

Father Involvement in Childrearing Activities in the Context of Arsi Oromo Culture: Implications for Intervention

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Abstract: The major purpose of this study is to examine the level and dimensions of Arsi Oromo fathers' involvement in childrearing activities and to identify the underlying factors that affect their involvement. A mixed methods research design was employed in the study. Questionnaire, focus group discussion (FGD) and observation were used to collect data from a sample of 260 (221 fathers for the questionnaire, 7 households for observation, and 32 discussants for FGDs) Arsi Oromo parents. Purposive, simple random and stratified random sampling techniques were employed for selecting samples. One-sample t-test, independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the quantitative data, while thematic technique was employed to analyze the qualitative data. The study revealed several important findings. First, Arsi fathers were far less involved in the dimension of direct interaction and physical care activities with their children. Second, the majority of Arsi fathers perceived their fathering roles as bread-winning, resolving disputes within the lineage and community, and representing the family in public gatherings as well as ritual ceremonies. Third, there was no substantial variation between rural and urban fathers' involvement in childrearing activities. Fourth, statistically significant variation was obtained in the involvement of Arsi Oromo fathers by the educational level and occupational status. Fifth, gender role attitude and orientation, cultural and societal expectations, traditional beliefs, traditionally defined sex-segregated-roles, fathers' perceived workloads in outdoor activities, patriarchal family structure, and traditional gender identity were perceived as factors affecting Arsi Oromo father's level of involvement in childrearing activities. The results imply that Arsi Oromo fathers play insignificant roles in the direct child care activities, and mothers bear the responsibilities of socializing and child caring.

Key terms: Arsi Oromo, childrearing activities, cultural values, fatherhood, father involvement, gender role attitude, bread-winning

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Introduction

The review of studies on fatherhood over the past four decades show that father involvement in the lives of their children is on the rise worldwide (Palkovitz, 2002; Pleck, 2007; Roggman et al., 2002). Similarly, fatherhood scholars (e.g., Cabrera et al., 2000; Cohen, 2001; UN, 2011) define the role of fathers as caregiving, playing with children, teaching, and acting as role models or authority figures.

At the same time, four models of fatherhood were identified in the existing literature (e.g., Day and Lamb, 2004; Lamb et al., 1985; Lamb, 2002; Palkovitz, 2002; Sarkadi et al., 2008). These models of fatherhood eventually evolved and shifted from father as moral teacher and disciplinarian model of the colonial period, to father as the distant breadwinner, and then to father as the sex-role model, and finally to father as the new nurturing model (Cabrera et al., 2000; Cohen, 2001; Lamb et al., 1985; Lamb, 2002; Sarkadi et al., 2008). In this historical and sequential shift in the model fatherhoods, the 21st century has now experienced the new nurturing, and more emotionally involved model of fatherhood (Day and Lamb, 2004; Lamb et al., 1985; UN, 2011). In this new co-parenting model of fatherhood, fathers equally share the task of caring for children with mothers (Lamb, 2002); and spend time nurturing children and performing both interactive and physical caregiving activities (Cohen, 2001; Palkovitz, 2002). It is apt to ask which model of fatherhood is dominant in the context of Arsi Oromo in this first quarter of the 21st century and find out why this is so.

The review of related literature also identified three dimensions of father involvement: paternal interaction, availability and responsibility (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine, 1985). Paternal interaction deals with the father's direct engagement in the life of the child through physical care activities (Cabrera et al., 2007; Lamb, 2004; Miller, 2011). On the other hand, paternal accessibility refers to the physical and psychological presence or availability of the father for the child (Cabrera and Coll, 2004; Cabrera et al., 2007; Lamb, 2002). Paternal responsibility refers to the father's involvement in planning and

scheduling activities and resources for children (Lamb, 2002; Pleck, 2010; Sarkadi et al., 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

In fact, the importance of the fathers' involvement in the lives of their children has theoretical and empirical support. For instance, attachment theory suggests that children establish secure emotional attachment and sustained relationships with fathers who are emotionally responsive to their children's basic physical and emotional needs (Lamb 2002; Pleck, 2007; Roggman et al., 2002). Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory states that fathers function as microsystem partners with whom children can experience good proximal process that, in turn, promotes their development (Pleck, 2007). Moreover, self-determination theory (SDT) asserts that fathers' involvement is essential for supporting children's autonomy, supplying high levels of warmth, and facilitating children's sense of competence, motivation, adjustment and well-being (Bouchard et al., 2007; Grolnick, 2009).

