

## The Roles of Fathers' having children under 10 years old in Child Care and Health

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### Abstract

Children must grow healthily in order to create a healthy, successful, productive and happy future. Family is the most important part of child's life and social environment. Social, cultural and economical factors make differences at roles in a family. Women is getting more educated and changing their roles from home to outside. We can say that norms are changing for women roles. So that men is getting more roles at home and child care. Father and mother is important at child growth. Mothers' role is constant when looking at the literature. We have to show some attention to fathers because physical, mental and social development of the children are affected by participation of the fathers in child care. This study aims to learn the roles of fathers' in child care and development in the family.

**Method:** This descriptive study was conducted in a middle socio-economical level region of Ankara. The target group is mothers who have children under 10 years old and attending for any reason at primary health care centre. 119 mothers were interviewed by using "face to face interview technique" between the dates 02.02.2010 and 05.02.2010. The questionnaire had four parts and fourty questions.

**Results:** In the study, mean age of the mothers was 30.73 (SD 5.747). 55.4% of the mothers were graduated from high school or college and 77.3% of them were housewives (Table1). According to the information taken from mothers; fathers' mean age was 33.88 (SD 5.888). 62.2% of them graduated from high school or college. Almost all fathers have the jobs which needs high education levels (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Some socio-demographical features (February 2010)

Özellikler	Mother	Father
<b>Education</b>		
Illiterate	0,8	-
Primary school	13,4	10,1
Middle school	30,3	27,7
High school	40,3	42,0
Univesity	15,1	20,2
<b>Working status</b>		
Yes	22,7	91,6
No	77,3	8,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>119</b>

Most of the fathers reached in this study, have long working hours (48.7% of them 9-10 hours and 41.2% of them 11 hours and up), and work in a stressfull environment (83.2%). 78.2% of the fathers prefer staying at home after work.

According to mothers' answers, 82.4% of the fathers paid attention to children' feeding, 39.5% of them help diapering and 75.6% went to the child's bed during his crying at night (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Father's dealing status with some basic requirements of their children (February 2010)

	n	%
<b>Feeding</b>		
Yes, very much	42	35,3
Yes	56	47,1
No, never	21	17,6
<b>Help diapering</b>		
No	72	60,5
Rarely	46	38,7
Sometimes	1	0,8
Always	-	-
<b>Going to bed when cried at night</b>		
Always	28	23,5
Sometimes	62	52,1
Never	29	24,4
<b>Total</b>	119	100,0

38,7% of fathers read book to children before sleeping, 39,5 percent watch children programmes together, 51.2% went to parks with the children and 48.7% played games at home.

**Tablo 3:** Some activities that fathers do with their children (February2010)

Etkinlikler	Sayı	Yüzde
<b>Read before sleep (n=112)*</b>		
Sometimes mother, sometimes father	41	34,5
Always mother	22	18,5
Always father	5	4,2
Never	44	37,0
<b>Watching child programs at TV (n=119)**</b>		
Father	47	39,5
Mother	43	36,1
Sibling	38	31,9
Alone	36	30,3
No	8	6,7
Grandmother	1	0,8
<b>Going to park (n=119)**</b>		
Mother	80	67,2
Father	61	51,2
Sibling	19	15,9
Grandparents	8	6,7
No	10	8,4
<b>Play at home (n=119)**</b>		

Father	58	48,7
Mother	53	44,5
Sibling	40	33,6
Friend	19	16,0
Alone	13	10,9
Others	7	5,9
<b>Frequency of playing with dad (n=58)*</b>		
Every day	26	21,8
Rarely	14	11,8
More than one day/ week	13	10,9
One day/ week	5	4,2
<b>Father's reaction to child's mistake (n=119)*</b>		
Verbal warn, this is wrong	83	69,7
Verbal warn, shoting/ swearing	24	20,2
No attention	6	5,0
Violence	1	0,8
No answer	5	4,2

\*There is one correct answer. "n" is total number so the percentages are over total number.

\*\* There is more than one correct answer. Row percentages were taken by using "n".

60% of the fathers didn't take any information about child education and care. The main source is the media for the fathers who had information on child care.

The fathers who have a good relationship with the mothers have better parenting behaviours than the others. Fathers' contribution to child care and education is found higher in the families if the decision about child care shared by mother and father than the families in which the decision made only by mother or father.

**Conclusion:** According to the results of this study if father is young, educated and working hours are decreased; they show more attention for their children. Fatherhood is something like motherhood, a duration so all parents have responsibilities that must be undertaken. Also it had seen that 'social status' of parents made them different even in this small study. Mother and father must be in good relations and show attention to children. In order to increase father role at child care, some implementations such as fathers and mothers can go to healthy child visits together can be planned. Also some visual and written material about child care can be provided and transmitted to fathers. Fathers are important for children's social and mental development; therefore the information and counselling service on child care should be served to the fathers.

**Keywords:** Father, child development, child care