

Content Analysis of Interview on Engaged Fatherhood

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Abstract

The article involves an exploratory study. It mainly reviews articles published in 2010s dealing with fatherhood issue. It has revealed that the typical behaviour of fathers nowadays is related with the changes in society concerning the understanding of masculinity and femininity. The relatively new concept of caring masculinity is being reflected in legislation of many countries, however, there are barriers to its realization due to employer resistance. The society should realize that it benefits from father involvement in child's life (engagement in child's entertainment and educational activities, moral and financial responsibility for the child), as happier and more stable families have to be borne in mind while creating obstacles to fathers sharing the baby care with mothers. A convenience purposive sampling was applied to hold an interview with researchers. Ten people from nine various countries responded to interview questions placed on Academia platform. The keywords in the answers were codified, and their frequency was counted. It was concluded that father engagement vs. father involvement and father absence from the child's life corresponds to the needs of contemporary society. Father engagement has individual (child, father) and social benefits, as well as individual benefits include medical, social, cognitive, and psychological benefits.

Key words: fatherhood, masculinity, father engagement, caring masculinity, hegemonic masculinity

Introduction

Children are our future, and parents are the first people who have an impact on them. As there are too many publications (e.g., Buehler & O'Brien, 2011; Heinrich, 2014; Meier et al., 2018) dealing with mother's or both parents' role in children's lives – their emotional state, cognitive and physical development, future careers and families, etc., while father's role has been relatively understudied, I decided to dedicate this article (as part of a series of such articles) to the analysis of the articles dedicated to fathers' roles in children's lives. The presented below literature review deals with most recent researches on the topic, as I have tried to notice some new trends in the researches and the dynamics in the roles and their assessment. Based on the literature review, questions for an interview were developed, piloted and then uploaded to Academia platform for experts to answer them.

Literature Review

Although much has changed in the father role in the family by the beginning of the 21st century, many men still stick to the typically masculine behavior. According to Petts et al. (2018), those of 2,194 fathers from a national study on fathers of children aged 2 to 18 who maintained the traditional masculine role of provider and organizer mostly demonstrated limited engagement with their children, while fathers who did not adhere too much with the traditional fathers' roles demonstrated nurturing parenting. Hunter et al. (2017) share their opinion of the type of masculinity the man follows and state that 'caring masculinity' is

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often theorised as a radical shift away from traditional or hegemonic forms of masculinity, while in reality it is rather a broadening type of hegemonic masculinity than an entirely new model of male behaviour.

Azumah, Krampah, and Nachinaab (2018) dedicated their study to the effects of family structure (full or single-parent family) on the academic performance of children in Ghana. They found that among single-parent families about 5% of children live with a single father, 16% live without any parent, while 81% live with single mothers. At an early age, over half of all children still live with both parents and this percentage declines with age. Youngsters brought up in agreeable, two-parent family units have a tendency to do academically better than youngsters in single parent families many of whom do not even enter school. An "organized dually headed family unit gives sufficient parental contribution, guidance, hope, support, time, and direction" (ibid, p.13). Mothers normally contribute to raising and household training, while the fathers - to budgetary commitments and supervision of youngsters. If/when mother is not educated enough to control the regular studies of the kids, father is expected to do so. Azumah et al. (2018) cite Ortesse (1998) who found that most children whose fathers have been missing while they were at ages one to five of life were more mentally, psychopathically and criminalistic in nature than those whose guardians were accessible during this period. Azumah et al. (2018) in their survey found that 42.50% of the respondents indicated that their parent/s sometimes do supervise them in regularly fulfilling homework and punctually attending school, while 31.25% revealed that their parent/s always do so.

Henry et al. (2020) held a systematic search of four major research databases and analyzed 44 studies published between 1988 and 2018. The interventions described in the given studies were conducted in the following 10 countries: United States (28 of them), United Kingdom, Canada, Ireland, India, South Africa, Australia, Uganda, Norway, and Germany. Fathers were between 16 and 66 years old, whereas the ages of their children ranged from infancy to adulthood. Participant sample sizes across studies ranged from 5 to 5,102 participants. The marital status of the participating fathers varied as well. The majority of the fathers in 19 studies were married or cohabitating with their partner. In 11 studies, the majority of fathers were unmarried nor living with their partners. Fourteen studies did not state the marital status of the participating fathers. In six studies, fathers were reported as married; however, they were not married to the participating child's mother. Fifteen studies included in this review employed experimental designs. Of the 16 studies that employed non-experimental designs, 5 studies employed mixed methods, while three were qualitative studies. Henry et al. (2020) found that the positive father involvement is critical to the healthy social, emotional, and academic outcomes of children at all stages of development.

