

Use of Social Support for Fathers with Developmental Disabilities in Japan

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Abstract : The purpose of this study was to clarify the differences and similarities regarding the social support of fathers and mothers towards considering increased assistance for the paternity of children with developmental disabilities. Written questionnaires were completed by fathers (n=85) and mothers (n=101) of children using rehabilitation facilities between infancy and 5 years of age. The survey contained multiple-choice questions on four categories: information support (6 items), emotional support (7 items), evaluation support (3 items), and daily living support (3 items). Regarding information support, fathers answered 'spouse' as the provider in over 50% of cases for all 6 items, which was significantly different compared with mothers (all $p < 0.001$). For emotional support, fathers were significantly more likely to get support from the workplace ($p < 0.001$) and from spouse ($p < 0.001$). The 'evaluation support' did not have significant differences for fathers in all the items, but the most frequent support providers were 'spouses'. 'Daily living support' was significantly different from fathers in the workplace ($p < 0.000$) in terms of make allowances for work and duties. Thus, it appeared that fathers had fewer social support sources as compared with mothers and limited non-spouse support. The understanding of developmental disabilities, acquisition of methods of rehabilitation, and sources of support might have been inadequately addressed among fathers, which could be a hindrance to the involvement of fathers in the rearing of children with developmental disabilities. On the other hand, we also observed that some fathers were involved in the care of developmentally troubled children while providing mental support for their spouse, cooperating with housework, and adjusting their work life. However, the results on the external and social backgrounds of fathers indicated a necessity for greater empowerment and peer support to improve the paternal care of children with developmental disabilities in the family survey.

Keywords : children with developmental disabilities, family support, father, social support

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