Original Research Article

Sociodemographic variables predicting fathers involvement in child rearing in Basavanapura village of Hunasuru taluk, Mysuru district, Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

Background: Role of parents in upbringing of children is crucial in forming a child’s future. In the present generation of increasing nuclear families, father’s role in child rearing becomes even more important in deciding the future of a child. Hence in this regard the following study was conducted to determine the father’s involvement in child rearing and to determine the socio-demographic variables associated with involvement of father in child rearing.

Methods: It is a cross-sectional study conducted in rural part of Mysuru District. Houses in the village were selected by simple random sampling through lottery method. Data was collected using Inventory of Fathers Involvement (IFI) questionnaire which was self-administered. Information on socio-demographic variables were also collected. Data thus obtained was coded and entered into SPSS version 22 and analyzed using the same. Data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, viz. percentages and the inferential statistics using Chi-Square test for qualitative data. Mann Witney U Test was used to know if significant difference existed in various domains of both group (Those with poor and better involvement in child rearing).

Results: 75.9% of fathers had poor in child rearing and the remaining 24.1% showed better involved in child rearing based on scores. The difference was observed in all the domains of IFI in the two groups except Attentiveness domain. Age of the father was found to be significantly associated with ‘social encouragement’ and ‘providing’ domains. Birth spacing with ‘Mother Support’ domain. Socio-economic status with ‘praise and affection’ domain. Type of family with ‘developing talents and future concerns’, ‘reading and homework support’ and Sex of the child was seen to be associated with ‘developing talent and future concern’ and overall total score.

Conclusions: 3/4th of father’s showed poor involvement in child rearing. The individual scores in all domains was statistically significant in both groups. Various socio-demographic variables were found to influence father’s involvement.

Keywords: Child rearing, Socio-demographic variables, Father, Rural India

INTRODUCTION

Parents play a very important role in a child’s life. While the role of mother is well recognized, the role of father in shaping the future of a child is not less than that of a mother. Mothers are usually gentler with the children, who also need a firm disciplining hand. Fathers could provide that discipline. Thus a father complements a mother's role.¹ Systematic reviews of longitudinal studies of Fathers involvement and children’s developmental
outcome has shown that father’s engagement seems to have differential effects on desirable outcomes by reducing the frequency of behavioral problems in boys and psychological problems in young women, and enhancing cognitive development, while decreasing delinquency and economic disadvantage in low SES families. While the situation is different in urban area, in rural areas the relationship between the father and his children is mostly authoritative. Hence with an intention to understand the involvement of father in child rearing in rural part of India and to explore the socio demographic predictors influencing it we conducted this study.

**Objectives**

- To determine the fathers involvement in child rearing.
- To determine the socio-demographic variables that predict the involvement of Father in child rearing.

**METHODS**

It is a cross-sectional study conducted in rural part of Mysuru District in a village Basavanapura of Hunasuru taluk, Mysuru District was selected with a purpose. The study duration was one month from March 2017 to April 2017. All the houses in the village were numbered and 125 families were selected by simple random sampling through lottery method. Fathers having children elder than 5 years were included in the study. Inventory of fathers Involvement (IFI) was used to collect data on involvement of father in child rearing. The interview schedule also contained information on socio-demographic variables associated to the fathers. The interview schedule consisted of questions related to various domains (discipline, school encouragement, mothers support, providing time and talking together, praise and affection, developing talents and future concern, reading and homework support and attentiveness) to measure father’s involvement. The total score possible is 210. Those less than 105 (median) were considered to be poorly involved in child rearing and the other counterpart was considered to be well involved in child rearing.

**Ethics statement**

Confidentiality and voluntariness were the guiding principles of the study. Informed consent was obtained from each of the study participants. The study was approved by the Institution’s Ethics Committee.

**Statistical analysis**

Data thus obtained was coded and entered into SPSS version 22 and analyzed using the same. Data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, viz. percentages and the inferential statistics using Chi-Square test for qualitative data. The difference in proportion was considered statistically significant whenever \( p \leq 0.05 \).

Mann Whitney U test was used to know the statistical significant difference in various domains of both groups.

**RESULTS**

The average age of the fathers included in the study was 42.7±10 years with minimum age of 28 yrs. and maximum of 75 yrs. 84.4% lived in nuclear families, 14.9% lived in three generation families and the remaining 0.7% stayed in joint families. 21.3% were illiterates, 77.2% had attained education till under graduation and 2.1% had finished under graduation and post-graduation. 24.8% were illiterate and 2.8% had completed under graduation/postgraduation. 41.1% were manual laborers and 58.2% practiced agriculture for their primary source of income and the remaining engaged in one or the other skilled labor. 46.1% belonged to lower middle class, 16.3% had single child, 63.8% had two children and 19.3% had three or more children. 51.1% had both male and female children, 31.2% had only female children and the remaining had only male children. 88.7% had birth spacing of equal to three years or less. The average age of children they had was 13.16±7.16 yrs. with minimum age of 2 yrs and maximum of 35 yrs. The median score obtained from IFI was 142 with inter quartile range (IQR) of 135-148. 75.9% of Fathers showed poor involvement in child rearing and the remaining 24.1% were well involved in child rearing (Figure 1).

Age of the father was found to be significantly associated with ‘social encouragement’ and ‘providing’ domains. Birth spacing with ‘Mother Support’ domain. Socio-economic status with ‘praise and affection’ domain. Type of family with ‘developing talents and future concerns’, ‘reading and homework support’ and Sex of the child was seen to be associated with ‘developing talent and future concern’ and overall total score (Table 1). The median scores in all the domains of Father’s Involvement was statistically significant among both the groups except attentiveness domain inferring that the those fathers with poor involvement in child rearing had statistically significant lesser score compared to the scores obtained by those with better involvement in child rearing in all domains (Table 2).
**DISCUSSION**

Opondo et al study showed that the children of fathers with high scores on involvement in child activities had 14% (OR 0.86, 95% CI 0.79 to 0.94, p=0.001) and 13% (OR 0.87, 95% CI 0.79 to 0.96, p=0.006), respectively, lower adjusted odds of behavioral problems at 9 years. It is also seen in a systematic review that father’s engagement seems to have differential effects on desirable outcomes by reducing the frequency of behavioral problems in boys and psychological problems in young women, and enhancing cognitive development, while decreasing delinquency and economic disadvantage in low SES families. Harris, Morgan et al study showed that Fathers were more involved with sons than with daughters and they disengage from adolescents with increasing marital conflict. With limited studies in this regard we would like to conclude that age, birth spacing, socio-economic status, type of family and sex of the child are seen to be influencing Father’s involvement in taking care of the child through their effects on various domains. Strength in our study is that no such studies are conducted in rural. Our study also tries to explore the association of various socio-demographic variables influencing Fathers involvement in child rearing. Limitation would be that the data is collected by self-administered questionnaire which is often subjected to bias. It is our personal opinion that qualitative study would be a better way to assess and interpret the results of such studies.

**CONCLUSION**

In our study 75% of father’s showed poor involvement in child rearing. The individual scores in all domains was statistically significant in both groups and significant association was found between socio-demographic variables and father’s involvement in child rearing.

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