

Father Involvement with Children in Absence and Presence of Mothers in Drawing Activity: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract. The role of parents, especially father has been considered very important for children's grooming, development and learning. Father warmth refers to the degree in which fathers display involvements, responsiveness and support to the child. Father involvement is associated with positive child outcomes in different aspects of life. But to some extent it has attained inadequate consideration and attention in the psychological research investigations. The aim of this research is to explore the father involvement with their children. The study also aimed at finding how much father involvement is shown by the fathers towards their children in presence as well as absence of the mothers of their children. The behavior of children was also observed in the two sessions to study how children react to father involvement in absence and presence of mothers. To carry out this experiment, two 45 minutes observation sessions were made on a single day; one at the first half of school in morning and one at second half of the school in afternoon. Repeated measures were taken for three different weeks. From the results a number of father involvement behaviors and their frequencies were observed. The results show that fathers showed more involvement with the children in the absence of the mothers as compared to the session where mothers were also present to assist the children in completing their drawing tasks. The results show that children were more eager to complete the task, competitive, talkative and sharing, in the first session (absence of mothers). The findings also reveal that children were somewhat more demanding, questioning and emotionally expressive in the second session (presence of mothers). Overall the children were obedient, happy and enjoyed their task in both the sessions. It is concluded that father involvement did increase in the absence of the mothers. The findings also reveal that the children were more eager to complete the task, competitive, talkative and sharing, in the first session (absence of mothers).

Keywords: Father involvement, parenting, experiment, Pakistan

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Introduction

The role of parents, especially father has been considered very important for children's grooming, development and learning. Researches indicate that parental involvement has positive influence on the educational outcomes of school children (e.g. grades, teacher class room rating, academic attitudes and behaviors) (Jeynes, 2005 & 2007). Father warmth refers to the degree in which fathers display involvements, responsiveness and support.

Father involvement is associated with positive child outcomes in different aspects of life. But to some extent it has attained inadequate consideration and attention in the psychological research investigations (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000). The child development and psychological health has been associated with the

mothers and their roles since ages (Bowlby, 1982) but little emphasis on the role of fathering and its impact on the life of children (Lamb, 1997). Father involvement for child development is as effective as mother involvement (Lamb, 1997).

Some researches put forward the fact that father involvement and its influence is slightly different from the mother engagement with children and their relationships. Because the father spend more time as compared to mothers in playful, physical and out-door activities and in the same way encourage the child to be more independent and competitive (DeKlyen, Speltz, & Greenberg, 1998). Thus, it may be speculated that fathering or father involvement is significant for the child development. It has been demonstrated by researches that parental involvement is influential for psychological development of the child. For instance,

studies showed that sons who described a healthy relationship with either mother or father had less psychological distress (Barnett, Marshall and Pleck, 1992), closeness to fathers during childhood is positively related to adult daughters' and sons' educational and occupational mobility, psychological adjustment and well-being (Amato, 1994), children with involved fathers tend to be more psychologically well-adjusted, to do better at school, to engage in less antisocial behaviour and to have more successful intimate relationships (Hwang & Lamb, 1997; Flouri & Buchanan, 2002).

Father involvement was acknowledged in 1970s and since then it started receiving attention in the field of research for family study and psychology (Day & Lamb, 2004b; Kim, 2005). Father involvement is a multi-featured and the attempts at examining father involvement with children in the context of child positive behavior has been somewhat limited.

Father involvement has been defined in a number of ways for the sake of its measurement; some researchers described father involvement in relation to the frequency of father contacts with their children (Lee, 2004d). According to Lamb and his colleagues (Lamb et al., 1987), father involvement in childrearing, that is, fathers' behavioral involvement including engagement, availability and responsibility. The behavioral facet of father involvement is gauged with the help of measuring the frequency of the father's involvement in care giving and rearing activities such as making meals, giving baths, taking the child to the school/doctor/dentist/market, and changing clothes and diapers.

Palkovitz (1997) described father involvement into multidimensional aspects: cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Palkovitz suggested 15 major ways to be involved in childrearing such as planning, providing, protection, emotional support, communication, teaching, monitoring, thought process, errands, availability, affection, care giving, maintenance, shared activities, and shared interests (Palkovitz, 1997).

