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Quick Response Code:

Website: www.jehp.net
DOI: 10.4103/jehp.jehp_523_23

A cross-sectional study to identify the perception of children regarding paternal involvement in child rearing

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Abstract:

BACKGROUND: Child rearing is a generic term that refers to the upbringing of children by providing them with food, shelter, and clothing and encircled with socialization, shaping their personality, character, talents, cultural and moral values as well as their physical and emotional well-being. Research studies in India indicate that fathers are participating in children's lives in many ways, and are far from being uninvolved.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: This was a cross-sectional study conducted among school-going children aged between 11-15 years at a selected school, Mangaluru in January 2022. Ninety-six study participants were recruited using a disproportionate stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using a self-structured four-point Likert scale under six domains. The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS: The study results revealed that 84.6% had poor perception and 16.4% had good perception regarding paternal involvement in child-rearing. There was a significant association found between the educational status of the father and the type of family with perception score, at $P < 0.05$ level of significance.

CONCLUSION: This study concluded that, even though fathers are more contributing, the children of the newer generation could not understand their father's involvement in their lives.

Keywords:

Childhood, father, parenting style, school-age child

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Received: 16-04-2023

Accepted: 30-05-2023

Published: 22-01-2024

Introduction

Childhood is much more than just the space between birth and the attainment of adulthood. No matter how hard we try, this is the only time in life when we can enjoy ourselves without fear of being judged. The backbone of the future is built upon the basis of childhood. The foundation is shaped by the love and care of parents, and the bright future is decorated by the right values and principles which are learned during childhood.^[1]

Child rearing is a generic term that refers to upbringing of the children by providing

them with food, shelter, and clothing and encircled with socialisation, shaping their personality, character, talents, cultural and moral values as well as the physical and emotional well-being. There are many contributing factors that have an impact on what methods or styles of child rearing are used: parental intuition and attitudes, beliefs, learned parenting skills, race, culture, social class and wealth are some of them.^[2]

When upbringing a child, there are four types of parenting styles. Authoritarian or disciplinarian, where use a strict discipline style with little negotiation, punishment is common, and communication is mostly one way: from parent to child, rules are usually

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How to cite this article: Shaharban F, Benazeera, Aranha PR. A cross-sectional study to identify the perception of children regarding paternal involvement in child rearing. J Edu Health Promot 2023;12:439.

not explained, parents with this style are less nurturing and expectations are high with limited flexibility. The second one is permissive or indulgent parenting, where they mostly let their children do what they want, and offer limited guidance or direction, communication is open but these parents tend to be warm and nurturing, and expectation are minimal or not set by the parent.^[3] The third one is uninvolved parenting, which means parents give lots of freedom and generally stay out of the way, no particular discipline style is used, communication is limited, offer little nurturing, and little or no expectations of children. The fourth method of parenting is authoritative parenting, where these parents are reasonable and nurturing, set high clear expectations, children tend to be disciplined and think for themselves, communication is frequent, disciplinary rules are clear and reasons behind them are explained and this is the most accurate style of parenting.^[4] These parenting styles can have an impact on the growth and development of children.

Parents influence their children in limitless ways. Firstly, they give the child a life, and then they create an environment that the child is raised in, and the child gets intelligence and personality from the ways they interact with the child. The way a father treats his child will influence what he/she looks for in other relationships. A friend, intimate partner, or spouse will all be chosen based on how the child perceives the meaning of the relationship with his/her father. The space and boundaries a father set in the relationship with his children will dictate how his children relate with other people.^[5]

A father, like a mother, is a supportive pillar in the family and plays an important role in the development of a child. Children look for a feeling of security, both physical and emotional, from their parents. An involved father promotes the child's inner growth and strength. When fathers are affectionate and supportive, it directly affects the child's cognitive and social development.^[6]

Mothers do more multi-tasking, more managing and organizing and face intense parenting pressure. But in the child's view, he/she should be considered by both parents. If equality begins in the home, it should reflect in parenting also, as nowadays both are earning members of the family. Children need a father as a playmate, a coach or teacher, a professor, a companion, and a provider. More importantly, a father is a role model for every child. Fatherhood can also be a struggle, as they want to perform many roles; father, son, man, husband, bread-winner, and caregiver. The upbringing of a child is a challenging one. The desire to be a perfect father is really innate. While a man trying to be a good father, the worth should feel by his child.^[7]

As a father, a man puts a lot of pressure on himself to do basically everything, all the time, every single day. It is essential to know a child's view about parenting styles, especially fathers. The future of a child depends on how well the child perceives the father's involvement in child-rearing. Still, studies are scarce to detect children's perceptions about child-rearing. So, a child's perception of a father's involvement in child rearing is very important to know in order to fill any gaps in the paternal parenting style. This study can contribute towards whether the child has understood their father's involvement in their lives is a worthwhile one or not.^[8]

Materials and Methods

Study design and setting

This was a cross-sectional school-based study conducted among school-age children. Data were collected in the month of January 2022 through the offline method.