Jessee and Adamsons (2018) in a study of 2,970 U.S. families revealed that fathers' relationships with their children are positively associated with the fathers' (when they were children) relationships with their fathers. As the tendency is to pass the relationships down the generations, it is especially important to work with future/young fathers in order to provide the growth of the positive tendency (and not vice versa, as, unfortunately is often the case).

According to Hamilton et al. (2003), more than one-third of all births in the United States in the beginning of the 21st century took place outside of marriage. Nowadays the situation, most probably, has not improved. It is only natural that in this context many researches are dedicated to non-resident fathers and their relationships with their children. A non-resident parent is a parent who does not live in the same household as the child. A non-resident parent may be divorced, separated, or never-married to the child's custodial parent.

Augustine et al. (2009) held longitudinal in-depth interviews with 171 low-income noncustodial fathers living in low-income neighborhoods across the Philadelphia metropolitan area came to conclusion that many fathers who have children beyond marriage belong to low-income social layer. Both interviewees and interviewers were of different ethnicities and races. Interviewers were both male and female. The interviewees were mostly not interested in either marriage or having children, as they thought they could not afford it. Correspondingly, the children who were born in this kind of relationships were accidental (where the man

believed that pregnancy was impossible), irresponsibly born (the man did not think about the possible consequences), and only 15% of them were planned (as single mothers receive some allowances). Interestingly, among 'just not thinking' fathers were men of various ages.

Logically enough, not only non-resident fathers demonstrate less care for their children than resident ones, also, in turn, children of divorced parents more rarely care for their elderly fathers than for their elderly mothers (Maes, Thielemans, & Tretyakova, 2020). In Jenkinson, Matsuo and Matthis (2020) study fathers with non-residential children below 18 reported lower life satisfaction than non-residential mothers. They found little analogous evidence of gender differences between lone mothers and fathers who report residential children. Living in complete families makes life more enjoyable for everybody, not only children! Maslauskaitė and Tereškinas (2020) in their study of 1,225 non-resident fathers of children under 18 revealed that the frequency of contacts, child support payments and co-parenting are beneficial to the level of intimacy and approval in father-child relationships. Non-resident fathers equally care for sons and daughters, and the geographic distance between them and the child did not reveal any impact on the intimacy between the father and the kids. Neither had having children in the new family did. Social loneliness and depressive feelings are inversely linked with "caring for" type of fathering, while fathers with a higher sense of being in charge of their lives report more intimacy and approval in relationships.

Ros Pilarz et al. (2019) conducted a study dealing with fathers' work schedule and their engagement with their children. They analyzed data of 1,598 resident and 759 nonresident US fathers. It was shown that both resident and non-resident fathers' engagement is related to non-standard work schedule. Work in evening hours, as well as extra working hours negatively impact fathers' engagement with their children, while working a variable schedule was associated with greater responsibility relative to other nonstandard schedules. To my mind, not as a researcher, but as a mother of two children, of course, things are not that simple, and it is not just the time spent by the father with his children, but the quality of that time as well.

Reilly (2021) studied the role of fathers in indigenous nations in Australia. He held analysis of all available (nine) qualitative studies (descriptive analyses, narrative descriptions, and interviews) across ten years. His findings reveal that close relations between fathers and children help not only children's, but also fathers' development.

Baldwin et al. (2021) studied the impact of the support offered to the first-time fathers by London health visitor services. The topic of the article is extremely interesting, as not only first-time mothers, but also first-time fathers experience ante and postnatal stress (10%) and anxiety (18%) (Leach et al., 2016; Paulson & Bazemore, 2010), however, such practices are not very well spread in the world. 45 questionnaires were fully filled in and then analyzed, besides ten interviews were held. The majority of the participants confirmed that they were satisfied with the service offered and supported the idea of fathers' contacts with health professionals before and after their first children birth.

