Impact of Mother Being in School on Academic Success of Her Child(ren)
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Background

- The number of women completing a 4-year college degree increased 256% between 1971 and 2011 compared to men at 110% during the same time frame (U.S. Department of Commerce [UDC], 2011).
- In 2015, 60% of women completed at least some college courses, and 33% of women completed a bachelor’s degree, compared to 58% men who completed some college courses and 32% completed a bachelor’s degree (UDC, 2015).
- Over 26% of all undergraduate students, or 4.8 million students, are raising dependent children, with women making up 71% of all student parents. (Institute of Women Policy Research [IWPR], 2014).
- Mothers are usually the primary caretaker of children, and their mean level of involvement with children’s activities is higher than fathers (Kim & Hill, 2015).
- There is lack of evidence “how does a mother’s pursuit of higher education impact (negatively versus positively) the academic interest of her children?”

Setting and Method

- Student Mothers (SMs) who are, or ever did pursue higher education while having children between ages 9-30 years, will be recruited from a public Midwestern university in the U.S., social media (Facebook and LinkedIn); a rural community including local churches, and ten Rural Health Centers of North Dakota. The majority of SMs contacts are from the U.S., Canada, Australia, India, and Philippines.
- A self-developed electronic survey (evaluated by six mental health experts from different geographic locations) with Score Content Validity Index (S-CVI) of 0.96, will be distributed electronically. Poli and Beck (2006) suggest S-CVI score of >0.80 as acceptable for an instrument to be valid.
- Participation in the electronic survey will imply SMs’ informed consent. Descriptive analysis of all survey responses will be completed. The goal is to assess the impact of mother’s who are in formal college courses on the academic success of her children. This analysis will also enhance the understanding of the concept of “Role Modeling” in context with mother-child relationship.

Proposed Project

- Helping SMs to know how their pursuit of higher education while caring for children impacts (negatively versus positively) the academic interest of their child(ren). Negative impact will serve as a guide to review SMs’ studying techniques at personal and systemic levels. Positive impact will encourage current and future SMs in pursuing higher education.
- Establishing awareness (of unique challenges faced by SMs) among key stakeholders to promote their cooperation at various levels. This will facilitate present and future SMs’ higher education endeavors.

Purpose

To explore the impact of mother being in school on academic success of her child(ren) and increase the understanding of key stakeholders (SMs’ employers; universities enrolling SMs; and members of SMs’ families and communities) regarding unique challenges faced by SMs in pursuit of higher education while caring for their child(ren).

Theoretical Framework or Demographics

Theory of Modeling and Role-Modeling (MRM) (Erickson, Tomlin, & Swain, 1983).

Facilitator

Promoting Positive Orientation

Modeling Positive Orientation

Unconditional Acceptor

Promoting Control

Nurturer

Mother Vs. Nurse

Modeling Role-Modeling

Children Vs. Patients

Building Trust

Health Versus Education Goals

Promoting Trust

Figure. Adaptation of Major Concepts of Theory of MRM for the Capstone Project

Implications for Practice

- Findings of this project may potentially improve key stakeholders’ cooperation and thereby create evidence-based systemic-level changes (such as individualized due dates for student assignments, personal connection between SMs and faculty members, on-campus and workplace lactation rooms and child care provisions, increased child care help by members of SMs families and communities)
- Systemic changes will promote higher education at various levels including nursing and health professions, which will enhance patient care and improve patient outcomes. In addition, higher education yields to tremendous personal (enhanced self-directedness and management, better self-esteem, personality development etc) and socio-economic (higher income, increased homeownership, overall better living) benefits (Bureau of Census [BC], 2016a, BC, 2016b; Sogunro, 2015).

References