

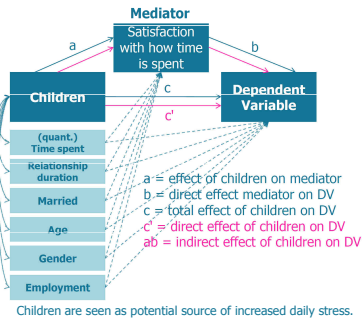
1. Theoretical Background

The amount of time spouses spend together is considered to be critically important for

- marital satisfaction (Crawford et al., 2002) and
- marital distress / conflicts (Hatch & Bulcroft, 2004).

Despite the fact that shared free time has increased over the last four decades (Voorpostel et al., 2009, 2010), couples subjectively report a lack of time for family and spouse. Especially dual earning couples (Crouter & Crowley, 1990) and couples with (young) children (e.g. Roxburgh, 2002, 2006) are exposed to time pressure in everyday life, that makes intimate spousal time sparse. However, little is known about if and how these couples vary in the amount of free time they spend together pursuing different leisure activities and how this affects relevant relationship outcomes.

The depicted mediation model is tested based on the stress-divorce-model (Bodenmann, 1995, 2000) which postulates that external daily stressors decrease the time partners spend together and hence result in lower relation quality due to a loss of joint experiences, weakening feelings of togetherness, and poorer dyadic coping.



Objectives:

- Do people spend less time (on specific activities) with their spouses when they have children? Do they evaluate the time spent together differently?
- Do time measures mediate the relationship between having children and relationship satisfaction, dyadic coping, arguing or couple internal stress?

2. Methods

Sample

- Online self-description questionnaires – survey period: 15.04. - 15.09.2011

Descriptive Statistics	
Age (Range 14 – 60 years)	$M = 31.36$; $SD = 9.66$ $M_2 = 30.88$; $SD_2 = 9.35$; $M_3 = 33.71$; $SD_3 = 11.54$ [$t = 1.632$, $df = 259$, $p = .104$]
Duration of relationship (Range 1 – 40 years)	$M = 8.14$; $SD = 8.27$ $M_2 = 7.84$; $SD_2 = 7.54$; $M_3 = 9.09$; $SD_3 = 10.27$ [$t = 0.870$, $df = 80$, $p = .387$]
Relationship satisfaction (Range 1 – 6)	$M = 5.03$; $SD = .92$ → highly satisfied sample $M_2 = 5.05$; $SD_2 = 0.91$; $M_3 = 4.98$; $SD_3 = 0.95$ [$t = 1.632$, $df = 259$, $p = .104$]
Married (0=no, 1=yes)	♀ = 41.3%; ♂ = 40.3% [$Chi^2 = 0.020$, $df = 1$, $p = .889$]
Children (0=no, 1=yes)	♀ = 42.6%; ♂ = 41.4% [$Chi^2 = 0.023$, $df = 1$, $p = .881$]
Employment (0=no, 1=yes)	♀ = 68.1%; ♂ = 79.3% [$Chi^2 = 2.698$, $df = 1$, $p = .100$]
Citizenship	76% German; 10% Swiss; 11% Austrian; 3% other

- Dropout** The original sample of $N = 325$ has been reduced by 26.5% to $N = 239$ ($N_2 = 177$; $N_3 = 62$) due to relationship durations < 1 year ($N = 46$), violations of selection criteria or missing values on core variables ($N = 38$).

Instruments

- Time measures** (single items, self-developed)
Quantity: „How much time do you spend alone with your spouse?“
Quality: „I am satisfied how my spouse and I spend our time.“
- Shared activities** (single items, self-developed)
Quantity: „How often do you do the following activities together with your spouse?“
Quality: „Please evaluate the frequency.“
- Multi-Dimensional Stress Questionnaire - Couples** (MDSP; Bodenmann et al., 2008)
- Dyadic Coping Inventory** (DCI-4; Bodenmann, 2008) 39 items - Cronbachs $\alpha = .92$
- Couple Satisfaction Index**, (CSI; Funk & Rogge, 2007) 4 items - Cronbachs $\alpha = .94$

3. Results

Participants with and without children do not differ significantly in respect of general self-reported time measures. However, they differ in the frequency of sharing specific activities with their spouses.

Time measures	couples with children	couples without children
Time spent together (hours/day) [$t = -.678$, $df = 234$, $p = .498$]	$M = 5.66$; $SD = 3.24$	$M = 5.35$; $SD = 3.64$
Satisfaction of how time is spent with spouse [$t = 1.687$, $df = 224$, $p = .093$]	$M = 2.87$; $SD = 0.86$	$M = 3.05$; $SD = 0.74$

