

Association Between Parental Support, Well-Being, and

Feelings Toward Parenting

Passion Driven
Statistics

James Cromwell Young

Research Mentor: Dr. Kristel M. Gallagher



Research Questions

1. Is there an association between parents' well-being and their attitude toward their parenting?
2. Is there an association between strength of support systems a parent has and their feelings about parenting?

Background Research

Researchers examined whether parents having a social support system was associated with parental exhaustion (Gillis & Roskam, 2019).

- For fathers, partner support does not seem to have a significant effect on exhaustion, suggesting support may be needed from somewhere else.
- Parental exhaustion can lead to negative parent-child relationships, which can relate to having negative feelings about parenting.

Parents of children diagnosed with severe emotional disturbance (SED) and an undiagnosed sibling were examined to see the association between social support, parental well-being, and parental stress (Palamaro et al., 2012).

- Social support seems to be positively associated with parental/caregiver well-being, however not with parental strain. This suggests that although parents may get support and feel satisfied about it, they still have the parental stress that comes with a child.
- The more strained a parent feels, the more conflict and difficulties that occur in their household.

Researchers examined Chinese parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (Yan et al., 2022).

- Parents who received more social support were shown to be more involved in their children's lives and increase parental well-being, such as more life satisfaction or more positive emotions.
- Different support systems, such as family versus friends, were shown to have different impacts on the parent and their parenting.

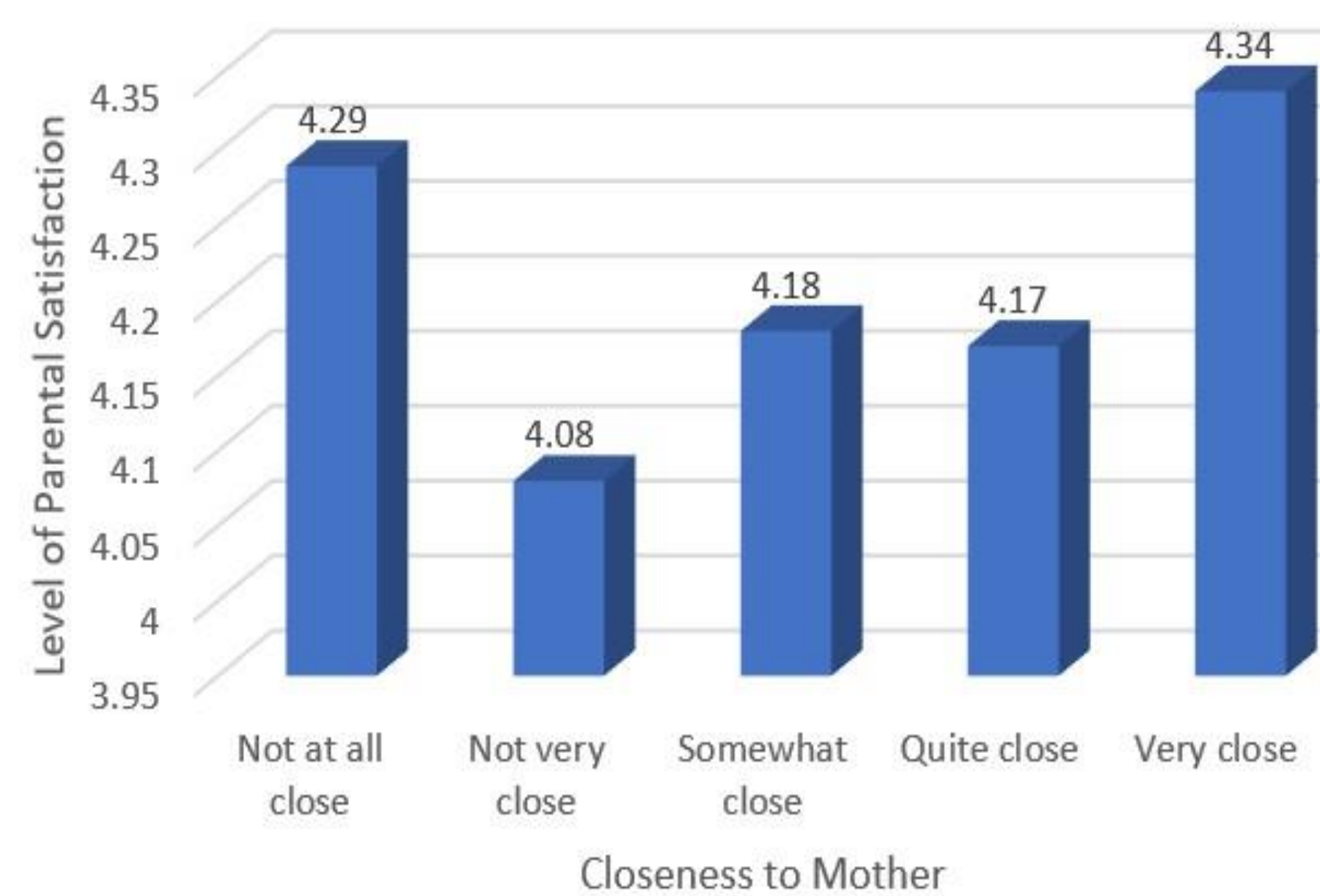


Figure 1. Closeness to mother explaining parental satisfaction.

