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## **Paternal Participation in Early Childhood Program: Perspectives of Fathers in their Children's Quest for Learning**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative study employing phenomenology aimed to determine paternal participation in early childhood program. A purposive sampling was employed were fathers served as the informants. Finding showed that the main role of the father is to shape the wisdom and proper behavior, reading and writing partner, and taking care of the child. However, they faced numerous challenges along the way. They prepared the needs of the child, they took over the role of the mother, and in disciplining of the child. Their stories inspired since they provided the needs of their children, becoming patient and showing love towards the child, and above all, they world tirelessly. Finally, an intervention plan was developed.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Fathers are part of the child's learning development. They are not only into helping their wives in looking to meeting the ends of their family, but they are responsible as well on the education. Without them, the balance of discipline and education can be at stake.

In the study of Tran (2008), paternal involvement can be associated with the child's immunization progress. Parents in general are the source of inspiration of their children towards education and health development (Peter et al., 2008). It was further confirmed by Garcia (2002) that children indeed need comfort and love by their parents. Thus, in their quest for learning both personalities should be involved.

The responsibilities should not only be given to mothers. Fathers too are the most important figure in the family. As the he seeks to meet ends, he too is focused on the education of his child especially those in the beginning stage (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008). Additionally, children need proper care and guidance as they journey in the world of learning (Menheere & Hooge, 2010).

By looking into the literatures, these are all beyond ten (10) years. There are no related studies published. As such, this study will fill in the gaps in the availability of paternal involvement. Researches related to this were on the contexts of the Latino families (Gonzalez et al., 2013) and the Indonesians (Yulianti et al., 2018). By looking into these aspects, there is a dire need to conduct this study.

Henceforth, this study will give the appreciation to how fathers provide the needs of their children. A responsible-image of the father can serve as inspiration not only to fathers but to mothers as well. Having the children in the family is a responsibility that they have to fulfill and should not be taken for granted. It is within this premise that the researcher is motivated to pursue this endeavor.

### **Statement of the Problem**

1. What roles do fathers play in the implementation of early childhood program?
2. What challenges do fathers face in responding to the needs of their children in the early childhood program?
3. What inspiring stories can fathers share in supporting their children in the early childhood program?
4. What intervention plan can be proposed to helping fathers improving their participation to early childhood program?

### **Research Design**

This study utilized the qualitative research (Gerring, 2017). Specifically, it used the phenomenological approach. Qualitative is a design in which it deals with the understanding of human experiences and existence. It interprets the data using texts and not numbers. Thus, no significant relationships nor influence will be sought (Potter, 2013).

Phenomenology is descriptive research which is most commonly used in the social and health sciences. It answers to questions of "how" and "what" is the phenomenon occurs (Van Manen, 2017). Generally, it assumes human experiences, feelings, and responses to a particular situation. Findings are usually in the form of themes in order to explain the occurrence of the phenomenon under studied (Khan, 2014).

Correspondingly, this study is phenomenology since I explored the participation of fathers on the implementation of early childhood program. Their experiences were sought so that different facets will be understood. By looking into the lived experiences of fathers, their role in the quest of their children's learning can play a gargantuan role in education.

### **Locale of the Study**

This study was conducted in the Municipality of Kabacan in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District of the Province of Cotabato. Kabacan serves as the center of education in the province because of the presence of the University of Southern Mindanao. It has been the source of inspiration to millions of Filipinos all over Mindanao.

In particular, schools under Kabacan South District will be the locale of the study. These schools are: Kabacan Pilot Central Elementary School, Kilagasan Elementary School, Cuyapon Elementary School, Dona Josefa Edralin Marcos Elementary School, Osias Elementary School, Upper Paatan Elementary School, and Lower Paatan Elementary School. Below shows the map of the study.

### **Sampling Procedure**

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling which was used in the selection of the informants (Rai & Thapa, 2015). However, the criterion-based-sampling will be utilized. The following are the criteria which will be used in identifying the informants of the study:

1. A father regardless of his age;
2. With a child enrolled in a kindergarten program of the Department of Education; and
3. With a child enrolled in one of the schools of Kabacan South District.

### **Research Instrument**

I used the following research instruments in gathering of the data. A recorder was used during the interview phase. Another is the consent-to-participate form where the informants have to affix their signature signifying their full participation in the study. Next is the interview guide questions which indicate the types of questions to be asked to the informants in order to understand the phenomenon.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

I strictly followed the following procedures in the gathering of the data. It is my duty to first develop the interview guide questions. This was validated by the experts in the field to ensure that these would not disparage the informants during the interview session. Following this will be the identification of the informants. The selection will be based on the criteria set.