According to Li (2020), Chinese fathers used to be emotionally distant educators and disciplinarians of their children as well as heads of the household. This has been changing recently, but the change has been too slow. "Their participation in their children's lives benefits children's adjustment, possibly through secure father-child attachment, and is influenced by the relationship between fathers and mothers" (p.150).

Cano, Perales and Baxter (2018) observed in a longitudinal study more than 3,000 children aged four to eight in Australia. They found that, while the increase of time spent by fathers with their kids caused little increase in children's cognitive development, the increase of their time spent on educational activities yielded from moderate to large improvements. This is an important finding, as many parents believe that just playing or watching cartoons together contributes to their children's cognitive development. Simply spending time together matters a lot for emotional bonds between children and parents and thus is important, but it is not sufficient.

Parents' socio-economic status (SES) has an indirect impact of children's academic achievement. Although not necessarily a child with a low-SES father demonstrates low academic achievement, statistically this is the trend. When/if low-SES fathers' involvement in their children's education increases, the gap in academic achievements of low and high-SES fathers' children narrows. This is what Miller et al. (2020) study has shown. While the reason why low-SES fathers often withdraw from their children's studies is fathers' low level of education, this barrier can be overcome by father and child studying together.

While father 'involvement' is a general term, 'cohabitation' and 'engagement' are more exact ones (Ball et al., 2007; Lamb et al., 1985; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Pleck, 2007). According to Sarkadi et al. (2007), father involvement unites his accessibility (cohabitation), engagement in activities, responsibility for the child or other complex measures of involvement. She analyzed 24 publications on the topic and found that the fact of the father living in the family (whether married or not) correlates with less externalising behavioural problems in children, especially boys, whereas his engagement not only decreases boys' behavioural problems and girls' psychological problems, but also enhances cognitive development.

Since the 1970s Swedish family policies have encouraged fathers to be involved in their children's lives from infancy onward. In 1974 they introduced the law on sharing childcare by mothers and fathers. Starting with 2002 the part of the leave taken by the father became compulsory (Stanfors & Larsson, 2014). Cools et al. (2015) found that the introduction of legislation that permits fathers to take a paternity leave (especially in Scandinavian countries) increases father engagement with children. The study also showed a dramatic increase in children's academic achievement in those families where father was staying at home with the child, especially in those families where the level of the father's education was higher than that of mother's. In the same line, Andersen (2019) held a study of the impact of 5 Danish parental leave reforms on 5 separate samples of all households who become first-time parents within the year before and after each reform (N1 = 2,304; N2 = 45,683; N3 = 16,668; N4 = 42,328; N5 = 38,978). He found that father sharing the leave to look after the baby decreased the gap between the mothers' and fathers' salaries and even in many cases increased the family income.

While in Scandinavian countries 3 months-long paternity leave is an obligation (Gnewski, 2019), in order to promote father engagement and, eventually, happier families, in other countries the inclusion of paternal leaves into legislation has not yet helped much to change the situation. Peukert (2018), for instance, has shown that employers in Germany hinder fathers from equally sharing childcare with mothers. More than that, his in-depth interviews with couples revealed that some of them (including women) perceive that sharing the childcare leave may 'undo' the very concept of masculinity. Kangas et al. (2019) even state that "though involved fatherhood is emerging in many western societies, a family-oriented male identity is likely to be problematic for men in organizations" (p. 1433).

Wells et al. (2014) held in Canada a project called Shift. They stress that father involvement prevents domestic violence in the next generation. They emphasize the role of positive father involvement for "the child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical health" (p.1). Their modeling behavior promotes gender equity. Dozois et al. (2016) in continuation of Shift project state that most children in Canada live with their fathers. In fact, in 2006, 80% of fathers lived with their children full time. The number of fathers who take the leave to look after their kids is slowly growing: 10% in 2008 compared to 4% in 1976. According to them, "Positive Parenting is associated with qualities related to an authoritative parenting style, which include: supporting the child's sense of identity and independence within warm and responsive relationships, having high and consistent expectations about behaviour, maturity and complying with authority; using positive disciplinary methods rather than corporal punishment (ibid, p.8). It supports the child's emotional, cognitive, and social well-being, and reduces the child's behavioural problems. It also leads to "developing healthy masculinity norms and increasing gender equality" (ibid, p. 10), which are based on caring and respect. It also increases fathers' well-being and decreases violence in families and society. In a large survey by ... as cited by Dozois et al. it was found that "in a large survey of over 2500 Canadian parents, only 27% of fathers agreed strongly with the statement 'I think Canada values

