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## **Assessing the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Regarding Child Care among the Fathers of Under five Children in Ramnagar Area: A Cross-sectional study**

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### **Abstract**

Children are the brightest treasures brought forth into this world because they comprise major assets of the national human resource of any country. The objective of the study was to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices of the fathers of under five children regarding child care. A community based cross sectional study was conducted among fathers of under five children at Ram nagar area, Belagavi. Pretested and predesigned questionnaire was used to collect information. Analysis of data was done by using SPSS software version 20. Percentage and chi-square test were calculated to find out association. It was found that majority (52%) of the fathers had good knowledge about child care, (26.5%) had average knowledge and only (21.5%) had poor knowledge. 80.5% of fathers had positive attitude while (19.5%) had average attitude towards child care. Regarding practice, (45.5%) of fathers did poor practice, (30.5%) were on average and only (24%) did good practice. A significant difference in the level of knowledge and attitude was seen with age, socio-economic status and education at  $P < 0.05$ . It was concluded that most of the fathers were having good knowledge and attitude regarding child care but they were less involved in child care practices.

**Key Words:** Child care, knowledge, attitude, practice, Fathers involvement.

### **Introduction**

Children are the brightest treasures brought forth into this world because they comprise major assets of the national human resource of any country, their adequate care and development is not only important to them but also an indicator that reflects the health status of a given country.

Currently India has the highest number of children in the world. The total population of India as recorded by Census 2011 is 1.2 billion. Approximately 40% of the nation's population is children. The country has a very high rate of neo-natal deaths (around 35%) in the world. It also accounts for around 40 percent of child malnutrition in the developing world.<sup>1</sup>

More than anything in the world, children want their parents attention and love. Fathers tend to take on more of the breadwinning responsibilities, while mothers take on more of the household responsibilities. However literature shows that when both parents take proper childcare responsibilities the health status of the children improves.<sup>2</sup>

Studies consistently show that children with involved, loving fathers are much more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy, good social behaviour, avoid high-risk behaviours such as drug use, truancy and delinquent activity than children who have uninvolved fathers.<sup>3</sup>

Father involvement is defined as men's "positive, wide-ranging and active participation in their children's lives". Father Involvement may be manifested over cognitive, affective and behavioural domains.<sup>2</sup>

Even though focus in various literatures is on the direct effects of father involvement on child development outcomes, it is also clear that fathers are an important source of indirect effects on children's developmental outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

Fathers involvement can be measured as time spent together with children. A father is defined as an involved father if his relationship with his child can be described as being sensitive, warm, close, friendly, supportive, intimate, nurturing, affectionate, encouraging, comforting, and accepting.<sup>5</sup>

The under five children are the most vulnerable population in the community since fatality cases are high among them due to dehydration caused by diarrhoea, malnutrition, infectious diseases, ARIs, congenital anomalies, pneumonia, accidents etc. Parents can control these conditions by measures like Nutritional supplementation, Immunization, Oral rehydration, growth monitoring, and care in illness.<sup>6</sup>

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In a developing country like India aspects of under five child care like immunization, growth monitoring, care in illness and proper child feeding are not only inadequately practiced but also literature on this domain is scanty, hence the present study was carried out to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices of the fathers of under five children regarding child care and to find out the factors associated with the level of knowledge, attitude and practices of the fathers of under five children.

### Methodology

The present study was a community based cross sectional study which was conducted during July 2012 to December 2012 among the fathers of under five children at Ramnagar, a field practice area of JN Medical College, Belagavi District. The total population of Ramnagar was 31648 and assumed 57% of them were  $\geq 18$  years of age . Hence the population of  $\geq 18$  years of age came to be 18039.

No data available from India on percentage of knowledge, attitude and practice regarding Child care among the fathers of under five children. So, presuming 50% prevalence, the sample size was calculated by using formula  $n = 4pq/d^2$ . Hence the sample size was 400 after considering an allowable error (d) 5%. 400 participants were selected among 18039 using random number table.

Fathers of under five children who were willing to participate were included in this study. Fathers who were outstation during the study period were excluded from the study. Information was collected on socio-demographic variables, knowledge, attitude and practices regarding child care among the fathers of the under five using predesigned and pretested questionnaire.