Study participant and sampling

School-age children of 11-15 years, living with their father were included by using a stratified random sampling technique. The exclusion criteria stated were children who are having single parent (mother), who are staying in a hostel, and whose father is sick/separated/staying abroad. The researcher divided the samples into strata based on their class of study. From the 6th and 7th standards, a total of 36 children were selected and 20 samples each from the 8th, 9th, and 10th standards. Finally, the samples were selected by a simple random technique. The sample size was calculated based on a reference research article published by V. Kavitha Kiran in the year 2018.^[9] With 10% precision, and 95% confidence, the calculated sample size was 96.

Data collection tool and technique

To assess the perception of children regarding paternal involvement in child rearing the investigator developed a 23-item, four-point Likert scale, ranging through never, sometimes, often, and very often, under 6 categories. The interpretation of the score: good perception- a score of 46-92, and poor perception- a score of 23-45. In order to obtain validity of the tool, the draft of the tool was submitted to the five experts for their valuable suggestions and recommendations. As per the expert's opinion changes were made to the tool. The tool was pre-tested by administering in 10 samples. It was found to be clear and feasible. Reliability was assessed by using the test-retest method and was calculated by using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability of the tool was found to be 0.751 which indicates that the tool was reliable. A pilot study was conducted with 10 samples to know the feasibility. No changes were made after the pilot study. The data was analyzed by using by descriptive and inferential statistics using IBM SPSS 23. A Chi-square

test at a 5% level of significance was used for statistical analysis. A *P* value of <0.05 considered to be statistically significant.

Ethical consideration

Written approval for the study was obtained from the ethical committee of the university (Approval number: YEC2/841 Dated (01/01/2022) and from the authority of the school. Consent from all the parents and assent from the children were obtained before data collection.

Results

A total of 96 children with an age range from 11 to 15 years participated in the study. Among the 96 samples, 55.2% were in the age group of 11-13 years, 60.4% were males, 58.3% were studying in 6th to 8th standard, 76% belong to the nuclear family, 46.9% belong to the Muslim religion, 42.75% were the second born, 46.9% having two siblings. A greater number of samples were living in urban areas (65.6%). The demographic characteristic of fathers included education and employment. Which majority (31.3%) of fathers were either completed PUC and 30.2% were graduated, and majorities (43.7%) of fathers was self-employed [Table 1]. As shown in table 1 there was a significant association found between the educational status of the father and the type of family with a perception score, at *P* < 0.05 level. The study indicated that [Figure 1] 18.4% of children had poor perception and 15.6% had good perception regarding paternal involvement in child-rearing. Table 2 indicates the area-wise Mean ± SD and mean percentage of perception score. The four-point Likert scale had six areas, which included questions regarding how well the father had been involved in their day-to-day life. One of the areas was aspiration, which had a higher mean value (63.3%). This means they are observing their fathers when they are at home and how the fathers treat

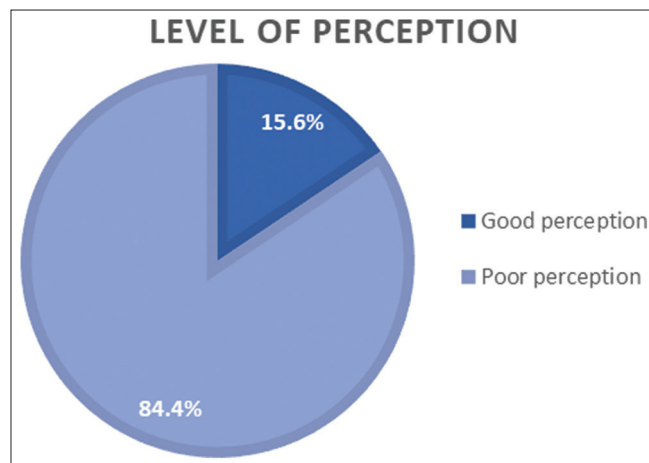


Figure 1: Pie diagram depicts the frequency distribution of children's perception on paternal involvement in child rearing

