Married vs. Non-married Students

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Introduction

College students are in different stages of life. They have different circumstances and experience that contribute to their academic success. The topic of this study is Grade Point Average for married students and non-married students. The purpose of this study is to explore how married students’ Grade Point Average compares to single students’ Grade Point Average. The research question that must be addressed to understand marital status and Grade Point Average is what is the average Grade Point Average for married students compared to non-married students?

Review of Literature

Introduction

College students come to school at different stages of life, some are married and some are not married. Married students face a different college experience than their single counterparts. This raises the question whether married students or non-married students achieve higher academic performance and higher grade point averages.

Married Students

Meehan (2003) demonstrates that “married students who had relatively high levels of social support from friends and family manifested better academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and more commitment and attachment to the goals and institution” (p. 5). Married students may perform better in school because they have better academic adjustment due to spousal support and a positive husband-wife relationship leading to overall satisfaction in life, and their maturity level tends to be more focused on accomplishing their schooling. There is data that indicates academic adjustment is better among married
students than single students, “Essentially, spousal support appears to act as a buffer against stress, especially if spousal empathy is present” (p.2).

Having a wife and child or children seems to steer married college males to greater academic adjustment. “The academic adjustment of married males was better than it was for single males when using a comparison of their over-all grade point averages” (Busselen, 1975). Spousal support is of great value. “The husband-wife relationship is of great importance…the relationship of marital satisfaction and academic adjustment appear to be positively correlated” (Busselen, 1975). The more secure a student feels in their relationship with their spouse, they are more satisfied with life, and tend to give a higher academic performance. A 2003 study “found that students with less free time to study had a significantly higher GPA than those with more” (Sarath A. Nonis). Married students may have less time to study because of their added responsibilities.

Non-married students

Studies show that marital satisfaction was statistically significant in correlation to student’s adaptation to college, but single students scored better on social adjustment and goal commitment. Married students may have lower adjustment in these two categories because they have increased responsibilities at home and in their marriage (Meehan, 2003). There are two contradictory hypotheses out there concerning the achievement of married students. First is that they are usually older and therefore more mature, and are more highly motivated to achieve good grades and have the maturity to manage the demands of college. On the other hand, married students may not have as much time and energy as single students, so some say marriage is detrimental to success (Yess, 1981).
Students may put off marriage until well after college to get better grades and to find themselves. “Lo and behold, people have come to the conclusion that it’s not much fun to get married and have kids right out of college” (Grossman, 2005). If students wait to get married until after college they may be able to get a better idea of who they are, become more adjusted to life, and achieve better grades. Students who get married later in life may not have the family support of married students during their college years, but they make up for that with friendship (p. 4).

Summary

There is evidence and research to back up married students having higher achievement, but there is also evidence to support the opposite claim. The research study will find which side of the literature review is supported. Through analyzing the two variables, it will be determined whether or not being married in college makes a negative impact on a student’s grades.

Methods

Introduction

Do married college students receive higher grade point averages than their non married counterparts? Based on the literature review, married students seem to have a greater advantage when it comes to academic achievement because of maturity levels, family support, and priorities.

Participants

Participants were community college students from Salt Lake Community College, in Salt Lake City, Utah. The 1,460 participants varied in: location of where they attend school, location of residence, age, part time or full time student status, and gender. Students at the Community College were randomly selected to participate in a survey.
Instrument

The instrument to collect the data was a paper based survey called the Community College Survey of Student Engagement. The CCSSE provides information on student engagement. The CCSSE was created “with the intention of producing new information about community college quality and performance that would provide value to institutions in their efforts to improve student learning and retention” (CCSSE, 2010).

Procedures

The CCSSE was used to collect data about student’s college experiences. Surveys were taken to multiple campuses at different times of day to ensure participants were randomly selected and represented. The survey collected data that measured student engagement in higher education, specifically community college. The survey asked how many hours in a typical week students spend doing different activities, for example time spent providing care for dependents. Survey participants marked 1 for 1-5 hours a week, 2 for 6-10 hours a week, etc. Another variable studied was family and friend support. Responses were ranked from 1-not very to 4-extremely. The survey asked if the participant was married, and analyzed that with a number to see the results. There was also a section that inquires about overall Grade Point Average, scored 1-8 with 8 being the highest. Questions were closed-ended questions where there was only one right answer. The null hypothesis is there is no difference between married and non-married students in terms of Grade Point Average at Salt Lake Community College. The alternative hypothesis is marital status will be positively related to Grade Point Average for students at Salt Lake Community College. The alternative hypothesis will be correct based on the literature. Items from the survey indicating if the student is married as well as the questions that infer about
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overall grade point average will determine if married students have higher grade point averages in contrast to single, unmarried students.