Researches show that children of involved fathers are more likely to enjoy school, have more positive peer relationships, have better grades, have fewer behavior problems, are less likely to be expelled and/or repeat grades and become more responsible adults (Child Care Bureau, 2004; Flouri et al. 2002). The sons who feel that their fathers give over time, particularly to talk to them about school work, worries, social and playful activities, more or less all grow up as motivated and optimistic adults (Katz, 1999) and

protects indulging into delinquent behaviors (Hobcraft, 1998). Father involvement in children's education at age 7 predicts higher educational attainment by age 20, in both boys and girls (Hobcraft, 1998). It is not only the children who benefit from their father's involvement. Research also finds that men who are involved fathers feel more self-confident and effective as parents, find parenting more satisfying, and feel more intrinsically important to their children (Allen & Daly, 2002).

In Pakistan, females' roles are more acceptable as a caretaker for children; foremost mothers are held responsible for caring the child. Therefore, fathers are not encouraged to take part in direct child care. On the other hand, fathers are regarded as the chief decision maker for major life activities of child for instance, education, health and money spending matters (Hirani, 2008). Recent studies also indicate that Pakistani fathers and mothers in particular seemed to place great emphasis on the providing role of the father, which supports the findings of a recent research study on UK Asian fathers (Salway *et al.*, 2009).

Pakistani families in particular tended to view physical care giving as more often the responsibility of the mother. Pakistani mothers spent on average almost five hours more time engaged in activities with the index child than Pakistani fathers. Pakistani parents more often saw it as an integral part of fathers' overall responsibilities, involving them in actively monitoring, supporting and promoting their children's education. Pakistani and black parents tended to see it as primarily the role of the father to discipline children (Hauari & Hollingworth, 2009).

It is significant to note that Pakistani fathers are now spending time in child care. A study carried out in Karachi, Pakistan, revealed 75% observations of children being carried by the man, even when the woman was present (Jahn & Aslam, 1995). The father involvement patterns are changing with urbanization and rise in maternal employment. It is expected that new outlook for father involvement will transpire as alternate child caregivers are unavailable and the need for ongoing child care is increasing (Engle & Breaux, 1998; Mansoor, 2008).

The study aims to explore father involvement with their children in absence and presence of mothers. Regardless of environment and conditions, fathers are involved or want to be involved in the lives of their children. Since long the father's role, in life of their children has been neglected, as mothers were considered to be the main focus of researches. But in recent years the gender shift in parenting practices

today has been noticed. Therefore, it is important to examine how, to what extent and through which behaviors fathers' exhibit their involvement with their children. Father research is an increasing field in the world, but this particular aspect of research has not been much explored here in Pakistan, to our knowledge. We have chosen to look at the father involvement behaviors as well as children's behavior to explore and understand how father involvement is practiced and how it influences the child. This study adds to research about fathers and father involvement. It has the potential to serve as a platform for future researches, including an evaluative study of father involvement in child educational programs and the study of father involvement in parenting education. It also has the potential to facilitate a more coherent approach in parenting education in regards to father involvement. This is particularly important for the policy makers and government, to consider investing in the parenting education in Pakistan, especially for the expecting parents.

Method

The design of the experiment was firmly based on observations for gathering the information and data. It was made sure that the participants will not be involved or interacted. The subjects being observed were not physically or psychologically involved with the experimenter or the observer.

For the present study father involvement was operationalized in terms of frequency of father contacts with their children in a drawing task. Aspects of father involvement for the study included discipline and teaching responsibility (verbal errands to child such as to sit, order and arrange the things, to follow the rules of the task), attentiveness (responding to child queries, looking out if child needs anything or help to decide), encouragement (verbal motivation such as you can do it, wow, its good work, or pat on back, you can finish it), praise and affection (verbal expression and physical expression in terms of hug or a kiss), providing material (passing on the drawing stuff, taking it out of the boxes), time and talking together, reading and drawing task support (the task was written on the paper and noted if father read it and explained it to the child or child read it him/herself), care giving activities (e.g. providing meals or taking the child out for some need), and supporting mother (verbal comments like I will help you, I will help the child, you are doing good). The coding of the behaviors to be noted was carried out by three M.Sc psychology students that was later reconciled in a

committee approach by the psychology experts.

