



Exploring Fathering Roles in Children's Kindergarten Education Process

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Abstract

The study explored the fathering roles in two districts in the upper west region of Ghana. Using a qualitative approach, the investigated the fathering roles in children's kindergarten education process within framework of the Lamb's Multidimensional Father Involvement Model (Lamb et al., 1987). A sample of 20 fathers of families with both parents living with their biological children who attended a kindergarten school at the time of the study were used for the study; 10 participants from each district. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and analyzed thematically. The data collected was audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed by coding.

The study revealed that fathering roles in the two districts were associated with responsibility than interaction and accessibility. That is, fathers were found to be more responsible than interaction and accessibility. While the study revealed responsibility as both a cultural and social value, fathers' accessibility and interaction with kindergarten children were affected by social, workplace, and time factors.

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INTRODUCTION

Fathering in general, has been considered culturally inclined, socially constructive, and distinctively historical. The roles of fathers have continuously been reconstructed to meet the needs of the evolving society (Dick, 2011; Olmstead et al., 2009) over the centuries.

In this light, the cultural definition of men rotates so as the masculine construction, as such, new dimensions of fathering roles emerge in diverse societies in response to their social customs, norms, and traditions (Schoppe & Sullivan & Fagan, 2020; Shafer et al., 2020). However, in the Ghanaian contexts, studies that directly investigated the fathering roles peculiar to our society's norms, customs, and traditions have not been accessing, suggesting the relevance of the current investigation. The current study hereby, seeks to investigate the nature of fathering roles in the Ghanaian context using the Lamb, multidimensional father involvement model (Lamb, 2013, Lamb et al., 1987).

Fathering roles have had long historic conceptualization difficulties. Due to the changing conceptualizations within diverse periods of historical times, researchers suggested it was difficult to categorize fathering roles (Lamb, 2013). From the 16th/17th centuries following its discovery, the concept of fathering roles has been associated with diverse conceptions through the 18th to the 21st century.

Since the egression of fatherhood and fathering roles in the 16th century, there emerged four suggested conceptualizations as to what should be considered fathering roles at varied designated historic times. Fathering roles were considered to constitute the model of moral guidance. Fathers were considered moral models and guidance to their families especially, in the lives of their children (Dick, 2011).

Fathers who trained, modelled, taught, and guided their children through the processes of moral development in society; the consideration of what is right and wrong guidance were revered (Price, 2020; Dick, 2011).

Fatherhood literature (Schoppe & Sullivan & Fagan, 2020) suggested fatherhood as moral development is associated with responsible parents, however, this conception changed in the mid-19th century. The mid-19th century marked the beginning of industrial development and every and each person including researchers and social scientists focuses changed toward the economic and industrial development of families and societies. The shift of focus into the industrializa-

tion motivated the shift in who was a true father. Fatherhood and fathering literature illustrated that within this period, fathering roles were associated with that of a breadwinner. Researchers indicated study focuses dropped from fatherhood being moral teaching to breadwinning (Schoppe & Sullivan & Fagan, 2020; Arsenault & Stykes, 2019).

Fathering roles were characterized as being 'providers' within this period of industrialization, suggesting fathers were considered involved in family affairs if they provided for their families. The demand for job and employment to enable families provide for their needs and demands was the grounding of fathering roles being considered breadwinner (Schoppe & Sullivan & Fagan, 2020; Lamb, 2004, 2000). The era of the World War II marked the end of fathering roles being considered breadwinner. Although the concepts of fatherhood could not die off from moral teaching and breadwinning, the effects of the World War II changed the conceptualization of fathering roles during the 1930/40s which were considerably sex-role modeling (Arsenault & Stykes, 2019; Yogman, 2016).

Fathering roles were reviewed as sex-role models as a result of the depression effect from the inadequate numbers of men (fathers) in the society.

Fathers hereby 'sex-role-modeled' their sons and provided sexual security to female adults within families (Yogman, 2016; Dick, 2011; Pleck, 1981). In addition, fatherhood literature captured fathering roles within the World War II as the sex-role-modeling amidst the significant effects of the previous conceptualizations (moral teacher and breadwinner). The concept of fatherhood as sex-role-modeling lasted for nearly 30 years till the 1970s'. The 1970s remarkably saw a new era of fatherhood research following the dominance of revered female traditional and social mores in society.

