

Research on Child-Rearing Support for Fathers Required from Nursery school Childcare Workers

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Abstract

This study aimed to clarify the type of parenting support required by day care center nursery staff for fathers whose children are enrolled in these centers. In this study, ten fathers who met the selection criteria were interviewed, and their data were analyzed using the systematic cause analysis technique. The storylines were divided into “support for raising one’s own child,” “provision of knowledge about children,” “opportunities for socialization among parents,” and “support tailored to individual needs.” Although fathers saw day care centers as child-rearing centers, other facilities were not deemed social resources for fathers’ child-rearing support. Therefore, day care centers and childcare providers must create an environment conducive enough for fathers to feel comfortable approaching them as a social resource regarding child-rearing support. In light of the aforementioned, day care center nursery providers must foster a climate where fathers feel comfortable approaching them for social support. In doing so, it became clear that the social work principle of intervening at the point of contact where people and the environment interact and providing support based on individualization as well as providing specific support, such as childcare workers, should be involved in a way that fathers feel they can consult with them.

Keywords

fathers; childcare support; childcare worker, stress, daycare centers



I. Introduction

There are five reasons for this theme.

First, fathers are increasingly expected to participate in housework and child-rearing. However, this was not always the case: women have been responsible for housework and child-rearing in Japan since the Meiji era (1868–1912). We witnessed a paradigm shift when rapid economic growth promoted the division of labor between the sexes. Therefore, since the “Ikumen Project” in 2010, fathers have been socially expected to participate in child-rearing and housework.

Second, while fathers are becoming more involved in housework and child-rearing responsibilities, both mothers and fathers appear to be affected by child-rearing stress.

Third, child-rearing support for fathers in Japan cannot be considered adequate. Recently, long working hours and various work styles have left them with less time for child-rearing and housework. They desire to be involved in child-rearing but find it difficult to do so and feel they have few people or places to turn to for advice.

Fourth, childcare center childcare workers have recently been asked to provide more childcare support. Childcare Center Childcare Guidelines were revised in 2018, and childcare centers are now required to provide childcare support to parents.

Fifth, we have little research on father-focused child-rearing support in day care centers. While new findings have been accumulated in research on child-rearing support for fathers, we still do not have much research on child-rearing support for fathers from day care centers, which are familiar facilities.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Definition of “Information”

Recent initiatives like the “Ikumen Project” provide context for this study. Additionally, as societal norms shift, fathers are increasingly expected to participate in housework and childcare, with fathers becoming more involved in housework and childcare than before. However, the childrearing-related stress affecting both mothers and fathers has become clear in recent years. However, determining whether fathers have sufficient child-rearing support remains unclear.

Although fathers seek people and secure environments where they feel comfortable discussing their child-rearing-related issues, some clearly do not have anyone or a place to turn to for support. They do not feel welcome in local parks or child-rearing support facilities (Benesse Institute for Educational Research, 2015). Given this situation, when fathers take their children to and from daycare, they have the opportunity to interact with daycare workers, nursery staff could provide fathers with additional childcare support.

The definition of “childcare support” is based on the Childcare Center Childcare Guidelines (2017), “Chapter 4: Childcare Support,” and includes (1) mutual understanding between parents and caregivers, (2) improvement of fathers’ ability to practice childcare, and (3) support tailored to individual needs to meet their diverse needs. The term “childcare support” will be used to describe activities with parents and their involvement at childcare centers.

2.2 Second Academic Discussion

a. Current Status of Fathers’ Parenting

A survey conducted by Funabashi et al. (2012) on men aged 25–49 regarding their occupational status, daily awareness, and views on marriage and family revealed that 73.4% of the respondents “want to be equally involved in child rearing and their occupation,” and 18.3% “want to prioritize their occupation over child-rearing,” indicating that men’s awareness of child-rearing fulfillment was greater than expected. These statistics indicate that men have become more conscious of their desire to be involved in child-rearing in recent years.

According to a questionnaire survey of fathers with infants aged 0-3 years by Yanagihara (2007), 73.1% of fathers answered “often” and “sometimes” together for their participation in child-rearing, and 38.8% answered “often” and “sometimes” together for their participation in household chores. As for the “content that fathers would like to discuss,” 48.5% said they found “children’s mind/behavior,” 17.9% “children’s illnesses,” and 11.9% “wife’s problems with childcare. And as “someone to talk to about child-rearing,” 66.7% of fathers cited their wives, and 41.2% also cited their wives as “a way to obtain child-rearing knowledge,” with “my own parents” next at 14.9%, indicating that “my wife” has a significant influence. However, fathers’ involvement in child-rearing causes them stress.

