Fathers’ Involvement in Childrearing Practices of Their Children with Intellectual Disabilities*

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Abstract

Background: Father involvement in education of children with intellectual disabilities (ID) is extremely important for both school learning and healthy development of children with ID in family. Father involvement was explained by engagement, availability and responsibility. It can be stated that engagement requires spending time and efficient interaction with children. The purpose of this study was to investigate father involvement in childrearing practices about children with ID.

Method: The descriptive method was used in the study. Participants included 41 mothers and 41 fathers of children with ID Paternal Involvement of Child Care Index (PICCI) was used to collect data about father involvement and a family information form was used to collect data about the demographic features of families. The involvement of fathers was determined with the evaluations of both parents (father and mother).

Results: Results, according to the both parents’ evaluations, indicated that father involvement in general was higher than the average. In the evaluations of both parents on father involvement, results also revealed that father involvement was low in “Child Care Responsibilities” only; however, other sub-areas of involvement were high. It was found that especially mothers were responsible as primary caregiver for the child care. Results also indicated that a significant relation was not found between family finances (monthly income of family), weekly working hours of fathers and gender of children with ID and the father involvement in childrearing practices with their children with ID.

Conclusions: The literature about the fathers’ role in families and father-child relationship with normally developing children usually show father involvement is low. This research shows that fathers involve childrearing practices of their children with ID. In direction of the research results, it can be said that having special needs is an effective factor for father involvement.

Keywords: Childrearing practices, father involvement, intellectual disabilities, Turkish fathers.

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INTRODUCTION

Researchers dealing with families who have children with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) usually paid more attention to mothers than to fathers in the past. However, the last 20 years have witnessed research on fathers’ relation with their children and wives (Lamb, 1997; Quinn, 1999; Tylicki, 2003). Despite not having a mutual decision on the subject, the prior research was focused on how to provide fathers involvement and necessary supports and encouragements to make this involvement positive and permanent (Quinn, 1999). According to Quinn (1999), there is no clear and permanent definition of father involvement, but Pleck’s (1997) has commonly been appropriated. Pleck (1997) explained father involvement by the three basic dimensions of involvement, engagement, availability and responsibility. Considering the contents of these concepts, it can be stated that engagement requires spending time and efficient interaction with children. Availability means being always ready to help the child during activities such as dressing, feeding, cleaning and being nearby while the child is playing games. Responsibility, although not defined clearly, is the most important of all dimensions of father involvement. Responsibility can be named as making arrangements for the child care, fixing the necessary appointments and taking leave from work.

Background

A number of studies emphasize the importance of father involvement in child development. Some research has introduced same evidence claiming the positive association between social competence and academic achievements of children and father involvement (Grolnick & Slowraczek, 1994; Hart, DeWolf, Wozniak & Burts, 1992; Lewis, 1997; Nord, Birmhall & West, 1997). In their research, Amato and Paul (1999) indicated that father involvement increased child’s academic achievement and reduced the frequency of unwanted behaviours. Another research by Dunn, Cheng, O’Conner & Bridges (2004) also showed that father involvement decreased adjustment problems children experienced. According to the results of the study of Flouri and Buchanan (2003) which is called ‘National Child Development’, father involvement is one of the preventing factors of psychological maladjustment. This study also indicated that father involvement prevented stress mothers had. Researchers in general have been supporting the thesis that fathers were more intensively involved in their sons’ education rather than daughters’ (Pleck, 1997). However, this can’t be truly said for child care. Considering the gender difference father involvement in their sons’ games was not observed in child care (Levy-Shiff & Israelashvilli, 1988). These findings show that there is a connection between child’s social behaviours or teachers’ perceiving that can have some influences on father involvement (Fagan, 1999).

Researchers had also stated that father involvement has some positive influences on both mother and child education and development. In some studies, the fact that, mothers who have children with ID are influenced positively by the spouse (father) support was expressed clearly (Nouh, Dumas, Wolf, & Fisman, 1989; Simmerman, Blacher & Baker, 2001). According to Ericson and Upshur’a (1989) when fathers give significant support to their wives and share the household cares, mothers’
perceiving the heavy burden of child care is lightened. Also since father involvement strength the family relationships and increases marriage order and expands the marriage satisfaction, it tends to prevent the stress factor coming from the case of having a child with ID (Trute, 1990; Willoughby & Glidden, 1995). The studies have been pointing to the existence of a close and positive relationship between father involvement and getting mothers to involve in the process (Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997).