Grounded on the interactions of fathers with children in the process of child development as do mothers, researchers during the 1970s once again shifted their focuses to fathering roles as nurturing (Lamb, 2010). The emphasis of fathers as proving to be true co-parents fostered the investigation of fathering roles as a 'state of a nurturer'. It was also founded on the predictions of social scientists that fathers could as well as mothers get involved in the daily life chores of child development (Schoppe & Sullivan & Fagan, 2020; Shafer et al., 2020). This led to the prose that fathers cannot just be substitutes for mothers. During childcare provision, education, and dis-

cipline, the interactions and activities that goes 'hand-in-hand' to yield the successful development of children constituted the proposition of fatherhood as a state of a nurturer. Researchers also based their conceptualizations on fathers as joint-family determinants alongside mothers.

Based on the present conceptualization of fatherhood since the 1970s as a nurturer, fathering roles can be categorized as when fathers become accessible, interactive, and responsible for child development (Lamb, 2010; McBride et al., 2002). Within this framework, the place of kindergarten children roles has been neglected since the 16th centuries.

Although various contextualized studies have investigated fathering roles during kindergarten education, fathering roles have not been made clear. Researchers were not able to clearly state fathering roles among children at the kindergarten level. Most literature accessed in the fatherhood and fathering literature contained findings that associated fathering roles to responsibility as evidenced by the prior conceptions; moral teacher, breadwinner, and sex-role model (Shafer et al., 2020; Lamb, 2010; Carla, 2016).

Conceptualization of Father Involvement

Fatherhood conceptualization have experienced historic challenges due to the changing effects of socioeconomic needs of people. However, within the nearly 30 years ago, the Lamb and colleagues' (1987) proposed model of fathering roles stood the 'test of time'. The theoretical model has been a fundamental part of fatherhood literature. The researchers argued that the quantity of researches and studies investigating fathering roles within the 1970s, through the 1980s connoted their desire to investigate fathering roles. They, therefore, proposed and developed the Lamb's Multidimensional Father Involvement Theory (Lamb et al., 1987). The theory consisted of various fathering roles categorized within the scope of nurturing (McBride et al., 2002). It comprised of three distinct fathering roles; *interaction*, *accessibility*, and *responsibility* (Lamb, 2013; Lamb et al., 1987; McBride et al., 2002).

The interaction category of the Lamb's Multidimensional Father Involvement theory (Lamb et al., 1987) constituted the childcare development activities that command engagement of fathers. These activities include the daily mores of fathers that are geared towards the development of children.

Some areas of the interaction aspect of the theory include fathers engaging in play time with children, talking with children, and enga-

ging in activities that are intended for the healthy development of children such as bathing, dressing, and brushing children's teeth. Accessibility domain comprises of the physical and psychological presence of fathers to children. Interaction and accessibility according to the theory are interrelated and operates hand in hand. Lamb et al., (1987) argued that fathers can only be accessible in to order to interact with children. As such interaction and accessibility components are akin. For instance, if fathers are not accessible, how could they share play time, mealtime with children? It is interesting to note that accessibility denotes availability (Lamb et al., 1987; McBride et al., 2002; Lamb, 2010).

On the aspect of responsibility, the researchers (Lamb et al., 1987) indicated, the concept constitutes the father's obligation for the child's wellbeing. Responsibility of fathers could include provision of healthcare, basic needs; food, clothes, and shelter, and making childcare arrangements. Fathers could be deemed responsible for an act without acting it out.

As such, responsibility in the model made part the acts of remembering, scheduling tasks, and planning child development activities (McBride et al., 2002; Lamb et al., 1987).

Amidst the prominence of the father involvement model in the fatherhood and fathering literature, researchers have argued that, it should not be assumed to be the delimited father involvement investigation model (McBride et al., 2002).

Other researchers have investigated some domains of fathering roles constituting fathering behavior, generative fathering, and cognitive; social capital perspectives, social constructionists, and cognitive vs. affective fathering roles (Shafer et al., 2020; Mitchell & Lashewicz, 2016; Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020). Although current emphasis of the fathering literature focuses on quality of fathering roles, the quantity of fathering roles still lapses behind. Fathers have been found missing in children's lives but when present according to Minnesota and Families Network (2011, p.1) have positive effects on children's general development. This is denoted by the amount of quantity and quality of fathering roles devoted by fathers on child development (Anne et al., 2017; McBride et al., 2002; Cabrera et al., 2000). Fathering roles needed to be researched to provide successful processes for efficient and effective development of children.

