




Fathers' Involvement in Child Rearing: Psychological Outcomes for Children

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The introduction provides a thorough overview of the increasing recognition of fathers' roles in child-rearing. However, the opening sentence could be clearer by specifying the "recent decades" in terms of time, as this is somewhat vague. For example, stating "over the past 30 years" would help readers better contextualize the timeframe for this shift in perception. Furthermore, the reference to Nili Ahadabadi et al. (2019) should be revisited, as the citation format is inconsistent with others in the introduction (i.e., year placement within parentheses). A more uniform citation style should be adopted.

The discussion of paternal mental health as a critical influence on child development is compelling. However, the sentence "Fathers experiencing mental health issues, such as depression or anxiety, are at a higher risk of exhibiting less positive parenting behaviors..." would benefit from specific examples or studies that illustrate how mental health issues manifest in paternal behaviors. Including a concrete example would enhance clarity. For example, citing how depression in fathers may lead to reduced emotional responsiveness or involvement in child-rearing would strengthen the argument.

The section discussing socio-cultural factors influencing fatherhood in Iran is insightful. However, the mention of Tehran as a unique socio-cultural environment warrants further clarification. It would be beneficial to briefly elaborate on how Tehran's socio-cultural context differs from other regions in Iran, particularly in terms of paternal roles. A comparison between urban

and rural areas, or specific cultural practices in Tehran that influence paternal involvement, would enhance the reader's understanding of this unique setting.

The description of participant recruitment and demographics is comprehensive. However, the study could benefit from a more explicit justification for selecting the age range of 5 to 12 years. While this is described as a critical developmental stage, providing a reference or rationale for why this age range is particularly relevant to psychological outcomes in children would strengthen the methodological clarity.

The demographic breakdown is informative, but the report lacks a discussion of how these demographics might influence the findings. For instance, how might the educational level, occupational status, or family structure of the participants affect their level of involvement in child-rearing or the psychological outcomes observed? It would be helpful to provide a brief reflection on how these variables might interact with the themes identified.

Table 1 offers a valuable summary of key categories and concepts, but there appears to be some overlap between subcategories. For example, "Emotional Support" and "Support for Mothers" could be combined or redefined to avoid redundancy. A more concise grouping of the categories would improve the readability and coherence of the table.

The finding that "higher levels of paternal involvement were found to be associated with improved emotional regulation and lower incidences of internalizing behaviors in children" is important, but it would be helpful to specify the nature of the relationship (e.g., moderate, strong). Furthermore, how were these relationships measured? Providing additional detail on how emotional regulation and internalizing behaviors were quantified would provide more transparency.

The conclusion that "higher levels of paternal involvement were found to be associated with improved emotional regulation and lower incidences of internalizing behaviors" is valid, but this claim would be more robust if the discussion included specific statistical findings, such as effect sizes or confidence intervals. Quantifying the relationship would lend further credibility to the findings.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The claim that "a lack of paternal engagement is linked to negative outcomes" needs more robust evidence from the cited references. For example, while Fitzsimons & Villadsen (2019) and Wickersham et al. (2020) are mentioned, there is no discussion of the specific types of studies they conducted (e.g., longitudinal, cross-sectional). To enhance the argument, please clarify how these studies contribute to the evidence base on the link between paternal disengagement and child outcomes. Additionally, consider expanding on the reference to "gender norms," providing a more in-depth analysis of how these norms have evolved and their impact on paternal roles.

The sentence "This dual role of fatherhood, contributing to both child and family health, underlines the significance of including fathers as equal partners in the parenting process" is strong, but could be improved by specifying what "equal partners" means in practice. Does this imply shared caregiving, equal decision-making power, or emotional support? Providing concrete examples or referencing studies that highlight these aspects of equal partnership would increase the depth of the argument.

The description of the semi-structured interview approach is clear, but the data collection section would benefit from a mention of the interviewers' qualifications. Were the interviewers trained in qualitative data collection techniques? Clarifying this point would provide readers with confidence in the reliability and consistency of the data collection process. Additionally, the sentence "All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim" could specify whether any measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants' responses.

While the data analysis section provides a clear overview of the approach, it would be helpful to provide a brief explanation of how the NVivo software was specifically used. Did the software aid in categorizing themes, or was it used to code individual words or phrases? More detail on the use of NVivo will allow readers to better understand the analytical process. Also, it would

be useful to mention the specific approach to "theoretical saturation"—what criteria were used to determine when this was achieved?

The discussion of paternal mental health influencing child outcomes is compelling but could be enhanced by discussing possible mechanisms. For example, how might paternal depression or anxiety directly affect parenting behaviors (e.g., less warmth, greater irritability)? Including potential mechanisms would provide a more complete understanding of how paternal mental health impacts children.

The statement that "the quality, rather than the quantity, of paternal involvement" is more important is valuable, but it would be strengthened by referencing specific studies that support this claim. For example, studies that examine the impact of emotional attunement versus physical presence would be useful here. Including these references would provide empirical backing for the argument.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.