The studies related to father involvement, indicate that fathers’ working status obviously affect father involvement. In association with fathers with more free time are likely to involve in household cares and child care that fathers who have less free time (Becker, 1981, as cited in NCOFF Brief, 1999). Thus, unemployed or retired fathers are supposed to spend much more time with their children (Radin & Harold-Goldsmith, 1989). Some studies indicated that attending family education programs organized by schools increased father involvement. On the other hand, fathers’ own skills also influenced their involvement on child education and care. It was observed that fathers who had knowledge on child care had higher motivation and self confidence (Fagan & Iglesias, 1999). Family involvement in education of children with ID particularly father involvement is extremely important on the aspect of achieving the goal of the education given at school and on the continuation of the healthy development of child in a family atmosphere. That’s why we are in need of such a study as it will be a guide for the family education programmes and it will define the role of father development which already existed. Mostly, in Turkey, studies that are focused on families are based on some aspects, such as the efficiency of family education programs (Birkan, 2001; Cavkaytar, 1999; Ozen, 1999; Sucuoglu, Kucuker & Kanik, 1993; Vuran, 2000); the characteristics of the families who have children with ID (Arslan, Deniz & Hamarta, 2002; Bakkaloglu & Sucuoglu, 2000; Cavkaytar, Batu, Kartal, Cetin & Güllüpinar, 2004; Karyelioglu, 2002); levels of concern, worries and stress in families, family needs and family attitudes (Akkok, Askar & Karanci, 1992; Kozalıoglu ve Ekberzade, 1994; Ulasanel, 1994; Evcimen, 1996; Mert, 1997; Besikci & Özkardes, 2002). Nevertheless, studies that are focused just on father involvement in child rearing practices regarding children with ID are rarely found. It is thought that, this research is significant because of it can contribute to understanding fathers’ involvement about child care in Turkey. The purpose of this research was to determine father involvement in childrearing practices of mentally retarded children and to find out if there were some relationships between some demographic features of families and general father involvement. In order to achieve this goal, definite answers were sought for the following questions: (1) What is the case of general father involvement in childrearing practices of children with ID? (2) Does this involvement tend to be different considering the sub-areas of involvement (statement of involvement; child care responsibility; socialization responsibility; influences in childrearing tasks; childrearing tasks; availability)? (3) Is there a relationship between father involvement and some demographic features of families?
METHOD

Participants
This study took place in the city of Eskisehir, Turkey, and included the participation of the parents whose children were attending a private rehabilitation center where this study was carried out. It has been carried out with 82 participants; 41 mothers and 41 fathers. The monthly income of the families was around 945 Turkish Liras (average 700$). Participants were generally families with 2 children. The average age of participant fathers was 44 and their education level was mainly secondary school. The average weekly working hours of fathers were 43. Participant mothers’ average age was 40, education level was generally primary school or just being able to read and write. Thirty-three of mothers were housewives. The average age of children was fourteen. Twenty-three of the children were boys and eighteen were girls. Thirty-six of the families were nuclear families and five families were extended families.

Measures
Data were collected, about father involvement, with the Paternal Involvement in Child Care Index (PICCI) and the data about the demographic features of families were collected with Family Information Form.

Paternal Involvement in Child Care Index (PICCI)
One of the commonly used evaluation tools to measure father involvement in childrearing practices regarding children with ID is Paternal Involvement in Child Care Index (PICCI) which was developed by Radin (1982). However, although PICCI is focused on fathers, the practice not only includes fathers, but also the evaluation of mothers on fathers; thus, it was aimed to determine father involvement according to the evaluation of mothers. In other words, using both fathers’ and mothers’ evaluations on father involvement the study determined father involvement. In this kind of studies called fathers’ reports on fathers and mothers’ report on fathers. Each part of PICCI represents a value in a certain point distribution. Total point is calculated separately for each part. The total score is equal to average father involvement (Rich, 2002). PICCI survey, up to now, has been used for families with different characters (Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992; Rich, 2002; Williams, 1995; Suppal & Roopnarine, 1999). The rates of the general and sub-areas in PICCI is as following:

1. Statement of Involvement 0 – 12
2. Child Care 0 – 12
3. Socialization Responsibility 0 – 18
4. Influences in Childrearing Decisions 0 – 12
5. Childrearing Tasks 0 – 28
6. Availability 0 – 18
* General Involvement 0 – 100

