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Fathers role importance in children's life

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Abstract

A wonderful and healthy parenting is one which involves both mothers and fathers taking active participation in a child's life. Scientifically, it has been proven that children whose fathers have active involvement in their growing up years have fewer behavioural problems and turn out better individuals socially and academically. A father's role is not just limited to being a "breadwinner" for the family. His involvement influences the child's overall development, including the intellectual development, gender-role development, and psychological development. He can be just as loving and nurturing as the mother. Most kids who share an intimate and warm relationship with their fathers tend to grow up to become more confident adults. As children grow up, fathers assume the role of a friend, guide and mentor. The presence of an actively involved father at home goes on to make a lot of difference in the lives of children. "When fathers are actively involved with their children, children do better," explains Paul Amato, a sociologist who studies parent-child relationships at Pennsylvania State University. "Research suggests that fathers are important for a child's development." "The Father Effect" is the umbrella term for the benefits of a paternal presence. Of course, a father's active participation in the family is always preferred. "There needs to be a minimum amount of time spent together, but the quality of time is more important than the quantity of time." Here is a look at the roles fathers play at different stages of their child's life. Traditional Indian notions endorsed the fathers' role as a provider, protector, teacher and a moral guardian to children (Kane 1974; Krishnan, 1998). The present study makes an attempt to understand the Fathers Role Importance in Children's Life. The results revealed that 94 percent faced difficulties in fulfilling children's physical and psychological needs, 91 percent fathers Created a conducive environment for children's, 87 percent fathers Guided for future and making them independent, 81 percent fathers inculcated in good values, habits in children.

Keywords: Father, role, children

Introduction

Fathers, like mothers, are pillars in the development of a child's emotional well-being. Children look to their fathers to lay down the rules and enforce them. They also look to their fathers to provide a feeling of security, both physical and emotional. Children want to make their fathers proud, and an involved father promotes inner growth and strength. Studies have shown that when fathers are affectionate and supportive, it greatly affects a child's cognitive and social development. It also instills an overall sense of well-being and self-confidence.

Most fathers in today's urban context in western India (Mumbai, Baroda, and Jaipur) expect an ideal father to be aware of and address the child's need, and be a friend, teacher and guide to the child (Saraff & Srivastava, 2008) [12].

In addition, fathers think it is their 'duty' to create a conducive environment for the child's growth, address their child's health needs, support both present but future security of the child, and maintain healthy loving and close relationships with children. Research studies with Indian fathers report a host of positive fathering Ideals such as guiding children's education, becoming more open, expressive, adopting less strict discipline measures, assigning more importance to children and their fathering role, prioritizing communication with their children, and engaging children in extracurricular activities (Mathur & Mathur, 2006; Sriram, 2003, 2008) [6, 14, 15].

Talking about the role of fathers in their children's development and well-being, it is important to define what is meant by "father" as the term carries several assumptions that may not be completely accurate given the changing family structure. In the AAP (American Academy of Pediatrician) guideline on fathers, father is defined broadly as "the male or males identified as most involved in caregiving and committed to the well-being of the child, regardless of living situation, marital status, or biological relation." Along with the biological father, this definition includes foster fathers, stepfathers, and grandfathers (Yogman M, Garfield CF, 2019) [19].

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Underlying this discussion of who is a father is the recognition of the evolving and changing nature of family structures, societal norms, and understanding of masculinity and femininity that is creating additional complexity to understanding the multiple influences on childhood development. Research shows that the influence of fathers on the psychosocial and behavioral development of children is distinct from that of mothers (Yogman M, Garfield CF, 2019)^[19]. However, it is difficult to tease out of this current research how these different influences are related to the biological distinctiveness of masculinity or femininity. Emerging research on the neurobiology of parenting provides some preliminary signs by showing just how complex the interplay between hormonal and neural circuitry is in men and women and how these biological processes manifest differently in parenting behavior (Rajhans P, Goinâ, Kochel RP, Strathearn L., Kim S. 2019)^[10].

