



Paternal involvement in child rearing activities of pre-school children

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ABSTRACT

In the past few decades, enormous changes have occurred in gendered divisions of household activities and child care across many countries with a growing consensus that there is a slow but steady pace of change in gendered division of time and tasks but one that is combined with a puzzling persistence of gender differences in parental caregiving responsibilities. The present study was an attempt to assess the level of father's involvement in selected child rearing activities of their male and female pre-school children under 2-6 years of age as their eldest offspring. The total sample consisted of 120 fathers, out of which 60 fathers were having boys as their index child and 60 fathers were having girls as their eldest child. Paternal involvement inventory was used by the investigator to assess the level of fathers' involvement in child rearing tasks of their pre-school children. Z- Test for difference between two means was administered and no significant difference was found in the level of father's involvement in child rearing of male and female pre-school children.

INTRODUCTION

Currently men are playing an increasing role in the care of their children in the private sphere and this has increased at a much faster rate than the increase in time that women spend with their young children and they are now responsible for around one third of all child-care activities. However, this increase of involvement is not reflected in a growth in the number of men in the childcare workforce. It appears from observational evidence that when men set foot in early year's settings as fathers, their role is often restricted to gender appropriate activities such as doing jobs around the setting or being involved in outdoor games and construction play. However, evidence

suggests that children do better educationally, psychologically and socially when their fathers are involved with them. Research has also indicated that it is not just the amount of time that the father spends with his child that is beneficial, but that the qualities of interactions are of central importance (Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda, 2004).

Since fathers in India have the power to make decisions in the family, society and schools can seek partnerships with them to advocate for the well-being of the nation's children and involve them in ensuring a gender-equitable and democratic family life.

Due to changing social conditions, both the desire and demand for father involvement is high in Indian

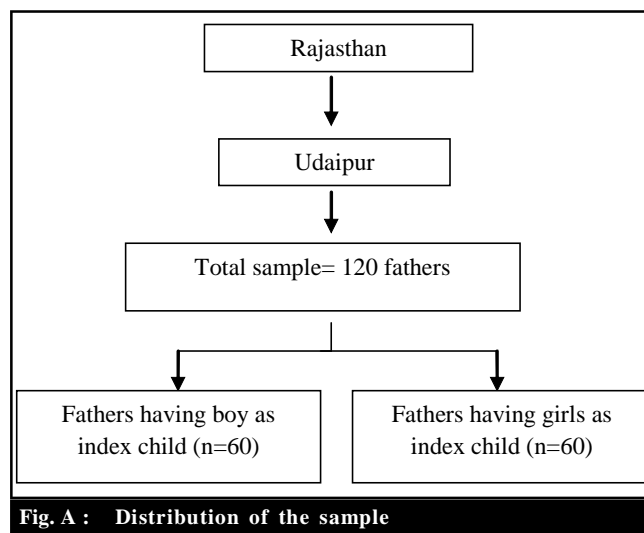
society. Indian fathers, the majority of whom are moderately involved, can play a key role in ensuring the healthy development of their children by increasing their involvement in the right direction. Demands on fathers to participate more actively in the rearing and socialization of their children have existed for some decades. These demands, nonetheless, have intensified in recent years across all social sectors. Now-a-days, young fathers generally help mothers with child rearing, particularly during the first months and years of the child. The scientific journals, as well as the social media, are filled with information reporting the importance of the father. There has never been any questions regarding father's importance in their children's lives; moreover, majority of studies affirm that an involved father can play a crucial role particularly in the cognitive, behavioral and general health and well-being areas of a child's life. However, researches regarding gendered differences in fathering are still lacking. Against this backdrop, the study envisaged with the following objectives:

- To assess the level of father's involvement in selected child rearing tasks of male and female pre-school children.
- To find out the difference in the level of father's involvement in child rearing activities with male and female pre-school children.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in Udaipur, a city of Rajasthan. The total sample consisted of 120 fathers, out of which 60 fathers were having boys between 2-6 years of age as their index child and 60 fathers were having girls between 2-6 years of age as their index child belonging to families having Rs.2,00,000 to Rs.8,00,000 as their annual family income. The distribution of sample is shown in Fig. A.

Paternal involvement inventory constructed by Singh (2007) was used to assess fathers' involvement in child rearing tasks of their 2-6 years old children. The inventory consists of close-ended questions, seeking responses on direct involvement of fathers on four point scale regarding selected child rearing tasks which were health promoting tasks, toilet training tasks, tasks promoting physical skills, tasks pertaining to satisfaction of emotional needs and tasks pertaining to promotion of social skills and discipline. Questions were framed concerning the major aspects of father's involvement in the selected aspect of involvement



namely: Grooming, Sustaining the learning and Future Orientation. Z-test (Large sample test) for difference between two means was administered to compare the means of two populations *i.e.* to compare the level of father's involvement in child rearing activities of male and female pre-school children.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

There are a number of factors that influence the degree to which fathers are involved with their children. As studied by Pleck (2010) fathers with more gender egalitarian practices are actively involved in parenting especially with children under pre-school age.