Percentage evaluation questions were not included in the reliability analysis of PICCI, and evaluation has been done regarding 29 items in likert type. In reliability
analysis for whole PICCI Cronbach Alpha value is: 0.87. In order to determine the consistency between the two evaluations was considered. Findings are as follows: general involvement: \( r = 0.48, p = 0.00 \); child care responsibility: \( r = 96, p = 0.00 \); socialization responsibility: \( r = 0.80, p = 0.00 \); influences in childrearing decisions: \( r = 0.20, p = 0.05 \); the frequency of doing childrearing tasks: \( r = 60, p = 0.00 \); availability: \( r = 0.90, p = 0.00 \). According to consistency between father and mother evaluation in all areas \( p<0.05 \) and significant relationship was found between the evaluations of parents on father involvement. In samples of Euro-American fathers, PICCI has good construct validity and high test-retest correlations (coefficients ranged from .60 to .99; Radin, 1982), and good internal consistency when it is used with Puerto Rican and African-American fathers (Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992; Roopnarine & Ahmeduzzaman, 1993). PICCI has been used with fathers of children with disabilities (Piburn & Boyce, 1992; Young & Roopnarine, 1994; Ricci & Hodapp, 2003; MacDonald & Hastings, 2010). Paternal Involvement in Child Care Index (PICCI) is translated to Turkish by a specialist in special education and an English teacher. The Turkish form of PICCI is evaluated by other specialists in special education and their opinions are taken and final form of PICCI is built. Because of the limited number of subject, a pilot research couldn’t be done. It is clear that this condition is a limit for the research.

**Family Information Form**

Family Information Form is formed with a purpose of determining the characteristics of the families who have children with ID considering different demographic varieties. There are totally 16 questions in relation to age, educational status, professions, weekly working hours, family finances, family types and number of children and also age, gender and kind of retardation of children with ID.

**Data Collection**

We got the appointments from 41 volunteer families by phone. In order to administer measures and collect the data, two practitioners, one female for mothers and one male for fathers, met with parents at their own houses but in separate rooms, in case, parents influenced each other. Meeting usually lasted about 30 minutes in a coordinated way.

**RESULTS**

The findings of evaluation of both parents on father involvement in childrearing practices were relatively close to each other. It can be said in relation to these findings that father involvement rate was between 57% and 60% (above average level). In the statement of involvement, according to evaluation results, it was observed that fathers involved in childrearing practices. In child care area fathers rarely had responsibilities. In socialization responsibility fathers occasionally involved in tasks. Considering the results, it can be said that in influences on childrearing decisions when comparing to the mothers fathers were equally involved in decisions and in childrearing tasks fathers are sometimes involved. And finally, in
availability fathers were occasionally involved. In other words, it can be expressed that availability correlation was in medium level. The results are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Fathers’ involvement in childrearing practices of their children with ID (N=82)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREAS</th>
<th>Fathers’ evaluations on fathers</th>
<th>Mothers’ evaluations on fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Involvement</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Involvement</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialization Responsibility</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences in Childrearing Decisions</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childrearing Tasks</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding their answers, parent share the opinion that especially mothers (67.6% – 67.8%) were responsible as primary caregiver for the child care (Table 2). Moreover, considering the percentage results of the tasks taken place in child care and socialization responsibility sub-area, it was determined that those tasks were done primarily by mothers, secondly by father and thirdly by a particular person except parents in extended families. Results also indicated that there was no significant relationship between father involvement and family finances (father evaluations, r = 0.08, p = 0.61; mother evaluations, r = 0.22, p = 0.15); weekly working hours of fathers (father evaluations, r = -0.19, p = 0.21; mother evaluations, r = -0.02, p = 0.87); the gender of the children with ID (father evaluations, t = 0.13, p = 0.89; mother evaluations, t = 1.22, p = 0.22).

Table 2. Primary caregiver in childrearing practices of children with ID (N=82)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>According to Fathers</th>
<th>According to Mothers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

Regarding the results obtained from the study, father involvement in childrearing practices regarding children with ID is above the average. In addition to this, in the studies by Erkut (2003), Jacobs & Keeley (2006), Sagi (1982), Shields (1998), Rich (2002), Roopnarine (1999), Ricci & Hodapp (2003), MacDonald & Hastings (2010), and Flippin & Crais (2011), father involvement is also above the average level. Considering the evaluations of both parents on father involvement, it was determined that father involvement is low only in child care, and in the other involvement sub-areas, it is in medium level. The fact that father involvement in child care can be originated by the reason that these tasks require having a direct interaction between father and child. Likewise, Cavkaytar, Batu, Kartal, Cetin, and Gullupinar (2004) found that comparing to mothers, father involvement in childrearing responsibilities was low.
Additionally, in the father involvement research results by Levy-Shiff ve Israelahvilli (1988) and Sucuoglu, Kucuker, and Kanik (1993) were the same. However, Young and Roopnarine (1994), in their study based on the evaluations of both parents, unlikely determined that fathers having children with developmental disorders were similarly involved in the all involvement areas.