Benefits of fathers' early involvement: Data show that getting fathers involved early in their children's lives predicts later involvement. Prenatal involvement by fathers, along with living with the mother, is the strongest predictor of their involvement by the time a child is aged 5 years (Shannon JD, Cabrera NJ, Tamis-Lemonda C, Lamb ME. 2009)^[16]

Paternal involvement just after a child is born is also critical. "Good research shows that the more men take time to spend at home with a child after birth, 2 weeks or more, they are almost 2 times as likely to be involved in diapering, feeding, cleaning, and caring for their baby at 9 months," says Garfield (Nepomnyaschy L, Waldfogel J. 2007)^[7].

Helping fathers to be more confident in taking care of their children helps their children during all stages of their development. Garfield highlights 3 main areas in which involvement by fathers is distinct from, and often complementary to, involvement by mothers.

One is in the area of language development. Garfield cites evidence showing that the more words and language to which a child is exposed at an early age, the greater benefit for kindergarten readiness. Children exposed to language and vocabulary through both mothers and fathers benefit by the additive effect of both hearing more words and also more variety (Pancsofar N, Vernon-Feagans L. 2006)^[8].

Another way in which fathers uniquely contribute to early childhood development is by promoting more risk taking and problem-solving behavior through greater physical engagement with the child than is typically done by mothers. (Raeburn P. 2014, Yogman YW, Lester BM, Hoffman J. 1983)^[11, 18]. "Really unique to dads is in the general area of play and in particular what is called 'rough and tumble' play," says Garfield, describing this type of play as a very high-energy and physical game wherein fathers may be changing the rules during play forcing the child to adapt quickly to the changes (Fletcher R, St George J, Freeman E. 2013)^[3]. "It is thought that this is helping children learn about how to make decisions and how to stay focused when they are amped up," he says, "and that can actually be teaching resilience to the child as well."

Fathers also influence their children during early childhood years and into adolescence by role-modelling behavior. Garfield emphasizes the important influence of fathers as a role model for adolescent sons and daughters. "They are role modelling how to be in a relationship, how to make health and well-being behavior decisions, and that can be important for the child as well," he says. For example, longitudinal data show an association between father

involvement and reduced behavioral problems and enhanced cognitive development in adolescent boys as well as reduced psychological problems in adolescent girls (Sarkadi A, Kristiansson R, Oberklaid F, Bremberg S. 2008)^[13] Other benefits of father involvement for adolescent girls are decreased early sexual experiences and teenaged pregnancy (Ellis BJ, Schlomer GL, Tilley EH, Butler EA. 2012)^[1] and for boys the potential for improvement in sexual health through better communication about condoms (Guilama-Ramos, V, Thimm-Kaiser M, Benzekri A, *et al.* 2019)^[2].

Comparing Father Involvement to Mother Involvement Reveals Fathers' Unique Value.: Mothers are widely associated with nurturance and protection, but there is less consensus concerning fathers' unique value (although financial provider is often seen as central). On average, fathers tend to be more involved in play than caregiving and their play is more physical and challenging than that of mothers. Fathers often encourage their children to take risks and be independent, whereas mothers typically emphasize avoiding risk and injury. A newer area of fatherhood study examines how fathers tend to encourage children "to explore, take chances, overcome obstacles, be braver in the presence of strangers, and stand up for themselves."

Through almost every studied culture, fathers have assumed three primary roles: the protector, the provider, and the disciplinarian. Before we discuss each of these roles, it is important to note that in many two-parent families today, mothers are fulfilling these three roles as much as fathers. Mothers protect their children by strapping them into car seats and buckling seatbelts, monitoring computer usage and assessing the environment for other potential dangers. Mothers provide for their families by working outside the home as much as fathers do. Additionally, today mothers are taking on a more disciplinarian role for their children than in the past, when we used to hear the phrase, "person wait until your father gets home." For the purposes of this course, we are discussing the importance of the father's role in a child's life, but it is important to acknowledge that mothers engage in these roles as well.