the role of fathers.' By contrast, 51% agreed strongly that 'Canada values the role of mothers' (p.13). This is why the researchers, although Canada is a country where the majority of fathers are involved (but not necessarily engaged), are addressing the government to fund more programs developing men's parenting strategies.

Compared to such countries as Canada, South African fathers are often absent from their children's lives and when present, often abuse them. South Africa has the lowest marriage rate on the continent (Richter & Panday, 2006 as cited in Richter, Chikovore, & Makusha, 2010); the second highest rate of father absence in Africa (after Namibia) (Posel & Devey, 2006 as cited in Richter, Chikovore, & Makusha, 2010); low rates of paternal maintenance for children (Khunou, 2006 as cited in Richter, Chikovore, & Makusha, 2010); and shockingly high rates of abuse and neglect of children by men (Richter & Dawes, 2008 as cited in Richter, Chikovore, & Makusha, 2010). That is why Morrell's (2006) book emphasizes how important fatherhood is in the lives of both children and men. The author argues that involved fatherhood could contribute significantly to the health of South African society by caring for their children. Becoming Baba can heal men as well, make them more humane, states the author.

Pablo et al. (2021) found that in Mongolia children's health state correlated significantly with mother care and not significantly correlated with father care. This indicates that care for children's health in Mongolia is still mostly on mothers' shoulders.

Method

The current study aimed to understand whether there have been changes in fatherhood understanding in the last decade. Therefore, the conducted study is of exploratory nature. "**Exploratory research** is a methodology approach that investigates research questions that have not previously been studied in depth. Exploratory research is often qualitative in nature" (George, 2021).

A convenience purposive sample was applied to select the participants of an interview. According to Andrade (2021), "a convenience sample is the one that is drawn from a source that is conveniently accessible to the researcher. A purposive sample is the one whose characteristics are defined for a purpose that is relevant to the study. The findings of a study based on convenience and purposive sampling can only be generalized to the (sub)population from which the sample is drawn and not to the entire population." However, the findings of the study can be valuable to gain an insight on the studied problem.

Tool

The questions for the written interview, developed by the researcher based on the literature analysis were as follows:

1. What is your opinion concerning active father involvement in childcare (financial responsibility, sharing maternity / paternity leave, taking part in entertainment and educational activities)?
2. Do you think that engaged fatherhood is a recent phenomenon? Why (not)? Or maybe that it has increased recently?
3. Has your father (other male caretaker) been (was your father) an engaged or a remote one? Can you provide some examples?
4. Question for male respondents with children of any age: Do you see yourself as an engaged father?
5. What benefits do you see in engaged fatherhood?
6. What risks (for male role, employers, and society) do you see in it?

The questions were piloted with three experts of the area.

Participants

1,144 participants subscribed to Academia network who deal with similar topics were invited. Ten researchers answered the given open-ended questions developed based on the analysis in the article. The participants were volunteers who were informed about the fact that their interviews would be analyzed in the article and their answers would remain anonymous. Five of them were females and six males. They came from the following countries: Austria, Eswatini (former Swaziland), Georgia, Gyana (residing in the UK) Italy (x2), Japan, Kenya, Poland, South Africa, and the US. This variety of countries was very valuable, as it provided a kaleidoscope of opinions.

Results

In the results section some most interesting answers to the interview questions will be provided, as well as their content analysis (frequency of keywords).