Conversely, I sent a letter to the Schools Division Superintendent, District Supervisor, and the respective school principals. Likewise, a letter will also be sent to the identified informants. Upon approval, the consent-to-participate form will be given to them. This enumerates their rights as informants.

Furthermore, the informants set the date and time of the interview. Their convenience will always be considered. Before the interview, they will be briefed about the study. Their questions will all be taken. After the interview, the informants will be gifted with a token.

Results will be brought to the data analyst. Peer debriefing will also be done in order to ensure the verisimilitude of the findings. Each theme emerged will be explained thoroughly and will be supported with their narratives. Ultimately, the data will be returned to them for confirmatory. If they would not attest to the authenticity of the data and interpretation, I will ask further clarification to them.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using the MAXQDA (Oliveira et al., 2013). This software was used in the identification of the emergent themes from the responses of the informants. It is the process of thematic analysis. Presentation of the findings will be in tabular and textual forms.

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## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Themes and Core Ideas on the roles of fathers in the implementation of Early Childhood Program**

*Shaping wisdom and proper behavior.* One of the important aspects of fatherhood is the shaping of wisdom and proper behavior of his own child. He is in-charge of nurturing the child to become a better person and citizen of the society. It cannot be denied that fathers are powerful role models for their children. Children observe and learn from their actions, attitudes, and behaviors. To embody wisdom, integrity, and proper conduct in their own lives, fathers can inspire their children to emulate these qualities. Moreover, this explains that fathers play a crucial role in setting boundaries and enforcing discipline. Consistent and fair discipline helps children develop self-control, respect for rules, and a sense of responsibility. Fathers should establish clear expectations and consequences, while also providing explanations and opportunities for their child to learn from their mistakes.

During the interview, it was mentioned that:

*"Following the guidelines of the said program. I will guide my child in shaping wisdom, talent and proper behaviour."* (Informant 5)

This is also the content of the response of Informant 10.

*“My responsibility as a father for my child’s education is to guide and teach her, especially since she is still young.”* (Informant 10)

In line with this, fathers can support their child’s personal growth and knowledge. They can expose their children to new experiences, encourage their curiosity, and provide opportunities for learning and skill development. Aside from that, they should be actively involved in their child’s education, helping them cultivate wisdom and proper behavior through learning and personal development (Palm & Fagan, 2008). Likewise, spending quality time with their children is important in building strong relationships and positively influence their development (Rosenberg, 2006). Engaging in shared activities, hobbies, and meaningful conversations creates opportunities for fathers to impart wisdom, reinforce values, and reinforce proper behavior (Ancel et al., 2018).

*Reading and writing partner.* Fathers help in stimulating the interest of the child towards reading and writing. It is not all the time that mothers have to teach the child, fathers too need to show their interest in order to stimulate learning development among their children. In addition, when fathers read with their children, they are actually stimulating their imagination and creativity. In the same manner, this fosters language development and narrative skills. Fathers encourage their children to write or dictate their own stories, providing guidance and support throughout the process.

In support with this theme, one of the fathers shared that:

*“My responsibility as a father is that the child must learn how to read and write as a beginner they should be guided by their parents and teacher as well. So that in the future the children become intelligent and confident in their way of life.”* (Informant 1)

Fathers have a significant impact on their children’s literacy development as reading and writing partners (Green, 2003). For Anderson et al. (2015), they build a foundation for academic success, nurture their children’s love for reading and writing, and strengthen their bond. Through this, fathers create a positive environment that enables language skills, critical thinking, and creativity. Similarly, the benefits of fathers’ involvement as reading and writing partners extend beyond literary because they are creating holistic growth leading to future success.

*Taking care of the child.* One of the most important roles of the fathers is to take good care of their children. They made it sure that they have provided the needs of their children in all facets of life. For example, during the day they send them and fetch their children to school. This role of the father manifested that they truly love and support them no matter what.

Their time and effort have been manifested on their responses.

*“My responsibility as a father is that I have to have time management, especially since I have a school-age child that I have to drop off and pick up from the school.”* (Informant 3)

In line with that:

*“As a father I have to fulfil my responsibility. So that I can provide the needs of my child.”* (Informant 2)

Also,

*“To give proper support in their studies.”* (Informant 5)

Active involvement of fathers in caregiving nurtures a strong emotional bond between father and child (McBride et al., 2001; McBride et al., 2005). This bond provides the child with a sense of security, love, and trust which are vital for health emotional development. Fathers who actively engage in caregiving activities develop a deep understanding of their child’s needs and emotions which indicates a positive parent-child relationship (Alio et al., 2013).

