

Abstract:

Children in stepfamilies accept, for the most part, both their fathers – their noncustodial biological father and their stepfather – as part of the family, even when the children are representing the ideal family as they imagine it.

Important factors in children's level of acceptance of their stepfathers include children's perception of a warm relationship between them and their stepfather, and between them and their mother, as well as a positive emotional climate in the family overall. Stepfathers are accepted by children if they impose a lower level of parental control over them. Children are also more likely to accept their stepfathers the longer the time has elapsed since the divorce of their biological parents, and the longer they have lived with their stepfather.

Children wish to have closer relationships with their non-custodial biological. They would also prefer if stepfathers exercised less authority over their families. Children often express a wish for the relationships among the significant adults in the family to be free of conflict. As expressed by one of the children: "I am not happy that dad has moved away, but if my parents have decided that it should be so, then at least I want everyone to get along."