To contribute to the fathering and fatherhood literature in the Ghanaian context, the researchers explored fathering roles during the kindergarten period of children's education. The

study was guided by the Lamb's Multidimensional Father Involvement Model (Lamb et al., 1987) to distinguish which areas fathers played a role in their children's kindergarten education process.

The study has become necessary since there is no accessed literature in the related areas in the Ghanaian context. The findings of the study therefore seek to bridge the literature gap between fathering roles and children's kindergarten education development.

Theoretical Framework

The Lamb's Multidimensional Father Involvement Model

The Lamb's Multidimensional Father Involvement model (Lamb et al., 1987) guided the study. It constituted three broad fathering roles; *Interaction*, *Accessibility* and *responsibility*. Interaction comprises of fathering activities that connote engagement in one-on-one activities with children geared towards their development.

Fathering activities within the interaction domain include activities that require fathers' presence and action. Interaction factors which are argued to include fathers engaging in playtime, mealtime, and or bathing children effects children's emotional balance during their development (Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020; McBride et al., 2002; Lamb, 2013). Accessibility on the other hand is when fathers are psychologically and physical present to children. Accessibility predicts interaction as it was argued that fathers can only be available to interact with children. This made the variables for the two concepts of the fathering roles integrable. For instance, if fathers are not available, they cannot share mealtime with children. It is interesting to note that accessibility signifies interaction (Lamb, 2013; Lamb et al., 1987).

The responsibility aspect of the model includes duties owed by fathers during the development process of children. These may include sending children for healthcare, provision of clothes, buying of books, and payment of school fees. Lamb and his colleagues argued that a father may be responsible for a role without performing it (Lamb et al., 1987).

Irrespective of other investigations, - cognitive and affective aspects that examined the fathering behaviors, social constructionist, and social capital perspectives (Lamb, 2013; Ward, & Lee, 2020; Mitchell & Lashewicz, 2016; Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020), fathering roles especially among kindergarteners still are obscure. Current emphasis on fathering roles' research

laid focuses on the quality and quantity of fathering roles in the child development. This formed the basis of the study.

The researchers hereby adopted the Lamb's Multidimensional Father Involvement Model (Lamb et al., 1987) to examine the fathering roles among kindergarten children. Since research indicated many fathers lapse behind engaging in fathering roles that are geared towards the categorical development of children, the Lamb's Multidimensional Model (Lamb et al., 1987) is an appropriate instrument that helped the researchers to investigate which fathering roles were associated with children's kindergarten development; *accessibility*, *interaction*, and *responsibility* (Lamb et al., 1987; Mitchell & Lashewicz, 2016; Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020; Lamb, 2013) in the Ghanaian context.

METHODS

Participants

Families with both parents living together with their biological children were recruited for the study. As such, 20 fathers from the Wa West and Wa East districts of the upper west region of Ghana took part in the study. The participants were recruited via posters on local billboards in community centers and writing to parents through children. Procedure for inclusion in the study was that biological fathers lived together with the children who were within 4 – 6 years old; the typical kindergarten going-age of Ghanaian children.

Another consideration was that fathers were willing to participate in the study and that they would consider a one-hour visit to their homes to be interviewed.

The mean age of fathers was 40.5 years. Eight (40.0%) of the fathers had combined incomes between ₵ 100 and ₵ 300 while 30.0% (6) of them had their incomes between ₵ 400 and ₵ 600. Three (15.0%) of the respondents also had total monthly earnings of ₵ 700 – ₵ 900 as 15.5% (3) participants also had monthly earnings above ₵ 1000. The participants were made of 40.0% (8) farmers, 15.0% (3) teachers, while 15.0% (3) were self-employed, and 30.0% (6); others.

Procedure

Self-reported data from participants through interviews and focus group discussions was used for the study. Interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect information on the interaction, accessibility, and responsibility aspects of fathering roles. Fathers were commu-

notated with through telephone calls where applicable and by writing through their children prior to the visits to their homes to ascertain their qualification to be part of the study. As they met the criteria, the researchers scheduled an hour visit to their homes to have them interviewed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interaction

The synthesis of the interview and focus group discussions revealed that fathers in the selected districts do not interact much with their kindergarten children. They do not engage in one-on-activities with their kindergarten children as do their mothers. Fathers indicated at that age of their children; mothers were more likely to interact with them as compared to fathers.