The experiment was carried out in a regular 4th grade classroom of a private school of Islamabad. The informed consent was taken from head of the institution to access the participants in order to start the process of data collection. The experimental sessions were designed as two 45-minute-sessions on a single day; first in the early morning (9:00am) and second in the afternoon (12:30pm). For each of the sessions, the same group of children with their fathers and mothers were kept under observation in an art and drawing task. The same experimental procedure was conducted for three weeks i.e one week each in three months. Most of the children were around 9 years old and all had mother and father alive.

There was one observer to record the father involvement behaviors in each of the two sessions. The classroom consisted of 10 students (5 boys and 5 girls) with only father in first session and both parents in second session. The children and parents were informed that there would be an art and drawing activity in which the parents would have to take part as a routine school activity in two rounds. A tally system was created in order to collect the frequencies of behaviors that are considered to be practices or behaviours involved in child-rearing. For the purpose of the study to investigate the father involvement with their children, a list of behaviors was prepared after an extensive literature review. Father involvement behaviors included:

Session 01

1. Disciplining the child.
2. Encouraging the child to do the drawing.
3. Setting rules or limits for the child behavior.
4. Encouraging to succeed
5. Encouraging to complete the work.
6. Reading out the material.
7. Instructing to follow any rules
8. Providing or helping the child with basic drawing material.
9. Providing the child with food or drinks.
10. Accepting responsibility to do the work.
11. Acting as a friend to the child.
12. Just talking with the child when he/she wants to talk about something.
13. Praising for being good or doing the right thing.
14. Expressing love with child verbally.
15. Expressing love with child physically (hug, kiss, pat, etc)
16. Taking the child out for some needs.

Session 02

The session two included the presence of the mother to help the child with the drawing task. All the father involvement behaviors were similar in the second session as observed in the first session. But a few more behaviors were also included.

1. Asking the mother to help the child instead of doing himself.
2. Letting the child know that his/her mother is an important and special person.
3. Cooperating with mother in accomplishment of the drawing task.

Note that in the both the sessions, the children had art and drawing class with some relaxation of eating and drinking. Both the sessions were taught by the same instructor and had asked the children questions consistently regarding the art work.

Some behaviors of children were also observed in both the session. Following is a list of behaviour that was prepared for noting the behaviours of the children.

1. Happy
2. Sad
3. Enthusiastic
4. Talkative and Chatty
5. Eager to Complete the task
6. Sharing
7. Demanding
8. Stubbornness
9. Positive attitude towards task
10. Questioning
11. Crying
12. Anger
13. Obedience
14. Disrespect
15. Verbal Expression of Love
16. Physical Expression of Love
17. Asking for help in task
18. Asking for food or drink
19. Acting as a friend

Results

Table 1
Demographic Variables

Demographic Data		F
Age	8 years	1
	9 years	5
	10 years	3
	11 years	1
Gender	Boy	5
	Girl	5
Place of Residence	Islamabad	6
	Rawalpindi	4
Birth Order	First Born	4
	Middle Child	4
	Last Born	1
	Only child	1
Father's Educational Level	Intermediate	1
	Graduate	4
	Masters	5
Family Income	20,000-30,000	1
	30,000-40,000	3
	40,000 and above	6
Socio Economic Status	Below Average	0
	Average	4
	Above Average	6
Family System	Joint Family System	6
	Nuclear Family System	4
Working Mother	Yes	2
	No	8

Table 2

Father Involvement in First Session with Children in the Absence of Mothers.

Father Involvement Behaviors		First Session			Mean
		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	
1.	Encouraging the child to do the drawing.	14	16	23	17.66
2.	Setting rules or limits for the child behavior.	6	5	8	6.33
3.	Encouraging to succeed	5	7	11	7.66
4.	Encouraging to complete the work.	13	15	13	13.66
5.	Reading out the material	7	5	9	7
6.	Instructing to follow any rules	5	5	5	5
7.	Providing or helping the child with basic drawing material.	17	18	19	18
8.	Providing the child with food or drinks.	10	11	10	10.33
9.	Accepting responsibility to do the work.	6	7	13	8.66
10.	Acting as a friend to the child.	11	7	15	11
11.	Just talking with the child when he/she wants to talk about something.	8	11	7	8.66
12.	Praising for being good or doing the right thing.	5	13	11	9.66
13.	Expressing love with child verbally.	7	9	9	8.33
14.	Expressing love with child physically (hug, kiss, pat, etc)	8	7	8	7.66
15.	Taking the child out for some needs.	0	3	3	2
16.	Asking the mother to help the child instead of doing himself.	0	0	0	0
17.	Letting the child know that his/her mother is an important and special person.	0	2	3	1.5
18.	Cooperating with mother in accomplishment of the drawing task.	0	0	0	2.5

Table 3

Father Involvement in Second Session with Children in the Presence of Mothers.