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of demographic characteristics of children n

Demographic variables	f (%)	χ ² test	P
Age in years			
11-13	53 (55.2)		
14-15	43 (44.8)	1.685	0.194
Gender			
Male	58 (60.4)		
Female	38 (39.6)	0.115	0.734
Class of study			
6 th grade to 8 th grade	56 (58.3)		
9 th grade to 10 th grade	40 (41.7)	2.420	0.120
Type of family			
Nuclear	73 (76.0)	6.253	0.012*
Joint	23 (24.0)		
Religion			
Hindu	27 (28.1)		
Muslim	45 (46.9)	0.148	0.929
Christian	24 (25.0)		
Birth order			
First born	33 (34.4)		
Second born	41 (42.7)	3.669	0.299
Third borne	19 (19.8)		
Fourth or more	3 (3.1)		
Number of siblings			
None	8 (8.3)		
One	38 (39.6)	4.532	0.209
Two	45 (46.9)		
Three or more	5 (5.2)		
Area of living			
Urban	63 (65.6)	3.737	0.191
Rural	33 (34.4)		
Education of father			
No formal education	4 (4.2)		
Primary	8 (8.3)	22.322	0.001*
High school	11 (11.56)		
PUC	30 (31.3)		
Graduation	29 (30.2)		
Post-graduation and above	14 (14.6)		
Employment of father			
Private employee	34 (35.4)		
Government employee	12 (12.5)	4.140	0.387
Unemployed	8 (8.3)		
Self employed	42 (43.7)		

²Chi square test, *Significance at *P*<0.05

Table 2: Mean±SD and mean percentage of area wise perception of children regarding paternal involvement in child rearing (n=96)

Areas	Maximum possible score	Minimum possible score	Mean±SD	Mean percentage
Guidance	24	6	13.20±4.31	55.0
Recreation	16	4	7.86±2.71	49.1
Availability	12	3	6.49±2.06	54.1
Aspiration	12	3	7.60±2.82	63.3
Scholastic	16	4	7.14±3.07	44.6
Psychological	12	3	6.21±2.02	51.8

SD - Standard Deviation

their siblings of other genders. Even though children’s perceptions were poor, they were considering their fathers as role models. The scholastic area had a 44.6 mean percentage, which is less compared to all other areas. This means that, while fathers contribute to academic performance, they spend less time with their children in extracurricular activities. Meanwhile, the children have a good perception regarding other areas of child-rearing in which guidance; availability, psychological aspect, and recreation areas had 55.0, 54.1, 51.8, and 49.1 mean percentages, respectively. Table 3 reveals the frequency and percentage distribution of items on the perception scale of children regarding paternal involvement in child-rearing. In which 40.6% of fathers never made their children understand their wants and needs, 39.6% children said that their father sometimes discourages them when they are eating unhealthy/fast food and watching TV/using mobile phone, 34.4% children said that their father helps them to take decision when they are in trouble, 36.5% of children said that their father sometimes guides them to spend money cautiously, 38.5% of children said that their father guides them in what is right and wrong, 32.3% of children said that their

father encourages them to do prayers, 42.7% said that their father never plays with them, 34.4% of children said that their father sometimes takes them for outings, 38.5% said that sometimes their father allows them to play outside the home with their friends, 42.7% of children said that their father never brings books for them to read, 42.7% of children said that their father sometimes spends time with them during illness, 31.3% of children said that sometimes their father takes them to the hospital when they become ill, 39.6% of children said that their father never drops/picks up them to/from the school, 30.2% of children are taking their father as a role model often, 30.2% of children said that their father often takes care of them as he takes care of their siblings, 58.4% of children said sometimes or often their father motivates them to help mother to do house hold chores, 41.7% of children said their father never help them in doing homework and school related activities, 40.6% said that sometimes their father communicates with their teacher, 73% of children said that their father never or sometimes assisting them in getting ready to go school, 33.3% said that never they can share their secret with their father, 37.5% said that sometimes only their father scolds/punishes them for

Table 3: Frequency and percentage distribution of items on perception scale of children regarding paternal involvement in child rearing (n=96)

