

Father- child - interaction with their pre-school children

■ M. DHRAKSHAYANI

Received: 12.12.2014; Accepted: 09.05.2015

Author for correspondence;

M. DHRAKSHAYANI

Department of Home Science,
Post Graduate Government
College for Girls, CHANDIGARH
(U.T.) INDIA
Email: sushaingoldy@yahoo.co.in

■ **ABSTRACT** : Although the importance of father's influence in child development is now generally accepted, we actually know very little about Father – Child – Interaction (F – C – I). This study aims to study Father – Child – Interaction with their pre-school children under natural conditions of home in middle class families. For the present study Belsky scale (1997) of F – C – I was used to study F – C – I in 120 Indian families. Results reveal that majority of the fathers were involved in teaching, disciplining and socialization when compared to attending to the physical needs and play activities of the child during one hour home observation studies.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Father child interaction, Care taking, Playing, Teaching, Disciplining, Socialization

■ **HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER** : Dhvakshayani, M. (2015). Father - child - interaction with their pre-school children. *Asian J. Home Sci.*, **10** (1) : 245-249.

Traditionally the parental roles and responsibilities were not easily altered but now due to the emergence of dual earner families and quality living it became very much essential for the couples to share the house hold tasks. Apart from the above due to the major changes taking place in the society such as modernization, urbanization and industrialization the “androgynous fathers” have emerged, as a result of which to a certain extent the fathers have started interacting with their young children in all walks of life.

Recently, a number of researches have begun observing father's involvement in selected cultures like Radin in U.S., Sagi in Israel, Lamb in Sweden and Russell in Australia. The results reveal fathers in intact families have become increasingly involved in child care activities. However, the research carried out in the Indian context regarding father child interaction is almost meager.

Early father-child-interaction is the attachment of the child with father (Coverman and Sheley, 1986; Lincoln, 1984; Pleck, 1985) and father-child relations typically become stronger and more satisfying during toddlerhood (Feldman *et al.*, 1983; Lamb, 1981; Levy-Shiff and Israelashnili, 1988) which will influence the bonding between father and child later in life.

Naturalistic home observational studies indicate that mothers differ from fathers both in amount of time spent with the infant and the type of activities in which they engage with the infant (Bridges *et al.*, 1988). Ishii (1994) found that American fathers interacted more with children than their Japanese counter parts.

As the age of the child increased from 1 to 3 years, fathers care giving time increased (Bailey, 1994) and fathers were involved in caretaking activities (Jain *et al.*, 1996) like dressing, kissing (Pannabecker *et al.*, 1982) soothing (Palkovitz, 1985) during father child interaction. During father-child-interaction fathers spent great amount

of time in play (Purnima, 1990). Fathers exhibited more physically arousing, vigorous play (Ricks, 1985) rough play (Roopnarine *et al.*, 1990; Sun and Roopnarine, 1996) social play (Mc Govern, 1990) vehicle or tool play with sons and domestic play with their daughters (Farver and Wimbari, 1995).

The quality of father-child-interaction with their children is tied to the fathers success as a bread winner (Doherty *et al.*, 1998). Research proves that father child interaction at an early age can reduce the behavioural problems leading to adolescent delinquency and anti social behaviour (Maeielle *et al.*, 2012 and Matos *et al.*, 2009).

The above review regarding father-child-interaction suggest that fathers are behaviourally defined as play mates and are less involved in other activities like care giving, teaching, discipline and socialization.

Purpose of this research :

Change is the most permanent feature of the world today. Given the rise in dual earner families and the changing roles of the present day fathers is resulting in increased interaction with their children. This area of research is totally neglected in Indian context. In order to explore this Belsky scale of F-C-I (1997) was used to study F-C-I under natural conditions of Indian homes.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

Methods :

120 dual earner couples and their 0–3 year children were recruited from middle class urban families of Hyderabad, of this, 60 dual earner couples were working during regular hours of work (Group-I) and in the remaining 60 dual earner couples fathers were working during regular hours and mothers on shift system (Group II). Children below 3 years were selected as father's interaction is critically more important when the children are at the young end of the age range and decreases as the children mature, presumably growing in independence. Middle income Indian families were selected because of their economic and financial positions they have limited access to the resources. They struggle for survival and are likely to be more egalitarian. Hence, the responsibilities have to be achieved within the family by mutual sharing of tasks.

