Comparison of GPA between Students Involved and Uninvolved in a Relationship

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College is a journey full of living, failing, learning and experiences that brings an individual a little bit further along life. In today's society, relationships are existent in many universities, and some students may be faced with that exact same dilemma. I decided to do my research project on a comparison of GPA between students who are in a relationship and those we are not. A relationship is defined as follows: a romantic, committed bond between two people for a minimum of a month. I assessed this information by distributing a 10 question survey to 92 undergraduate college students. After inputting my findings into SSPS I discovered that my hypothesis was not supported. The results stating that there is not statistical significance to prove that relationship status has neither a negative or positive effect on one's GPA.

In a study conducted by Kulm and Cramer (2006), researchers attempted to identify whether increased time on campus correlated with a students success. Rather than looking at the possibility of finding a correlation between GPA and relationships, this study took employment while in college and tested to see if there was a correlation between employment and GPA. During this study, researchers examined a student's academics performance and social interaction levels, and observed the effect that employment played on those two factors. Kulm and Cramer (2006) tested approximately five hundred, 19-24 year old undergraduate students by using an online survey. In their study, Kulm and Cramer (2006) discovered that student's

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academics were higher when more time was spent on campus rather than at work. They also discovered that employment had a negative effect on social interaction. The basic idea being that when there are more things going on in a student's life, areas like, academics, social interaction, and extracurricular activities suffer.

Crissey (2004), studied whether being involved in a romantic relationship had a negative or a positive correlation with academic activity. She also studied the difference between boys and girls involved in a relationship and whether the couples were involved in sexual activity and if that was related to academic activity. The rationale for this study was based on the statement from an article by Larson (1999), stating that research has shown relationships can be the largest source of stress for adolescents.

This study conducted by Crissey (2004), addressed the effect of romantic relationships on educational outcome, focusing on two specific courses: math and science. Crissey had three different hypotheses' that she was testing, those being: Involvement in a romantic relationship will be the reason for dropping out of math and science class, as well as an increase in other course failures, the effects from her previous hypotheses will be more detrimental for girls than boys and finally her third hypothesis in the study stated, relationships that are sexually active will have the same effects, except magnified and consequences will be worse.

Crissey (2004), used an in-home survey with a broad range of questions such as, family issues, peer networks, future aspirations and romantic and sexual activity and her sample size was 6,420 people. Her results stated that for both sexes, involvement in a romantic relationship was associated with an increased chance of dropping out of math and or science or just an overall increase in course failure. Girls had a higher percentage of drop out than did the boys in her study. For her hypotheses concerning sexual activity and academic outcome, both boys and girls

were at high risk for course failure or drop out when involved in a sexual relationship (Crissey, 2004).

In a study done by Giordano, Phelps, Manning and Longmore (2007), 572 currently dating teens were tested on nine different variables: Academic achievement, Dating partner's grades, respondent's academics orientation, friends' academic orientation, parents' school involvement, race, gender and age, family structure, parental education and parental monitoring. The study was done to explore if romantic partner's grades were significantly related to all nine variables. Concerning the relationship aspect, (Giordano et al., 2007), girls have a stronger relational orientation and center more time and energy into their romantic relationships than boys. In this study, the researchers hypothesized that romantic partners did contribute to adolescent's own grades. The results concluded that teens that have a romantic partner with higher grades are then in turn are more likely to have higher grades and visa versa.

A study done by Kopfler (2003), hypothesized that students involved in a romantic relationship would not perform as well academically in their undergraduate   courses. What Kopfler discovered was that stress played into whether a student did was academically. Stress could be caused by a relationship but not necessarily. Thus, the hypothesis was not supported.

Malecki and Demaray (2006) were interested to see if social support had any effect on GPA. Social support is defined as, "one's perceptions of supportive behaviors from individuals in his or her social network that enhance functioning and/or may buffer him or her from adverse outcomes, (Malecki & Demaray, 2006, p. 2)." This could be anything from parents, teachers, classmates, close friends, boyfriends/girlfriends. The researchers did this by surveying one hundred and sixty-four students in grades 6-8 from a school in Illinois. From a separate study cited in this study by Rosenfeld, Richman and Brown (Rosenfeld, Richman & Brown, 2000),

found that students with a high support from at least three social support systems had better grades, those support systems being parents, teachers and friends. Unfortunately, when investigating the relationship between GPA and social support they found little to no significance, (Malecki & Demaray, 2006).