In case of knowledge and attitude, correct answer to the question was given '1' mark, '0' was given for wrong answer while in case of practices '1' for correct answer and '0' for negative. To assess knowledge, attitude and practice in accordance with good, average and poor, Mean score and SD of the participants were calculated. Participants with score less than Mean score – SD was considered as poor, Mean score – SD to Mean score + SD as average and more than Mean score + SD as good. After computing Mean score and SD, participant with score  $>12$  was considered as having good knowledge, between 6 to12 as average and  $<5$  as poor. Similarly for the attitude related question participant with score  $<15$  was considered as having poor attitude, between 15 to35 as average and  $>35$  as good attitude. Regarding the practices related question, participants with score  $<5$  was considered as having poor practices towards child care, 6-12 as average and  $>12$  as good.

Data was analyzed by using SPSS version 20. Results were expressed in percentages and chi- square test was used to find the association. Ethical clearance from institutional ethics committee of J.N.M.C, KLES was obtained and informed consent from the participants was taken after explanation of the whole study.

### Results

Out of 400 participants, 154 (38%) of the fathers of under five belonged to age group of 22-26 years, 128 (32%) of them belonged to 27-31 years and 118 (30%) belonged to 32-36 years respectively. Most of the participants 206 (51.5%) were Hindus followed by Muslims 145 (36.5%) and Christian 49 (12%). Majority of the participants 246 (61.5%) belonged to the joint family followed by nuclear family 154 (38.5%). A large proportion of the participants 242 (60.5%) were working as a labourers and more than one quarters 158 (39.5%) were educated upto PUC level. According to modified B.G. Prasad Classification, majority of the participants 220 (55%) belonged to class IV, followed by class III 130 (32.5%) and Class V 50 (12.5%). None of the participants belonged to high socio-economic class.

Majority 207 (52%) of the fathers were having good knowledge on under five child care, 107 (26.5%) had average knowledge and only 86 (21.5%) had poor knowledge. Out of 400 participants, 322(80.5%) were having positive attitude towards child care, 78 (19.5%) had average attitude and none of the fathers had poor attitude. Regarding practice 183 (45.5%) of fathers had poor practices on child care, 121 (30.5%) had average practices and only 96 (24%) had good practices towards under five child care.

**Table I: Association between the levels of knowledge and socio-demographic variables**

Socio-demographic variables		Knowledge Level			Statistical test value		
		Poor (n=86)	Average (n=107)	Good (n=207)	$\chi^2$	df	P value
Age in years	22-26	17	31	106	1.597	4	0.019*
	27-31	21	39	68			
	32-36	48	37	33			
Type of family	Nuclear	33	26	95	4.317	2	0.168
	Joint	53	81	112			
Religion	Hindu	42	61	103	0.065	4	0.798
	Muslim	32	38	75			
	Christian	12	8	29			
Occupation	Service	0	7	21	1.7524	4	0.1762
	Labour	62	86	94			
	Business	24	14	92			
Socio-economic status	Class III	21	23	86	0.1427	4	0.0138*
	Class IV	42	68	110			
	Class V	23	16	11			
Level of education	Illiterate	26	16	8	12.415	6	0.001*
	Primary	24	46	24			
	Secondary	21	41	36			
	Diploma /PUC	15	4	139			

\* - Significant at  $p < 0.05$ **Table II: Association between the levels of attitude and socio-demographic variables**

Socio-demographic Variables		Attitude level		Statistical test value		
		Poor (n=78)	Average (n=322)	$\chi^2$	df	P value
Age in years	22-26	22	132	1.597	4	0.019*
	27-31	27	101			
	32-36	29	89			
Type of family	Nuclear	26	128	4.317	2	0.287
	Joint	52	194			
Religion	Hindu	45	161	0.1452	4	0.438
	Muslim	22	123			
	Christian	11	38			
Occupation	Service	8	20	4.8124	4	0.1724
	Labour	54	188			
	Business	16	114			
Socio economic status	Class III	18	112	0.1672	4	0.0437*
	Class IV	49	171			
	Class V	11	39			
Level of education	Illiterate	24	26	0.1416	6	0.002*
	Primary	21	73			
	Secondary	20	78			
	Diploma /PUC	13	145			

\* - Significant at  $p < 0.05$ 

There was a significant difference in the level of knowledge and attitude of fathers towards under five child care according to their age, socio-economic status and level of education at  $p < 0.05$  respectively while no significant difference was found with the type of family, religion and occupation. (Table I and II)