The maximum percentage (93.33%) of the fathers and mothers (85.83%) were above 27 years of age and 82 per cent of them had single child. About 50 per cent

of mothers were graduates and fathers were postgraduates. Fathers income was higher when compared to mothers. However, fathers spend less time (10 hours per day) at home than mothers (12 hours per day). 65 per cent of the couples were married for 3 to 4 years.

One hour home observations were carried out to study F-C-I under natural conditions of home. The various dimensions of Belsky scale (1997) are as follows :

Care taking :

Attending to the physical needs of the child includes feeding, bathing, dressing, comforting the distressed child, diapering, stimulating, cleaning ears, cutting nails, keeping an eye on room safety, providing clothing in good condition, that are taken care of by the father during father-child-interaction.

Play :

Play includes toy-mediated play, social games, exaggerated vocalizations, rough physical play like throwing the child in air, swinging and tossing, that are performed by the father during father-child-interaction.

Teaching :

Teaching includes to show the child objects, label them, explain things, reading books, teaching a new skill, helping the child in doing simple problems, encouraging vocabulary and comprehension during father-child-interaction.

Discipline and socialization :

To promote proper behaviour, discourage improper behaviour, teaching social manners, morals, praising appropriate behaviour, prohibiting and punishing problematic behaviour, scolding, socializing and helping in habit formation that are taken care by the father during father-child-interaction.

Scoring technique given by Belsky (1997) :

Caretaking, playing, teaching and disciplining formed the main dimensions of the father-child-interaction. Each of the four aspects of fathering were rated every two minutes on a four point scale, ranging from "No Involvement" (1) to "High Involvement" (4). The ratings were based both on the frequency of the occurrence of the behaviour and the intensity or the extent of fathers

interaction in each domain. High involvement was scored as 4 which was characterized by intense engagement for the entire 2 minute episode. Moderate involvement was given a score of 3 which meant for more than 1 minute but less than 2 minutes. Low or fleeting involvement was scored 2 which meant for less than 1 minute and 1 refers to the absence of any involvement.

Ratings for each dimension were summed across 2 minutes episode for one hour to create scores for total basic care, teaching, playing and socializing. The total scores of the respondents on the father-child-interaction scale was obtained by adding scores of all domains across one hour of home observations.

Scoring technique :

Means were calculated to study father-child-interaction. T-test was carried out to study the level of significance.

Procedure :

Father-child-interaction in the family setting was conducted during dinner time to ensure the availability of fathers at home and an opportunity for them to interact with their children. The session involved 60 minutes of home observation. During all observations both parents were requested and encouraged to carry out daily routines as if the observer was not present. They were free to move at will but were encouraged to remain in the same room with the child most of the time, following Belsky's (1997) procedure. One investigator and two observers participated in each visit. The investigator interacted with

the parents and infant in an effort to make them feel comfortable about being observed. The two observers retreated to a corner of the room and recorded the time of each activity. The observers recorded each time an adult picked up and held or played or disciplined the child using Belsky's categorization of father-child-interaction. The observers also noted when the activity ended in order to obtain measures for the duration of the activities.

Inter observer reliability for the father-child-interaction was obtained by having two observers to assess the behaviours of the father and child as they occurred. Initial training and practice was given to the observers by the investigator to study father-child-interaction for one hour.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From Table 1 it can be analyzed that none of the fathers took sole responsibility of taking care of their children, nor even they were ignorant in meeting the needs of the child. From this it can be stated that fathers were providing a helping hand to mothers in taking care of their children, but never took the whole responsibility of the child.

