

Observance of Family Routines by Family Type

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Abstract

Family routines are observable and repetitious family behaviors that provide structure and order to families. The current study explored whether the observance of regular family routines varied by family structure. Parents representing four family structure (i.e., two-parent biological intact, single-parent, blended, and cohabiting families) reported the frequency of observance of family routines within the home. Results revealed no significant differences in the observance of family routines by family structure.

Introduction

Family routines are observable and repetitious family behaviors that provide structure and order, define roles and responsibilities, and provide meaning and a sense of belonging (Fiese & Marjinsky, 1999; Schuck & Bucy, 1997; Viere, 2001; Wildenger et al., 2008). Furthermore, routines provide stability and predictability to children and promote their social, emotional, and mental well-being (Koome et al., 2012; Wildenger et al., 2008). Common examples of family routines include dinnertime customs, bedtime practices, and weekend leisure activities (Schuck & Bucy, 1997).

As the number of two-parent biological intact families have decreased in recent years, single-parent, blended, and cohabiting families have increased. While research has examined children and their well-being within these family structures, little research has explored how family routines are observed within different family types. The current study explored whether observation of family routines varied by family structure.

Method

Participants

- Participants were recruited using purposive sampling
- 201 parents participated (159 mothers and 43 fathers)
- 64% were White; 30% were African American
- Average length of marriage was nearly 15 years
- Average length of cohabitation was 5 years

Measure

- 7 items measured the frequency of observance of family routines (e.g., “Whole family eats at least one meal together daily” or “Children have special things they do or ask for each night at bedtime (e.g., story, good-night kiss, hug, etc.)”)
- 4-point Likert scale (0 = *False*, 1 = *Mostly False*, 2 = *Mostly True*, and 3 = *True*)
- Cronbach’s alpha was .69
- Mean frequency was 16.05 (SD = 3.40); range from 3 to 21



Results

Observance of family routines by family type is listed in the table below.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed no significant differences in frequency of family routines by family structure ($F(3, 187) = 0.67, n.s.$).

Participants, regardless of family structure, did not differ significantly in the observance of family routines.

Observance of Family Routines by Family Type

Family Type	Mean	SD
Two-parent biological intact ($n = 49$)	19.69	5.06
Single-parent ($n = 52$)	18.54	2.86
Blended ($n = 50$)	18.96	5.25
Cohabiting ($n = 50$)	18.63	2.04

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Discussion and Application

The results of this study suggest families, regardless of family structure, observe regular family routines. Considering the benefits provided by family routines (Fiese & Marjinsky, 1999; Koome et al., 2012; Schuck & Bucy, 1997; Viere, 2001; Wildenger et al., 2008), these findings are encouraging. However, the next step is to explore how these family routines influence family well-being, particularly among children.

The common observance of family routines, as demonstrated by the results of this study, suggest the utility and importance of regular family routines. Those working with families can help families recognize the benefits of implementing and maintaining regular family routines. One additional approach is to help families prioritize family routines, such as developing an “intentional family” mindset (Doherty, 1997), such as preventing outside activities and influences from detracting families from observing family routines.

References

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