It is consistently shown that increased level of paternal involvement both in quantity and quality plays a significant role in enhancing children's social, emotional and cognitive development (Allen and Daly, 2007; Day and Lamb, 2004; Palkovitz, 2002); in minimizing children's delinquent and risky behaviors (Lamb, 2002; Miller, 2011; Pleck, 2007; Sarkadi et al., 2008); and ensuring children's right to protection, survival, education, development and participation (Hiwot Ethiopia, 2015; Lamb, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2001; Volker, 2014).

However, paternal involvement in childrearing activities still remains limited (Bonney et al., 1999; Milkie, Simon, and Powell, 2002; Nkwake, 2009). Of course, a number of historical, cultural, personal, demographic and familial factors are identified as determinants to fathers' level and quality of involvement with their children. For instance, Lamb et al. (1985); Palkovitz (2002); Day and Lamb (2004); Stone and McKenry (1998) and Volker (2014) identify paternal attitude, motivation, competence, identity, and education as factors limiting fathers' involvement in childrearing. Similarly, the child's gender, age, and temperament are also indicated as factors determinant to fathers'

involvement (Sanderson and Thompson, 2002; Lamb, 2002; Lamb and Lewis, 2004; Volker, 2014). At the same time, marital satisfaction, mother's attitudes and perception of her husband's competence; and mother's employment status are mentioned as factors determinant to father involvement (Bonney et al, 1999; Hakoama and Ready, 2011; Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda, 2004; McBride et al., 2005). Moreover, societal attitudes, workplace environment, cultural background, and social support contribute to paternal involvement (Bouchard et al., 2007; Cabrera et al., 2000; Gibson, 2008; Miller, 2011; Pleck, 2010; Roggman et al., 2002; Roopnarine, 2004).

Although few in number, there are also some local studies on father involvement in the Ethiopian context. For instance, Belay Tefera (2014) indicates that paternal involvement is multidimensional and it has direct and indirect ways, acting and capacity building roles and caring and masculine-oriented desires of fathers' involvement with children. Similarly, Belay Tefera and Dawit Solomon (2015) suggest that there is a state of transitioning in paternal involvement from the accessibility to the responsibility dimension. This study further confirms that fathers score far less in the engagement dimension of fatherhood. At the same time, Belay Tefera (2008) indicates that most of the Ethiopian fathers are characterized by masculine oriented personality traits, bread winning roles, and masculine oriented childrearing activities. In connection to this, Alemayehu Fantahun (2009) also reports that among Oromo society women are highly represented in activities such as cooking, cleaning and child care (the home making role) whereas men are represented in activities such as managing, financing and farming (the bread-winning role). Jeylan Hussein (2004) also states that there is a spatial stratification and differentiation of the household activities between men and women among the Oromo society. Moreover, Hirut Terefe (2012) reports that the psychological orientation of females to the domestic sphere and males to the public domain is reproduced largely through the culturally guided efforts of male children to differentiate themselves from the feminine world. Dame Abera (2014) also indicates the existence of gender-segregated parental roles

among the Arsi Oromo. **Hiwot Ethiopia** (2015) also points out that within the Ethiopian societies families are traditionally patriarchal and the father holds the power to make decisions regarding the household, including child rearing, disciplining and education.

Statement of the Problem

Though there is an increasing recognition that father involvement is on rise worldwide and is in a state of transition from the accessibility to the engagement dimensions even in the Ethiopian context, there is a lack of empirical research in various contexts in Ethiopia such as the context of Arsi Oromo. Despite the efforts made to study father involvement in a wider context of the Ethiopian culture, no local studies have been conducted so far in the area in the context of Arsi Oromo culture. Not much is known about Arsi Oromo fathers - how they perceive their roles, how they involve with their children, what obstacles get in the way of their involvement, and what impact they have on their children. These, in fact, require theoretically pertinent and empirically sound answers.