Majority of the fathers from group-I and II categories with mean scores of 23.17 and 24.85 (maximum mean score 30) were involved in "playing" with the child during one hour home observations (Table 2). One of the fathers said "playing is a kind of most enjoyable experience that a father can provide to the child and it is one of the best ways to develop closer and intimate relationship with the child". This finding is in agreement with the research

Table 1 : Distribution of fathers based on their interaction with the child

Sr. No.	Extent of interaction	Scores	Group-I (n=60)		Group-II (n=60)	
			Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	High interaction	91-120	8	13	25	41
2.	Moderate interaction	61-90	21	35	31	52
3.	Low interaction	31-60	31	52	4	7
4.	No interaction	1-30	-	-	-	-

Table 2 : Mean differences in father-child-interaction between group-I and group-II

Sr. No.	Father-child-interaction dimensions	Mean scores			Z-test (group I and II)
		Group-I (n=60)	Group-II (n=60)	Total (n=120)	
1.	Care taking	14.35	20.02	17.18	4.295**
2.	Playing	23.17	24.85	24.01	1.1515
3.	Teaching	15.12	20.13	17.62	4.295**
4.	Disciplining and socialization	18.35	20.28	19.31	1.6821
	f-value	7.826**	6.772**		10.9680**

** indicate significance of value at P=0.01

studies done by Chibucos and Kail (1981), Jain and Belsky (1997), Belsky (1996), Tiedje and Cynthia (1993) whose research results revealed that fathers were more involved in general play behaviours during father-child-interaction.

Disciplining and socialization was given second preference by both the categories of fathers during father-child-interaction. Wherein, 50 per cent of the fathers were talking to the child and controlling the behaviour of the child. These were followed by teaching (mean score of 15.12 and 20.13) and care taking (14.35 and 20.02). When compared to group-I category of fathers, group-II fathers showed more interaction in teaching and care taking dimensions during father-child-interaction. This was because when the mother was away to work, fathers got used to engage the child in different types of activities as well as used to attend the care taking needs of the child as no help was provided to the father.

When the total sample was considered play dimension was given first preference. This was because majority of the fathers thought, the easiest way to engage the child was only through play. "Disciplining and socialization" was given second preference followed by "teaching". Some of the fathers were of the opinion that, it was not fair to teach the child during his early years. The other reason could be that fathers never wanted to involve in tasks that are laborious and strainful. This finding is not in agreement with a study done by Jain *et al.* (1996), whose results revealed that fathers were more involved in "teaching" the child during father-child-interaction than mothers. However, to a certain extent fathers were engaged in solving simple puzzles, games, helping the child to do colouring activities and picture reading with the child. Fathers obtained a least mean score of 17.18 for "care taking" dimension, when the total sample was considered. One of the fathers said "if I was provided with an opportunity to interact with the child during early year, it would have been more likely that I would have been involved in care taking. But unfortunately I was not provided with a chance because my wife was there along with her parents for seven months after the birth of the child". However, "care taking" was still viewed as a feminine chore by some of the fathers.

From the above discussion, it can be understood that, there is a significant difference in the four child care dimensions of father-child-interaction during father-child-interaction within group-I and group II categories of

fathers. However, highly significant differences were observed in "care taking" and "teaching" dimensions during father-child-interaction between group-I and II categories of fathers. Wherein, group-II fathers were more involved than group-I fathers in all the said child care dimensions because of the nature of mother's employment. Whereas, irrespective of the kind of employment the dual earner couples were engaged, the father-child-interaction remained the same in "playing" and "disciplining and socialization".

Conclusion and implications :

Fathers provided unique experiences for their children and were an extra source of stimulation when they interacted with their children. Early interaction with their children will also facilitate bonding influences between the father and the child, but little is known about the actual amount of the time fathers associate and interact with their infants, in Indian context. It appears that Indian fathers interact with their children more at home than in public places when compared with children with men in other cultures. However, father's interaction in all aspects of child care is much better in the present century than a decade ago. Further research can be carried out on other variables such as varied observational settings, the age of infant, the sequence of episodes in which different adults are involved and the length of observation. Further investigation can be carried out on triadic interaction such as father-child-mother. Above all the child's reciprocation to the fathers interaction can also be studied.

■ REFERENCES

- Bailey, W.T. (1994).** Father's involvement and responding to infants: "more" may not be "better". *Psychological Reports*, **74** (1): 92-94.
- Belsky, J. (1996).** Parent, infant and social-contextual antecedents of father-son attachment security. *Develop. Psychol.*, **32** (5): 905-913.
- Belsky, J. (1997).** Theory testing, effect-size evaluation and differential susceptibility to rearing influence: the case of mothering and attachment. *Child Develop.*, **68** (4) : 598- 600.
- Bridges, J. L., Connell, P.J. and Belsky, J. (1988).** Similarities and differences in Infant-mother and infant-father interaction in the strange situation: A component process analysis. *Develop. Psychol.*, **24** (1): 92-100.

