

The effects of psychological variables of father's role on parenting participation

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The purpose of this study is to examine how father's psychological variable of role awareness affects parenting participation. Data were collected by the survey in fathers of 363 children in public kindergartens and national/public and private nurseries and analyzed by using multiple regression analysis. The results showed that fathers perceiving their role of educating (for cognitive development, social skills, and physical health) and of meeting the needs (needs for health protection, and emotional needs) participated actively in parenting and that those

perceiving their role of meeting the needs for food, clothing, and shelter participated passively in parenting. On the basis of these results, strategic and practical implications were given to induce fathers to participate more actively in parenting.

Keywords: Father, Role awareness, Parenting participation, Psychological variable

INTRODUCTION

The dichotomous idea that fathers should take a role of a breadwinner and mothers should take principal responsibility for child-rearing has traditionally dominated in the Korean society. At the approach of the industrial society, however, there was an increasing demand for fathers' participating jointly in child-rearing with the changed family structure, the smaller number of children, more dual-income families, and the rise of the idea of feminism (Kim, 2005). In such a rapidly changing modern society, a shift into sharing and division of duties within family rather than the traditional gender role division based on patriarchal ideology. In other words, fathers are expected to take a developed and changed role in the position of co-parenting, instead of being a helper, as their children make growth and development (Cabrera et al., 2000).

In this context, the demand for the new gender system of child-rearing emphasizes fathers' role as an important variable to solve such problems as inequality for women and the vacuum of care and leads to discussion concerning the definition and role of fa-

thers' child-rearing (Yee et al., 1999). Besides, research on fathers' image or on development of a child-rearing scale (Cho and Choi, 2004) and analysis of relations between fathers' parenting participation and child development (Moon and Seol, 2006) have been underway.

Such a paradigm shift caused this society to prefer a kind and friendly father to the one standing on his patriarchal authority and giving a sense of distance. Man's positive fathering not only exerts positive effects on many types of developments of his children and induces his spouse to be more satisfied with family life but also has positive significance on his own development in adulthood (Hwang, 2005). In particular, the fact that fathers are offered an opportunity to reduce negative feelings from their work by family life reconfirms that in addition to work life, family life is indeed important and meaningful to them. Indeed, Cho and Han (2001) who conducted a research in fathers reported that the greater degree of role performance induced fathers to have a greater sense of psychological welfare.

It is well known that fathers' personal parenting participation

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facilitates young children's emotional and social development and allows their children to improve their cognitive skills and get less sexually-fixed attitude (Radin, 1981). In fact, fathers' participation in child-rearing also contributes to their sense of competence: fathers participating more actively in child-rearing showed good relationship with their children and tended to perceive themselves to be able parents with increasing confidence and satisfaction (Lee, 2003).

In this situation, one of the most important and fundamental factors in becoming 'parenting father' as demanded by the times is awareness of the role felt about child-rearing by fathers themselves. That is, fathers who first become aware of the role of child-rearing become more active in participatory actions. As a different concept from a simple sense, 'awareness' can mean the 'subjective world where elements of external environment reflected by senses are reconstructed according to one's own values in the personal mindset. Therefore it could be said that 'role awareness' in child-rearing by fathers is the very important element of child-rearing since fathers can make participatory actions more specifically in terms of parenting attitude after they become aware of the role of child-rearing (Parke and Sawin, 1980). Awareness of parenting pattern by father is one of father's psychological properties, which is principal variable affecting father's parenting participation. Fathers who become aware of the importance of the role of child-rearing can participate with more specific actions in terms of parenting attitude and practically perform parenting as perceived by them in terms of parenting participation. Fathers' awareness of their fathering role enables successful performance of fathering in child-rearing. In other words, since the subjective factor of 'awareness' serves to drive forward specific actions, fathers' awareness of the role of child-rearing directly affects their participatory actions.

However, the existing studies on fathers mainly deal with the effects of actual parenting time and parenting pattern of fathers on development of their children, with researchers reporting contradictory results (Hwang, 2004; Kim et al., 2009). These studies contributed to valuing the importance of fathers' role but made less consideration of such internal factors as personal awareness, perception, and belief, which motivate actions necessary to perform duties.

