

The Co-Parental Relationship has Indirect Effects on Child Development Outcomes

The co-parental relationship indirectly affects the parent-child relationship. For example, when fathers are supportive and encouraging, mothers are more competent parents. They are more patient, flexible, emotionally responsive, sensitive, and available to their infants and young children. This tends to enhance the quality of the mother-child relationship and thus facilitates positive developmental outcomes for their children such as being popular with peers, increased self-control and academic competence and positive relationships with peers and intimate partners. The effect of a supportive co-parental relationship seems to work for fathers as well. Therefore, support from wives can improve the quality of the father's parenting which in turn has positive child development outcomes.

When the co-parental relationship is not supportive, children suffer. For example, husbands who show little warmth or are abusive towards their wives, have wives who are more likely to feel emotionally drained, irritable, and distracted. This increases the likelihood that they will employ non-effective parenting

strategies (such as harsher and less consistent discipline) when interacting with their children and respond to them in an impatient, non-nurturing manner.

Research consistently documents a negative association between marital discord and children development outcomes such as academic success, behavioural conduct, emotional adjustment, self esteem and social competence.

Happily married parents interact more positively with their infant, preschool child and school age child.

A positive co-parental relationship models many important relationship skills that children can use in their own relationships such as: providing emotional support, resolving conflict effectively, showing respect, and positive, open communication patterns.

When fathers are emotionally supportive of their spouses, wives are more likely to enjoy a greater sense of well being, good post partum mental health and have a relatively problem free pregnancy, delivery process, and nursing experience.