Similarly, although it is established that a number of factors determine fathers' level of involvement in childcare tasks, there is no information as to which of these factors practically influence Arsi fathers' involvement in the life of their children. Furthermore, it would be proper to identify which fatherhood models predominates in the context of Arsi Ormo culture.

Besides, much of what is known about father involvement in childrearing is limited to Ethiopian cultures in general and to some small-scale observational studies of European American middle-class families. However, relying on findings from such studies of fathers' involvement not only restricts our understanding of the complex nature of father involvement and its effects on young children, but it may not also be generalized to and reflective of the specific cultures like that of Arsi Oromo. At the same time, the lack of accurate research-based and empirical data on the level, models, effects, and determinants of father involvement in the context of Arsi culture may result in a lack of

understanding on the part of policy-makers, health and social workers of what appropriate parenting interventions should be taken and what services need to be planned for fathers.

Generally, as Ethiopia is a country of multicultural societies and as each society has its own unique cultural values, beliefs and practices, the study of paternal involvement in the context of Arsi Oromo culture deserves adequate attention. This shows that there is a need to study fathering in culture-specific contexts using a variety of data sources, research designs and data generation methods. This study is an attempt to fill in the gap stated above and add new knowledge on father involvement, particularly in the context of Arsi Oromo culture.

This research focuses on the following basic issues:

- What Arsi Oromo fathers consider as their roles in family life;
- The extent of Arsi Oromo fathers' involvement in childrearing tasks;
- Which dimensions of father involvement Arsi Oromo fathers score high;
- Whether there is a significant difference in Arsi Oromo fathers' involvement in childrearing activities by the residence, occupation, and educational level of fathers, and
- Factors perceived to affect the involvement of Arsi Oromo fathers in childrearing tasks.

Methodology

Participants

This study employed mixed methods research design based on its appropriateness to the study's research questions and generation of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single research (Bazeley, 2004; Bryman, 2006; Greene, 2008; Johnson, and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The study also employed childrearing fathers and mothers, primary school teachers, community elders, and religious leaders of Arsi Oromo as the main data sources. Arsi (both East and West Arsi Zones) was purposively chosen as a study site. According to the

central statistics agency (CSA, 2008), there were 36 woredas in the two Arsi zones. From these, one Woreda was selected for the pilot test and five Woredas were selected for the main study randomly. Moreover, from each of the Woredas, three Kebeles, in which the households resided, were selected at random.

Generally, the current study employed 260 samples (221 fathers for questionnaire, 7 households for observation, and 32 discussants for FGD). Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 221 samples of fathers (2% of the target population of 11,050) for the quantitative part of the study based on Neuman's (1997) guideline and on the grounds that Arsi Oromo are homogeneous. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select 32 discussants of the FGD and seven households who have children from infancy to three years old for observation for the qualitative part of the study. The existing literature (e.g., Bazeley, 2004; Byers and Wilcox, 1991; Duggleby, 2005; Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007; Webb and Kevern, 2001) shows that in mixed methods studies, because of the complexities of data it generates, samples for qualitative investigations tend to be smaller, and drawn purposively.

Instruments

The study employed focus group discussion (what informants perceive about themselves and other parents), self-report questionnaire (what fathers say they do, think, or feel), and observation guide (what parents actually do) to collect information about the extent to which Arsi fathers' involve in childrearing tasks.

A focus-group discussion guide consisting of five (5) unstructured items was developed by the researcher to capture information about the perceived roles, dimensions of fatherhood and factors that affect Arsi Oromo fathers' involvement in childrearing activities.

Similarly, a self-report father involvement questionnaire consisting of 22 Likert-type items were employed to capture information about the dimensions of fatherhood in which Arsi fathers perceive themselves to involve in most. The paternal involvement scale consisted of three

subscales: engagement (13 items), accessibility (3 items), and responsibility (6 items). This father involvement scale was adapted from the original instrument of Minton and Pasley (1996). According to these authors, the internal consistency reliability in terms of Cronbach's alpha is .90 for the full scale; .69 for engagement subscale; .73 for accessibility subscale; and .79 for responsibility subscale. Fathers responded to each item on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). At the same time, fathers received a composite score for each of the three subscales separately, and a high score for each subscale indicates that the father is highly involved in that particular dimension of childrearing.