Father Involvement Behaviors		Second Session			Mean
		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	
1.	Encouraging the child to do the drawing.	9	11	7	9
2.	Setting rules or limits for the child behavior.	6	4	5	5
3.	Encouraging to succeed	4	7	8	6.33
4.	Encouraging to complete the work.	10	16	11	12.3
5.	Reading out the material	6	4	9	6.33
6.	Instructing to follow any rules	3	4	1	2.66
7.	Providing or helping the child with basic drawing material.	8	10	8	8.61
8.	Providing the child with food or drinks.	10	6	7	7.66
9.	Accepting responsibility to do the work.	8	7	9	8
10.	Acting as a friend to the child.	8	6	6	6.64
11.	Just talking with the child when he/she wants to talk about something.	3	8	5	5.33
12.	Praising for being good or doing the right thing.	4	10	8	7.33
13.	Expressing love with child verbally.	2	3	5	3.33
14.	Expressing love with child physically (hug, kiss, pat, etc)	7	3	6	5.33
15.	Taking the child out for some needs.	0	1	1	0.66
16.	Asking the mother to help the child instead of doing himself.	11	9	8	9.3
17.	Letting the child know that his/her mother is an important and special person.	2	4	1	2
18.	Cooperating with mother in accomplishment of the drawing task.	9	6	8	2.5

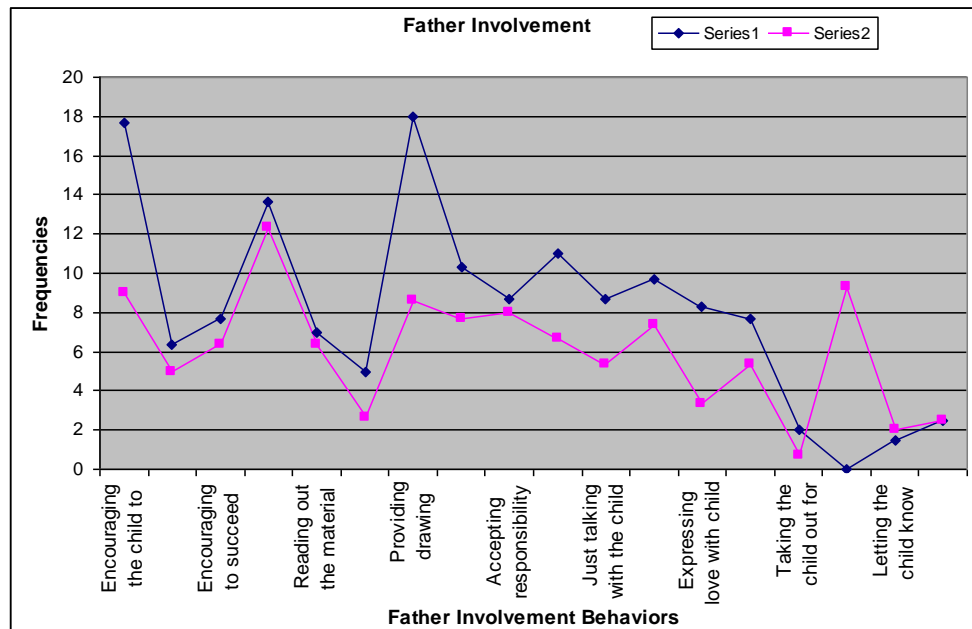
Graph 1. *Father Involvement Behaviors Frequencies*

Table 4

Behaviors Displayed in the First Sessions by the Children in Absence of Mothers.