Protector. One of the strategies here used is encouraging fathers to baby-proof or child-proof their home when the mother is expecting. What are the things they can do to prepare the home for the child? That's one of the ways that men can protect their children from dangers inside the household. They can also protect their children from external dangers. This is especially important in communities where there are higher levels of violence, where there is a potential for the child to be exposed to gang activity or crime.

Moms tend to see the rest of the world in relation to their children. Fathers tend to see their children in relation to the rest of the world. Mom's traditional emphasis is that she wants to protect her child from getting hurt by forces from the outside world (e.g., bullies, strangers, mean dogs, accidents, disease). She never wants this to happen to her child. In fathers, their paternal instinct also wants to prevent bad things from happening, but if it could happen, they want to do what they can to prepare their child to cope with these types of dangers. Often, the dads will try to prepare the child to handle external dangers, such as dangerous strangers, mean dogs, lightning, bullies, falls, or accidents. Both of these roles are important for the child. Mom is protecting the child and dad is preparing the child.

Another role of the protector that fathers play is by observing the social environment and knowing the peers and friends of

their children. Also, when the children go to another family's home, do he/she know what is in the home? Do they have firearms in the home? Is it in a safe neighborhood? What do I need to do to protect my child from environments that could cause a threat to them? Fathers also guarantee their child's safety by shaping their environment. In other words, they can look at their surroundings (e.g., the household, the neighborhood, the community) and encourage safe opportunities, as well as remove hazards from the child's path. Provider. As the role of provider, a father's ability to provide for his family is related to his sense of duty, his sense of identity, and his manhood. Different cultures have different messages about what it means to be a man, a husband, and a father. Many of those cultures see that one of the father's primary roles is that of a provider. That the "real men bring home the bacon," they support their family, they tend the fields or work in the factories, the mines, and the forests. Although the jobs may be dangerous, that is their responsibility as the provider for their family. As I mentioned, in many two-parent households today, fathers are no longer the sole provider, but it still is an important role that fathers fulfill in their families.

Disciplinarian. In preparing their child for the future, fathers often have high expectations. They want their child to succeed, to see what's on the horizon, to aspire to bigger and better things. As such, fathers need to be there to teach their child how to handle their impulses, how to stay calm under stress, and how to deal with situations where they don't endanger themselves or endanger others. In the dominant culture in the United States, many fathers are fulfilling the role of the disciplinarian, but it has to be in a safe and respectful way. It can't be in a violent way, because boys that are raised in homes with violence tend to perpetuate that in their family. Using this role as a disciplinarian is important as the father uses his physical presence and teaches their child how to respond to situations accordingly and appropriately.

Newer Fatherhood Models Examine Fathers' Essential Functions.: As social scientists' focus moved from studying father absence to father involvement, the need arose for a broader view of paternal involvement that includes what and how much fathers actually do for and with their children. The "Involved Fatherhood Model" emerged as the dominant frame. It comprises three components:

- **Positive engagement:** Involved fathers directly interact with their children in positive ways, including caregiving such as changing diapers and shared activities that involve play.
- **Accessibility:** Involved fathers are available to their children even when not directly interacting, such as cooking while the child plays nearby.
- **Responsibility:** Involved fathers take ultimate responsibility for their child's welfare and care, including participating in decision-making regarding child-rearing and ensuring that children's needs are met.

Other researchers built on the Involved Fatherhood Model to include fathers' provision of indirect care, such as providing financial support, and direct care, such as caregiving and play. Parenting Tips for Dads: Being an Engaged, Supportive & Loving Father: Spend time with the child. How a father spends his time reveals to his child what is important to him. Kids grow up quickly and the time to bond is now. There are plenty of fun ways to spend family time with children.

- **Discipline with love and positive parenting:** All

children need positive guidance and discipline, not as punishment, but to set reasonable limits. Dads should remind children of the consequences of their actions and positively acknowledge desirable behavior. Fathers who discipline in a calm and fair manner show love for their children.