Moreover, a spot-observation guide consisting of 12 unstructured items was adapted from Best's (2001) modified version of the Munroe's and Munroe's original spot-observation technique for this study. This guideline was employed for it allows direct access to the childrearing households to watch the actual father-child interaction in the home-settings.

Procedures

An attempt was made to translate questionnaire items into the local language of the participants, Afan Oromo, for ease and convenience. For those participants who were totally unable to read and write in the target language, the Afan Oromo language teachers teaching in the upper primary schools with the diploma/degree were used as data enumerators. An attempt was also made to orient the data enumerators on how to administer the questionnaire and record the responses. Prior to the actual data collection, an attempt was made to contact the study participants to get their oral consent to participate in the study and to explain the purpose of the study. Four FGDs were conducted (two FGDs in urban settings and two FGDs in rural settings). An attempt was made to record the FGD responses using both on site field-notes and audio/video recordings. In average, the FGDs took a period of one hour and a half. All the FGDs were moderated by the researcher with the help of a trained data recorder.

Moreover, all the household observations were conducted by the researcher at varying time while the parents were interacting with their children. Generally, all the three data gathering tools were administered in a face to face approach.

In analyzing qualitative data (both FGDs and household observations), thematic analysis method was employed. So as to secure confidentiality in the transcription and analysis of qualitative data, codes were used to represent the participants rather than their actual names. In analyzing the quantitative data, one-sample t-test, independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were employed. In fact, prior to using these parametric tests an attempt was made to check their model assumptions.

Results

The main purpose of the present study was to assess the roles, levels, dimensions and factors affecting Arsi Oromo fathers' involvement in child care activities. To realize this purpose both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed in integration.

Perceived Roles of Arsi Oromo Fathers

Data for addressing this research question were mainly generated through FGDs. The FGD discussants were asked to describe what Arsi Oromo fathers perceive as their fathering roles. According to the majority of the FGD discussants, Arsi Oromo fathers perceived their fathering role as economic provision, performing masculine roles, resolving disputes within the lineage and community, and representing the family in public gatherings and ritual ceremonies.

In support of this, one rural FGD discussant reported:

In the majority of Arsi households, fathers assume their fathering roles as role-modeling their children through performing masculine activities such as farming, building huts and houses for family living, constructing fences and sheds for cattle; crop production; preparing grazing and cultivated lands; as representing the family in public sphere of settling conflicts or disputes in a society, public gatherings and ritual ceremonies; and as breadwinners in providing food, shelter, and clothing to the family.

Similarly, an urban discussant of the FGD reported:

Domestic tasks are not generally perceived by the general society as men's territory. No single Arsi father perceives his roles as performing domestic tasks such as child caring, cooking, and cleaning.

Generally, the findings indicated above showed that providing an income for the family and engaging in the public sphere of paid employment were viewed both by the larger society and most of the Arsi Oromo fathers as the central fathering roles. This clearly implies that whereas the models of fatherhood as breadwinner and sex-role modeling are dominant, the model of fatherhood as a co-parent, emotionally involved or nurturing in which fathers are expected to participate in the socialization and development of children as well as equally share with spouse the work of caring for children is not a customary practice in the context of Arsi Oromo.

Perceived Level of Arsi Oromo Fathers' Involvement in Childrearing Tasks

Data for addressing this research question was mainly generated through FGDs. The FGD discussants were asked to reflect their views about the extent to which they involve in childrearing activities in the

context of Arsi culture. The responses of most of the FGD discussants generally showed that whereas mothers were mostly over burdened with all household tasks including childrearing activities, fathers' level of involvement in household chores and childrearing tasks was insignificant.

In connection with this, one rural discussant of the FGD said: *among the majority of Arsi households of our locality, domestic tasks such as child care and indoor activities are mainly considered as mothers' job.*

At the same time, one urban mother of the FGD discussant expressed:

I am a mother of three children...I and my husband work in government organizations, and we are both dual earners....when I am in the workplace there is a house worker who cares for children and who performs household tasks...when I get back from the work place, I feed children, check whether the day's activities are accomplished, and perform the chores left undone...my husband usually comes home being late in the evening...this is because the existing societal norms assign domestic tasks to mothers and outdoor tasks to fathers...