- Chibucos, T. and Kail, P. (1981).** Longitudinal examination of father infant interaction and infant-father interaction. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, **27** (2) : 81-96.
- Coverman, S. and Sheley, F.J. (1986).** Change in men's house work and child care time, 1975-1985. *J. Marriage & Family*, **48** (2): 413-422.
- Doherty, J.W., Kouneski, F.E. and Erickson, F.M. (1998).** Responsible fathering: An overview and conceptual framework. *J. Marriage & Family*, **60** (2): 277-292.
- Farver, J.M. and Wimbari, S. (1995).** Paternal participation in toddlers pretend play. *Soc. Develop.*, **4** (1): 17-31.
- Feldman, S.S., Nash, S.C. and Aschanbrenner, B.G. (1983).** Antecedents of fathering. *Child Develop.*, **54**: 1928-1936.
- Ishii, K.M. (1994).** Paternal involvement and perception towards fathers role: A comparison between Japan and United States. *J. Family Issues*, **15** (1): 30-48.
- Jain, A. and Belsky, J. (1997).** Fathering and acculturation: Immigrant Indian families with young children. *J. Marriage & Family*, **59** (4): 873-883.
- Jain, A., Belsky, J. and Crnic, K. (1996).** Beyond fathering behaviours: Types of dads. *J. Family Psychol.*, **10** (4): 431-442.
- Lamb, E.M. (1981).** The role of father in child development. John Wiley and Sons, NEW YORK, U.S.A.
- Levy-Shiff, R. and Israelashnili, R. (1988).** Antecedents of fathering : Some further explorations. *Develop. Psychol.*, **24** (3): 433-440.
- Lincoln, L.M. (1984).** Fathering and the separation individuation process. *Maternal Child Nurs. J.*, **13** (3):103-112.
- Maeielle, E.A., Marianne, J.E., Lidewei, C., Frederique, J.G.C., Frits, B. and Ramonm, J.L. Lindaver (2012).** Parent child interaction therapy for pre-school children with discipline behaviour problems in Netherlands. *Child & Adoles. Psychiatry & Mental Health*, **24** (6): 261-275.
- Matos, M., Bavermeister, J.J. and Bernal, G. (2009).** Parent child interaction therapy for puerto rican pre-school children. *Child & Adoles. Psychiatry & Mental Health*, **48** (2): 232-252.
- MC Govern, A.M. (1990).** Sensitivity and reciprocity in the play of adolescent mothers and young fathers with their infants. *Family Relations*, **39** (4): 427-431.
- Palkovitz, R. (1985).** Parental attitudes and fathers interactions with their 5-month old infants. *J. Develop. Psychol.*, **20** (6): 1054-1060.
- Pannabecker, J.B., Emde, N.R. and Austin, C.B. (1982).** The effect of early extended contact on father new born interaction. *J. Genetic Psychol.*, **141** (1): 7-17.
- Pleck, J.H. (1985).** *Working wives, working husbands*. Sage Publications, NEW DELHI, INDIA.
- Purnima, K.R. (1990).** Job involvement : A comparative study of the effects of role change perspective in dual and single earner families. Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Bombay (M.S.) INDIA.
- Ricks, S.S. (1985).** Father-infant interactions : A review of empirical research. *Family Relations*, **34** (4): 505-511.
- Roopnarine, L.J., Talukder, E., Jain, D., Joshi, P. and Srivastav, P. (1990).** Characteristics of holding, patterns of play and social behaviour between parents and infants in New Delhi, India. *Develop. Psychol.*, **26** (40): 667-673.
- Sun, L.C. and Roopnarine, J.L. (1996).** Mother-infant, father-infant interaction and involvement in child care and 3 labour among Taiwanese families. *Infant Behaviour & Develop.*, **19** (1): 121-129.
- Tiedje, L.B. and Cynthia, S. (1993).** Factors that influence fathers participation in child care. *Health Care Woman Internat.*, **14** (1): 99-107.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ of Excellence ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 10th Year