Several Western studies showed that father's psychological properties significantly affect their parenting practice (Dudson, 1975; Parke, 1996; Parke and Sawin, 1980; 1998). Other studies supporting this view suggest motivation to participate in parenting, practical parenting skills, social support and network including mother's employment properties and marital dynamics, institu-

tional factors, and customs as variables affecting father's parenting participation (Lamb, 1987; Pleck, 1997; Yee, 2008).

To sum up, factors of role awareness and role action are mutually complementary as a whole, and father's role awareness is regarded as an important variable of parenting participation (Son and Yoon, 2011). However, while emphasis is put on the importance of father's role awareness, few discussions have been made about how the content of role awareness determines parenting participation behavior.

Therefore, this study aims to examine how father's role awareness affects parenting participation among fathers of young children with the greatest need for care. The results of this study will suggest the desirable fathering role in child-rearing and provide basic data for devising a way to induce positive parenting participation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research model

This study aimed to explore how role awareness among fathers of young children affected their practical parenting participation. To do this, with socio-demographic variables controlled, an attempt was made to see the effects of the independent variable of father's role awareness on the dependent variable of parenting participation.

Operational definition of variables and measuring instrument

Independent variable

In this study, the independent variable of father's role awareness refers to role responsibility perceived by father within the general cultural framework and has sub-factors, such as teaching in performing the role of an educator and the role of meeting basic needs.

Role awareness was measured by using the abridged Perceptions of Parental Role Scale manufactured by Gilbert and Hanson. This scale had a total of 20 questions with Cronbach's Alpha of 0.913.

Dependent variable

The dependent variable of father's parenting participation refers to how well father participates in child-rearing in daily life. Parenting participation comprised such factors as leisure activities, living guidance, household work, and learning guidance. Each has the 5-point scale, with 4 points or more in each question showing positive parenting participation. Parenting participation, which was the measuring instrument for the dependent variable, had high

reliability of 0.94 as analyzed by Cronbach's α coefficient.

Control variables

The control variables in this study are socio-demographic factors, including basic facts about fathers.

Data collection and analysis

In this study, a survey was conducted in 363 fathers of children 3-5 yr old residing in Seoul, Gyeonggi Province, and Incheon.

The directors of national/public and private nurseries and public kindergartens were asked a favor in advance to distribute a total of 450 questionnaires to fathers in those facilities willing to participate in this study in February 2013; ultimately, a total of 363 copies were used in the final analysis, excepting those with poor responses. Data collected in this study were analyzed by using an SPSS 12.0 program, along with descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis.

Table 1. Respondents' socio-demographic characteristics (N = 363)

Division	Content	Frequency (persons)	%
Age (yr)	-30	3	0.8
	31-35	56	15.4
	36-40	184	50.7
	41-45	86	23.7
	46-50	24	6.6
	51	10	2.8
Education	Middle school	1	0.3
	High school	60	16.5
	College	71	19.6
	University	152	41.9
	Graduate school or higher	79	21.8
Spouse's employment status	Unemployed	103	28.4
	Part-time job	63	17.4
	Full-time job	197	54.3
Occupation	Manual labor	7	1.9
	Production	4	1.1
	Office work & technician	149	41.0
	Sales	49	13.5
	Management specialist	109	30.0
	Others	45	12.4
Monthly income (less than)	1 million won	3	0.8
	2 million won	17	4.7
	3 million won	69	19.0
	4 million won	85	23.4
	4 million or more won	189	52.1
Working hours	5 or less	3	0.8
	6-8	27	7.4
	8-10	211	58.1
	10 or more	122	33.6

RESULTS

Respondents' socio-demographic characteristics

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in this study are shown in Table 1. As for age distribution, those of 40 or younger got the highest percentage (50.7%), followed by 45 or younger (23.7%), 35 or younger (15.4%), 50 or younger (6.6%), and 51 or older (2.8%). University graduates got the highest percentage (41.9%), and the largest number of spouses had full-time job (28.4%) or were unemployed (28.4%), followed by having part-time job (17.4%). They were mostly office workers or technicians (41%), and the total household income of 4 million won or more got the highest percentage (52.1%), followed by less than 4 million won (23.4%) and less than 3 million won (19%). Most of them worked less 10 h (58.1%), followed by 10 h or more (33.6%), less than 8 h (7.4%), and 5 h or less (0.8%).