Interpretation of Data

Data will be interpreted using a t-test comparing marital status to grade point average. The test will take both variables from the survey and analyze both items to get the results. The data analysis will provide insight as to how a married community college student’s Grade Point Average compares to their non-married peers Grade Point Average.

Summary

Students at Salt Lake Community College took a survey called the Community College Survey of Student Engagement in the spring semester of 2010. They gave information about their marital status and their grade point averages. Through conducting a t-test, it will be determined how married students vs. non-married students compare in their Grade Point Average.

Results

Number of participants

1,460 students at Salt Lake Community College completed the Community College Survey of Student Engagement. 1,417 students’ surveys were completed with marriage and grade point average variables. Of those 1,417 students, 1019 were not married and 398 were married.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MARRY</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>6.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>1019</td>
<td>6.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Average score of groups

The average Grade Point Average score for married students was 6.60. The average Grade Point Average score for unmarried students was 6.20. Married students have a higher average GPA than unmarried students.

Standard Deviation of groups

Standard deviation of married group was 1.305 and standard deviation of unmarried group was 1.335.

P Value

The P value for these statistics is p<.001, which means married students have a higher GPA than unmarried students and the difference is statistically significant. There is less than a 0.1% chance that the difference is due to random error. Married students are more academically successful.

Null Hypothesis

The null hypothesis stated that there is no difference between married and non-married students in terms of Grade Point Average at Salt Lake Community College. This hypothesis is rejected because the t-test showed there is a difference and married students have a higher GPA. The p value showed that there is a significant difference that is not related to random error.

Discussion

Conclusion

The question was posed whether married or unmarried community college students received a higher Grade Point Average. Using the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, the comparative GPA’s were explored using a t test. The main research question
was: What is the average Grade Point Average for married students compared to non-married students?

**Interpretation of Results**

The results showed that married students have a higher Grade Point Average and there is less than a 0.1% chance that the difference is due to random error. Married students have a higher GPA, so it does not necessarily mean students have to wait until after college to get married. They can be successful in school while married because they have higher support and more motivation to succeed for their dependents. Meehan (2003) showed in a study, that married students have better overall adjustment in life and therefore tend to do better in college courses. Busselen (1975) also found significance in marriage and academics, “The husband-wife relationship is of great importance…the relationship of marital satisfaction and academic adjustment appear to be positively correlated.” Another piece of literature that supports the theory that married students receive higher grades is from Nonis (2003) who “found that students with less free time to study had a significantly higher GPA than those with more.” The data from the CCSSE supports this theory and the alternative hypothesis.

**Implications**

The implications of this data are that it is not detrimental for a student to get married while still in college. Some people advise to wait until after college to get married because it alters your academic success (Yess, 1981); it seems to be the opposite though. When a person is not married yet, they may not have the same drive and motivation to do well as a married individual. When a student is married they might have clearer goal in sight of why their education is important to support their family, and with that goal, they are driven to succeed and
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Married students have more responsibilities than non-married students most of the time, so they have to be especially organized with their time (Nonis, 2003).

Limitations

The limitations in this study are that it is data based on one community college in one state. It would be beneficial to compare with other community colleges in other states and see if all married students have higher GPA’s than non-married students, or if it is exclusive to Utah. It would also help generalize the conclusion if data was taken from University students, as well as Community College students to see if there is any difference there. Another limitation is the survey results were only as true as the participants’ answers. They could have fabricated their answer to make their Grade Point Average higher than it really was.

Future Research

Future research would include analyzing the data from other surveys to see how they compare to Salt Lake Community College, comparing to other community colleges in the country and also to Universities in Utah and elsewhere. Another point of future research is comparing GPA to another factor, to determine why married students have a higher Grade Point Average. Determining if they have more study time, or less absences, or more interaction with the teacher, etc. might extend the scope of the study. Another aspect of future research would explore whether married men vs. married women compare in Grade Point Average compared to single men and women.

Summary

The findings of this research study are very interesting to teachers and college students alike. The data is would be most interesting for a student contemplating if they should get
married now or later. Students may wonder if they should put education first, and then worry about marriage. Non-married students appear to have lower Grade Point Averages though because their priorities may be different than married students. Grossman (2005) talked about single students waiting to settle down until well after college graduation, because they need to find themselves before they can make a commitment to dependents. The biggest significance of the findings is that the common idea of finishing your education first is not necessarily the best way. It is possible to be married and still achieve academic success.
References


