while the spouse is away the likelihood of conflict is increased.
- Our research supports that the optimal time to spend away from home is 3-6 hours, with your spouse spending that concurrent time away, up to 8 hours

Discussion

Marital conflict has been researched; our specific research question has never been tested until now. Our research question asked throughout the survey was, "Is there a relationship between hours spent outside the home and conflict between spouses?" We hypothesized that as hours outside the home increased (i.e. school, work, clubs, extracurricular activities, etc.), marital conflict would also increase. Our results suggest that there is a correlation between hours spent outside the home and an increase of marital conflict. Through our research we were able to show our hypothesis was correct and for this reason the reported results did fit our expectations.

		How often do you or your spouse use electronics such as phones, the TV, computer, or play video g...
What would you rate your communication level in your marriage?	Chi Square	34.03*
	Degrees of Freedom	9
	p-value	0.00
*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.		
		How often do you or your spouse use electronics such as phones, the TV, computer, or play video g...
What would you rate your conflict level in your marriage?	Chi Square	12.66*
	Degrees of Freedom	12
	p-value	0.39

		What would you rank your stress level?
What would you rate your communication level in your marriage?	Chi Square	21.58*
	Degrees of Freedom	12
	p-value	0.04
*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.		
		What would you rank your stress level?
What would you rate your conflict level in your marriage?	Chi Square	41.04*
	Degrees of Freedom	16
	p-value	0.00
*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.		

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