**Table III: Association between the level of practices and socio-demographic variables**

Socio-demographic variables		Practices Level			Statistical test value		
		Poor (n=183)	Average (n=121)	Good (n=96)	$\chi^2$	df	P value
Age in years	22-26	49	41	64	1.248	4	0.139
	27-31	62	48	18			
	32-36	72	32	14			
Type of family	Nuclear	65	47	42	1.745	2	0.263
	Joint	118	74	54			
Religion	Hindu	94	61	51	2.487	4	0.431
	Muslim	67	48	30			
	Christian	22	12	15			
Occupation	Service	11	10	7	0.241	4	0.037*
	Labour	113	69	60			
	Business	59	42	29			
Socio-economic status	Class III	67	31	32	3.641	4	0.283
	Class IV	78	84	58			
	Class V	38	6	6			
Level of education	Illiterate	37	8	5	1.362	6	0.003*
	Primary	21	61	12			
	Secondary	15	58	25			
	Diploma /PUC	27	77	54			

\* - Significant at  $p < 0.05$

The study found that there was a significant difference in the level of practices of fathers toward child care according to their occupation and level of education at  $p < 0.05$  whereas no significant difference was observed with age, type of family, religion and socio-economic status. (Table III)

### Discussion

Majority (52%) of the fathers were having good knowledge on under five child care, (26.5%) had average knowledge and only (21.5%) had poor knowledge. Out of 400 participants, (80.5%) were having positive attitude towards child care, (19.5%) had average attitude. Regarding practice (45.5%) of fathers had poor practices on child care, (30.5%) had average practices and only (24%) had good practices towards under five child care.

A similar study was conducted in Wardha, Maharashtra showed that men are taking more active role in childcare. 20% of fathers had poor knowledge on child care, 42% had average knowledge while 38% had proper knowledge on child care.<sup>7</sup>

Another similar study conducted by Saha K et al., revealed that 72% of the respondent had proper knowledge on child care whereas only 54% practiced it.<sup>8</sup>

In the present study Knowledge regarding child care among the fathers of under five children was higher in (51%) of the younger age group i.e. 22-26 years and least in (56%) of the older age group i.e. 32-36 years. Age of the fathers of under five children was inversely related to their knowledge regarding child care. It showed that as the age increased the knowledge regarding child care decreased and the difference was statistically significant.

Similarly knowledge regarding child care was higher among (68%) fathers who had completed pre-university education whereas only (4%) illiterate fathers had good knowledge. The knowledge regarding child care was directly associated with the literacy status and the difference was statistically significant.

Present study revealed that (53%) of the fathers belonging to socio economic class IV had average knowledge regarding child care. The association was found to be statistically significant.

In the present study attitude regarding child care among the fathers of under five children was highly positive in (41%) of the younger age group i.e. 22-26 years and least positive in (38%) of the older age group i.e. 32-36 years. It showed that as the age increased the attitude regarding child care decreased and the difference was statistically significant.

About (45%) of the fathers had good attitude who had completed pre-university education while only (30%) fathers had good attitude towards child care. (56%) of the fathers of under five did good practices who had completed pre-university education whereas only (6%) of fathers did good practices among illiterate. The attitude and practices regarding child care was directly associated with the level of education and the difference was statistically significant. Majority (53%) of fathers from Class IV of the social economic status had good attitude towards child care and statistically significant difference was detected between the socio economic status of fathers and their attitude level.

Present study revealed that majority (62%) of fathers who work as laborers had good practices regarding child care and statistically significant difference was observed between the occupation of fathers and their practices level.

A similar study done by Sarkadi A et al., revealed that there is evidence to support the positive influence of father engagement on offspring social, behavioural and psychological outcomes.<sup>7</sup> Another similar study conducted by Earl J and Perkins W, on "Fathers care" revealed that fathers are less involved in the care of children than mothers.<sup>9</sup> Fathers attitude of caring is often circumscribed by family, child arrangements, cultural and social expectations.<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

The overall findings of the study revealed that fathers of under five children in Ramnagar area have good knowledge and attitude regarding child care but they were less involved in child care practices knowing that its women's responsibility. Hence it is concluded that improvement of knowledge and motivation of fathers to get involved in dealing with under five child care practices is needed.

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