



Father's Perceptions of Their Role in Fathers with Babies Aged between 4 and 12 Months in Turkey



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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Father role perception scale
Father's role
Nursing
Family

ABSTRACT

A cross-sectional study was conducted to examine fathers' perceptions of their parental role among men with babies aged 4 to 12 months. Data were collected on Personal Information Forms alongside scores from the Father Role Perception Scale between January and June 2015. Data were analyzed using percentage distributions, independent samples t test, and one-way ANOVA for comparison of more than two groups. Statistically significant differences were found in the scores of fathers for the fathers' role perception scale and their educational background, their profession, their level of income, their wives' educational background and their health insurance ($p < .05$). The fathers had high positive parental perception level scores.

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Family the smallest unit of a society has an important place in the lives of its members.¹ The relationships between family members have great influence on all the developmental phases of children and shape their world views. Children can develop negative or positive viewpoints based on outcomes of these positive or negative relationships.^{2–4} What is learned within a family unit during early periods of life, therefore; has a big impact in the healthy development of a child.

Literature supports the idea if mother as the family member primarily responsible for the child's care. Therefore, much of the research focus has been on the importance of the mother in a family.⁵ Parallel to the current technological, social, political and industrial developments, several changes have occurred in the role and responsibilities of family members.^{5–7} For instance, in many cultures, the role of the father has been to meet the financial needs of his children and he has traditionally kept himself apart from his children. This role has been changing and today, the importance of the father in child development has been recognized.^{7–9} Several studies have been conducted on the father's role in child development and the effects on the child.⁸ When fathers' roles are examined, culture, family, father's age, father's perception of his role, as well as the child's gender have all influenced the fathers' perception of their roles.^{8,10} Evans (1997) pointed out that fathers considered physical care of children to be the part of a mother's role and that the father's role was to teach their children intellectual skills, to decide on their children's education and to earn money necessary for their children's care.¹¹ Lind and colleagues reported that fathers who made

eye contact with their infants for an hour a day and changed their baby's clothes twice within the first three days after birth, took more responsibility for the baby's care in the first three months.¹² When other studies on the father–child relationship were examined, it was determined that the role of the male father is necessary for the child's sexual, mental, and identity development; that a close father–child relationship increases the child's confidence; and it positively influences a child's healthy behavior.¹³

National and international studies on role perceptions of fathers demonstrate that the father has as much positive influence on child development as the mother. However, in the city of Diyarbakir, Turkey, where this study was conducted, there were no data regarding fathers' perceptions of their roles. For this reason, the present study was carried out to examine the perception levels that fathers had of their roles who had a child between 4 and 12 months of age in the city of Diyarbakir.

Materials and Methods

Research Method

This descriptive study was conducted to examine the levels of perception of their roles among fathers who had a baby aged 4 to 12 months.

Sample

The sample included fathers with a child between the ages of 4 and 12 months who attended to four family health centers in the city center of Diyarbakir between January and June of 2015. Among the fathers with a healthy child between 4 and 12 months of age of which did not

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have any chronic disease, physical or mental disabilities, and demonstrated a normal development according to their ages, 133 of the fathers willingly took part in the study and constituted the research sample. To conduct the study, legal permissions were obtained from the relevant institutions. Before starting the research process, approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences at Dicle University (Number: 60; Date: 22.01.2014) was obtained. Fathers who met the research criteria were informed about the purpose of the study, and were verbally consented. In addition, Dr. Yaşar Kuzucu, developer of the Father Role Perception Scale, consented via email to the use of the scale for this study. Lastly, the family health centers involved in the study were asked for their verbal consents.

Research Setting

The study was carried out in four family health centers in the city center of Diyarbakır in Turkey.

Data Collection Tools

In order to collect research data, the “Personal Information Form” and “Father Role Perception Scale” were used and the instruments are described below:

Personal Information Form

This form, developed by the researcher in line with the review of the related literature,^{14,15} included a total of 12 direct questions to determine the father and his wife’s demographic backgrounds (father’s age, education and profession; wife’s age, education and profession; family income; health insurance; family type; the birth order of the family in the family; baby’s age; and whether the father smokes).