In sum, the findings indicated above make clear that Arsi Oromo fathers' engagement in childrearing tasks is minimal and that household chores are perceived as the exclusive tasks of mothers.

Dimensions of Fathers' Involvement in Childrearing Tasks

The quantitative data for addressing this research question were generated through questionnaire scales as summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: *One-sample t-test on the Dimensions of Fathers' Involvement*

DV	N	Mean	SD	Test value	t	P
FES	221	37.29	6.34	39	16.63	.096
FAS	221	8.61	1.87	9	10.12	.073
FRS	221	23.3	4.6	18	17.72	.02

Key: FES-Father Engagement Scale, FAS-Father Accessibility Scale, and FRS-Father Responsibility Scale

One-sample t-test was used to test the dimensions of fatherhood in which fathers were dominantly involved. The one-sample t-test shows statistically significant result for the responsibility dimension [$t(220) = 17.72, p = .02$] while it yields statistically non-significant results for the engagement dimension [$t(220) = 16.63, p = .096$] and for the accessibility dimension [$t(220) = 10.12, p = .073$]. This means that while most of the Arsi Oromo fathers take the responsibility of ensuring the survival, closing and health status of their children, the tendency to be available for their children and involve in the actual child care activities is minimal.

Variations in Arsi Oromo Fathers' Level of Involvement in Childrearing Activities

Both the household observations and questionnaire scales provided the data for addressing the above research issue. In terms of paternal interactional behaviors, the analysis of household observation data showed that fathers were observed to make more verbal (talking) interactions with their children, while mothers were witnessed to make more visual interaction or attention giving (looking) with their children. Similarly, mothers more than fathers were observed to make physical contact (holding, carrying, hugging, picking, and kissing) with their children. Moreover, although the tendency to purposely plan and invest time with children as well as deliberately draw children into conversations that aims to improve children's reasoning and communication skills was not seen among the households observed,

generally mothers were seen to invest more time with children than fathers.

In terms of responsiveness to the target child's basic needs, the analysis of household observation data showed that mothers were observed to be more responsive to their children's basic needs (child's cry for food, sanitation, play, concern, and requests for support or attention) than fathers. Moreover, the physical care activities (diapering, bathing, sleep rituals, feeding, and dressing) were witnessed to be exclusively performed by mothers in all the households observed.

In terms of guiding the target child toward planned activities, the analysis of household observation data generally indicated that the practice of systematically and intentionally setting age-appropriate sequence of activities for children, shifting the activities based on children's attention span and interest, and properly directing children towards the chain of activities was generally seen to be minimal among the Arsi Oromo households observed. However, the practice of directing children towards engagement in activities that children spontaneously create while playing with elder children, and providing guidance to children on such activities was observed to be more performed by mothers than by fathers. Based on the household observation data, the frequency of fathers' interaction with children, responsiveness and sensitivity to children's basic needs, guidance of children to a variety of play activities, and training of children on what and how to do things is very limited compared with that of mothers among the Arsi Oromo households observed.

Table 2 and 3 indicate the quantitative data for addressing the research question about the variations in childrearing activities.

Table 2: *Independent t-test of Fathers' Level of Involvement as a Function of Residence*

DV		residence	N	Mean	SD	T	P
Paternal Involvement	FIS	Rural	125	82.04	12.51	-1.296	.196
		Urban	96	84.12	10.96		

It was hypothesized that paternal involvement in childrearing activities varied as a function of residence. An independent t-test was performed to test the prediction. However, the result of the study did not provide support for the research hypothesis. No statistically significant difference was obtained for paternal involvement in childrearing tasks as a function of residence [$t(219) = -1.296, P = .196$]. This means rural and urban fathers do not differ substantially in the way they involve in childrearing tasks; they treat their children; interact with their children; and provide physical and emotional care for their children.