Levels of role awareness and parenting participation

Levels of father's role awareness

Father's role awareness had two sub-factors—awareness of the role of teaching and awareness of the role of meeting the basic needs—which were measured by the 5-point scale as shown in Table 2. As a result, awareness of the role of teaching got 4.27 points and awareness of the role of meeting the basic needs got 4.39 points, with both being higher than the median of 3 points. This doesn't agree with the result of the prior research that parents are more aware of the role of educating (Kim, 2002) but demonstrates that fathers of young children place greater stress on meeting general needs in daily life rather than educating in terms of infancy development tasks.

Levels of father's parenting participation

Descriptive statistics of father's parenting participation are shown

Table 2. Levels of father's role awareness (N = 363)

	Item	M	SD
Role of educating	Cognitive development	3.97	0.638
	Social skills	4.31	0.555
	Emotional treatment	4.36	0.549
	Physical health	4.23	0.567
	Social standard and value	4.48	0.528
	Personal hygiene	4.29	0.674
	Average role of teaching	4.27	0.585
Role of meeting needs	Health protection	4.20	0.636
	Food, clothing, and shelter	4.41	0.548
	Young children's emotional needs	4.49	0.511
	Protection of young children	4.45	0.554
	Average role of meeting needs	4.39	0.562

in Table 3. Father's parenting participation had such sub-dimensions as leisure activities, living guidance, household work, learning guidance, which were measured by the 5-point scale, with greater points being a higher level of parenting participation.

The mean of general parenting participation was 3.29, higher than the median of 3, and parenting participation was mostly shown in living guidance, followed by leisure activities and household work. This is not so different from the results of the existing studies (Kim, 2011; Lee, 2011). However, fathers in this study were relatively less involved in learning guidance, probably due to their children being preschoolers, not being of the school age, on the basis of Kim's (1997b) result that the degree of role awareness depends on children's age.

Correlation between principal variables

Correlation analysis was carried out to see the effects of father's role awareness on parenting participation and determine multicollinearity between independent variables as shown in Table 4. All the sub-factors of role awareness were variables significantly related to father's parenting participation, with correlation coefficient of 0.08 in general, having low possibility of multicollinearity between independent variables.

Table 3. Levels of father's parenting participation (N = 363)

Sub-factor	M	SD
Leisure activities	3.49	0.664
Living guidance	3.57	0.622
Household work	3.15	0.869
Learning guidance	2.96	0.693
Mean	3.29	0.576

Table 4. Relations between role awareness and parenting participation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Cognitive development	1										
2. Social skills	0.584*	1									
3. Emotional treatment	0.460*	0.757*	1								
4. Physical health	0.703*	0.621*	0.612*	1							
5. Standard & value	0.444*	0.701*	0.769*	0.578*	1						
6. Personal hygiene	0.615*	0.539*	0.621*	0.630*	0.548*	1					
7. Health protection	0.518*	0.680*	0.659*	0.626*	0.695*	0.600*	1				
8. Food, clothing, & shelter	0.574*	0.723*	0.623*	0.495*	0.680*	0.523*	0.680*	1			
9. Emotional needs	0.429*	0.724*	0.720*	0.533*	0.795*	0.531*	0.778*	0.694*	1		
10. Protection of young children	0.495*	0.784*	0.747*	0.567*	0.798*	0.641*	0.766*	0.736*	0.793*	1	
11. Parenting participation	0.435*	0.512*	0.442*	0.499*	0.498*	0.343*	0.533*	0.379*	0.525*	0.469*	1

* $P < 0.001$.