Scholars have suggested that gender inequalities in child care might be reduced when women are employed as maternal employment may bring fathers to compensate for their wives' time pressures by increasing the child care output for children of both the sexes (Raley *et al.*, 2012).

The results of the present study as well as relevant discussions have been presented under the following subheads:

Socio-personal characteristics of the respondents:

In every study, it is essential to know the background information in which the research investigation has been conducted as the personal and familial details of the respondents bring out their characteristic features.

At the time of present investigation majority of the fathers belonged to the age group of 25-35 years with good educational qualifications *i.e.* graduates and

occupationally placed at government sectors having an annual family income under the range of Rs.2,00,000 to 4,90,000. 60 per cent fathers of male pre-school and 63.4 per cent fathers of the female pre-school child were having children under 2-4 years of age. Majority of the wives were not working although they were well educated *i.e.* graduates.

Assessment of the level of father’s involvement in selected child rearing tasks of male and female pre-school children:

Table 1, depicts the level of father’s involvement in selected child rearing tasks of male and female pre-school children.

From Table 1, it can be concluded that fathers of pre-school boys and girls were found to be highly involved in promoting healthy habits, toilet training and age appropriate physical skills whereas, moderate involvement was observed in grooming aspect of promotion of age appropriate emotional needs and social skills and discipline. Moderate involvement was also observed in fathers of pre-school boys regarding future orientation aspect of promoting age appropriate emotional skills.

Mother and fathers are both important in proper development of children; therefore, gender role redefinition in parental role is required instead of lamenting the passing of the good provider model and trying to reclaim a nostalgic vision of responsible fathers and soft patriarch. It is important to study and promote a wide range of fathering styles and focusing on those activities that reflect a healthy trend of gender equality. To find out the difference in the level of father’s involvement in selected child rearing activities of male and female pre-school children Z- test for difference between two means was administered to the subjects. Table 3, depicts the values of the Z-test calculated for the fathers of male and female pre-school children.

Comparison of the level of father’s involvement in child rearing activities of male and female pre-school children (2-6 years):

Table 2, depicts the values of the Z-test calculated for the fathers of male and female pre-school children.

From Table 2, it is evident that there is no significant difference between the level of father’s involvement in child rearing activities with male and female pre-school

Sr. No.	Child rearing task	Level of involvement	Grooming		Sustaining the learning		Future orientation	
			Boys (n=60)	Girls (n=60)	Boys (n=60)	Girls (n=60)	Boys (n=60)	Girls (n=60)
1.	Healthy habits	High	96.5	89.5	94.5	89.5	95	88
		Medium	3.3	8.3	3.34	10.5	3.34	3.34
		Low	-	1.67	1.67	-	1.67	86.5
2.	Toilet training	High	91.5	91.5	93	91.5	83	86.5
		Medium	8.34	8.34	6.67	1.67	16.6	6.67
		Low	-	-	-	6.67	16.6	6.67
3.	Physical skills	High	96.5	95	86.5	91.5	80	68
		Medium	3.34	5	10.8	8.3	20	11.67
		Low	-	-	2.5	-	-	20
4.	Emotional needs	High	54.5	54.5	88	83	68	78
		Medium	45	45	11.67	16.67	28.33	15
		Low	-	-	-	-	3.34	6.67
5.	Social skills and discipline	High	33	71.5	90	78	68.3	93
		Medium	65	26.67	10	21.6	28.3	3.34
		Low	1.67	1.67	-	-	3.34	3.34

Sr. No.	Sex of the child	Mean	Standard deviation	Z- values
1.	Fathers with eldest male child	3.6707	0.3792	1.4424
2.	Fathers with eldest female child	3.55	0.5257	(NS)

NS= Non-significant

children as calculated value of 'Z' is less than tabulated value of 'Z' at 0.05 per cent level of significance.

From the above results it can be concluded that this non-significant difference could be due to the constantly changing global ecosystem and its biological and cultural diversity. Changes have occurred in every aspect right from changes in legislation to gender roles and fathers at present are equally involved in child rearing activities of their male and female pre-school children and taking on a parental role equal to that of women.

Conclusion :

On the basis of the findings it is indicated that Indian fathers are ready to participate in any activities which are related to family life. Their role has consequently changed and even in the family they are showing concern by participating in activities like promoting healthy habits, toilet training, promoting age appropriate physical skills, fulfilling the emotional needs and socializing children that were once considered as prime responsibilities of mothers. Fathers at present are equally involved in child rearing

activities of children belonging to both the sexes (*i.e.* boys and girls) showing androgynous behaviour and reflecting a healthy trend of gender equality. Fathers are emerging as an active participant in raising children and providing a unique contribution to the development of the children.

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