Behaviors Displayed by Children	First Session			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Mean
1. Happy (Giggle & laugh)	12	10	11	11
2. Sad	1	2	0	1
3. Enthusiastic	8	6	17	10.33
4. Talkative and Chatty	8	8	8	8
5. Eager to Complete the task	8	10	9	9
6. Competitive	9	8	15	10.66
7. Sharing	13	17	9	13
8. Demanding	4	5	4	4.33
9. Stubbornness	1	2	0	1
10. Positive attitude towards task	9	10	10	9.66
11. Questioning	3	6	5	4.66
12. Crying	1	2	1	1.33
13. Anger	3	4	2	3
14. Disappointment	5	4	0	3
15. Obedience	7	10	10	9
16. Disrespect	0	0	0	0
17. Shouting	1	1	0	0.66
18. Verbal Expression of Love	9	7	6	7.33
19. Physical Expression of Love	6	3	3	4
20. Asking for help in task	4	6	5	5
21. Asking for food or drink	6	3	7	5.33
22. Acting as a friend	9	5	7	7

Table 5

Behaviors Displayed in the Second Sessions by the Children in Presence of Mothers

Behaviors Displayed by Children	Second Session			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Mean
Happy (Giggle & laugh)	13	14	17	14.6
Sad	2	0	0	0.6
Enthusiastic	8	7	16	10.33
Talkative and Chatty	3	6	10	6.33
Eager to Complete the task	3	7	9	6.33
Competitive	5	8	17	10
Sharing	10	13	7	10
Demanding	7	8	8	7.66
Stubbornness	1	1	1	1
Positive attitude towards task	9	10	10	9.66
Questioning	7	8	11	8.66
Crying	2	0	0	0.66
Anger	0	4	0	1.33
Disappointment	2	1	0	1
Obedience	7	7	11	8.33
Disrespect	2	2	0	1.33
Shouting	2	2	0	1.33
Verbal Expression of Love	11	11	9	10.33
Physical Expression of Love	9	8	9	8.66
Asking for help in task	8	7	8	7.66
Asking for food or drink	14	9	11	11.33
Acting as a friend	9	8	6	7.66

Graph 2. Children Behavior During Father Involvement

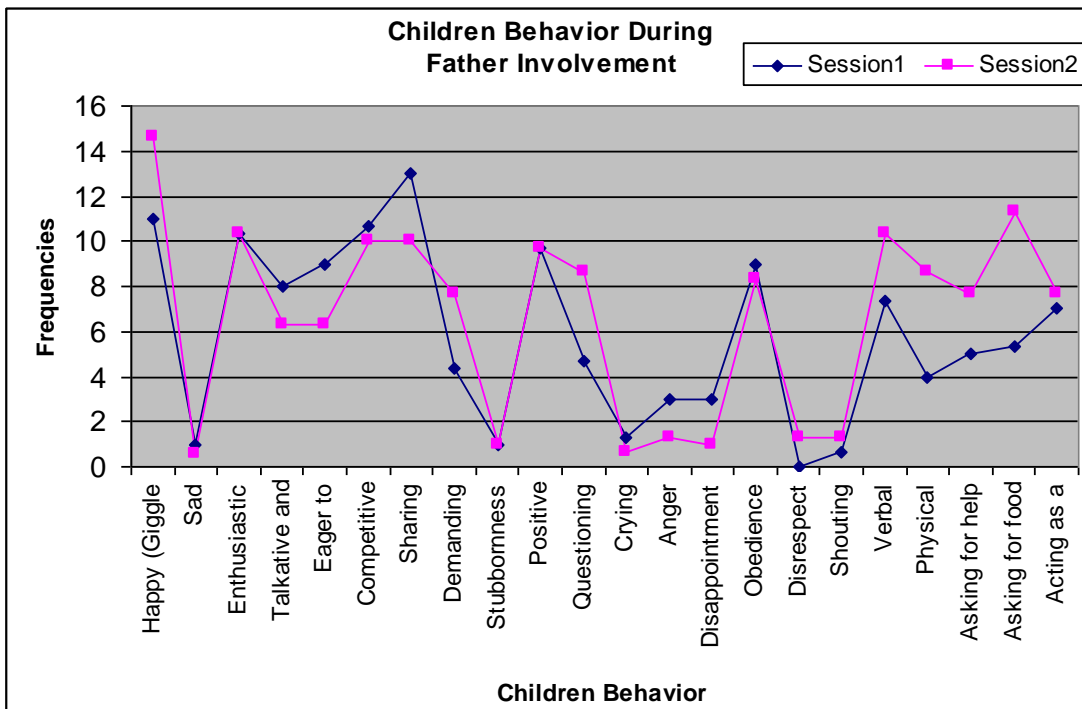


Table 2-3 reveals the number of occurrences of father involvement behaviours in first session. The results show that fathers showed more involvement with the children in the absence of the mothers as compared to the session where mothers were also present to assist the children in completing their drawing tasks.