Effects of role awareness on parenting participation

Cognitive development ($\beta = 0.18, P < 0.05$), social skills ($\beta = 0.22, P < 0.05$), and physical health ($\beta = 0.16, P < 0.05$) in role awareness for educating were found to have statistically significant effects on parenting participation, and meeting the need of health protection ($\beta = 0.23, P < 0.01$), meeting emotional needs ($\beta = 0.26, P < 0.01$), and providing food, clothing, and shelter ($\beta = -0.22, P < 0.01$) in role awareness for meeting the basic needs were shown to have statistically significant effects on parenting participation (Table 5).

This result demonstrates that the content of father's role awareness determines the degree of effects on parenting participation in

Table 5. Effects of father's role awareness on parenting participation

Variable	Model			
	B	β		
Control variable	Age	0.01	0.01	
	Education	-0.01	-0.01	
	Spouse's employment	0.03	0.05	
	Occupation	-0.02	-0.05	
	Average monthly income	0.01	0.01	
	Working hours	-0.07	-0.07	
Independent variable	Educating	Cognitive development	0.16	0.18*
		Social skills	0.23	0.22*
		Emotional treatment	-0.13	-0.13
		Physical health	0.16	0.16*
		Standard & value	0.12	0.11
	Meeting needs	Hygiene	-0.10	-0.12
		Health protection	0.21	0.23**
		Food, clothing, & shelter	-0.23	-0.22**
		Emotional needs	0.29	0.26**
		Protection of young children	-.03	-.03
R ²			.38	
F			23.06***	

* $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$.

support of the prior research (Parke and Sawin, 1998) that role awareness serves as an important element in behavior of participating in child-rearing.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze how father's role awareness affects parenting participation, obtaining the following results: First of all, fathers were most actively involved in living guidance for their children, whereas they were relatively less involved in learning guidance. They were more aware of the role of educating than that of meeting needs, and the effects on parenting participation depended on the content of father's role awareness. In agreement with the result that fathers perceiving their role participate in child-rearing with more specific actions (Parke and Sawin, 1980), father's role awareness is a very important variable in parenting participation. In particular, intervention to help fathers become aware of the role of teaching for cognitive development, social skills, and physical health and get role awareness for health protection, meeting emotional needs, and offering food, clothing, and shelter, which were found to have statistically significant effects on parenting participation, is expected to allow them to perform their parenting role more effectively. To do this, it is necessary to increase the number of father's role education programs and provide practical contents.

Secondly, father's parenting participation is now becoming an important issue, along with discussions about the reconciliation between work and family life, in the Korean society. Therefore great efforts are being made to refine and use the system of supporting performance of parenting role within workplace; in particular, there are reports on discussions about reduction of working hours to support father's parenting participation (Kwon and Lee, 2009; Son and Yoon, 2011), introduction of paid maternity leave for male spouse, and use of paternity leave. Such an institutional approach can be a very encouraging attempt in that it promotes father's parenting participation; however, discussion about what role fathers should perform in practice and what should precede participation in child-rearing is still at standstill. The result that father's perception of his role of offering food, clothing, and shelter negatively affects his parenting participation can exemplify the need for father to get a new perception of his role, instead of the traditional role of a breadwinner. Thus, it is necessary to distribute more education programs about father's role along with the existing institutional approach and increase their accessibility so that fathers in workplace or in the community can participate

in them. In short, parental education is a way to help fathers look at their role from various views. Also, national campaigns can be planned for such changes to come, at the same time, community work is also essential to bring changes at local level. These efforts are necessary to help and support fathers in finding their role in child rearing and could be helpful to change social attitudes towards gender stereotyping.

In particular, on the basis of the results, it is necessary to diversify those education programs so that they can perform the role of teaching for cognitive development, social skills, and physical health and provide long-term, systematic education about father's role so that they can become aware of their role of offering health protection and meeting emotional needs. The enlargement of these programs will serve as an important element in allowing fathers to become aware of their role and, furthermore, become a mechanism that can induce fathers to participate more actively in parenting in daily life.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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