For instance, when participants were asked how many times they have bathed, dressed and or put their children to bed, one of the participants stated as follows;

"Mothers are more likely to bath children and prepare them for school as I am more likely to provide books and clothing for the child. If mothers can do the mentioned activities without errors, there is no need for me to 'come in'. The mother wakes them up, bath them and prepare breakfast and snacks for them to join the buses to school. I guess this was enough and do not need my assistance". This clearly indicates that in this family, the father is not interactive with his kindergarten children within this category. The father rather considers providing for the child but however do not take part in the day-to-day chores that surrounded the child's education.

In another instance, the participants indicated that at the age of children's kindergarten education, most of the activities are supposed to be carried out by mothers. Examples of activities mentioned included dressing up children, putting them to bed, and waking them up. Participants shared similar views about interaction activities with children at the kindergarten except 'play'.

During the focus group discussion, a participant expressed similar views like; *"for play, it is normal, no parent can refuse playing with their kids, however certain activities such as shopping for kids, dropping off and picking them up from school most necessarily has to be the mother. For me, by 6:00am I am preparing to leave for work and have no time to assist the kids which I know I should have done but the time factor remains a key issue... For picking children up from school, I sometimes do when I am less busy other than that the mother has to.*

As a self-employed business man, sometimes, I do not get break time for myself because I have to do

business if customers are demanding".

However, within some aspects of interaction, fathers shared similar views that they are the most practiced as others refuted the idea. Participants shared akin views that they often chatted and watched television programs more easily with their children mostly in the evenings. As some indicated they have to force children to read other than watching the television, some mentioned it was the only time to interact with their kids as they would go to bed soon after watching the news feed.

Accessibility

Fathers can be available and not interactive with children but cannot interact with children when not available (Lamb et al., 1987; McBride et al., 2002). The accessibility data was coded and under such connotations. Most fathers from the discussions and interviews stated that they could be available but busy schedules would restrict them from being there for their children. For instance, a participant indicated from the focus group discussions that *"sharing meals with one's family signifies the specialty of the family union but as a farmer, I sometimes return late from the farm quite tired that I have to eat dinner after rest which the family had already sat for.*

This has been the routine in the farming seasons which however I am not comfortable with as a family man. Particularly waking up early to supervise children's routines becomes a problem so I had to leave that to their mothers because I leave early for the farm, the time the kids are still on bed".

Availability as the participants stated becomes an issue when children need their parents (fathers) to interact with as fathers are providers. One of the participants stated that availing oneself to the family always is not that necessary as one has to go out there and work for the family's wellbeing. According to a participant, *"in this 21st century, every parent strives to ensure the wellbeing of their families. Although I am not educated and do not have a work in the government sector, I have got to work my own ways to keep the family moving forward. For instance, I do not have job to do but have to wake up every morning and run through the streets of the city to 'make ends meet' so if I remain at home to keep the family emotionally stable, I guess we would be compounding our problems".*

Another participant shared similar opinions about the issue of availability; he stated availing oneself at the dining table could be easy but not interactive. He lamented that *"at dinner, I have already returned from work sometimes tired following the stress at the workplace. This makes it difficult*

for me to be present at the dining table to attend to some bothering questions from my children. I am personally aware that this was necessary to boost a healthy relationship between my children and I. However, the fatigue from workplace and other social factors remain the relationship barrier. Sometimes, I am present at dinner but the pressure to finish up assignments from the workplace makes me leave earlier intended.

This does not signify a healthy relationship but the workplace factors continuously thwart such relationship”.

Another participant revealed that playtime for instance should be an important activity for a child and his father as it communicates interactions and healthy development but that it is unfortunate that they (fathers) do not mostly get the chances to have children engaged in play activities. They (participants) engage in play activities with their children but felt it was not enough for children to mean they were available for them.

Dabuo, a farmer exclaimed! *“imagine returning from farming activities exhausted, I would not have much time for my kid amidst the need and advocacy. We are not naïve about the need to be available for our children when mostly they need us but it is the situation sometimes. One day, I returned from the farm and knowing very well my daughter had missed me so much, she ran to me but still in the farm clothes I felt it was not healthy to allow her mingle with me. She actually felt so bad when I stopped her but it was necessary although not appropriate. Her health was more important, such circumstances disturb our availability”.*

Participants shared similar views about their desire to be available for their children as they are conscious of the relevance of attachment to such relations in a family. They indicated exhibiting such relations in a family connotes healthy development of the children, however, lamented time, social, and workplace factors thwart such connections in families.

Responsibility

The findings illustrated participants actively were involved irrespective of time, social and workplace factors except economic challenges.