According to the results of this research, it is the mother who is primarily responsible in child care. Not surprisingly, both fathers and mothers reported that mothers spent significantly more time in primary caregiving than fathers did (Suppal & Roopnarine, 1999; Roach, Orsmond & Barratt, 1999). Fathers in particular engage less in the care and therapeutic support of their children with intellectual disabilities than mothers do (MacDonald & Hastings, 2010). It is estimated that fathers are the primary caregivers for only 24% of preschool-age children with working mothers (Flippin & Crais, 2011). In this sense, the result is consistent with the findings of the studies of Sagi (1982), Shields (1998), Roopnarine (1999) and Young & Roopnarine (1994). Up to now, mothers typically played a larger role than fathers within early intervention services because they were caring for the children at home while fathers were working outside and were less available (Murray & McDonald, 1996). For instance, within the early intervention service system, mothers remain the primary participants in child assessments (Crais, Poston Roy, & Free, 2006) and interventions (Able-Boone, 1993; Polmanteer & Turbiville, 2000).

Studying the relationship between demographic varieties and father involvement, it was not possible to find a relationship between family finances and father involvement in childrearing practices of their children with ID. This result is also consistent with the findings of Riposo (1999) and Roopnarine (1999). Nevertheless, some research shows that increase in family finances create some positive influences on father involvement (Hossain, 1992; Jacobs and Keeley, 2006; Shields, 1998; Sagi, 1982; Tiedje, 1993). Regarding the involvement studies focused on normally developing children, it can be said that, fathers, considering the family finances, perceive themselves just as financial supporters and this is a major handicap on father involvement (Quinn, 1999). Yet, in this study, it can be indicated that, fathers involved actively in childrearing practices because of their children’s being handicapped and the mission of giving financial support does not prevent father involvement.

In the study, it couldn’t be found any significant relationship between weekly working hours and father involvement. However, according to some various involvement studies, the involvement rate of fathers who spend less time at work is high (Becker, 1981, as cited in NCOFF, 1999; Radin & Harold-Goldsmith, 1989). Father involvement studies based on normally developing children show that the fathers see the intensity of weekly working hours as a barrier in their involvement in childrearing practices. But for this research, it can be said that fathers do not perceive intensive weekly working hours as a reason not to be involved in such practices, because they may be aware of the fact that their children are mentally retarded, and relatively there is more child care and childrearing responsibilities comparing to those normally developing children.
It was also determined in this study that according to results of the evaluations of both parents, the gender of children with ID does not affect father involvement. Also in the two different studies done by Shields (1999) with Afro-American fathers and by Roopnarine (1999) and Suppal & Roopnarine (1999) with Indian fathers, the gender factor did not change the situation. However, there are some studies supporting the thesis claiming that fathers were more involved in their sons’ education and caring (Pleck, 1997) and there was a relationship between father involvement and their sons’ cognitive development (Radin, 1981; Ziegler, 1979). In the studies done with white American fathers, it was observed that fathers are more actively involved in their sons’ education and caring (Baruch & Barnett, 1981; Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Marcus, 1985). For the Turkish families with normally developing children, it can be said that there is a tendency to think that mothers are responsible for their daughters’ and fathers are responsible for their sons’ education and rearing (Guler, 1992). However, regarding the results of this study, we can say that the fact that being of children with ID is much more important than the gender factor, and father involvement is not influenced by it.

Since the literature about the father’s role in families and father-child relationship is based on normally developing children, there is a general belief about father involvement’s being low. However, fathers spend more time on caring for their children and are more directly involved with their children than fathers of past generations, effectively shifting from breadwinning to co-parenting roles (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). This research shows that Turkish fathers involve childrearing practices of their children with ID. In direction of the research results, it can be said that having special needs is an effective factor for father involvement. In addition to findings, in family research, fathers of children with intellectual disability are a relatively neglected group. However, an understanding of fathers’ adjustment to living with a child with intellectual disability could inform suitable support interventions. In spite of the fact that cognitive behavior therapy, interventions may be beneficial for fathers of the children with intellectual disabilities (Hastings & Beck 2004; Singer, Ethridge & Aldana, 2007).
REFERENCES