Table 1. Themes and Core Ideas on the roles of fathers in the implementation of Early Childhood Program

Themes	Core Ideas
Shaping wisdom and proper behavior	They made it sure that they are guiding their children's growth and development.
Reading and Writing Partner	They guided their children towards grasping to the bodies of knowledge that make them more ready to the next chapter of their journey.
Taking care of the child	They provided the needs of their children in all facets of life.
	They dropped off and fetched their children to school.

#### Themes and Core Ideas on the challenges do fathers face in responding to the needs of their children in the Early Childhood Program

Table 2 shows the themes and core ideas on the challenges do father face in responding to the needs of their children in the early childhood program. These includes the preparation of the needs of the child, the absence of the mother, and the attitude of the child at school.

*Preparing the needs of the child.* As fathers, they fulfill different responsibilities not only at home but also in providing to meeting the ends of the family. At one hand, mornings can be hectic especially if fathers need to get ready for work themselves. Trying to fit in the child's morning routine while managing their own responsibilities can create time constraints and increased pressure to complete tasks efficiently. It should be remembered that fathers often juggle multiple roles and responsibilities, including their careers, household chores, and family commitments. Waking up early to prepare the child for school adds another task to their already demanding schedule which often requires effective time management and prioritization.

As a father, he articulated the complexity of his role.

*"Well, I have to pay attention to their needs like, food, and getting up early in the morning preparing them to go to school and to accompany them every day."* (Informant 1)

Also, this appears to the response of Informant 10.

*"Taking care of the in preparing his things for the school every day."* (Informant 10)

Furthermore, this is complicated by the availability of finances.

*"First is the financial, because sometimes I don't have anything, sometimes my budget is not enough."* (Informant 9)

Every individual has different energy levels and peak productivity times. Some fathers may find it challenging to be fully engaged and alert in the early morning, which can make the task of preparing the child for school more challenging. Children may not always be cooperative or enthusiastic in the morning. Getting them out of bed, dressed, and ready for school can sometimes be met with resistance, adding to the father's challenge of ensuring everything is prepared on time (Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Sriram, 2011).

*Absence of mother.* Mothers often serve as primary points of contact and communication between the school or program and the child. Fathers may face challenges in bridging communication gaps and ensuring they are well-informed about their child's progress, activities, and any concerns that may arise in the Early Childhood Program. The absence of a mother may impact the dynamics of the parent-child relationship. Fathers may need to adapt their parenting style and find ways to establish a strong bond with their child. This can involve building trust which shows open communication, and actively engaging in activities that promote connection and understanding.

A father said that:

*"I had the difficulty in raising my child because his mother is not around."* (Informant 6)

While this challenge exists, it is important to acknowledge that fathers are capable of successfully responding to the needs of their children in an Early Childhood Program. With dedication, open communication, and a willingness to learn, fathers can overcome this challenge and provide a nurturing and supportive environment for their children's growth and development. Collaborating with teachers and professionals in the Early Childhood Program can also offer valuable guidance and assistance in navigating this challenge and ensure the well-being and success of the child (Palm, 2014).

*Attitude of the child.* Children may display challenging behaviors at school such as disobedience, aggression, or inattentiveness. Fathers may struggle with managing these behaviors especially if they differ from the child's behavior at home. Understanding the underlying causes and working with teachers and professionals can help fathers address and support their child's behavioral challenges. In addition, difficulties in establishing positive peer relationships can impact a child's attitude at school. Fathers may observe their child experiencing social challenges, such as difficulty making friends, conflicts with classmates, or feeling isolated.

The attitude of the child has a detrimental impact to a father. This has been shared by one of the fathers especially in learning.

*"As a father it is difficult to take care of children by guiding them in learning."* (Informant 4)

The adoptability of the child with the environment is also a problem to a father.

*“My child is playful/hyper/bully. She can’t adopt her new surrounding being with other children.”* (Informant 5)

Therefore, Ferguson and Morley (2011) revealed that attitude problems exhibited by children at school can significantly impact their academic performance, social relationships, and overall well-being. Children who struggle with these issues may show behaviors like bullying, rudeness, or disregard for other’s feelings. In this regard, fathers should actively teach and model empathy and respect, emphasizing the importance of considering others’ perspectives and treating everyone with kindness (Donaldson et al., 2011).

Table 2. Themes and Core Ideas on the challenges do fathers face in responding to the needs of their children in the Early Childhood Program

Themes	Core Ideas
Preparing the needs of the child	They woke up early in the morning to make everything ready for the child’s readiness in going to school.
Absence of mother	They fulfilled the responsibility of being a mom as well.
Attitude of the child	They faced difficulties with the attitude of their children especially the misbehavior at school.