Table 3: *Ns, Means, SDs, F values, and P values for testing differences in father involvement by the educational level and occupational status of fathers (N= 221)*

DV	IV		N	Mean	SD	F	P
	Educational level	Not educated	37	75.4	5.69	4.07	.042
		Primary	80	76.3	4.55		
		Secondary	37	78.5	5.31		
		Diploma	36	82.1	4.59		
		First degree	31	88.6	6.25		
FI	Occupation	Professional/managerial	45	89.2	6.89	4.74	.039
		Technical/clerical	22	82.4	5.74		
		Manual/service	44	76.5	5.13		
		Farming	110	73.7	4.65		

The study compared the level of fathers' involvement in childrearing tasks as a function of the educational level and their occupational status. A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to test the comparison. The results of ANOVA provided support to the hypothesis. The findings revealed significant differences in the level of fathers' involvement by the educational level [$F(4, 216) = 4.07, P < .05$] and the

occupational status [$F(3, 217) = 4.74, P < .05$] of fathers. In terms of educational level, post hoc analysis using LSD showed the existence of significant mean differences between not-educated and diploma; not-educated and 1st degree; primary education and diploma; and primary education and 1st degree. Similarly, in terms of occupational status, post hoc analysis showed the existence of significant mean differences between professional/managerial and farming; between professional/managerial and service; and between clerical and farming. The findings generally showed that Arsi fathers who were more educated and engaged in professional work tended to involve in childrearing tasks (treat their children; interact with their children; and provide physical and emotional care for their children) more often than fathers who were less educated and who were engaged in manual and farming occupations.

Perceived Factors Affecting Arsi Oromo Fathers' Involvement in Childrearing Tasks

Data for addressing this research question was mainly generated through FGDs. The FGD discussants were asked to describe factors that they thought could affect the involvement of Arsi Oromo fathers in childrearing activities. Generally, the responses of most of the FGD discussants showed that gender role orientation; cultural and societal expectations, beliefs and attitudes embedded within the traditional proverbs/sayings; fathers' perceived workloads in outdoor activities; patriarchal family structure; and religious beliefs were perceived as the major factors affecting Arsi Oromo father's level of involvement in childrearing activities.

In relation to this, one rural discussant of the FGD expressed:

Because of the deep-rooted gender based division of roles and harmful traditional beliefs and attitudes in the society, Arsi Oromo fathers are not encouraged to involve in childrearing activities. Moreover, in the rural settings where the father is considered as the head of the family, those men who are found to support their wives in domestic tasks are perceived by the society as a fool...where such a perception is commonly expressed in a traditional saying 'kuni gowwaa beerti mana keessa ergattuudha' (he is a fool ordered by a woman in the home).

Similarly, one urban discussant of the FGD said:

Among the majority of Arsi fathers, there is a belief that supporting wives with domestic tasks will encourage them to overload their husbands with tasks of their own territory, where such a belief to a great extent limits fathers' involvement in childrearing activities and is commonly expressed in a popular Arsi proverb: 'garbittiin gargaarsa argatte majii dhoksiti' (a servant who received support from others hides a grinding-stone).

At the same time, one religious leader of the FGD discussants reported:

There are religious orientations or beliefs in the society that make childrearing a better choice for women. For instance, the sharia law suggests that it is the responsibility of the wife to feed, nurture and care for children while the husband is responsible for generating income.

Generally, summary of the findings and part of the discussions and opinions presented above imply that there are clear gender-segregated divisions of roles for mothers and fathers; that their perceptions and participations in domestic tasks are in line with these gender division of roles; and that men's interference in women's jobs is considered as violation of the cultural norms or breaking the societal moral values (locally known as *safuu*). It also implies that in the tradition of Arsi Oromo, males and females are expected to act in accordance with the traditionally defined sex-roles that do not encourage males to involve in domestic tasks, including child care activities.

Discussion

This study showed that Arsi Oromo fathers generally perceived their fathering roles as bread-winning/economic providing, resolving disputes within the lineage and community, performing masculine tasks, and representing the family in public gatherings. This suggests that the traditional financial provider, role-modeling, protector and disciplinarian model of fatherhood is predominant among Arsi Oromo fathers. In such fatherhood model, as shown in the reviewed literature, fathers were physically present but functionally absent in the actual life and physical care of their children. In fact, such gender-role ideologies, attitudes, perceptions and practices might have been developed and internalized by fathers from their own childhood experiences of their parents' every day demonstration, enactment and involvement in a gender segregated role system and observations of the wider societies' sex-segregated socialization. The finding also suggests that the

emotionally involved and co-parenting model of fatherhood is not well developed in the context of Arsi Oromo culture. Though the traditional one-dimensional approach of the financial provider role might have been sufficient to fulfill the paternal role, fathers today are expected to be more than just a financial provider, embracing a more multidimensional notion of fathering such as engaging in the physical care, emotional support, academic support, and verbal interaction with their children.