1) Sharing activities with spouse

Shared activities	Quantity (Frequency: 1 "never" to 5 "very often")				Quality "Please evaluate the frequency"						
	women with children (N = 73)	women without children (N = 104)	M (SD)	t-value (df = 195) [95% CI]	women with children (N = 73)	women without children (N = 104)	not enough	just right	enough	too often	Chi² (df = 2)
If I am with my partner, ...											
we eat dinner together.	3.80 (.76)	3.51 (.86)	3.65 (.81)	2.354 [-0.52, -0.05]	19.4%	79.2%	1.4%	9.8%	90.2%	0%	4.860
we watch TV (DVD, video, etc.)	3.81 (1.37)	4.01 (.90)	3.91 (1.14)	2.467 [0.11, 0.74]	10.0%	78.6%	11.4%	4.1%	66.7%	28.3%	0.666
we go out (e.g. to the movies, theater, concerts, visiting friends, do sports etc.).	2.85 (.90)	3.38 (.89)	3.11 (.90)	4.113 [0.29, 0.82]	66.7%	30.6%	2.8%	57.0%	43.0%	0%	4.324
we share our daily experiences.	4.26 (.87)	4.41 (.73)	4.33 (.80)	1.060 [-0.11, 0.36]	14.1%	85.9%	0%	16.3%	82.1%	1.6%	1.370
we talk about important issues and upcoming problems.	4.18 (.86)	3.99 (.89)	4.08 (.92)	1.441 [-0.44, 0.07]	20.8%	75.0%	4.2%	27.9%	66.4%	5.7%	1.586
we talk about politics, daily news, philosophy and religious views, etc.	3.60 (.94)	3.14 (.99)	3.37 (.96)	3.210 [-0.74, -0.18]	22.2%	76.4%	1.4%	30.1%	69.1%	0.8%	1.514
we argue with each other.	2.55 (.69)	2.53 (.88)	2.54 (.78)	0.144 [-0.25, 0.22]	8.5%	67.6%	23.9%	4.9%	67.5%	27.6%	1.163
we do chores together (cooking, doing dishes, cleaning, etc.).	2.83 (1.17)	3.00 (1.02)	2.91 (1.09)	1.050 [-0.14, 0.49]	33.8%	64.8%	1.4%	31.9%	67.2%	0.8%	0.224
we play games with each other (board games, card games, PC games, etc.).	2.33 (1.07)	2.55 (1.00)	2.44 (1.03)	1.975 [0.01, 0.63]	47.1%	52.9%	0%	43.9%	56.1%	0%	0.189
both of us are busy doing our own things (reading, chores, business affairs, etc.) while we are in the same room.	3.52 (.97)	3.16 (.96)	3.34 (.96)	2.552 [-0.64, -0.08]	6.9%	76.4%	16.7%	12.2%	79.7%	8.1%	4.271
both of us are busy doing our own things in different rooms.	2.84 (1.01)	2.63 (1.13)	2.73 (1.07)	1.303 [-0.52, 0.11]	7.1%	78.6%	14.3%	8.1%	79.7%	12.2%	0.213
we are affectionate to each other (kissing, cuddling, making love, etc.).	3.51 (.93)	4.00 (.90)	3.75 (.91)	3.709 [0.24, 0.77]	38.9%	61.1%	0%	29.3%	69.1%	1.6%	2.890
we spend time with our children.	3.66 (.89)	—	—	—	37.5%	62.5%	0%	—	—	—	—

Note: Bold numbers are significant for $p < .05$; separate analyses for the group of men are not shown. Results show that men with and without children only differ significantly in the self-report of how often (frequency) they go out ($M_{men} < M_{women}$) and argue ($M_{men} > M_{women}$) with their spouses. Men and women differ significantly in how often they report sharing daily experiences ($M_2 < M_3$) regardless whether they have children or not, however, in no other activity.

2) Mediating function of (satisfaction with how) time (is spent)

Mediation Models	Dependent Variables (DV)							
	Relationship satisfaction	Dyadic Coping Global score	Arguing (shared activities)	Couple Internal Stress				
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
<i>Direct, Indirect and Total Effects</i>								
a path	-.376 *	.153	-.376 *	.154	-.362 *	.155	-.362 *	.155
b path	.645 ***	.066	.252 ***	.036	-.361 ***	.070	-1.465 ***	.177
c path (total effect)	-.262	.176	-.110	.088	-.225	.164	.787	.451
c' path (direct effect)	-.019	.148	-.015	.080	.089	.157	.258	.397
ab path (indirect effect) ¹	-.244 *	.120	-.095 *	.047	1.338 *	.072	.524 *	.263
<i>Partial Effects (Control Variables)</i>								
(Quantitative) Time spent together	.016	.015	.031 ***	.001	-.009	.016	.032	.041
Gender (0=male; 1=female)	.025	.128	.141 *	.069	.064	.136	-.041	.344
Age	-.015	.001	-.004	.001	-.004	.010	-.019	.026
Married (0=no; 1=yes)	.020	.152	-.044	.082	.017	.162	-.543	.409
Relationship duration	.011	.011	.002	.006	.002	.011	.011	.028
Employment (0=no; 1=yes)	.004	.135	.104	.073	-.216	.143	-.362	.363
R ²	.34		.26		.14		.28	

Note: Mediator = satisfaction of how time is spent with spouse; DV = children (0=no, 1=yes); SOBEL-test results are shown for the direct and total effects, bias corrected bootstrap ($N=5000$) results [95% CIs (-.51; -.03); (-.20; -.01); (.02; .30); (.06; 1.08)] were calculated for the indirect effects; *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Children do not seem to be directly associated with relationship satisfaction, dyadic coping, arguing or stress. But a mediated effect of having children through the satisfaction of how time is spent with the spouse can be found.

Quantitative time spent together is slightly positively related to dyadic coping, but has no predictive power for the other outcomes.

4. Conclusion

- Findings show differences in the amount of time participants with and without children and their spouses are engaged in specific activities, however, not in the overall time spent together. Interestingly, they hardly seem to vary in terms of the evaluation of whether the amount of time spent on an activity is sufficient.
→ Couples shift their activity preferences and share different activities with their partner when children are present in the household.
- The satisfaction of how one spends time with the spouse is critically important for relationship outcomes, not the mere quantity of time spent.
→ Having children is not a risk factor in general for relationship satisfaction, conflicts, dyadic coping or couple internal stress. Nevertheless, having children can have negative effects on the relationship, if couples are not satisfied with how children affect the togetherness with their spouses.

Limitations

- Online study: gender distribution → sampling artefacts?
- Self-report time measures only

Future research

- Definition of (quantitative and qualitative) couple time
- Assessment of objective quantitative time measures
- Intra-couple differences in time perceptions, time satisfaction, time need and their effect on relationship outcomes