

Factors Influencing Paternal Involvement in Childcare: Empirical Evidence from Rural India

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Abstract : By using the baseline data of a randomized cluster trial aiming to understand the effects of social, technological and business innovation on child development in two districts of Tamil Nadu, India, we examine the determinants of father involvement in childcare. While there is a growing literature on the role of fathers in child development and family systems, we particularly look at the effect of the attitude of mother and father towards father's involvement in childcare in rural South India. We find that father's own attitude and the mother's gatekeeping attitude significantly affect the father's behavior when other socio-economic characteristics of the parents are controlled. Further, the results are corroborated using different empirical models in which father involvement is conceptualized into three categories broadly; play, caretaking, and affection. We also examine the other socio-economic characteristics affecting paternal involvement using both quantitative and qualitative methods. For instance, child characteristics such as the age and birth order have a significant influence on the level of paternal involvement. That is, older the child, the more involved the father is and the father gets more involved in childcare of the second child as compared to the first child. The participants of the study included 1516 children of age 0 to 22 months from 1476 households. Results indicate that fathers of households where the mother and the father have less traditional attitude exhibit a higher level of involvement in childcare as opposed to parents having a more traditional attitude towards gender role in parenting. The results of this paper provide a major policy lesson aiming to improve paternal involvement in childcare.

Keywords : child development, father involvement, gender, parent's attitude towards paternal involvement

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