Table 4-5 show the behaviours displayed by children in the two sessions where fathers showed father involvement with the children. The results show that children were more eager to complete the task, competitive, talkative and sharing, in the first session (absence of mothers). The findings also reveal that children were somewhat more demanding, questioning and emotionally expressive in the second session (presence of mothers). Overall, the children were obedient, happy and enjoyed their task in both the sessions.

Discussion

The present study exhibits a number of father involvement behaviors with their children. The study explored that the fathers show involvement in the academic related tasks of children. It was observed that fathers are more involved with their children in the absence of mothers as compared to when the mothers are around. The difference might be because in Pakistan, the views are traditional; children are usually responsibility of mothers at home as fathers are busy at offices.

Erickson and Gecas (1991) argued that men with careers tend to have fewer hours to spend with their families. In dual-earner families, the mother's attitude toward the male role predicted fathers' participation in child care. When her attitude was liberal, he did more; when it was traditional, he did less (Barnett and Baruch, 1987). Children are more attached with the mothers for the gratification of the basic necessities of life. And due to such exercises mothers usually take care of children. Most Pakistani fathers place a high value on their tradition and culture with regard to certain aspects of parenting. However, some Pakistani men are consciously deviating from the practices of their own fathers by getting more involved in non-traditional parenting roles such as childcare and presenting more father involvement (Hauari & Hollingworth, 2009).

So, in the first session as the mothers were not around it was explored that the fathers considered it their responsibility and accountability to involve with the children. Whereas in the second session

where the mothers were around to assist for the task, an interesting observation was made; an average of 9.3 occurrences were observed when fathers asked the mother to help or do the task for the child instead of doing it himself. Berardo, Shehan, and Leslie (1987) argue that regarding child care, men still depend on their wives to do the tasks rather than receiving the responsibility to do the tasks on their own. It was observed that overall Father Involvement behaviors decreased in second session. A notion of complementary parenting in Pakistan was indicated by a research that parenting is a partnership within which there is a degree of role differentiation, with each partner taking the lead in different areas. However, to be successful, the partnership involves providing 'back-up' for one another and being prepared to cross role boundaries when necessary, with the needs of the children always paramount. The study revealed that if mother is available then she should take the childcare responsibilities. But if she is not present then the father needs to carry out the tasks and take care for the child (Hauari & Hollingworth, 2009).

Psychologists believe that the fathers, as well as mothers, influence the social, emotional, and cognitive development of children, which was also observed through a number of behaviors noted in the sessions. The contribution of fathers in child development in addition to that of mothers is not till now well acknowledged (Parke, 1995). However, it is recognized that the roles fathers and mothers take up in the family and home as well as the ways in which they interact with their children are not identical, nor are (Lamb, 1997; Lamb, 1981).

A study found that parental involvement has significant effects on achievement (Feinstein, L & Symons, 1999). Very high parental interest is related with enhanced performance in academics, as compared to the children whose parents show no interest. The research findings reveal that engaging in leisure activities with children such as: artistic activities and music-related leisure or reading for pleasure, all have positive effects in the life of children. For instance, it increases the chances of getting good grades and achieving high level of education (Robson, 2003).

The results show that children were more eager to complete the task, competitive, talkative and sharing, in the first session (absence of mothers). The findings also reveal that children were somewhat more demanding, questioning and

emotionally expressive in the second session (presence of mothers). Probably because fathers prohibit their children's actions more than mothers (Brachfeld-Child, 1986). Overall, the children were obedient, happy and enjoyed their task in both the sessions.

Fathers who show involvement at a personal level with their child's school activities increase the probability of the achievement of their child. When fathers play a positive and interactive role in the child education, he feels a positive impact and takes more interest (McBride, Brent, Sullivan & Moon-Ho, 2005). A study revealed that in two-parent families the children with highly involved fathers reported getting mostly A grades, as compared to the children of non-resident father families (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999).

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