Fathers Aren’t All the Same and That’s OK: Patterns, Predictors, and Outcomes of Father Involvement Using Latent Profile Analysis

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Introduction

Previous research has investigated the association between father involvement and child and adolescent outcomes. Most of this research has suggested that there is a direct link between the amount of father involvement and outcomes. Pathways (1977) has suggested that it is important to examine fathering in a more subjective manner, that there are many factors that determine involvement, and many ways to be involved.

Research Questions

1. How many patterns of father involvement emerge from a measure of 9 dimensions of father involvement?
2. Are the profiles related to adolescent outcomes?
3. What factors predict profile membership?

Sample

414 participants (M = 19.49, SD = 1.48); 54% female; 11% African American, 5% Asian American, 73% European American, 8% Latino, 3% other

Methods

Indicator Variables:

Inventory of Father Involvement (Hawkins et al., 1997)
Questions assess 9 dimensions of father involvement: discipline and teaching responsibility (α=.80), school encouragement (α=.91), mother support (α=.93), providing (α=.80), time and talking together (α=.91), praise and affection (α=.90), developing talents and future concerns (α=.87), reading and homework support (α=.75), attentiveness (α=.85).

Background Variables:

Background variables were used as predictor variables: gender, ethnicity, parents’ education, mother’s full-time work status, father’s residence/nonresident status, the number of father’s work hours, parents’ marital status, family income.

Outcome Variables:

Antisocial behavior (delinquency and drug use) (α=.85, # of questions: 25)
Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977) (α=.91, # of questions: 20)

Centred Variable:

Maternal Authoritative Parenting - CRPBI (Schaefer, 1965) (α=.90, # of questions: 40)
Included in the model to account for the fact that mothers’ parenting style will influence fathers’ and children’s behavior

Analysis

This investigation used a person-centered method to examine fathering behavior subjectively. It employed latent profile analysis (LPA) to examine patterns of father involvement that emerged from a measure of 9 dimensions of father involvement.

LPA was used to determine the probability of profile membership. Multinomial logistic regression was used to examine which factors predicted the likelihood of profile membership. The outcomes were tested using a Wald test of mean differences across profiles using posterior probability based multiple imputations.

Results

Question 1 - Patterns

5 patterns of fathering behavior emerged. Each profile is associated with a specific set of behaviors and outcomes. Some profiles are associated with more negative outcomes, while others are associated with more positive outcomes. For example, Profile 5, which is characterized by low father involvement, is associated with higher levels of depression and antisocial behavior.

Question 2 – Adolescent Outcomes

Means with an a are significantly different than means with a b. Means with a c are significantly different than means with a d.

Discussion

Patterns:

5 patterns of fathering behavior emerged.

Adolescent Outcomes:

Profile 5 seems to be associated with more negative outcomes. It could be that these fathers are focusing on providing andpressuring their adolescents to do well in school and to think about the future, while at the same time not supporting the mother or showing the adolescent warmth or support. Perhaps this pressure is causing them distress or to act out or to engage in drug and alcohol use to cope with the pressure.

If one looks only at the graph, one might erroneously conclude that low father involvement (Profile 5) leads to less antisocial behavior. However, please note that for antisocial behavior there was no statistical difference between Profiles 1, 2, 4, and 5. Additionally, it should be noted that Profile 5 had the fewest number of fathers having an absent father.

Therefore, it is also likely that these adolescents with absent fathers were likely to be absent nonresident fathers. It could be that these fathers are focusing on providing andpressuring their adolescents to do well in school and to think about the future, while at the same time not supporting the mother or showing the adolescent warmth or support. Perhaps this pressure is causing them distress or to act out or to engage in drug and alcohol use to cope with the pressure.

Predictors

Ethnicity, marital status, education, income, and nonresident status were related to the likelihood of profile membership.

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