The purpose of this current study was to research if there is a correlation between a student's relationship status and college academics, defined by student's grade point average (GPA). In the studies above no research was done specifically on just relationship status and GPA. Research revealed that time spent on campus was helpful to GPA, social factors had minor effects on GPA and according to Crissey (2004), and students involved in sexual relationships had a negative impact on science and mathematics courses. Using this past research as a foundation, I wanted to investigate the students' relationship status and level of commitment as reported by students. The hypotheses for this study was that students involved in a romantic relationship will have a lower GPA than students who are single.

Method

Participants

Ninety-two participants were recruited by classroom. Out of the 92 participants 40 were male and 52 were female, consisting of 20 freshmen, 22 sophomores, 20 juniors and 30 seniors. Seventy-eight percent of that sample was single, four percent were engaged, 4.3 % of the students surveyed were married and 13 percent circled other. The mean for the age of subjects was 21 years old with a standard deviation of 2.518. According to demographics, 64.1 % of the 92 participants stated that they were involved in a romantic relationship in the spring of 2009 and 32 % stated they were not. Three participants did not circle either. Regarding the level of commitment, 8.7 % of the participants stated that according to their relationship status they were

not committed, 7.6 percent said they were somewhat committed, 12 % stated they were

committed and 55.4 stated they were very committed. 16.3 % did not answer the question.

Materials and Procedure

A computer, printer and a copy machine were used to make about 150 copies of the

required forms. These include: the survey (Appendix A) (Alderson & Gruenloh, 2008), the

informed consent form, and additional consent form (Appendix B) and feedback letter. The

informed consent form had a brief description of the research project and asked for the

participant's signature. The additional consent form (Appendix B) to have official GPA released,

was used to attain the required permission from the participants to allow the researcher to verify

their grade point average from the spring semester of 2009. The survey (Appendix A) had seven

questions regarding age, sex, class level and additional questions concerning their current

relationship status and their opinions regarding relationships and academics (i.e.,Spring of '09

GPA).

Permission was gained from Professor Walsh, Dr. Tillinger, Dr. Plate and Professor

Werhli to come into their class room and discuss the research project with the students in their

classroom. Participants used a pen or a pencil to fill out the appropriate forms. (Consent forms

and survey) Participants were handed two informed consent forms; one form was to be signed

and handed back to the researcher and the other was for the participants records. The first one

was to be signed and returned to the researcher, the signature granting the researcher permission

to continue in the project. Then all participants received a second consent form (Appendix B).

This form was to attain permission to verify student's grade point average from the spring

semester of 2009 before taking the survey. All participants were informed that they did not have

to participate and that they could exit the project at any time with no penalty. After all forms are

filled out students then received a short survey (Appendix A) concerning their current

relationship status. Most of the questions were geared toward students currently involved in a

relationship. However, students who are not in a relationship were also asked, "How much do

you feel that a relationship is related to the level or outcome of your academics on a level of one

to ten (One being the lowest amount while ten being the highest most)?" This was asked to get a

more broad opinion and less biased data. Following the completion of the survey all participants

were given a feedback letter and thoroughly debriefed. All participants were informed that if

they have any questions or concerns they could feel free to contact the researcher and all contact

information could be found on the feedback letter.

Finally after all the data was taken, all participant names and identification numbers was

taken to the registrar's office to attain their grade point averages. From that point the faculty

advisor for this project matched all GPA's with given identification codes and returned data to

the experimenter with the participants' identifying information removed. Once all identifications

were assigned and GPAs were collected all data was inputted into SPSS program and analyzed.

