



**QUALITY OF FATHER-CHILD
RELATIONSHIPS AND
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
AND SCHOOL DISCIPLINE**

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BACKGROUND LITERATURE

- Prior research has focused on quality of mother-child relationships to predict youth outcomes; however, there is a growing body of research exploring the role of fathers in adolescent development.
- Quality of father-child relationships has been shown to promote:
 - Adolescent's self-esteem (Bulanda & Majumdar, 2008)
 - Educational attainment and college expectations (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Manning & Lamb, 2003)
 - Global happiness and life satisfaction (Amato, 1994)
- Additional research has shown that father-child relations can reduce:
 - Substance abuse (Coombs & Landsverk, 1988; Cookston & Finlay, 2006)
 - Externalizing and internalizing behaviors (Carlson, 2006)
 - Delinquency (Carlson, 2006; Manning & Lamb, 2003; Cookston & Finlay, 2006; Amato & Rivera, 1999)
 - Psychological distress (Carlson, 2006; Cookston & Finlay, 2006)
- The present study expands research on father-child relations in two ways:
 - Including multiple measures of father-child relations
 - Explore the relationship of each measure to adolescent outcomes



RESEARCH QUESTION

1. Does the quality of father-child relationships predict adolescent's academic performance and school discipline?



FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

Closeness

- How close do you feel to your father?
- How much do you think he cares about you?
- Most of the time, your father is warm and loving toward you.
- Overall, you are satisfied with your relationship with your father.
- Alpha = .85

Activities

- Doing
 - E.g. Going shopping; playing a sport; going to a movie or museum
- Talking
 - E.g. About a personal problem; about school work or grades; about someone your dating

Communication

- You are satisfied with the way your father and you communicate with each other.



YOUTH OUTCOMES

Academic Performance

- Self-report grades (most recent grading period)
 - English Language Arts (ELA)
 - Mathematics
 - History/Social Studies
 - Science
- Overall self-report of grades

School Discipline

- Skipping school
- Repeating a grade
- Out-of-school suspension



SAMPLE

- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Wave 1)
 - Nationally representative sample of US adolescents
 - Adolescent In-Home interviews
- Sample descriptives:
 - Resident fathers (biological/step/adoptive)
 - N = 11,702
 - Mean age of 15.66 years, equal numbers of males and females, and mostly White.



MODELING FRAMEWORK

- Regression Analyses
 - Predict Youth Outcomes using Father Closeness, Activities, and Communication
 - Controlled for Teen's Age, Gender, Race, Parent Education, and Mother Closeness



ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

	Overall (N=9833)	ELA (N=9833)	Math (N=9833)	History (N=9833)	Science (N=9833)
Direct Effects	β	β	β	β	β
Closeness	.11***	.08***	.06**	.09***	.12***
Doing Activities	.14***	.12***	.10***	.12***	.10***
Talking Activities	.01	.00	.01	.02	.01
Communication	-.02	-.02	-.01	-.03	-.01

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001



SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

	Skipping School (N=9,917)	Repeating a Grade (N=10,066)	Suspension (N=10,065)
Direct Effects	β	β	β
Closeness	-.06*	-.04	-.16***
Doing Activities	-.06***	-.08***	-.14***
Talking Activities	.00	-.02	.09***
Communication	-.05	.02	.01

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001



CONCLUSIONS

- Quality of father-child relationships is associated with better academic performance and lower school discipline.
- Father closeness, *over and above mother closeness*, is related to academic performance and school discipline.
- Doing activities, *rather than talking activities*, is more strongly related to academic performance and school discipline.



NEXT STEPS

- Mother activities and communication
- Longitudinal Analyses
- Gender Differences

