Parental wellbeing – what is the relationship with time use?

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Overview

- Research aims
- Subjective wellbeing: ‘global’ measures
- Moment-to-moment wellbeing
1. Research aims
Subjective wellbeing

- **Global wellbeing**
  - *Evaluative*: life satisfaction, job satisfaction, satisfaction with work-life balance, happiness in general etc.
  - *Eudemonic*: e.g. feeling life is worthwhile
  - *Hedonic*: happiness, sadness, anxiety, anger, stress etc.

- **Moment-to-moment wellbeing**
  - Subjective wellbeing in a particular *moment*
    - Enjoyment, anxiety, stress etc.
Previous research

- **Process of stress**
  - Many studies suggest lower levels of subjective wellbeing for parents compared to adults without dependent children
  - Theories of stress and mental health: Parenthood providers parents with meaning, identity and social connections BUT it also increases exposure to stressors (increased demands on time and energy, financial strain, marital strain, sleep deprivation and role strain)

- **Gender-role attitudes and parenting aspirations**
  - Discrepancies between normative preferences and actual time spent on paid work and domestic tasks can cause distress
  - Fatherhood becoming a more important source of self-worth and fulfilment; distress when not being able to live up to personal ideal
Research questions

- What is the relationship between amounts of time parents spend on paid work, housework, childcare and other activities and their wellbeing?
- What is the effect of fragmentation of time and multitasking?
- Are there differences in patterns of association between mothers and fathers?
- What is the role of household composition (single v partnered parents, number of children, age of youngest child) and household context (what the other parent does with their time)?
- What are the factors affecting parents’ moment-to-moment wellbeing?
2. Parenthood and wellbeing
Parenthood and global wellbeing

- (-) Parents more likely to be stressed than adults without resident children

- (+) Parents have higher overall life satisfaction than adults without resident children, and they are more likely to say that things they do in life are worthwhile

- (.) No association between parenthood and satisfaction with work-life balance, happiness or anxiety
Mothers and fathers

- Mothers more likely to report feeling stressed than fathers
- No association between gender of the parent and life satisfaction, satisfaction with work-life balance or happiness
Parental wellbeing in different types of households

- (. ) Age of children
- Number of children: no association with wellbeing for fathers, mothers with 2+ children -> higher life satisfaction
- Single mothers -> lower life satisfaction, but (. ) for other wellbeing measures
Paid work and wellbeing

- **Fathers:**
  - Not in paid work -> lower life satisfaction, lower satisfaction with WLB
  - Part-time working -> higher satisfaction with WLB
  - (.) Happiness and stress
  - FT working fathers in households where mother was not in paid work or working PT -> higher stress compared to FT fathers whose partners also worked FT

- **Mothers:**
  - Not in paid work -> lower happiness compared to working FT
  - Part-time working & not in paid work -> higher satisfaction with WLB
  - (.) Life satisfaction and stress

( . ) Schedule flexibility
3. Time use and wellbeing
Time use variables

- Childcare time
- Housework time
- Leisure time
- Sleep time
- Multitasking
- Fragmentation
- Partner’s amounts of time spent on childcare and housework

Controls: age + age squared, education, general health, age and number of children, household type, division of paid work in household
Time use patterns and wellbeing

- **Childcare time:**
  - (+) Mothers doing more childcare reported higher satisfaction with WLB
  - (-) Fathers whose partners did more childcare reported lower satisfaction with WLB

- **Housework time:**
  - (.) for fathers; (+) mothers doing more housework had higher happiness scores (???)