Likert scale - question	Never f (%)	Sometimes f (%)	Often f (%)	Very often f (%)
Guidance				
My father makes me to understand about my wants/needs	39 (40.6)	28 (29.2)	26 (27.1)	3 (3.1)
My father discourages me when I am eating unhealthy/fast food and watching TV/using mobile phone	22 (22.9)	38 (39.6)	26 (27.1)	10 (10.4)
My father helps me to take decision when I am in trouble.	27 (28.1)	33 (34.4)	28 (29.2)	9 (9.4)
My father guides me to spend money cautiously.	23 (24)	35 (36.5)	29 (30.2)	9 (9.4)
My father guides me in what is right and wrong.	21 (21.9)	37 (38.5)	28 (29.2)	10 (10.4)
My father encourages me to do prayers.	24 (25.0)	31 (32.3)	28 (29.2)	13 (13.5)
Recreation				
My father plays with me.	41 (42.7)	22 (22.9)	25 (26)	8 (8.3)
My father takes me for outing	31 (32.3)	33 (34.4)	28 (29.2)	4 (4.2)
My father allows me to play outside the home with my friends.	32 (33.3)	37 (38.5)	22 (22.9)	5 (5.2)
My father brings books for me to read.	41 (42.7)	37 (38.5)	13 (13.5)	5 (5.2)
Availability				
My father spends time with me during illness.	29 (30.2)	41 (42.7)	20 (20.8)	6 (6.3)
My father takes me to the hospital when I become ill.	21 (21.9)	30 (31.3)	29 (30.2)	16 (16.7)
My father drops/pick up me to/from the school	38 (39.6)	23 (24.0)	28 (29.2)	7 (7.3)
Aspiration				
I take my father as a role model	19 (19.8)	20 (20.8)	29 (30.2)	28 (29.2)
My father takes care of me as he takes care of my siblings.	23 (24)	18 (18.8)	29 (30.2)	26 (27.1)
My father motivates me to help my mother in house hold chores	26 (27.1)	28 (29.2)	28 (29.2)	14 (14.6)
Scholastic area				
My father helps me in doing homework and school related activities.	40 (41.7)	38 (39.6)	17 (17.7)	1 (1.0)
My father communicates with my teacher	27 (28.1)	39 (40.6)	26 (27.1)	4 (4.2)
My father attends parents meeting at school.	24 (25.0)	37 (38.5)	26 (27.1)	9 (9.4)
My father assists me in getting ready to go school.	35 (36.5)	35 (36.5)	20 (20.8)	6 (6.3)
Psychological aspect				
I can share my secrets with my father.	32 (33.3)	24 (25.0)	31 (32.3)	9 (9.4)
My father scolds/punishes me for simple mistakes.	34 (35.4)	36 (37.5)	13 (13.5)	13 (13.5)
My father expresses his love towards me by words/gifts/deeds.	39 (40.6)	29 (30.2)	19 (19.8)	9 (9.4)

simple mistakes, 40.6% of children said that their father never expresses his love by words/gits/deeds.

Discussion

In reality, there are a large number of “father missing” cases even though they are physically present. Existing studies have concentrated on how father involvement affects children’s development and what factors affect father involvement in raising children. The involvement of fathers has varying degrees of impact on children’s development of personality, social skills, cognition, IQ, and academic achievement, as well as gender roles, morality, and emotions.^[10] While the present study focuses on children’s perception; of how well they have understood their father’s involvement in their life.

The present study revealed that the majority (76%) were under the nuclear family. A larger number of samples (42.75%) were second born, the current study results showed that 84.4% of children had poor perception and 15.6% had good perception regarding paternal involvement in child- rearing.

A similar study done by M. P. Somashekar, M. C. Smitha, and Nagendra, showed 84.4% lived in nuclear families, and 63.8% were second-born. The study results concluded that 75.9% of Fathers had poor involvement in child rearing and the remaining 24.1% were well involved in child- rearing.^[11]

The four-point Likert scale had six areas, which included questions regarding how well the father had been involved in their day-to-day life. The children have a good perception regarding guidance, availability, psychological aspect, and recreation areas of child-rearing in which they had 55.0, 54.1, 51.8, and 49.1 mean percentages, respectively.