Zihinsel Yetersizliği Olan Çocukların Yetiştirilmesine Yönelik Etkinliklerde Baba Katılımı

Özet


Amaç: Bu araştırmanın temel amacı zihinsel yetersizliği olan çocukların yetiştirilmesine yönelik etkinliklerde baba katilimanın düzeyinin belirlenmesidir. Bu amaçla ulaşmak için araştırımda, anne babalarının, zihinsel yetersizliği olan çocukların yetiştirilmesine yönelik etkinliklere baba katılma iliskin yaptıkları değerlendirme ile baba katilimanın zihinsel yetersizliği olan çocukların yetiştirilmesine yönelik etkinliklere genel katılım durumları, (2) babaların, zihinsel yetersizliği olan çocuklarının yetiştirilmesine yönelik etkinliklere katılım durumlarının katılım alt alanlarına (katılımın değerlendirilmesi; çocuk bakım ve sosyalleştirme sorumluluğu; çocuk yetiştirme kararlarında etki ve çocuk yetiştirme görevleri; erişilebilirlik) göre farklılaşıp farklılaşmadığı ve (3) babaların zihinsel yetersizliği olan çocukların yetiştirilmesine yönelik etkinliklere katılım durumları ile ailelerin, babaların, annelerin ve çocukların bazı demografik özellikleri arasında ilişki olup olmadığını incelenmiştir.

Yöntem: Araştırma Eskişehir ili merkezinde zihinsel yetersizliği olan 41 çocuğun anne ve babasından oluşan 82 kişilik bir katılımcı grubu ile gerçekleştirildi. Araştırma durum saptamaya yönelik bir rehabilitasyon merkezinde, kaynaklaştırma ve destek hizmet uygulamaları dışında bireysel ve grup eğitimi alan, zihinsel yetersizliği olan 41 çocuğun anne ve babasından oluşan 82 kişilik bir katılımcı grubu ile gerçekleştirildi. Araştırma durum saptamaya yönelik betimsel bir çalışma olması yanında, değişkenler arasında ilişki var olup olmadığını ortaya koyan bağıntısal bir çalışmaya uymaktadır. Zihinsel yetersizliği olan çocuk babalarının çocukların yetiştirilmesine yönelik etkinliklere katılım durumlarıyla ilgili veriler “Çocuk Bakımda Baba Katılımı İndeksi/Anketi

**Bulgular:** Araştırmada elde edilen bulgulara sırasıyla bakıldığında, anne baba değerlendirmelerine göre babaların zihinsel yetersizliği olan çocukların yetiştirilmesine yönelik etkinliklere genel katılım durumlarının ortalamanın üzerinde olduğu belirlenmiştir. Babaların ve annelerin, baba katılımlına ilişkin yaptıkları değerlendirmelerde, babaların sadece “Çocuk Bakımı” alt alanında düşük bir katılım sergiledikleri, diğer katılım alanlarında ise zihinsel yetersizliği olan çocuklarıyla ilgili etkinliklere daha yoğun katıldıkları belirlenmiştir. Çocuğun öncelikli bakım sağlama sorumluluğunun ise ağırlıklı olarak anneye ait olduğu bulunmuştur.

**Sonuç ve Öneriler:** Araştırma bulgularına göre, ailinin ekonomik düzeyi (aylık hane geliri); babanın haftalık çalışma saatleri toplami; zihinsel yetersizliği olan çocuğun cinsiyeti ile babaların zihinsel yetersizliği olan çocuklarının yetiştirilmesine yönelik etkinliklere katılım durumları arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunamamıştır. Aile içi ilişkilerde babanın rolü ve baba çocuk etkileşimine ilişkin literatür, normal gelişim gösteren çocukları merkeze alarak oluşturulduğundan babanın katılmının düşük olduğu konuşunda genel bir eğilim vardır. Ancak, çocuğun yetersizliğe sahip olması her şeyin önune geçerek, babaların çocuklarını yetiştirilmesiyle ilgili etkinliklere, anneler kadar olmasa da, aktif katılmını beraberinde getirmektedir. Bu araştırmının bulguları da, babaların zihinsel yetersizliği olan çocukların yetiştirilmesine yönelik etkinliklere katıldığı göstermektedir. Bu araştırmannın sonuçları doğrultusunda, çocuğun zihinsel yetersizliğe sahip olmasının baba katılım üzerinde belirgin bir etkisi olduğunu söyleyebilir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Çocuk bakımı, baba katılımı, zihinsel yetersizlik, Türk babalar.