Father Role Perception Scale

The Father Role Perception Scale developed by Kuzucu in 1999 is one that can be applied both individually and as a group. The scale is made up of 25 five-point Likert-type items, 14 of which were positive and 11 of which were negative, negative (2, 4, 8, 11, 12, 16, 20, 22, 23, 24 and 25) to measure and to measure the fathers’ role perceptions.¹⁶

In the Father Role Perception Scale, there were five options for each item: 1 – Inappropriate, 2 – Not appropriate at all, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Partly appropriate, 5 – Appropriate. The positive items were scored from 1 to 5, and the negative items were scored as 5 to 1. Higher scores received from the scale demonstrated that fathers had positive perceptions of their role as fathers. The sub-groups of the scale covered (1) the father’s positive perceptions regarding the father role, (2) their negative perceptions regarding the father’s role and (3) their perceptions regarding the father role in child’s sexuality. There were 12 items (17, 18, 5, 14, 19, 1, 6, 15, 3, 7, 21, and 4) in the sub-group of positive perceptions regarding the father’s role, 10 items (22, 12, 24, 23, 8, 25, 16, 2, 11, and 20) in the sub-group of negative perceptions regarding the father’s role, and three items (10, 9, and 13) in the sub-group of the father’s role perceptions regarding child sexuality. Factor analysis revealed that ‘I punish the child by hitting him/her if necessary’, the fourth item in the scale, belonged to both sub-groups of positive and negative perceptions regarding the father’s role. The value for the item regarding positive group was 0.357, and the one regarding the negative group was 0.347. Therefore, this item was included in the positive group since it received a higher value for this sub-group. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.75,¹⁶ and it was calculated as 0.86 for the present study.

Data Collection

The research data were collected in fathers’ houses via phone if they were at home, in their workplaces if they were not at home or in the family health center if they were willing to come to the center. The

data were collected by the researchers in about 15 minutes using the face-to-face interview technique.

Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed with the SPSS program. For the data analysis, numbers, percentage distributions, independent samples t test, and one-way ANOVA for the comparison of more than two groups were used.

Results

The following findings were obtained in this study; which was conducted to determine the fathers’ perceptions of the father role.

Of all the fathers, whose average age was 32.857 ± 5.393 , 39.8% of them were graduates from a university, and 85.0% of them were part of a nuclear family. Also, 42.1% of the fathers reported that their baby (between 4 and 12 months of age) was their first child in the family. The average age of all babies was 7 ± 3.450 months (Table 1). In addition, 28.6% of the fathers’ wives were graduates of a high school, and 75.2% of them were housewives (Table 2). The mean score for the father perception levels of the fathers participating in the study was found to be 93.060 ± 13.591 (Table 3). The results revealed a statistically significant difference between the mean score regarding the perception levels of the fathers and such variables as their educational backgrounds, family income, profession and the educational backgrounds of their wives ($p < .05$, Table 4). In line with the wives’ educational backgrounds, the fathers’ perceptions of the father role became more pronounced. However, no statistically significant difference was found between the father’s level of perception and such variables as their age and their family type (Table 4).

Discussion

The present study focused on the factors that influenced fathers’ perceptions of their roles as fathers. In this study, the mean score regarding the perception levels of the fathers was found to be high (93.060 ± 13.591). In one study carried out by Telli (2014), the total mean score achieved by the fathers from the father perception level scale was found to be 99.49 ± 11.10 .¹⁴ This finding was consistent with those obtained in the present study. It was observed that fathers participating in the present study had a good level of perception of their roles as fathers. It was also found that the perceptions of the fathers regarding their parental role were influenced by such factors as the fathers’ educational backgrounds, their profession, family income and their wives’ educational backgrounds. Fathers’ perception of their role as fathers was found to increase in parallel to their educational backgrounds.

Table 1
Socio-demographic characteristics of fathers.

Features	N	%
Average Age: 32.857 ± 5.393		
Education status		
Illiterate	5	3.8
Literate	3	2.3
Primary school graduate	19	14.3
Secondary school	11	8.2
High school graduate	42	31.6
Graduates of a university	53	39.8
Family type		
Nuclear family	113	85.0
Extended family	20	15.0
State budget		
Good budget	65	48.9
Medium budget	47	35.3
Poor budget		
Total	133	100.0

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