

# How father's engagement reflects on the social maturity and cognitive development...

[Psychology](#), [Child Development](#)



## **Introduction**

Father engagement entails a father-child relationship that allows for the father to be involved in the activities of the child both socially and academically. For this paper, father engagement will be analyzed in the academic realm and the impact it has on the child's cognitive development and social maturity. According to Flourin & Buchanan, 2002, fathers' involvement in children's lives has a positive impact on their ability to interact with other children and adults, consequently fostering a robust social life. Father involvement not only impacts the child's development but also the well-being of the mother and the development of the father himself.

### **Significance of Father Engagement in Child's Early Life**

Learning for children begins at infancy and education institution is the family and the home setting. Welsh et al, 2004, after a longitudinal analysis of children who have had their fathers involved since birth concluded that the relationship led to adolescent happiness and overall satisfaction with life. Due to father engagements infants at six months are more cognitively aware of their environment and the caregiver's activities. Father involvement in improving communication in children above an year because their conversations are usually made up of the wh- questions (why, what and where).

The child will be able to confidently answer questions in any other settings and understand the importance of effective communication. Infants who interact with their fathers display a high score on the Bayley scale of Infant Development (Allen & Daly, 2007). They become better problem solvers and

by the time they are three years old they have a higher IQ than their counterparts without involved fathers. According to Welsh et. al, 2004, infant mortality rates are 1.5 times higher for children living with single mothers and have fathers who are not involved in comparison to their counterparts who live with involved parents.

### **Impacts of Father Engagement in Children's Academic Life**

There are various ways in which fathers can be involved in their children's academic lives for instance doing homework with them in the evening, reading books and giving them educative stories. Fathers can drop or pick children from school and attend parent activities like Parents day, sports day and talent days (Coakley, et al. 2016). Conversely, father involvement should not replace the involvement of the mother. The impacts analyzed are based on a child who has both parents involved in their lives in comparison to one with only the mother involved.

Children whose fathers are involved in their academics in the aforementioned ways tend to have a positive attitude towards school. This they learn from their father and will enjoy school. They are less likely to be absent, get suspensions or even fail grades. Coakley, et. al 2016, noted that paternal involvement in 7th grade predicted fewer problems and issues in the 8th grade where most of the children become teenagers. The level of rebellion that the teenagers adopt is observed to be less in these children and they are able to discuss their issues with parents and cope easily with the changes in their bodies.

Children with fathers involved have a higher level of academic excellence, higher IQ and better brain development. Varghese & Wachen, 2016, assert that these children always score above average in the standard test scores, with most of them having A's. Father's involvement acts as a source of challenge for the child to better himself, leading to higher levels of educational and career success. Children from a very young age can be able to determine their career path and develop interests and fathers can act as their pillar.

The warmth and nurturing support offered by fathers has a positive correlation with a child's social behavior (Fatherhood Institute Research Summary, (Dec 2010). Children will have a matured sense of social responsibility and will be highly involved and successful co-curricular activities like music, sports and even internships. They have a moral compass that will ensure that they have their moral judgment in check and will always conform to the rules and regulations. Accordingly, children whose fathers are not involved in their lives are rebellious and most of them will end up abusing drugs and other substances (Allen & Daly, 2007).

As children grow, parents tend to be less involved in their school lives; this is based on the premise that they are no longer dependent and can easily be able to make the correct decisions. This phenomenon occurs as from the 10th grade. In children with paternal engagement, at this point they are more independent and have self-acceptance simply because they have explored their likes and interests. Their counterparts on the other hand

usually act out due to the decrease in attention and end up getting suspensions and their academic performance declines.

Paternal involvement shields children from teen delinquent behaviors.

Teenagers join gangs in search of gratifying the need to belong. Coakley, et al, 2016, established that there is a correlation between teenage drug and substance abuse and lack of paternal involvement. Fathers act as a form of authority in a family and when they are involved in the lives of the children, they instill discipline and responsibility that gratifies the need to belong.

### **Barriers to Paternal Engagement in Children's lives**

Fathers lack role models that can be able to guide them on how to get involved in their children's lives. There is a need to balance nurturing and care with masculinity. Fathers are seen to be the disciplining agent in the family and learning when and how to be caring and understanding enough to be involved is a real challenge. Most fathers are seen as the providers and in most families they prefer to have financial support rather than emotional. This leaves fathers at a disadvantage and creates a barrier in terms of time and context of their involvement in their children's lives.

Paternity leaves are usually very short in comparison to maternity leaves.

The fathers are restricted in the amount of time they can spend with their infant and still be able to financially provide for them. Currently in America, there has been the introduction of the Family medical leave act that allows for fathers to spend more time with their children (Coakley, et al. 2016).

Conversely, this is only meant for big companies with more than 50 employees and sad to state, only for the white collar jobs.

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Increase in divorce rates has left fathers at a loss because more often the mother is allowed to have full custody or primary custody when it is shared. The role of the father becomes negligible and paternal involvement is drastically reduced. Teenagers will always end up communicating with their fathers through phone calls, texts and emails, their relationship is hardly felt and the young adults will become desperate to have a father figure in their lives.

The major barrier to paternal involvement is gender expectations especially after marriage. Married couples, even egalitarian ones, tend to hold onto the traditional gender roles, where the woman nurtures and cares for the children while the man simply offers financial support. Children grow loving their mothers and fearing their father; in turn the children and the fathers become estranged. Men trying to defy this believe usually have undergone training or life changing experiences that reveals to them the importance of paternal involvement in their children's lives. There is need to change this belief that children should be closer to mothers than to fathers, it can only be achieved if the current fathers set an example. They will become the role models for their children and boys will seek to be closer to their fathers.

In conclusion, paternal involvement in children's lives from infancy has benefits to the children, the family as an institution, to the education and school system and to the entire society at large. Increase in delinquent behaviors is on the rise due to increase in divorce rates and single parenthood.