- **Leisure time and sleep:**
  - (.) for fathers; for mothers -> (+) associations between leisure time and life satisfaction and satisfaction with WLB, and (-) between sleep and stress

- **Multitasking and fragmentation:**
  - (.) for fathers; (-) mothers who multitasked more had lower satisfaction with WLB
Key findings

- Mothers more stressed than fathers but no differences on other wellbeing measures
- Very limited evidence that wellbeing varies by household characteristics
- Paid work matters – both own employment status and division of paid work in the household
- Very limited evidence that time spent on childcare, housework, leisure and sleep is associated with parental wellbeing
- Very limited evidence that multitasking and fragmentation of time are associated with global wellbeing measures
4. Moment-to-moment wellbeing
# Moment-to-moment wellbeing

- Enjoyment of current moment or activity
  - “How much did you enjoy this time on a scale of 1 to 7?”
  - Measures of utility or benefits that individuals derive from particular activities (Kahneman 2004; Dow and Juster 1985)
- Measures tied to activity minimize “filter of memory” (Kahneman 2006)

### Day 1
**Time: 7am – 10am**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Companion</th>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7am-7.10</td>
<td>Woke up the kids</td>
<td>At home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.10-7.20</td>
<td>Made breakfast</td>
<td></td>
<td>×</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.20-7.30</td>
<td>Talked w/ kids</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.30-7.40</td>
<td>Ate breakfast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.40-7.50</td>
<td>Cleared table</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key research questions

- How does parents’ enjoyment vary across different types of activities?
- How does parents’ enjoyment of activities vary by the context in which they are carried out?
- How do these patterns vary by gender?
Partner presence by gender

Enjoyment (1-7 scale)

- Core housework
- Non-routine housework
- Physical childcare
- Interactive childcare
- Other childcare
- Other

- No partner present
- Mothers, with partner present
- Fathers, with partner present
Partner presence by gender

Enjoyment (1-7 scale)

- Core housework
- Non-routine housework
- Physical childcare
- Interactive childcare
- Other childcare
- Other

- No partner present
- Mothers, with partner present
- Fathers, with partner present

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Multitasking

Enjoyment (1-7 scale)

- Core housework
- Non-routine housework
- Physical childcare
- Interactive childcare
- Other childcare
- Other

Single activity
Multitasked activity
Multitasking by secondary task

Enjoyment (1-7 scale)

- Core housework
- Non-routine housework
- Physical childcare
- Interactive childcare
- Other childcare
- Other

Single activity
Housework as second activity
Multitasking by secondary task

Enjoyment (1-7 scale)

- Core housework
- Non-routine housework
- Physical childcare
- Interactive childcare
- Other childcare
- Other

- Single activity
- Housework as second activity
- Childcare as second activity
Key findings

What parents do matters for their moment-to-moment wellbeing.

- Mothers and fathers enjoyed housework and paid work least, and interactive childcare and leisure activities most.
Key findings

The context in which activities are carried out also matters for parents’ moment-to-moment wellbeing.

- Mothers enjoyed nearly all housework and childcare activities more when a partner was present, but fathers did not.

- Multitasking in general did not appear to be associated with lower enjoyment of housework and childcare.
  - For housework, any multitasking was associated with greater enjoyment but adding housework as a secondary task detracted from enjoyment of childcare activities.
  - Multitasking with a secondary childcare activity tended to be associated with greater enjoyment.
Thank you

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Appendix slides
Global wellbeing measures

- How dissatisfied or satisfied would you say you are with your life overall?
  - Derived from two slightly different measures, one asked in the first half of the fieldwork (7-point ordinal scale) and the other one in the second half (0..10)

- How dissatisfied or satisfied would you say you are with your work-life/work-family balance? (7-point ordinal scale)

- How stressed do you normally feel? (always/sometimes/never)

- How happy did you feel yesterday? (0..10)
Multitasking by secondary task

Enjoyment (1-7 scale)

Core housework  Non-routine housework  Physical childcare  Interactive childcare  Other childcare  Other

Single activity  Housework as second activity  Childcare as second activity  Leisure as second activity
Multilevel model – controls

**Episode-level controls**
Contextual factors
- Time of day, episode duration, proportion of overall day multitasked

Time allocation
- Time spent in paid and unpaid work, time spent in restorative activities (sleep and leisure)

**Person-level controls**
Socio-demographic characteristics
- Sex, age, age squared, educational attainment, occupational class

Household composition characteristics
- Partner status, number and age of children