

The Effect of Stepfathers on Self-Perception and Familial Support



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Abstract

We used the National Survey on American Life – Adolescent Supplemental (NSAL-A) data set to explore the interplay between self-perception and family relationships based on the absence of a biological father among African-American and Caribbean adolescents. As evident in the findings, those with a stepfather reported to have higher self-esteem, a more positive perception of self, and a more uplifting family model compared to those without a stepfather. Some discrepancy did exist, however; self-esteem with regards to education was reported to be lower for adolescents with a stepfather than without. The data showed the presence of a father figure enhances self-perception and familial support, but not academic motivation.

Key terms: Social development, social impact, nature vs. nurture, adolescents, educational development

Introduction

The National Survey on American Life – Adolescent Supplemental data set was designed to lay the foundation for future research in early identification of mental disorders for adults (Jackson et al., 2016). The inclusion of social conditions adds to this detailed measure of mental health and provides a wealth of information that can be observed about mental well-being in adolescents. Adolescents who do not experience an in-home father figure are less-likely to possess a positive educational experience and are more likely to engage in negative behaviors than those who possess a father figure (Mallers et al., 2010).

Hypothesis

The presence of a stepfather living in the home will have a favorable effect on educational attainment, mental well-being, and self-perception in adolescents. In other words, if a stepfather is present in the home, he/she will face fewer difficulties in these areas, than those individuals without a present step-father. Adolescents with stepfather figures will have overall more positive experiences in their social lives, family environments, and mental health.

Results

Adolescents with stepfathers, compared to no father figure, reported that their family would provide more comfort, make them feel more loved, help them more with problems and have more wealth. Also, adolescents with stepfathers were more satisfied with life, satisfied with self, and thought they could do things as well as others. Lastly, adolescents with step fathers reported that they wanted to go less far and thought they would go less far in school than adolescents without stepfathers.

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
How much comfort would family give R	Between Groups	4.348	1	4.348	11.289	.001
	Within Groups	144.816	376	.385		
	Total	149.164	377			
How often family make you feel loved	Between Groups	1.695	1	1.695	4.462	.035
	Within Groups	142.876	376	.380		
	Total	144.571	377			
Satisfied w/ life	Between Groups	1.667	1	1.667	4.284	.039
	Within Groups	145.951	375	.389		
	Total	147.618	376			
Do things as well as others	Between Groups	1.863	1	1.863	4.143	.043
	Within Groups	169.039	376	.450		
	Total	170.902	377			
Satisfied with self	Between Groups	2.256	1	2.256	5.532	.019
	Within Groups	153.352	376	.408		
	Total	155.608	377			
help_probsR	Between Groups	4.600	1	4.600	10.877	.001
	Within Groups	158.614	375	.423		
	Total	163.215	376			
Family_wealthR	Between Groups	1.413	1	1.413	5.595	.019
	Within Groups	94.688	375	.253		
	Total	96.101	376			
far_in_schl_wantR	Between Groups	11.680	1	11.680	7.699	.006
	Within Groups	570.428	376	1.517		
	Total	582.108	377			
far_in_schl_willR	Between Groups	20.343	1	20.343	9.358	.002
	Within Groups	815.185	375	2.174		
	Total	835.528	376			

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Methods

- Quantitative approach
- N=378
- Noted the significance values for a one-way ANOVA and observed the mean differences among the selected variables.
- Variables were selected on the basis that they pertained to these three problem areas: self-esteem, self-perception, and family dynamics.
- Variables were obtained from the NSAL-A data set.
- Mean difference were examined

Discussion

The presence of a father figure contributes significantly and positively to the cognitive and social growth of an adolescent. As previously mentioned, positively related factors include those centering on family support, self-esteem and self-perception, but not educational goals. Thus, the hypothesis was only partially supported. Because the findings suggest that stepfather households negatively relate to educational goals, it is possible that single mother households provide more support and emphasis on education to try to compensate for the lack of a father figure, and in doing so, overcompensate.

References

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