Q1:

- I think the beneficial effects are not only for the child, who grows up in an environment with more gender equity, but also for the father, who sees his well-being increase and has more time available for other activities.
- I believe positive active father involvement in the care of their children offers benefits to fathers, mothers, children, and all of society. Positive, healthy, interacting family members help children thrive in all areas of life. A child who is loved and valued by both parents begins life with a sense of security and a sense of personal worth that enhances self-development, leading to school retention and positive scholastic outcomes. This foundation in childhood and youth provides society with new strong confident generations.
- The beneficial effects of fathers' involvement on children's socio-cognitive development have been proven. The socio-productive structure of many countries, including Italy, which still has a deeply patriarchal form, remains a problem. Men tend to have the highest salary, and often the restricted welfare measures do not allow to reduce men's work involvement in favour of a greater presence in the family. The dual-earner family model is increasingly emerging, but the economic uncertainty that often was mainly related to women workers is now common to men workers as well, further hindering men's involvement in childcare.

Q2:

- As long as active fathers aren't pointed by our fingers and we don't perceive them as something rare, they are majority. As you have noticed "among single-parent families about 5% of children live with a single father, 16% live without any parent, while 81% live with single mothers." That adds up to 102%, actually, but it indicates that most fathers want to take responsibility for their families, and let us not forget that fatherlessness became a problem when women went to work. I'm not trying to blame women for this, I'm trying to point out that before they went to work they were simply unable to throw away men from their lives, what is I believe the most common scenario of lonely maternity.
- Taking lessons from my father, engaged fatherhood has always been effected, especially in providing essential resources for the family. However, this role was based on gender roles. Currently, fathers have bridged the gender barrier, hence they are actively involved in baby care (feeding, changing diapers, and the total care of children).
- Over time the division of labor has changed within families. In the past, because men were not first-line caregivers, did not mean they were not "engaged" in their family's interests and well-being. For hundreds of years the fathers' role in the family was that of "breadwinner". Put very simplistically, as "breadwinner" fathers were responsible for providing for their

family's needs, while mothers tended home and children. Fathers may have been "remote", but they were engaged as they provided for their family's needs, whether they were laborers, working 10-12 hours/day, blue-collar workers, or professionals.

Q 3:

- My father was a professional athlete and was away from home six months each year for the first 14 years of my life. During the winters and throughout my teen years, we ate dinner together as a family. At dinner we talked about family and community issues; our father was always interested to learn what had happened at school. He encouraged us to invite friends into the house and when they visited, he stopped what he was doing and interacted with them. Because my father was a good listener, I was comfortable confiding in him and found his advice to be solid. An important conversation occurred at the beginning of my junior year in high school as I was considering my major in college. Dad talked to me through possible scenarios in 4-5 different education and career paths, then he let me make up my own mind. During college, he helped me solve problems in a variety of classes and helped me manage a difficult issue at work. His encouragement helped me not to drop the course during a particularly difficult semester. The summer after college graduation, at the age of 21, and 10 days before my wedding, he said to me, "You have not seemed happy for a long time, I want you to know that you do not have to get married; there is still time to send regret notes." I exclaimed, "Dad! But what about the money we have already spent?" He said, "Don't worry about the money, if you want to, all you have to do is just call this wedding off and go to Hawaii." Two days later I flew to Honolulu, Hawaii. Dad gave me courage to make the best choices of my life.
- My father was a university researcher and was often at home. He was certainly also a caretaker: for example, when I was a child I often had respiratory problems, and in winter he even took me to the seaside for a month to keep me well. But this was possible because of the nature of his work. At the same time, however, all sentimental and emotional education was absent on the male side: for example, I never saw my father cry, and his message was always about dedication to his work.
- My father took an active part in raising me. He was engaged financially and emotionally. Do you want me to tell you a short story about my childhood, about trips we went to, about games we played, about events we celebrated? I believe all that was just fine, I really don't have anything to complain about.