#### **Themes and Core Ideas on the inspiring stories shared by fathers in support to their children in the Early Childhood Program**

*Provide the needs of the child.* Fathers are figures who actively provided the well-being and development of their children. Providing the needs of their children goes beyond financial support; it encompasses emotional, physical, and psychological aspects. Meeting the needs of their children gives fathers the opportunity a sense of security and stability. When children feel their needs are consistently met, they develop a sense of trust and confidence in their father’s presence. This emotional stability enhances the child’s overall sense of security, which positively impacts their emotional and psychological development.

The effort of a father can make a difference. This is further strengthened during the interview that:

*“What I can say to the father like me is to give effort and do their responsibility as a parent.”* (Informant 2)

In the same vein,

*“Will do everything possible for a good future for their child.”* (Informant 9)

When fathers consistently provide love, acceptance, and support to their children, it helps them develop a positive sense of self-worth. Children feel valued and cherished, leading to a strong foundation of self-esteem and confidence. Fathers who demonstrate unconditional love and acceptance create an environment where children can freely express themselves and develop a healthy self-image (Bushfield, 2004; Palm, 2013).

*Patience and love towards the child.* Patience and love create a strong emotional bond between fathers and their children. When fathers are patient, they showed the values of patience, understanding, and empathy towards their child’s emotions and experiences. It is said that love provides a foundation of care and affection that nurtures deep connection. This emotional bond cultivates trust, security, and a sense of belonging. Patience is crucial when it comes to discipline. Fathers who approach discipline with patience and love create a safe and supportive environment for their children to learn from their mistakes. Rather than resorting to harsh punishments, patient fathers guide their children with understanding, helping them develop self-discipline and learn valuable life lessons.

The enormous love of a father is needed. This was the claim by the informant.

*“Be patient and love your children even more.”* (Informant 5)

In addition,

*“Father should have patience in his child’s journey in education.”* (Informant 8)

From this, love from a father is a powerful force that shapes a child perception of themselves and others (Burbach et al., 2004). Unconditional love indicates a sense of security, acceptance, and belonging. Children who feel unconditionally loved by their fathers are more likely to develop healthy relationships, have a positive self-image, and exhibit empathy and love towards others (Yogman & Eppel, 2022).

*Work tirelessly.* Every father has a dream for their children. They always prioritize the things that would help them become the best version of themselves. Aside from that, fathers made it sure that their children will be in the right path in reaching their dreams and aspirations in life. Nevertheless, these fathers do their best even in the most tiresome times of their lives. It is said that they are doing their best in order to make the lives of their children worthy of their tireless efforts.

This has been strengthened by their responses.

*“Work and make time to support the child.” (Informant 2)*

*“Go to work even if it’s difficult just for the child. Will do everything to support the child.” (Informant 3)*

Financially, fathers often work diligently in order to provide a stable income for their respective families. They may pursue careers or employment opportunities that offer financial security that leads them to meet their children’s basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and education. In addition, they work long hours, sometimes sacrificing personal time or leisure activities to ensure their children have a comfortable life (Palm, 2014).

Table 3. Themes and Core Ideas on the inspiring stories shared by fathers in support to their children in the Early Childhood Program

Themes	Core Ideas
Provide the needs of the child	Fathers should have to do their best in order to provide the needs of their children.
Patience and love towards the child	Fathers should have to be patient in dealing with their children.
Work tirelessly	Fathers should have to work for the child’s future.

### Intervention Plan

#### Rationale

Active involvement of fathers in early childhood program has been linked to improved development outcomes. Fathers bring unique perspectives, play styles, and interactions that complement those of mothers, leading to a more diverse and enriching environment for children’s growth and learning. In the same manner, fathers’ involvement has been associated with enhanced cognitive development in children. Often, they engage in different types of activities which promote problem-solving skills, spatial awareness, and creativity. This diverse interaction style complements the nurturing and caregiving role of mothers, leading to a more holistic cognitive development for children.

In this intervention plan, different activities will be highlighted to capture the basics of fathers’ importance in growth and development of the child. They can captivate the very core of fatherhood when they will engage in the school activities aside from being the source of inspiration. Indeed, these are the things that need to be considered to really motivate fathers to partner with their children in conquering their dreams in life.