Responsibility as described include any attempts by parents to remember, plan, schedule any activities towards the development of the child. Responsibility may include what fathers are responsible for without actually performing them (Lamb et al., 1987). The findings were coded as such. It therefore revealed that participants found it easier to be responsible than the other categories (interaction/accessibility).

“Mike”, a senior high school level teacher illustrated that *“fathers by nature are breadwinners,*

providers, and law enforcers in most families. Prior research findings according to the teacher reiterated the status of fathers as providers and breadwinners of families. As such it is not surprising to find that in a society of ours where we (fathers) embrace such routines. When a child’s booklet is lost, finished or he is asked to buy some school materials, one would usually hear the mothers refer them to their fathers. Go tell your dad you are asked to pay your school fees”.

Such views did not differ from Dery, a self-employed business man. He emphasized that amidst any difficulties, he still provides for the family including the children. He aligns such arguments to cultural norms. According to Dery, *“in my tradition, fathers are meant to provide for families including the children among all odds. Although some women help in terms of difficulties, men notably are responsible for providing for the family. I have to buy my children’s school clothes, pay their fees, ensure they eat and have proper healthcare. Such is what our society holds prestigious. There are mothers among mothers he stated who do some of these as fathers, I acknowledge the single mothers and those of the fatherless but probably if their fathers were present they would be in the position to take up such tasks as that is our societal and cultural norm”.*

Discussion

The study revealed that fathers of the two selected districts were more responsible in their kindergarten children’s education as compared to interaction and accessibility. Fathers stated that responsibility was both a cultural and social norm, suggesting, every father aims to be a responsible family man.

This means that all fathers within the districts and outside are likely to be responsible as it is considered a socio-cultural tradition. Fathers subsequently provide for their families irrespective of all circumstances. Responsibility as illustrated by the findings is supreme among the participants.

Deductively, the fathers investigated were chose to be responsible due to their cultural orientations. Specifically, the districts investigated could be a patriarchal society where families function based on the concept of masculinity. If so, any attempts to educate fathers on the need to be accessible or interactive to their kindergarten children may fail as a result of their attachments to their social and cultural norms. Societies do not live in a vacuum but among norm, customs and traditions, this could explain the current findings of our study. Significantly, amidst socio-cultural traditions, conscious efforts should be made to educate fathers on the need to be acces-

sible to and interact with their children as this promotes healthy relationships among families (Lamb, 2010).

Regarding accessibility/interaction, fathers were found not to be accessible or interactive to their kindergarten children as compared to mothers. The findings illustrated that fathers were not as interactive and accessible to their kindergarten children as they (fathers), by culture and tradition assumed mothers were more suitable for handling the activities of children at that age. This means there is a trace of cultural value attached to mothering roles and children's development at the early years.

Just like participants indicated responsibility is both a cultural and social value, interaction and accessibility with children were associated with mothers. Some of the participants by virtue of society's demand for responsibility rather chooses work over accessibility.

Fathers hereby have to work to provide for the development, comfort, and socio-economic security of the families rather than staying at home and interacting with kids. From the findings, fathers were aware of the need for attachment to children through accessibility and interaction but factors such as work, social values and time factors affect such relationships with their children. This means that fathers were aware of the relevance of establishing such relationships with their children which however do not materialize because of the factors mentioned.

Taking into consideration the Lamb's Multidimensional Father Involvement Model (Lamb et al., 1987), fathering roles in the two districts investigated were associated with responsibility other than interaction and accessibility. Fathers however related such roles to their cultural and social inclination. Fathers were responsible as they indicated mothers were suitable for the interaction and accessibility activities of kindergarten children.

CONCLUSION

The study examined fathering roles in two districts in the upper west region of Ghana. We found that fathers were responsible in children's kindergarten education process. While the study revealed responsibility as both a cultural and social value, fathers' accessibility and interaction with kindergarten children were affected by social, workplace, and time factors.

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that fathers of children within the districts were more responsible than interacti-

on and accessibility. It was however revealed that time, social, and work place factors influenced their inability to be accessible and or interactive to their children. Responsibility was also revealed to be both a cultural and social value in the districts.

Cultural attributes where fathers have to provide for families deduces the patriarchal system of society – thus – where fathers are supposed to be the key founders of families and ensure their wellbeing.

To further understand the cultural stands of the participants investigated, an ethnographic study with patriarchal-orientation should be conducted to further understand the interrelationship between fathering roles and socio-cultural norms.

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