Q4:

- I consider myself an engaged father, or rather, I try to be. I have two children aged 6 and 4, and I do various activities with them. With my wife, we share tasks related to their home life as well as their school and social life. On working days, I spend two afternoons out of five with them, my wife the other two, and one afternoon a week they are with the babysitter. At home, I mainly take care of the kitchen (doing the washing up and preparing the meals), while my wife takes care of their hygiene. During the week I drop them off and pick them up from school, play with them in the afternoons (e.g. we draw, read books, do tickle fights), or take them to the park to play with their friends. I often take the little one to drama class in the afternoon and the big one to aikido class. In addition, I am a class representative at my older son's primary school. This organisation allows us both to carve out 3 full days a week for our professions and still have time to spend with our children. On my side, this is possible because I am a research fellow in a research institute, with no time constraints or presence in the office. The time I don't spend working I make up for in the evenings or at weekends.
- Yes, I am an engaged father. I have two beautiful children, a boy and a girl. Fathering to me is the most fulfilling job a man can have. God gave you as a father (a gift) to your family (wife and children), and God gave your children (and wife) (a gift) to you as a father. Fathers should engage in productive activities with their children for example household chores,

washing dishes, cleaning up, etc. Such shared activities promote a sense of responsibility and significance such as greater self-esteem, academic and occupational achievement, psychological well-being, civic engagement, etc.

Q5:

- Active father involvement: Fatherhood is much more! Attributes such as nurturing, time spending (children cry out, daddy we need your presence and not your presents. His physical role at home is paramount. He has a huge responsibility towards his family in aspects such as security; acceptance (applicable towards his children); handle disappointments; have a listening ear to listen, encourage his children not to make bad choices, and tell them, if they did, that failure is not final!
- I see an engaged father as one who is available to offer real support and timely encouragement to his children. In my dissertation research I interviewed families in which fathers were supportive of their daughter's giftedness. Because of the qualitative nature of my research, my findings were reported in the voices of each participant, and in many situations, when their responses were similar, one voice spoke for many. Here, I will present some of their responses that seem to have direct bearing on your question: Fathers in my study said they felt spending time at home with their children was important because time together provided opportunities to work and play together, to support, motivate, listen, and / or offer encouragement. These fathers said encouragement came in different forms, sometimes their daughters needed hope, or courage, other times they needed confidence. In their own voices—four daughters: Elena: He was always around. And when he wasn't I always waited for him because we had such a fun time when he got home. Meg: Because he made a point of being at home after school, he was there when I needed him. If I ever needed help with homework, he'd try to help me. I'd go to him before Mom. Finally, as a senior when I was taking calculus he'd say, well, you've gone ahead of me there! Suzanne: Now I call, and I say things like, "Dad, I'm fed up with school, what should I do?" or "Come see me and celebrate my birthday at Easter!" My Dad let me know that if I ever wanted to come home and I couldn't come get a ride, he would come get me. Several times during my freshman year he made the trip up here so I could be home for four days at a time. New years the weather was yucky, he took off work and drove me back to school. I made him stay overnight with one of the guys I know that had an extra bed and he stayed there. When I go home on vacation now, I always spend extra time with him. Julia: Now that I am in college, I don't know how much our relationship has changed from his end. I think I appreciate him more. I think most people would say that about parents. I look forward to talking to him. It is interesting to compare notes with him, telling him about what is going on and discussions about stuff I'm learning about, you know, I'll hear something related to what he knows, and I'll ask him about it. I think I have a stronger sense that I know him better, a stronger sense of pride in him. It was his 50th birthday this weekend and it was fun to see how many people know and like my dad. It was something I hadn't picked up on quite as much when I was younger. These fathers believed it was their responsibility to pay attention to their daughter's needs and provide safe environments in which to explore; this included such things as building playground equipment in the back yard or taking their daughters along on field trips; later, their father's encouragement to take advantage of course offerings in the gifted programs helped the girls explore and excel intellectually. The fathers stated that encouragement "takes many forms" and identified attending parent-teacher conferences and being present at extra-curricular activities as encouraging. Fathers reported that encouraging their children seemed to come naturally as though it was an integral part of parenting. These fathers continued to encourage their daughters as they grew. One father said he encouraged his daughter to be well-rounded. Another father seconded that sentiment when he noticed his daughter becoming a bit of an "egghead" he wanted to motivate her to be well-rounded, so he talked to her about extra-curricular activities and attended as many of her activities as he could. In a longitudinal piece of the research one daughter talked about her father's valuable encouragement and guidance as she was considering taking her career down a different path and began looking into various Ph.D. programs.

(from: The Structure of the Relationship between Fathers and their Gifted Daughters that is Supportive of Giftedness: A grounded theory. (2002). S.L.K. Blanchfield.)

