

# A Probe into the Influence of Father Participation on the Formation of Children's Gender Role

Lu Sen<sup>1, a</sup>, Lixia Liang<sup>2, b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School Of Political Science And Law University Of Jinan, Shandong 250022, China;

<sup>2</sup>School Of Political Science And Law University Of Jinan, Shandong 250022, China;

[a1329097809@qq.com](mailto:a1329097809@qq.com), [blxia76@163.com](mailto:blxia76@163.com)

**Keywords:** Father involvement, Gender roles, Child rearing.

**Abstract.** Traditionally, raising a family as one of the core identities of adult males is established by society. After the implementation of the comprehensive two-child policy, more and more fathers have noticed their important role in the development of their children in family education, that is, their influence on the gender of their children. The formation of the role plays an important role in its growth and even the development of life. The father influences the development of children's gender role cognition, personality and social belonging by participating in consciousness, parenting style, and caring companionship. Therefore, we should pay attention to the characteristics of fathers and children, create a good family atmosphere and attach importance to social support, so as to promote the correct formation of children's gender roles.

## 1. Introduction

"Do not teach, the father has passed", throughout the ages, parent-child relationship is considered to be an important factor in the formation of children's gender roles. After the Second World War, Many children face the pain of losing their father, which results in children's psychological problems. This phenomenon has led researchers to study the importance of the father's roles. In 1975, an article published by Lamb pointed out the importance between the fathers and children, the previously neglected research on fatherhood began to receive wide attention. In 1987, the US federal government held a national conference on children, which emphasized the importance of parenthood. Sex, and suggest changing policies that are not conducive to the father's irresponsibility to the child<sup>[1]</sup>. Empirical studies in western academic circles over the past 40 years have shown that the improvement of father's participation level has a significant impact on children's gender role cognition, personality ethics training, interpersonal relationship and social development. In the past ten years, domestic scholars have also begun to pay attention to the study of the role of fathers, and gradually become a hot pot of research, especially in the social division of labor and cultural norms of the division of roles in the traditional Chinese society "male and female, female", to explore the involvement of fathers in children. The impact of gender roles is important.

## 2. Literature review

As an important stage in the formation of children's gender roles, childhood has been influenced by various roles such as parents, teachers, and peers. However, the traditional concept of education is that mothers usually take on more educational responsibilities in the family, and fathers often neglect their functions and inadequate care for children, resulting in unbalanced family relationships. Father's care and education have an irreplaceable role in the child's life. Scholars at home and abroad mainly discuss the influence of father participation on the formation of children's gender roles from the following aspects.

### 2.1 Gender Role Theory

Gender roles refer to the process by which children develop gender perceptions and gender

behaviors that are similar to their physical gender<sup>[2]</sup>. Role theory holds that father and mother play different roles in establishing family relations. Father's participation in child education, child's gender role, gender behavior and gender socialization are significant. Usually, the father has a unique gender temperament that is different from the mother. For example, men have a more sunny, decisive, and adventurous personality. Children will imitate their father's character intentionally or unintentionally. Foreign studies have found that fathers who actively participate in the development of their children will have fewer school behavior problems in the future.

Psychoanalytic psychologist Freud once described his father as a protector and educator who had a profound influence on his future ideals. He believes that the relationship between father and child has an important influence on the child's future personality and social relations. The effects are manifested in childhood at the very beginning. In the stage of gender cognition, the boy will have "castration anxiety" because of the Oedipus complex, and the girl will also produce "Penis envy" because of the relationship between the father and the father<sup>[3]</sup>. In interaction with children, fathers tend to adopt more equal ways to actively encourage their children's attitudes and take more rigorous and dignified education in their children's behavior. This way of doing things enables children to distinguish different social meanings corresponding to different genders. The father's powerful role may be a contradiction of identity in the anxiety of same-sex parents.

## **2.2 Social learning theory**

The social learning theory of the behaviorist school believes that the acquisition of children's gender roles is formed through the role of the same gender parents. One is imitating the hypothesis that men imitate their fathers by following the example of their fathers. If their father is approachable, then this role model has a reinforcing effect on their father. Meng Yuqun, Song Xuewen pointed out that the family is an important place for children to learn role concepts, form role orientations, imitate role behaviors, and is the first source of gender socialization<sup>[4]</sup>. The child initially imitates the parents at home, and then imitates the behavior of other men and women, thus forming their own gender roles. Fathers provide a basic role model for men, and boys tend to see the father as the most realistic way to develop male identity in the future. "Model", the girl will take some of the father's qualities as a reference for future life, and inadvertently according to the father's standards to find the husband; the other is the compensation hypothesis, which holds that when the child grows into a father, after that, he will pay attention to the defects of the father-son relationship in his own growth experience, try to avoid these problems in his own life, so that he can become a more qualified father<sup>[5]</sup>.

## **2.3 Ecosystem theory**

In the perspective of family ecosystem theory, fathers' participation in parenting activities will not only be influenced by the internal factors of the wife, parents, etc., but also by external factors such as neighbors and colleagues. The ecological psychologist, Brown Brenner, proposed in 1979 that the ecological environment for child development consists of a number of nested systems that are directly or indirectly connected to children from micro to medium to macro<sup>[6]</sup>. The family and school are the most important living areas for children, which constitute the micro-system of children's growth. The inter-connection between micro-systems constitutes the intermediate system, while the family background of the parents, the level of education, and the way of social interaction constitute the external system.

Parenting, role recognition and support within the family play an important role in the formation of children's gender roles, but support outside the family is also an important factor. Psychology research shows that if the father adopts a different approach to parenting, he will be biased by social groups. In most societies, men are identified as family members, and if they are too involved in childcare, they will be influenced by neighbors or colleagues.