In contrast to this, a study conducted by Unlu Cetin S and Olgan R-showed that the lowest mean score belongs to the “Availability” sub-scale ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.85$) whereas the highest mean score belongs to the “Providing” sub-scale ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 0.54$).^[12]

According to children’s perception, in the guidance aspect 40.6% of fathers never made their children understand their wants and needs, 39.6% of children said that their father sometimes discourages them when they are eating unhealthy/fast food and watching TV or using a mobile phone, 34.4% of children said that their father helps them to make decisions when they are in trouble, 36.5% of children said that their father sometimes guides them to spend money cautiously, 38.5% of children said that their father guides them in what is right and wrong, 32.3% of children said that their

father encourages them to do prayers. In the recreation area, 42.7% said that their father never plays with them, 34.4% of children said that their father sometimes takes them for outing, 38.5% said that sometimes their father allows them to play outside the home with their friends, 42.7% of children said that their father never brings books for them to read. In the availability area 42.7% of children said that their father sometimes spends time with them during illness, 31.3% of children said that sometimes their father takes them to the hospital when they become ill, 39.6% of children said that their father never drops/picks up them to/from the school. In the aspiration area 30.2% of children are taking their father as a role model often, 30.2% of children said that their father often takes care of them as he takes care of their siblings without any gender difference, 58.4% of children said sometimes or often their father motivates them to help the mother to do house-hold chores. In the Scholastic domain, 41.7% of children said their father never helps them in doing homework and school- related activities, 40.6% said that sometimes their father communicates with their teacher, and 73% of children said that their father never or sometimes assists them in getting ready to go to school. In the psychological aspect 33.3% said that never they can share their secret with their father, 37.5% said that sometimes only their father scolds/punishes them for simple mistakes, 40.6% of children said that their father never expresses his love through words/gits/deeds.

In contrast to this, studies show that fathers inspire the child to regular performance, and children acknowledged the high level of the father’s contribution especially, in the area of positive emotional responsiveness and providing and planning for meeting their needs and wishes.^[13] Based on a series of studies on middle-class fathers with 6-8-year-old children, it is found that participation in daily care-giving was more out of necessity rather than a choice, and is more frequent when the mother was not available. Fathers were also less involved in daily tasks such as dropping and picking up their children from school and other places as well supervising their child’s homework.^[14]

The Study showed that there is a significant association between area- wise perception scores of children regarding paternal involvement in child rearing with the type of family and the educational status of the father.

This was supported by the study done by Binal Joshi and Devangi Sharma on assessing the Facets of Child Rearing Practices among Parents in Selected communities in Gujarat. The finding of this study showed a significant association of facets of child-rearing practices of the demographic variables of the father shows significant association with the type of family and education.^[15]

A similar study done by M. P. Somashekar, M. C. Smitha and Nagendra, showed a significant association of Type of family with “developing talents and future concerns” and with “reading and homework support”.^[11] The study concluded that 84.4% of children had poor perception and 15.6% had good perception regarding paternal involvement in child-rearing. In the present scenario, the variety of conceptualizations and approaches required to construct healthy paternal involvement has led to the overall development of the children.

Implication

A nursing curriculum can reinforce the nursing student’s ability to educate the family and community regarding the importance of “felt paternal child rearing” in the growth and development of children. Education can be given to the fathers of all aged children as paternal involvement influences from the infancy period onwards. During the care and management of hospitalized children, a pediatric nurse must ensure the presence and involvement of the father in care irrespective of the age of the children. So, measures should be taken to improve the nurse’s knowledge and practice. Education programme with effective teaching strategies will help the nurses as well as the fathers to become aware that paternal care is as important as maternal care in the health and well-being of children. The nurse administrator should be interested in delivering information on “felt paternal child rearing”. Parental health education should be planned and organized by the nurse administrator.

Limitations and Recommendations

The main limitation of the study was the participant’s life-style practices, which may vary with different settings; so, generalizing the results to other cultures or groups should be done with caution.

On the basis of the present study, the recommendations were drawn for the future study such as comparative study can be done to assess the perception of children regarding maternal and paternal child rearing, the longitudinal study can be done to know the change in children’s perception from child-hood to late adolescence and study can be reproduced in different age group like schooler.

Conclusion

A paternal involvement is most contributing factors; the newer generation of children could not understand their father’s involvement in their lives. The father’s involvement could directly affect the overall growth and development of the children. So, the children should feel

the involvement of their fathers in their lives. It can lead them to a better adulthood.

Acknowledgement

The authors are thankful to the authorities of Yenepoya (Deemed to be University) and Yenepoya School for providing all the technical and other support for the completion of this research work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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