- **Be child's role model:** Whether they realize it or not, fathers are role models to their kids. A girl who spends time with a loving father grows up knowing she deserves to be treated with respect by boys and she learns what to look for in a partner. Fathers teach boys and girls what is important in life by demonstrating honesty, humility and responsibility.
- **Earn the right to be heard:** Fathers should begin conversations with their children about important topics when they are very young so that difficult subjects will be easier to handle as they get older. Take time for listening to your child's ideas and problems.
- **Be your child's teacher:** To be a good father, teach your children about right and wrong and encourage them to do their best. See that your children make good choices. Involved fathers use everyday examples to help children learn the basic lessons of life.
- **Eat together as a family:** An important part of healthy family life is bonding through family meals. It gives kids the chance to talk about what they are doing and want to do. It is also a good time for fathers to listen and be involved. It provides a structure for families to be together each day.
- **Read to the child:** In a modern world dominated by television and internet, it is important that fathers make the effort to read to their children in order to grow lifelong readers. Begin reading when they are very young and as they get older, encourage them to read on their own. Instilling a love of reading is one of the best ways to ensure children will have a lifetime of literacy and personal and career growth.
- **Respect the other parent of the child:** Parents who respect each other and demonstrate mutual respect to their children, provide a secure environment for them. When children see parents respecting each other, they are more likely to feel that they are also accepted and respected within the father-child relationship.
- **Seek involvement early:** Show interest early by understanding a father's role during pregnancy or the adoption or surrogacy process and gently touch, play, hold and talk to infant child. When fathers are involved, they send the clear and emphatic message: "I want to be your father. I am interested in you and we have a relationship that is important to me."

Few events change a man's life as much as becoming a father. Being entrusted with the responsibility and care of another person is a monumental task but none is more rewarding than becoming a father and seeing the child grow gradually into adulthood, with the affection returned in good measure and the child's self-worth confirmed. Hopefully, these parenting tips can provide some guidance to dads trying to learn how to become engaged, supportive, and loving fathers.

Data show that getting fathers involved early in their children's lives predicts later involvement. Prenatal involvement by fathers, along with living with the mother, is the strongest predictor of their involvement by the time a child is aged 5 years.

Paternal involvement just after a child is born is also critical. “Good research shows that the more men take time to spend at home with a child after birth, 2 weeks or more, they are almost 2 times as likely to be involved in diapering, feeding, cleaning, and caring for their baby at 9 months,” says Garfield.

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Fathers play a surprisingly large role in their children’s development, from language and cognitive growth in toddlerhood to social skills in fifth grade, according to new findings from Michigan State University scholars.

The research provides some of the most conclusive evidence to date of fathers’ importance to children’s outcomes and reinforces the idea that early childhood programs such as Head Start should focus on the whole family, including mother and father alike. The findings are published online in two academic journals, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* and *Infant and Child Development*.

“There’s this whole idea that grew out of past research that dads really don’t have direct effects on their kids, that they just kind of create the tone for the household and that moms are the ones who affect their children’s development,” said Claire Vallotton, associate professor and primary investigator on the research project. “But here we show that fathers really do have a direct effect on kids, both in the short term and long

term.”

Using data from about 730 families that participated in a survey of Early Head Start programs at 17 sites across the nation, the researchers investigated the effects of parents’ stress and mental health problems such as depression on their children. Parental stress and mental health issues affect how parents interact with their children and, subsequently, childhood development.

The study found that fathers’ parenting-related stress had a harmful effect on their children’s cognitive and language development when the children were 2 to 3 years old, even when the mothers’ influences were taken into account. This impact varied by gender; fathers’ influence, for example, had a larger effect on boys’ language than girls’ language.

Another key finding: Fathers’ and mothers’ mental health had a similarly significant effect on behavior problems among toddlers. Further, fathers’ mental health had a long-term impact, leading to differences in children’s social skills (such as self-control and cooperation) when the children reached fifth grade. In fact, fathers’ depression symptoms when children were toddlers were more influential on children’s later social skills than were mothers’ symptoms.