#### Objectives

The objective of this intervention plan is to highlight and enhance the involvement of fathers in early childhood program. This aims to recognize the importance of fathers’ active participation in their child’s development and create strategies encourage and support their engagement

Areas of Concern and Database	Objectives	Strategies	Activities	Time Frame	Persons’ Involved	Performance Indicator
Paternal Involvement in Early Childhood Program	The objective of this intervention plan is to highlight and enhance the involvement of fathers in early childhood program. This aims to recognize the importance of fathers’ active participation in their child’s development and create	Creating Awareness  Training and Professional Development	Conduct Workshops and Seminars  Develop informational materials  Provide Specialized Training  Organize workshop  Establish	Second Semester 2020-2021		95%

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strategies encourage and support their engagement	Collaborating with fathers	father advisory group  Organize regular meetings  Review and revise program policies
	Flexible Program Structures	Provide opportunities with fathers  Collaborate with local community
	Community Partnerships	Arrange joint activities and events involving fathers

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## IMPLICATIONS

### Implications for Practice

Early childhood education plays a pivotal role in laying the foundation for a child's lifelong learning and development. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the significant impact that fathers have on their children's educational journey. Fathers' involvement in early childhood programs holds great potential educational outcomes and creating a more inclusive and enriching learning.

Their active involvement in early childhood programs can have a profound impact on children's attitudes towards education. It has been said that when fathers volunteer, participate in classroom activities, and demonstrate a genuine interest in their children's learning, they communicate the value they place on education. This helps children develop positive attitudes, motivation, and a love for learning. Educators can facilitate opportunities for fathers to actively engage in the learning process, both inside and outside the classroom, thereby maximizing their positive influence.

More so, early childhood program can offer workshops or support groups that help fathers enhance their parenting skills, focusing on effective communication, positive discipline strategies, and nurturing emotional well-being. This can be done by supporting fathers in their parenting journey. In this manner, educators contribute to the social-emotional development of children. Furthermore, fathers' presence promotes a sense of security, empathy, and emotional resilience which enabled children to thrive in the learning environment.

Finally, their unique parenting style complements that of mothers, creating a balanced and nurturing environment. Fatherly affection, warmth, and encouragement contribute to children's self-esteem, emotional resilience, and social development. If fathers actively engage in this program, they build strong bonds with their children which contribute a sense of security and trust.

### Implications for Future Research

Understanding the paternal role in early childhood program is tantamount for creating effective educational practices and promoting children's holistic development. Though, existing research has shed light on the significance of fathers in this milieu, further exploration is needed to uncover new insights and implications. It is within these aspects that the following considerations should be undertaken.

First, future research should focus on quantitative studies that measures and quantify the impact of father involvement on children's educational outcomes. By employing standardized assessment tools and longitudinal studies, researchers can examine the relationship between specific aspects of father involvement and academic achievement, cognitive development, and social-emotional well-being. These can help establish evidence-based practices and policies that support father involvement in the early childhood programs.

Second, the investigation of the dynamics of father-child interaction in early childhood program is important for understanding its impact on children's learning outcomes. Hence, future research can explore the nature and quality of father-child interactions during educational activities, play, and academic support. As such, the examination of the influence of different interaction styles, communication patterns, and teaching approaches, researchers can identify effective strategies that optimize father-child engagement and promote positive learning experiences.

Third, future research should pay attention to the experiences of fathers from diverse backgrounds, including fathers from different cultures, socio-economic statuses, and family structures. Looking into the intersectionality of fatherhood and early childhood education can uncover unique challenges, strengths, and cultural factors that influence father involvement. This research informs culturally responsive educational practices that better support fathers' engagement and create inclusivity in the delivery of education.

Henceforth, research should have to examine the long-term impact of paternal involvement in early childhood programs on children's educational attainment, career outcomes, and overall well-being. Longitudinal studies can follow children from early childhood through adolescence and adulthood. In fact, this tracks the influence of father involvement on their educational life trajectories. This research is insightful into the lasting effects of father engagement and inform policies and programs that instill lifelong positive outcomes.

### Concluding Remarks

The role of fathers in early childhood program is a powerful force that significantly impacts children's educational experiences and overall development. It is indeed clear that fathers bring unique strengths, perspectives, and contributions to the educational landscape. Their active involvement as positive role models, emotional supporters, and partners in learning creates a nurturing and inclusive environment for children.

Meanwhile the implications for educational practices are vast. Schools and educators should have to recognize and value the important role that every father plays. Creating a welcoming and supportive environment that encourages father involvement, providing opportunities for fathers to actively engage in their child's learning journey. In the like manner, this provides collaboration between fathers and educations which may be deemed essential steps toward harnessing the potential powers of fathers.

Fathers are tireless in providing for the needs of their children. Their involvement in early childhood program has transformative potential. Embracing and empowering fathers as partners in education not only benefits children but also enriches the educational community as a whole. Continuing to champion the abilities of the fathers in this endeavor ensures that every child has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

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