2010-04-01

Marital Satisfaction and the Transition to Fatherhood

Brandon McDaniel
Sheila Lopez
Erin K. Holmes

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/fhssconference_studentpub

Part of the Family, Life Course, and Society Commons

The Annual Mary Lou Fulton Mentored Research Conference showcases some of the best student research from the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences. The mentored learning program encourages undergraduate students to participate in hands-on and practical research under the direction of a faculty member. Students create these posters as an aide in presenting the results of their research to the public, faculty, and their peers.

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

McDaniel, Brandon; Lopez, Sheila; and Holmes, Erin K., "Marital Satisfaction and the Transition to Fatherhood" (2010). FHSS Mentored Research Conference. 80.

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/fhssconference_studentpub/80

This is brought to you for free and open access by the Family, Home, and Social Sciences at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in FHSS Mentored Research Conference by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
Marital Satisfaction: The Transition to Fatherhood

Brandon McDaniel, Sheila Lopez, & Erin Holmes

Family, Home and Social Sciences College

Abstract

Fathers' marital satisfaction across the transition to fatherhood is a focal point for researchers. The current study investigated factors that may affect fathers' marital satisfaction following the birth of a child. Factors that may affect fathers' marital satisfaction were identified and studied with the use of surveys. Factors that may affect marital satisfaction were found to be communication, appreciation, and support from the spouse. These factors were found to have a significant impact on fathers' marital satisfaction.

Introduction

The transition to fatherhood is a significant life event that can impact a father's marital satisfaction. This study examined a range of self-reported factors and their possible relation to fathers' marital satisfaction across the transition to parenthood. The survey's 37 questions were divided into 13 sections, ranging from communication to housework tasks.

Factors that may affect Fathers' Marital Satisfaction

The factors that may affect marital satisfaction were identified through a literature review. These factors include communication, appreciation, and support from the spouse. The literature review also identified other factors such as financial stress, work-life balance, and emotional well-being.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study were developed to investigate which factors contribute to marital satisfaction in the transition to fatherhood. The hypotheses were as follows:

1. Fathers who feel supported by their spouses will have higher marital satisfaction.
2. Fathers who feel appreciated by their spouses will have higher marital satisfaction.
3. Fathers who communicate effectively with their spouses will have higher marital satisfaction.
4. Fathers who feel that their expectations were met will have higher marital satisfaction.

Methods

Participants

Five hundred fathers who had become fathers within the last year responded to a survey. Participants ranged from age 22 to 31, with about 81% being between the age of 23 and 26 (M = 24.9, SD = 2.56). Most of the respondents were Caucasian (87%), with only 9% reporting that their household income was less than $25,000. All respondents were in their first marriage and had graduated from or were currently attending college.

Expectations

Table 1: Expectations of fathers during the transition to fatherhood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time spent together</td>
<td>23 58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>11 28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby care</td>
<td>14 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work pressures</td>
<td>7 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal attitudes</td>
<td>7 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with child care</td>
<td>5 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep</td>
<td>4 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Intimacy</td>
<td>3 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Fathers who were more satisfied with their marriage were more likely to feel supported by their spouse (M = 3.78, SD = 2.56) and feel more positively about the birth of their child (M = 3.93, SD = 1.45). Fathers who feel supported by their spouse and extended family than did those who reported making less than $40,000 (M = 9.22, SD = 2.45) felt significantly more positive about the birth of their child (M = 7.33, SD = 2.56) than those who were married less than three months and became pregnant (M = 7.33, SD = 2.56) after the pressure of providing for their families (p < .05). All respondents were in their first marriage and had graduated from or were currently attending college.

Conclusion

Although we were unable to gather a complete picture of the factors that contribute to marital satisfaction across the transition to fatherhood, our findings suggest the following: (1) communication, (2) appreciation, and (3) support from the spouse are the most significant factors that contribute to marital satisfaction. These factors should be considered when designing support programs for fathers who are newly married and expecting a child.