The highest emotion felt by fathers in response to childrearing stress items was “anxiety, fear, worry” at 41.7%, followed by “anger, frustration” at 40.0%, “tiredness” at

12.8%, "sadness/numbness" at 8.3%, and "frustration" at 5.4%, indicating that fathers are stressed about childrearing. A survey of fathers' stress in childrearing shows that fathers are stressed out about childrearing (Shimizu 2006).

b. Current Status of Childcare Support for Fathers in the Region

Let us first look at child-rearing support centers to examine the current status of local child-rearing support for fathers. In a survey of fathers and mothers who used child-rearing support centers, 40.1% of mothers reported interacting with people they met at child-rearing support centers. In comparison, only 9.3% of fathers reported doing so. The survey revealed that fathers come to child-rearing support centers for three main reasons: (a) to lighten the load on mothers by taking on some of the child-rearing duties themselves, (b) to provide their children with a safe place close to home, and (c) to learn about their children (Suzuki 2011).

According to a survey by Kozaki (2011) on fathers' support programs at child-rearing support centers, the most common number of fathers per month at each center was "1 to 5" at 43.5%, followed by "6 to 10" at 8.4% and "11 to 20" at 7.8%. Nine percent of the childcare support centers have programs for fathers, whereas 75% "do not," and when "plan to" and "had in the past" are combined, 90% of childcare support centers do not have programs for fathers. The most common program implementation frequency was "once a year" (32%), indicating that child-rearing support centers are less likely to recognize fathers as users.

Next, in the children's halls, there is a desire for the men's restroom to be maintained so that children can be taken to the men's restroom. In addition, a survey conducted by Masada et al. (2016) of children's centers in Sugunami Ward revealed that some respondents felt that "men should enter the nursing room," "they are concerned about male participation," and "men should not participate in the program," among other sentiments, as they were perplexed by the entry of men into the previously female-dominated childcare setting.

Fathers are becoming more involved in child-rearing but are also facing child-rearing-related stress, highlighting the challenges faced by fathers in receiving local child-rearing support.

2.3 Childcare Support For Fathers in Day Care Centers

Tatsumi (2018) noted, with regard to the childcare support provided by childcare professionals, that parents with no experience in child-rearing often rely on advice from childcare professionals and other childcare support specialists, and this guidance has a substantial impact. According to Tanabe (2017), day care centers are a significant asset in providing child-rearing support to fathers because they allow fathers to connect with their supporters and discuss issues related to their children. He also stated that fathers are expected to take delight in watching their children grow up and enjoy the child-rearing duties.

Thus, the effect of the childcare support provided by childcare workers on the fathers is significantly clear; this support is expected of them. The definition of childcare workers under the Child Welfare Law also defines the role of childcare workers as "childcare of children" and "guidance regarding childcare for guardians of children. Moreover, the Day care Center Childcare Guidelines (2017) mandate that the role of day care centers is to provide "childcare support for parents using day care centers" and "childcare support for local parents, etc." The Day care Center Childcare Guidelines Commentary (2018) also emphasizes the necessity of supporting knowledge and skills, such as social work and counseling, as appropriate to the situation.

Support for parents can be divided into two categories: the kind that occurs in everyday situations and the one reserved for specific occasions. The direct means were (1) correspondence at pick-up and drop-off, (2) individual notebooks, (3) class notebooks, (4) class newsletters, and (5) events, whereas the indirect means were (1) interactions with children in childcare situations, (2) postings (exhibits), and (3) configuration of the room environment (Nishimura 2016). The consolidation of prior research has revealed a wide range of issues when providing child-rearing support to fathers in the community. Therefore, we believe that identifying the child-rearing support sought by fathers and examining the support that day care center nursery workers can provide will result in an environment and society that makes it easier for fathers to raise their children.

III. Research Method

3.1 Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to determine the type of parenting support required by day care center nursery staff for fathers whose children are enrolled in day care centers.

3.2 Analysis Perspective

The four perspectives analyzed in this study are as follows:

1. Support for child-rearing,
2. Provision of knowledge about their children,
3. Opportunities for socialization among parents, and
4. Support for their individual needs.

3.3 Research Methods

Ten survey collaborators who met the following criteria were selected: 1) they were fathers, 2) their children were enrolled in day care centers, and 3) they were dual-earner families (including part-time and part-time non-regular employees). The survey collaborators were secured using the kinship method, and the day care center director was asked to select parents to participate in the survey. The survey consisted of interviews conducted through individual semi-structured interviews lasting 60–90 minutes and recorded with an IC recorder. The data obtained were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using SCAT. This survey was conducted after obtaining approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Graduate School of Life Design at Toyo University.