Results

The hypothesis for this study was, students involved in a relationship would have a lower

GPA than students what are singe. A t-test was done to analyze the data GPA and relationship

status. By doing an independent t-test my hypotheses was not supported. In the survey I asked

each participant to give their self-reported GPA just in case I could not obtain all the GPA's from

the registrar's office. This was helpful because I only was able to obtain 40 official GPA's from

the 92 participants. According to the analysis there was no significance in GPA and relationship

status for official GPA, $t(38)=-.73, p>.05$ or the self reported GPA, $t(79)=-.383, p>.05$. The

interesting thing about those results in that according to the participants 28.3 % stated that they

thought that being in a relationship would negatively affect their GPA. However, 38.0 % of the participants stated that it all depended on different factors, such as, the person's time management skills, the person's maturity level, and a significant amount of people stated that it depended on whether the relationship was a healthy relationship or not. Those participants stated that if the relationship was mature and a happy relationship that would better someone's GPA and if the relationship was unstable and unhealthy that would bring someone's GPA down. 16.3 % of those participants stated that in their opinion being in a relationship would better there GPA. No significant findings support either of those categories.

An interesting aspect about the GPA is the inflation in the self-reported GPA and the actual GPA. The mean of the self-reported GPA for the participants involved in a relationship was 3.0848 with a standard deviation of .52028 and the mean for the actual GPA was 2.7688 with a standard deviation of .54321. The inflation was .316 points difference. This happened for the students not involved in a relationship as well. Participants mean self reported GPA who was not involved in a relationship was 3.1317 with a standard deviation of .54321 and the actual GPA mean was 2.7194 with a standard deviation of .93873. The inflation for students not involved in a relationship was even higher with a .4123 difference.

Discussion

The hypotheses to this study stated that students involved in a romantic relationship will have a lower GPA than students who are single. Unfortunately, after analyzing the statistical; data, the present finding fail to support my hypotheses that relationships would negatively affect GPA. However, the study did show according to the open response questions on the survey that relationships can have some type of positive or negative affect depending on other variables that were unattainable for testing purposes.

Also, although the students involved in a relationships GPA did not vary enough from the student's GPA's who were not in a relationship this does not mean that the student's GPA's would not be higher if they were not involved in a relationship. Therefore, one way to make this study more beneficial would be to do a more long term study and test the student's GPA before they were involved in a relationship, while they are in a relationship and then if possible, after the relationship ends if that happened to be the case. This would give me a more accurate result, more specific to each individual person.

Twenty freshmen were included in the study. Freshmen did not have a GPA on final yet and although their self-reported GPA was used it is from high school and I wanted to test undergraduate college students. For future research for this experiment a larger sample size would be nice and I would only recruit participants who had a GPA on file for me to use in my analysis.

Another variable that may have skewed the data was the marital status. Although 78.3 percent of the participants stated they were single, 13.0 percent stated they were other. Along with 4.3 percent were married and 4.3 percent were engaged. Married, engaged and other may have a completely different relationship style and may be in a different part of life than the single status that could include casual daters, serious relationships.

Although participants were notified that all answers from the survey were kept secret and kept anonymous participants may have felt like they could not be completely honest in case another student's saw their responses. I would hand out the survey in a different way, perhaps one on one by using the LPP (Lindenwood Participant Pool). This would allow for the participants feel that they could be much more honest and the results may have differed.

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Appendix A

Survey

SUBECT ID NUMBER: _____ (Assigned by Researcher)

Definition for this study:

Relationship: A romantic committed bond between two people for a minimum of a month.

1) Are you: MALE   FEMALE?

2) Martial Status: (Circle One)

Single   Engaged   Married   Divorced/Separated   Other

3) Age _____

4) What grade level are you:

     FRESHMAN   SOPHOMORE   JUNIOR   SENIOR   OTHER

5) Were you involved in a romantic relationship in the spring semester of '09?

     YES   NO

6) Rate the level of commitment (exclusive to one person) in your relationship

1	2	3	4
Not committed	Somewhat Committed	Committed	Very Committed

7) If you are in a relationship, how often do you see your significant other?

8) How much do you feel that a relationship is related to the level or outcome of your academics on a level of one to ten (One being the lowest amount while ten being the highest most).

9) Explain number 8.

10) What is your current G.P.A (Cumulative)?

Appendix B

Additional Consent

I, _____ (print name), give my consent to have my cumulative grade

point average accessed by the registrar's office and presented to the experimenters anonymously. I also

comprehend that once the experiment has been completed all records concerning my grade point average

will be destroyed accordingly.

Finally I recognize that if at any point in time I feel stressed or concerned over this issue I can

contact the experimenter and express these concerns or questions.

Participants Signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date: _____

Students ID # or SNN: _____

(SNN # is needed for the researcher's instructor to get correct G.P.As regarding participants)