

FINAL protocol

Effect of father's depression on the marital relationship: a systematic review

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PROJECT TITLE:

Effect of father's depression on marital relationship: A meta-analytic review

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Decision problem

What are the effects of fathers' depression on the quality of marital (partner) relationship?

Purpose

The purpose of this systematic review is to help clarify the difficulties fathers with depression experience in their marital (partner) relationship. The objectives of the project are:

- Estimate the magnitude of the effect of fathers' depression on marital (partner) relationship
- Investigate potential moderators of this association, including the methodology by which marital relationship is assessed (self-reports or observations) and characteristics of the sample (clinical or non-clinical population, years in the relationship)

- **Population**
- Fathers with a clinical diagnosis of depression or high levels of depressive symptoms and fathers without depression (clinical diagnosis or depressive symptoms)
- Married or living together or cohabitating

Outcomes to be examined

If possible, outcome measures will include:

- Positive dimensions of marital relationship (i.e., affection, satisfaction, cohesion)
- Negative dimensions of marital relationship (i.e., conflict, aggression)

Methods of synthesis of evidence

The assessment report will include a systematic review of the evidence for the effects of fathers' depression on the marital relationship. The review will be undertaken following the general principles published by CRD (2008).

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Search strategy

No methods filter will be applied. The master search strategy will be translated and run on a number of databases. The search strategy will comprise the following main elements:

- Searching of electronic databases including PsychLIT, PubMed, Cochrane Library, EMBASE, CINAHL
- No time period searching limitation
- Inclusion of English language papers only
- Scrutiny of bibliographies of included studies
- Hand searching of relevant journals (i.e., based on journals that occur frequently in the included literature)
- Contact with experts in the field (i.e., list of authors contacted)
- Internet searching of relevant websites (i.e., fragile families and child wellbeing, child trends)
- Record of the number of papers found
- Justification for exclusion of the studies for the flowchart

STUDY SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

Types of study to be included

- Cross-sectional
- Longitudinal
- Surveys
- Case control studies
- Case studies (?)

Types of study to be excluded

- Narrative reviews, editorials, opinions
- Dissertations
- Reports published as meeting abstracts only, where insufficient methodological and statistical information are presented

Study selection

- The abstracts and titles of references retrieved by the electronic searches will be screened for relevance by two reviewers (Anke Karl and Lamprini Psychogiou)

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- Log of all excluded studies will be kept
- Full paper copies of all relevant studies will be obtained
- The retrieved papers will be assessed for inclusion by two reviewers (AK and LP)
- Discrepancies will be resolved by discussion, with the involvement of a third reviewer (Jo Coon-Thompson)
- All duplicate papers (i.e., papers from longitudinal studies) will be double checked and excluded (But what about longitudinal studies with long gaps in assessment points?)

Inclusion criteria

- Assessment of self-reported or interviewer-assessed fathers' depressive symptoms or diagnoses
- Assessment of father-reported or observationally assessed marital relationship
- Provision of sufficient statistical information (i.e., mean differences between the depressed and non-depressed groups in each study, standard deviations of the outcome for each group)
- Articles not reporting this statistical information will be included in a narrative/descriptive synthesis but excluded from the meta-analysis (?)
- Focus of study is NOT on parents of a special group of children (i.e., autistic children, premature infants, children with cancer)

Exclusion criteria

Studies that reported effect sizes calculated using only

- Measures of general psychopathology (i.e., combined measures of depression and anxiety, or general negative mood)
- Combined depressive symptoms or diagnoses for fathers and mothers
- Combined assessment of marital relationship for fathers and mothers

STUDY CODING

Study information

- Type of study (i.e., cohort versus cross-sectional)
- Study citation (authors and year)
- Study participation status (published or unpublished)
- If published, in which journal

Sample information

- Sample size in each of depressed and non-depressed groups
- Mean (SD) age of participants

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- Years in marriage or relationship
- Race/ethnicity of the sample
- Depression measure
- How depression was assessed (symptoms or diagnosis)
- The timing of depressive symptoms or diagnosis (current or lifetime)
- Onset of depression (if possible)

Methodological information

- Method by which marital relationship was assessed (self-report or observational)
- If self-report, the measure used
- If observational
 - The type of task used (structured or unstructured)
 - Location of the observational assessment (lab or home)
 - The length of task in minutes
 - A description of the coding system used to rate marital relationship

Outcome information

- Marital relationship dimension assessed (i.e., affection, conflict)
- Category of marital relationship dimension (positive or negative)

Quality assessment strategy

- The quality of individual studies will be assessed by two reviewers (LP and AK)
- Risk of bias in the included studies will be assessed (CRD, 2008)
 - Inadequacies in study design
 - Inadequacies in statistical analysis
- Level of detail required in the assessment
- Validity of studies included

Data analysis strategy

Random effects meta-analysis will be used to combine the estimated effects across studies that are considered to be combinable (i.e. studied the same population, used similar definitions of depressed and non-depressed status, measured the same outcomes, etc). The effect of depression on quality of marital relationship in each study will be quantified on the effect size scale by dividing the mean difference in marital relationship score between depressed and non-depressed fathers by the pooled *standard deviation* across the groups. The *standard error* for the mean difference will be calculated on the effect size scale (assuming that we have the sample size in each group and the standard deviation in each group). These standard errors will then be used to calculate weights when pooling estimates across the studies. The results will be summarised numerically and for each study and the overall pooled estimate across studies using a forest plot. A funnel plot will be drawn to investigate the possibility of publication bias.

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If there are sufficient studies, meta-regression will be used to investigate potential moderators of the effect of depression status and whether effect size depends on the dimension of marital relationship used as the outcome.

Master search strategy

PANEL 1 Medline Search Strategy

- 1 Exp Fathers/
- 2 exp Parents/
- 3 (father* or paternal).ti,ab.
- 4 parent*.ti,ab.
- 5 ((men or male*) adj3 depress*).ti,ab.
- 6 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5
- 7 exp "Depression (Emotion)"/
- 8 exp Affective Disorders/
- 9 exp Dysthymic Disorder/
- 10 exp Psychopathology/ (
- 11 (depress* or (affective adj disorder*) or dysthm* or dysphor* or (negative adj emotion*) or (low adj3 mood*) or psychopathology or (mental adj health)).ti,ab.
- 12 exp marriage/ or exp marriage attitudes/ or exp marriage counseling/
- 13 exp marital conflict/ or exp marital relations/ or exp marital satisfaction/ or exp marital separation/ or exp marital status/
- 14 exp Family Conflict/
- 15 (marriage* or marital or (domestic adj relation*) or (partner* adj relation*)).ti,ab.
- 16 interparental.ti,ab.
- 17 (family adj (function* or conflict*)).ti,ab.
- 18 (couple* adj (relation* or satisfaction)).ti,ab.
- 19 12 or 13 or 14 or 15 or 16 or 17 or 18
- 20 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 or 11
- 21 6 and 19 and 20