Q 6:

- Risks associated with the caring father would be those associated with female gender; physical, emotional, psychological, and financial abuse; social stigma, limited chances for professional development, exclusion from career development due to taking time off work to attend to child needs.
- Not all societies are ready to understand the importance of male involvement. This results in still inadequate social protection systems and the labor market tends to discourage male workers from requiring more time to devote to parental care.
- As for the 6th question, if I've understood it correctly, the excessive father's involvement in child's life sometimes creates risk that in future the child won't be independent enough and able to take some proper decision by himself/herself. As for the girl, she can expect from the people (men, employers, society) she comes across the same caring attention she has received from her father. I think father should be actively involved in the upbringing process of his child. His participation in child's life shouldn't be limited only by his financial support. He should spend more time with his children. Involved fathers enhance their children's communication skills because they tend to ask children more questions than mothers do. Children, whose fathers are actively involved in their lives (taking care of them, playing together, and teaching them), tend to be more confident and, in future as they grow older, they have stronger social connections with peers.
- I fear discrimination and marginalisation at work (e.g. career blocking, becoming a victim of jokes) or in the peer group (e.g. male friends, sporting activities), especially if this involvement is not supported at the public level by policy and welfare.

Table 1 below presents the obtained content analysis results.

Table 1. Frequency of key concepts applied in interviewees' answers

	answers	n	keywords	n
Involved fatherhood includes:	Availability (available)	3	(at) home	3
			around	3
			attend	3
			present/presence	3
	Financial support (support financially)	7	pay/paycheck	2
			money	3
	Spending time together	23	fun	2
			play	11
			shared activities/tasks	3
entertain/entertainment			3	
celebrations / celebrate			2	
cinema, theatre, opera			1	

	Educating	8	study lesson(s) teach/teacher mentor	1 1 5 4
	Upbringing	2	values beliefs culture meaning of life/life perspective advice	5 1 2 2 1
	Doing chores together	1	washing dishes, cleaning up	1
	Emotional/psychological support	8	love care encourage/encouragement listen protection	4 15 13 5 1
	Effective leadership	2	motivate role model	2 2
	Caring for health	1		
Benefits of engaged fatherhood: benefits to children:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • medical benefits 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improves health 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social benefits 	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps develop a clear life perspective • helps grow into responsible adults • improves life quality • develops lifelong relationship • helps form family values, beliefs, and maintain culture • provides gender equity (for the future) 	1 2 1 2 8 1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive benefits 	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides knowledge and skills • develops communication skills • provides school retention and academic achievement • helps solve problems 	2 2 1+1 1

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> psychological benefits 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feeling of security shapes the character provides self-confidence / self-worth 	2 1 5
benefits to fathers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increases their life quality when elderly, provides that their children care for them 	2 1		
benefits to families and society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strengthens the relations/families provides safe environments 	6 1		
Risks of the changed understanding of father's involvement/engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feminization barriers to career growth social pressure 	2 3 4		
Risks of father's excessive involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of child independence disappointment in men who are not as caring as one's father 	1 1		

Concerning the first question, the interviewees' answers very much coincide with literature review. However, there are some things to be commented on. First, the total number of answers dealing with (pleasant) spending time together (45) greatly exceeds the answers dealing with educational activities of fathers (19), which reveals that fathers are insufficiently associated with children's education, which is not good, especially taking into consideration that (especially in less-developed countries) fathers' educational level is often higher than that of mothers. Besides, the social benefits of involves fatherhood (19) exceed in the answers the cognitive (8) and the psychological (8) ones, to say nothing of children's health (1). This indicates that engaged fatherhood is insufficiently linked in people's consciousness in other-than-social aspects.

Concerning the second question, the majority of the respondents (7) believe that involved fatherhood is not a new issue, but the character of involvement has changed: it has shifted from financial aspects to direct care starting with the time when women became an important labour force component (second half of the 20th century). One respondent dropped this question, one thinks that this is a relatively new issue, while one that it is quite novel. I find one respondent's answer important: 'poverty, employment opportunities, discrimination and racism' have an impact on choosing the model 'no involvement', 'father financial involvement only', or 'father multilateral engagement'. Whilst the first model is harmful for children, their fathers and society, the second model is outdated, and the only fruitful model today is the third one.