In sum, the findings contribute to the small but growing collection of research affirming the effects of fathers’ characteristics and father-child relationship qualities on children’s social development, rather than just the fathers’ residence in the home or presence in the child’s life, according to the paper published in *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*.

Tamesha Harewood, lead author on the paper in *Infant and Child Development*, said fathers, in addition to mothers, should be included in parenting research and family-intervention programs and policies.

“A lot of family-risk agencies are trying get the dad more involved, but these are some of the things they could be missing,” said Harewood, a researcher in MSU’s Department of Human Development and Family Studies. “When the agency is talking with the dad, it’s not just about providing for your child economically, but also to be there for your child, to think about how stress or depression might be influencing your child. In order to understand and help children in their development, there needs to be a comprehensive view of the whole family, including both mom and dad.”

Research Method

It focused on children (3 to 15 years). The main focus of the study was to study Fathers Role Importance in Children’s Life.

Sample: N= (80)

Research Findings and Discussion

In 2016, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) updated its guidance for pediatricians on the role of fathers in the care and development of their children based on the increasing number of “high-quality” studies that now quantify and qualify this role. According to the guideline, among the drivers underlying this increased interest in fathers are socioeconomic forces in which the traditional roles of men and women are changing. More mothers are working outside the home and more stay-at-home fathers are taking on caregiving activities. Fathers also are increasingly taking on the primary caregiving role as single parents. Also highlighted are changing social mores encouraging more involvement by fathers beyond their historic protector and provider role. Data

show this, with involvement by fathers in childcare nearly doubling between 1965 and 2011 (Parker K, Wang W. 2019) [9].

Fathers not only influence who we are inside, but how he/she have relationships with people as individual's grow. The way a father treats his child will influence what he or she looks for in other people. Friends, lovers, and spouses will all be chosen based on how the child perceived the meaning of the relationship with his or her father. The patterns a father sets in

the relationships with his children will dictate how his children relate with other people. The data collected with respect to understand the Fathers Role Importance in Children's Life. The results revealed that 94 percent faced difficulties in fulfilling children's physical and psychological needs, 91 percent fathers Created a conducive environment for children's, 87 percent fathers Guided for future and making them independent, 81 percent fathers inculcated in good values, habits in children.

Table 1: Data shows the father's role importance in children's life

S.no	Statements	Total (N=80)		
		Category	F	P
1	Faced difficulties in fulfilling children's physical and psychological needs	Yes	75	94
		No	5	6
2	Creating a conducive environment for children's	Yes	73	91
		No	7	9
3	Guiding for future and making them independent	Yes	70	87
		No	10	13
4	Inculcating good values, habits in children	Yes	65	81
		No	15	19
		Total	80	100

Conclusion

Creating opportunities for fathers to be more involved in the caretaking needs of their children is critical at a time when the changing mores and expectations of society are seeing more fathers involved in caregiving activities with their children. Growing evidence shows that fathers contribute to the development and well-being of their children in unique and often complementary ways to mothers.

Fathers, like mothers, are pillars in the development of a child's emotional well-being. Children look to their fathers to lay down the rules and enforce them. They also look to their fathers to provide a feeling of security, both physical and emotional. Children want to make their fathers proud, and an involved father promotes inner growth and strength. Studies have shown that when fathers are affectionate and supportive, it greatly affects a child's cognitive and social development. It also instills an overall sense of well-being and self confidence.

While society often paints the picture of a father as the sole breadwinner and the mother as the sole caregiver for the children, it is very important for a child to have both father and mother to play a role in their overall development. While moms are usually the ones who take charge of the upbringing of the child as they are more nurturing, a father has a very important role to play if he wants his child to grow into a well-balanced adult.

The children with involved dads are likely to be more confident, emotionally secure and form better social bonds. Their educational outcomes are often better than children with dads who are less involved, and also they are more likely to have better communication skills and better intellectual functioning. The importance of a father in child's development is undeniable as children are able to learn to better regulate their behaviour during the playful and stimulating activities a father is more likely to provide.

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