Therefore, in studying the role of fathers' participation in the development of children, it is necessary not only to make an analysis at the micro level, but also from a macro perspective,

including social culture, social support and social policies. Further put forward the father's participation in parenting and the way of parent-child interaction. The study focuses on the concept of parenting, cultural background and social support environment. Therefore, a broader research field has been obtained.

### **3. Father involvement in the formation of children's gender roles**

The father's involvement can directly or indirectly affect the child. Fathers' behaviour, attitudes and information directly affect children's perceptions of gender roles, including education, friendship, discipline and beatings; fathers' transmission to others and society has an indirect effect on children, such as financial support to the family. Both direct and indirect effects are equally important.

#### **3.1 Father's participation in the development of children's gender role identity**

Father and mother play different roles in the family, and play different roles in the development of children's gender role identity and the development of gender adaptation behavior. The most basic role of the father in the child growth stage is the playmate. The father's most important way of parenting is through the way of the game. By playing with the father, the child gradually gets rid of the dependence on the mother, arouses curiosity about the outside world, and encourages the child to explore the outside world, in order to cultivate children's courage, perseverance, self-confidence personality.

Father's gender behavior model is the fundamental guarantee for the development of children's gender development. In the game, the father strictly according to the gender role standard of the society requires the child, especially the son, to play the game that suits his gender, otherwise the punishment will be imposed<sup>[7]</sup>. In this way, by playing in simulated scenes, children can distinguish the social significance of different gender representatives and gain stable gender role cognition through the conscious reinforcement of fathers. In addition, children and fathers' game will produce psychological security, forming a strong psychological attachment to the father, this attachment can make children get rid of emotional disorders and avoid gender role cognitive disorders. And children tend to observe the behavior of their fathers and internalize them into their own knowledge of gender roles. Therefore, by providing safe attachment and punishing the gender behavior according to the social standards in the game, the father is the basis and motive force for the stable development of the child's gender role.

#### **3.2 The influence of father's participation on children's emotions and personality development**

From the moment of birth, a person realizes the transition from natural person to social person. Father is the most important person in children's life, the core of family, the earliest contact with children and the closest emotional connection. Father through parent-child communication to guide children, promote the healthy development of children's emotions and personality. Some studies have shown that the male role image of the father is closely related to the development of the female role of the daughter. For male fathers, their daughters are more likely to develop clearly feminine roles. In the process of getting along with the father, they can get a sense of love and security, learn to react appropriately to the opposite sex, and also get a reference from the father to the image of the opposite sex.

Foreign studies have found that if fathers are actively involved in the upbringing of children, these children will show fewer behavioral problems in school in the future. A doting father may make his child wayward, pampered, affect emotional development, be emotional, lack self-control, and show more negligent behavior. On the other hand, the father's excessive care can make the child lack of understanding of justice. As a result, they may appear to be domineering, unable to tolerate setbacks, and so on. High-penalty fathers make children feel wrong and unacceptable, leading to their frustration and gradually becoming withdrawn and depressed.

### **3.3 Father's participation in the formation of children's future marriage concept**

Children who enjoy more paternal love in childhood will have better social relations, marriage quality and extra family ties in middle age. The study found that the masculine character of boys was not obvious in the absence of fathers, but it was more obvious in negative personality traits such as inferiority complex and aggression. These personality traits affect not only the child's criteria for choosing a spouse, but also his future marriage relationship. The father's influence on the girl's view of marriage is even more profound.

The formation of girls' gender roles is related not only to the masculinity of fathers, but also to the father's praise for her imitation of her mother and her participation in female activities. This praise has a direct bearing on the demands of a girl's future marriage. When a girl enters puberty, she will regard her father as a close, even the most important emotional bond in her life. The father's behavior is the mirror of the girl.

### **3.4 Father's participation in the acquisition of children's sense of social belonging**

Children with correct gender roles can not only understand the social meaning of gender, but also acquire the gender behavior paradigm consistent with their own physiological characteristics. The gender behavior of this kind of children is accepted feedback because it is in line with the expectations of the society. Children who do not have the correct gender role because of their father's absence or lack of participation will be denied and rejected by social criteria because they do not meet the social expectations. Such children lose their social identity and are confused with their own cognition, fail to develop a sense of belonging and lack a sense of collective security in their society. The involvement of fathers in influencing children's sense of social belonging is also reflected in fathers' role models for children, father's words and deeds are the benchmark of early Childhood interaction with Society. Lack of this link will also lead to children in the interaction with society passive, unanticipated. Reducing the frequency of social interaction without standards and support is detrimental to the acquisition of children's sense of social belonging.

### **References**

- [1] Xu Anqi, Zhang Liang. Influencing factors of father's parenting input: Interpretation of local experience data [J]. *Chinese Youth Research*, 2009, (4).
- [2] [3] Li Xueping, Huang Hong. The influence of father participation on the formation of children's gender roles [J]. *Education Review*, 2013, (2).
- [4] Meng Yuqun, Song Xuewen. Father's role in family education and father's love [J]. *Education Science*, 1998, (4): 43.
- [5] Zhang Liang, Xu Anqi. Father's participation in research: attitude, contribution and utility [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2008, 112.
- [6] Zhang Liang, Xu Anqi. Father's participation in research: attitude, contribution and effectiveness [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2008, 128.
- [7] Fan Zhentao, Fang Fuxi. The development of children's gender constantly [J]. *Advances in Psychological Science*, 2004, (1).