Two interviewees mentioned they were brought up by relatives (the grandfather who was uninvolved and male relatives who were involved). One answer was vague, while six respondents had engaged fathers and one had financially involved and present fathers. So the interviewees had different experiences and could view the problem from different viewpoints.

One of the five involved male interviewees is not a father yet and one dropped the question. Three others view themselves as engaged fathers.

The fifth question sort of overlaps with the first one, that is why some respondents dropped it. However, one answer was really great:

- A first benefit there is for the growth of the children, i.e. to have a different example with which to deal from the first months of life (different in terms of play, sociability, imagination). It can have a great effect on the family and on the own partner (greater equity in the working career). And it can have an effect at a social level, deconstructing the male stereotype of virility and masculinity such as strength, courage, independence and working success, in favour of an idea that also includes affectivity, listening, and caring for loved ones (thus overcoming the teasing of Mr. Mum).

Concerning the risks of the changes in the engaged fatherhood understanding, social pressure (peer disapproval) and another social factor – barrier to career growth were named. On the whole, the attitude is such that the risks are minimal and they can be turned into opportunities.

Discussion and limitations

The study came to conclusion that, although father involvement in children's lives is not a recent innovation, the accent on engagement rather than involvement is relatively new. While the term 'involvement' is basically associated with 'presence' and/or 'cohabitation' accompanied mostly with financial participation, 'engagement' includes availability, financial support, spending time together, educating, upbringing, doing chores together, emotional/psychological support, leadership, and healthcare. The study also defined the benefits and the risks of shared child care.

This is in line with the analyzed literature (Andersen, 2019; Azumah, 2018; Buehler & O'Brien, 2011; Cano et al., 2018; Heinrich, 2014; Henry et al., 2020; Jessee & Adamsons, 2018; Li, 2020; Miller et al., 2020; Pablo et al., 2021; Reily, 2021; Richter et al., 2010; Ros Pilarz, 2019). However, our study gave a more concise list of father engagement components than the above-mentioned articles one by one. Besides, the majority of studies neglect the risks associated with shared care. Keizer et al. (2019), for instance, mention only the impact of father involvement (or lack of it) dealing with passing the traditions of gender equality from generation to generation.

The limitations of the current research is related to the limited number of interviewees and the nature of the applied method, which does not enable generalization.

Conclusion

Therefore, to increase father engagement in their children's development, it is essential to change the understanding of masculine role in the family from provider and organizer only to nurturing fatherhood (which does not exclude earning money for children's needs). Recent research has once again confirmed that engaged fatherhood decreases their sons' aggressiveness and their daughters' stress. What is new in the findings it is that engaged (not, as it used to be in the past, involved) fatherhood which includes educational activities stimulates children's academic success. If the society wants to be a healthy one, it has to take various measures to supports fathers' engagement: state-funded projects, popularizing the changed fatherhood model through media, etc.

Family structure (married / divorced / non-resident) is essential to more satisfied lives not only of children, but also their fathers. But even non-resident fathers should be engaged in their children's lives, otherwise irresponsibility will become a vicious circle. Family traditions also matter. When grandfathers are married to their grandmothers and involved in childcare, so normally are fathers.



There are many non-resident fathers in the contemporary world. Those of them who did not marry due to lack of care usually demonstrate lack of care to their outside-of-marriage children. Those who did not marry due to financial reasons only, however, tend to participate in their children's lives. It is essential that they do, as non-resident fathers' involvement has as positive impact on children's health, social and cognitive development like that of resident fathers.

Of course, father's work schedule has an impact on his involvement and relationships with children, but this means that the little time that fathers can dedicate to their children should be used as effectively as possible.

Parents' socio-economic status is related to their relationships with children. Due to this, special attention should be paid to low-SES fathers' involvement in their children's lives.

The legislation dealing with fathers' duties and rights related to care about/of their children can create a possibility for more balanced relations in the family, however, the attitude of the whole society needs to be changed to create conditions for the application of this legislation, and this is a slow and long voyage.

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