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1 Results

The following four points were identified as the child-rearing support sought by the fathers. First, they lacked the foundational relationship with day care workers necessary to ask questions or seek guidance about their own child-rearing, but as their relationship with those workers developed through accumulation of daily interactions with them, they were able to do so. In addition, when the day care provider mentioned the child's status during pick-up and drop-off, they saw it as an opportunity to consult with the childcare worker. Some fathers hesitated to inquire because of the confusion regarding when to consult with childcare workers. Therefore, a specialist mechanism is required.

Second, exposing fathers to the work of childcare workers in action helped them put what they learned into practice with their own children, which led to an improvement in fathers' ability to practice child-rearing. In addition, the fathers' ability to practice child-

rearing had improved based on what they had discovered about their children's growth at the daycare center when they returned home and from the productions they brought home with them. As for the support they were seeking, they wanted to observe their children at the daycare center because of their interest in their children's daily lives.

Third, many fathers expressed a desire to interact with other parents. Sharing information about their children was among the motivations for seeking interaction; they saw interactions with other parents as an opportunity to gain knowledge about their children and child-rearing. However, the lack of interaction among fathers was attributed to the absence of a coordinator. They also believed that mothers and children were the main actors in the day care center. They wanted opportunities to interact and feel as though they were the event's intended audience.

Fourth, the public must be made aware of the existence of a consultation service, mechanisms from specialists to make it easier to consult with them, and a contact book so that they can know how to contact them.

Other influences on fathers with regard to parenting came from their own childhood environment and from their own parents. Fathers also had concerns about their own children's development. However, fathers did not use any facilities other than day-care centers, and they perceived day-care centers as child-rearing centers for fathers.

4.2 Discussion

Fathers had problems raising their children but did not use facilities other than day care centers because of the large number of mothers and other reasons, suggesting that institutions other than day care centers do not function as social resources for fathers in raising their children. Therefore, day care centers and childcare workers are expected to function as social resources for fathers. Then, as specific support, first, the fathers should be involved so that they can determine when and where they can consult with the childcare workers; second, opportunities should be provided for them to see their children; third, opportunities should be provided for the parents to interact, led by childcare workers; fourth, the roles of childcare centers and the work of childcare workers should be established, and cooperation with other organizations as a consultation service should be provided.

Furthermore, the fathers in this study drew parenting inspiration from their parents. Factors such as working status are used to determine that mothers and fathers come from distinct child-rearing backgrounds. This knowledge necessitates an improved understanding of the fathers' characteristics and backgrounds to develop child-rearing support.

Therefore, child-rearing support is based on social work principles that focus on and intervene in the individualization and support of the person concerned, and social resources are required.

V. Conclusion

Childcare workers must strive to become a social resource for fathers, where they can easily consult with them and seek and provide individualized support. Childcare workers are expected to provide the type of support described by the four categories of particular support outlined above. Specifically, (1) Provide fathers with clear opportunities for consultation and judgmental involvement. (2) Provide fathers with time and opportunities to observe the children and the relationship between the child care staff and the children during pick-up and drop-off times and events. (3) Continuously make it known

that fathers are the target audience at events, etc., through daily interactions with fathers at pick-ups and drop-offs, and through contact sheets and notices. Provide opportunities, time, and programs for parent-teacher-led interactions. (4) Inform fathers about the role of the day-care center, the duties of the day-care staff, and how to use the liaison book at orientation meetings prior to admission. The day-care center should function as a consultation center and collaborate with other institutions.

This study's significance lies in its ability to identify what fathers seek from each of the four perspectives, which has provided childcare workers with crucial insights for providing the support fathers seek.

a. Future Issues

The first issue to be addressed in this study is the need to conduct a more detailed survey of the child-rearing support that day-care centers need to provide to fathers. Child-care workers should also be surveyed to determine what child-care support they can provide to fathers that meets the needs of fathers, based on the child-care support sought by fathers and the child-care support that day-care center nursery workers can provide.

Second, because this study took an overall view of the child-rearing support that day-care center nursery teachers should provide to fathers, it was not possible to conduct a survey limited to fathers of children with individual needs such as disabilities.

Therefore, future issues for this study include: (1) the need for more detailed research on the child-rearing support that day-care centers should provide to fathers, and (2) the need to examine the child-rearing support that day-care center nursery staff should provide to fathers of children with specific needs. We plan to continue to examine ways to provide support to fathers.

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