



FATHER INVOLVEMENT IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

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Father Involvement in Child Development and Learning

Mothers and fathers play an essential role in children's development and learning. Father's participation in child's learning and development process changed over time. In the past, fathers were less involved in their children's lives. However, with women's increased involvement in work life and changes in gender roles, parenting roles within the family also changed. Therefore, the



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traditional definition of the father role switched. Research indicates that although there are regional differences, fathers spend more time with their children due to fathers' changing roles. Research shows that fathers take more responsibility for their children (Kuzucu, 2011). Father's education level, income status, perspective on gender roles, self-esteem, and self-control affect their participation in child-rearing (Uludağlı, 2017). The qualified time between father and child is positively associated with children's social, emotional, and cognitive development (Dubowitz et al., 2011). For example, research demonstrates that children who spend more time and have a warm relationship with their fathers have higher cognitive skills and school success (Rollè et al., 2019). Moreover, children securely attached to their fathers have fewer emotional problems (de Minzi, 2010).

Cognitive and Social Development

Young children interact with the world by playing. They explore the real world that is unknown to them through imitating adult roles in their plays. Sometimes, adults or their peers accompanying them in these games. Children's emotional and cognitive skills as well as their imaginations, are strengthened thanks to games (Ginsburg, 2007).



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Children learn the shared meanings of words through symbolic games in which children imitate the real world, which is called "pretend play" (Kızıldere et al., 2020). Fathers and mothers who play games with their children contribute to their children's development. Studies indicate that

the fathers' warm behaviors and positive attitudes while playing with their children support children's cognitive development and academic performance (Coley et al., 2011).

Dubovitz et al. (2001) asked six-year-old children the quality and quantity of time they spend with their fathers in daily life. According to results, if the quality and quantity (e.g., educational activities) of time spent with their father is high, children have better cognitive abilities. Another research indicated children who spend more and qualified time with their fathers are more accepted by their peers, have strong social relationships, and show fewer depression symptoms (Cano et al., 2019).

The Role of Fathers in Child's Psychological Well-Being

The behaviors expected from fathers differ from culture to culture and shape the children's expectations from their fathers. However, many studies agreed that children show fewer emotional problems and psychological disturbances when their fathers have warm behaviors (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004; Tandon vd., 2014). This situation is explained by the fact that parents contribute equally to the development of the child. On the other hand, positive paternal behaviors may be a buffer against negative maternal behaviors children are exposed. (Li & Meier, 2017). As a result, the time spent with the father and the quality of this time is highly correlated with children's psychological well-being (Wilson and Prior, 2011).

Games for Fathers and Children



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Rough-and-Tumble Play

Rough-and-tumble play has an important role on father and child interaction (StGeorge & Freeman, 2017). Rough-and-tumble play (RTP) includes fighting, chasing, tumbling, kicking, and boxing. For instance, fathers toss children into the high and grab them. These physical games played under the father's control, enable children to learn how to react in unusual situations. Children feel safe in these games because of the emotional bonds with their fathers. Besides, this game is frequently played between fathers and children in

preschool periods when children's self-regulation skills develop. Studies show a positive relationship between physical games and self-regulation skills (Paquette, 2004; Diamond, 2013; StGeorge & Freeman, 2017). However, if the child feels stressed, it is recommended to play relaxing games instead of rough-and-tumble play (Paquette, 2004).

The Game Factory Program

The Game Factory Program is a game program that includes several games, helps children discover their own skills, and increases their positive social behaviors. Children's analyzing and controlling skills can be improved through playing game factory games. Although these games are usually play in the classroom, children who cannot go to school due to pandemic may have fun with their parents by playing these games. The time ball game is a good example. In the home environment, everyone is standing and throwing balls at each other. Before the ball touches the ground, everyone must take turns kicking the ball and sitting. The purpose of the game is to get everyone seated without dropping the ball on the ground. This game requires strong communication, concentration, and eye contact (Street et al., 2004). Thanks to this game, children can spend quality time both with their fathers and in a family environment.



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Finally, the father's active and supportive contributions to children's developmental processes positively affect children's development in many ways. The bond between father and the child is not only related to the current well-being of the child but also it is important for their future life. For this reason, father involvement in child development is important (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003).

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