Method

Sample

This project utilized secondary data analysis to answer the research questions. The data was drawn from a publically available sample of respondents from Wave IV of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health). Add Health is a nationally representative sample of adults living in all 50 states of the United States. Wave IV was collected in 2008 and contains 5,114 respondents aged 25-34 years. Of those, 46% are male and 54% are female. The race breakdown includes approximately 72% white, 24% black or African American, 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 3% Asian or Pacific Islander. For the purpose of this study, only parents' data were used, making the total number of respondents 2,579. Respondents answered questions using a likert scale or "yes or no" answers.

Measures

To test for parental well-being I...

- Created a secondary variable to determine depression level of parents based on CESD Depression Scale. So, a respondent's response to each variable to determine an overall assessment of each respondent's depression levels. These were the variables:
 - In the last week how often have these been true:
 - You were bothered by things that usually don't bother you. (0-3)
 - You could not shake off the blues, even with help from your family and your friends. (0-3)
 - You had trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing. (0-3)
 - You felt depressed. (0-3)
 - You felt sad. (0-3)
- Created a secondary variable to determine perceived stress scale of parents based on Cohen Perceived Stress Scale. So, a respondent's response to each variable to determine an overall assessment of each respondent's stress levels. These were the variables:
 - In the last 30 days, how often have you felt that you were unable to:
 - Control the important things in your life? (0-4)
 - How often have you felt confident in your ability to handle your personal problems? (0-4)
 - How often have you felt that things were going your way? (0-4)
 - How often have you felt that difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them? (0-4)

To test for strength of parental support systems:

- How close do you feel to your mother figure? (1-5)
- How close do you feel to your father figure? (1-5)

To test for parental feelings toward parenting:

- Created a secondary variable to determine how parents felt about different aspects of parenting:
 - I am happy in my role as a parent. (1-5)
 - I feel close to my children. (1-5)
 - My children are the major source of stress in my life. (1-5)
 - I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a parent. (1-5)

Results

Univariate Statistics

- The median level of stress for respondents was approximately at a level of 5, with a standard deviation of around 2.98 and range between levels of 0 and 16.
- The median level of depression for respondents was approximately at a level of 2, with a standard deviation of around 2.56 and range between 0 and 15.
- 4.5% of respondents reported not feeling close to their father figure at all, 5.6% reported feeling not very close, 16% reported feeling somewhat close, 23.5% reported feeling quite close, and 50.4% reported feeling very close.
- 2.2% of respondents reported not feeling close to their mother figure at all, 4.7% reported feeling not very close, 5% reported feeling somewhat close, 28% reported feeling quite close, and 60.2% reported feeling very close.
- The median level of parental satisfaction for respondents was approximately at a level of 4, with a standard deviation of 0.62 and range between levels of 0 and 6.

Bivariate Statistics

- A correlation test was conducted to examine the association between a parent's level of depression-like symptoms and their feelings about parenting. The results showed significance and the correlation was weak and negative, $r(2579) = -0.22, p < .0001$.
- A correlation test was conducted to examine the association between a parent's level of stress and their feelings about parenting. The results showed significance and the correlation was weak and negative, $r(2579) = -0.25, p < .0001$.
- An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the relationship between strength of paternal support system and a parent's feelings about parenting. The ANOVA was significant, suggesting that there was a relationship between strength of paternal support system and a parent's feelings about parenting, $F(4, 2079) = 9.53, p < 0.0001$.
- An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the relationship between strength of maternal support system and a parent's feelings toward their own parenting. The ANOVA was significant, suggesting that there was a relationship between strength of maternal support system and a parent's feelings about parenting, $F(4, 2400) = 10.38, p < 0.0001$.

Multivariate Statistics

Gender was tested as a possible moderating variable in the association between a respondent's closeness to their father and their feelings about parenting. The original ANOVA did show significance ($p < .0001$). In the original analysis, parents that were closer to their fathers showed higher parental satisfaction. When only examining males or females, both results were still significant. Males had better feelings about parenting when closer to their father figure ($p = 0.0003$). This was the same for females ($p = 0.0006$). Therefore, gender is not a moderating factor.

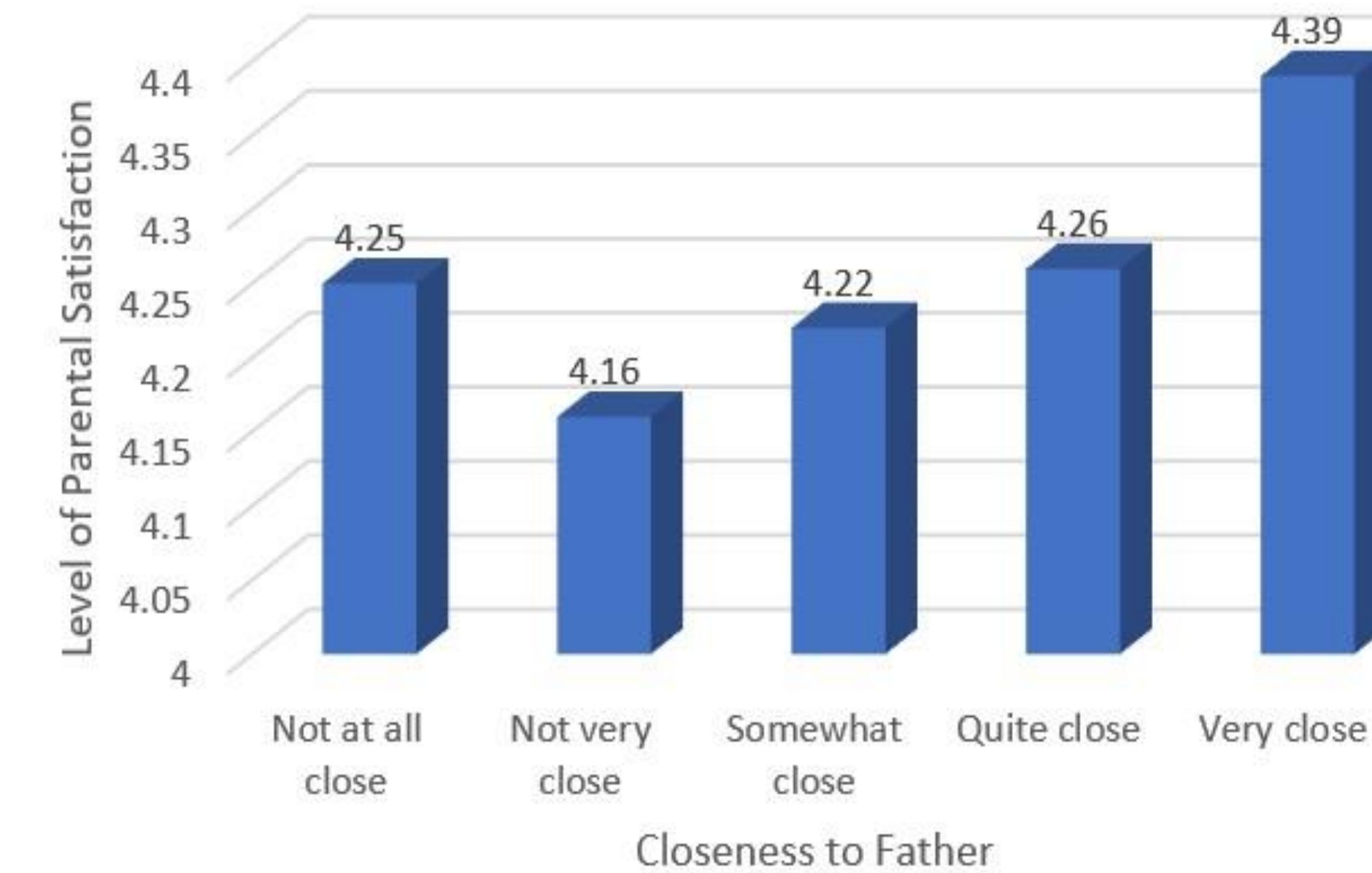


Figure 2. Closeness to father explaining parental satisfaction.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that there is a correlation between a parent's well-being and their feelings about their own parenting. However, this relationship, while significant, is not very strong. This study also suggested a relationship between parental support and feelings toward their own parenting. This was a significant relationship. With these findings, there is further emphasis put on the role of the parent. It is common belief that parenting should end at 18, but this study suggests otherwise. By continuing to build parent-child relationships well into adulthood, the parent is able to feel better, and likely perform better in their role. Further, although the significant relationship between parental well-being and their feelings toward parenting was weak, it should still be highlighted. There being significance suggests that at least some attention should be paid to parents' well-being. For future research, different types of support systems, such as friends, mentors, coworkers, etc. could be examined. This could give insight into what support systems are more strongly linked to a parent's attitude toward their parenting. Another possible avenue for future research could be analyzing the relationship between the support system(s) and well-being of parents. It is likely that all three variables (support system, well-being, and attitude toward parenting) are interconnected. If by building support, their well-being improves that could have great outcomes for both the parent and child.

References

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