Generally, the current finding is consistent with the results of previous studies conducted in the Ethiopian context. For example, Belay (2008) found out that most of the Ethiopian fathers are characterized by masculine oriented personality traits, bread winning roles, and masculine oriented childrearing activities. However, the current finding is inconsistent with the global literature. For instance, a number of research work (e.g., Day and Lamb, 2004; Lamb, 2002; Lamb et al., 1985; UN, 2011) consistently showed that father ideal has shifted from the disciplinarian and breadwinning models to the more involved fathering model. As also suggested by Palkovitz (2002), Cohen (2001), and Cabrera et al. (2000), beginning from the 1970s the more involved and nurturing model of fatherhood has received increased recognition.

This study also revealed that Arsi Oromo fathers' level of involvement in childrearing tasks is minimal. This implies that Arsi fathers' engagement in the physical child care activities, preparing children for adult roles, and monitoring their children's social as well as academic life is scarce. In fact, this tendency of Arsi fathers to report low level of involvement in childrearing tasks seems to match with the reality on the ground. This is because gender segregated division of roles, patriarchal family structure, and deep-rooted traditional gender role identity are the customary practices of Arsi society. Hence, in a society where traditionally defined sex-role is highly prevalent, there is a traditional family structure in which mothers are generally perceived as housewives and fathers as bread-winners; and the role of child care-giving is considered as the exclusive activity of mothers; it is not reasonable to expect a strong engagement dimension of fatherhood.

The finding is consistent with the existing literature. For instance, Bonney et al. (1999) pointed out that in all societies of the world fathers' role in caregiving is minimal since culture assigns different roles to fathers and mothers. Similarly, in a study of mothers' and fathers' perceptions of paternal involvement in child care in Uganda, Nkwake (2009) indicated that housework is traditionally regarded a domain of women, while men's place is largely understood to be in the wage employment sector, and the breadwinners of the family.

Furthermore, results of the study indicated that the involvement of Arsi Oromo fathers in the engagement and accessibility dimensions of fatherhood was minimal, while their involvement in the responsibility dimension was significantly high. Though the interaction or engagement dimension of fatherhood was believed to be strongly linked to children's developmental outcomes, this was missing in the Arsi Oromo fathers. In fact, this is consistent with the previous findings of Belay and Dawit (2015). In their study, Belay and Dawit (2015) found out high scores of paternal involvement in the responsibility dimension, and low scores of paternal involvement in the engagement dimension of fatherhood. However, the current finding is inconsistent with studies conducted outside of Ethiopia. For instance, the research findings of Pleck (2007) and Roggman et al. (2002) suggested that increased paternal engagement had enormous implications for children's social, emotional and cognitive development. In a similar vein, attachment theory suggests that children establish secure emotional attachment and sustained relationships with fathers who are emotionally responsive to their children's basic physical and emotional needs.

Likewise, this study also revealed that there is no substantial variation between rural and urban fathers in the level of their involvement in childrearing activities. This implies that both the rural and urban fathers seem to equally participate in caring and nurturing their children in the context of Arsi households. This might be associated with the cultural, religious, economic and social resemblance among the Arsi households of rural and urban settings. On the contrary, results revealed that fathers' involvement in childrearing tasks vary by the

educational levels and occupational status of fathers. This finding showed that well educated than less educated fathers tend to involve more in the actual child care tasks. Similarly, fathers who engaged in professional work than those who engaged in manual and farming occupations tend to involve more in childrearing tasks. This implies that increasing fathers' level of awareness and knowledge base will, in turn, increase their understanding of child development and their role or expectation as fathers. It also implies that fathers who engage in professional work tend to earn more, will have more time to spend with their children and can provide for their children's basic needs. Generally, this finding is consistent with the existing body of research. For instance, Cabrera et al. (2007), UN (2011), and U.S. Department of Education (2001) suggested that fathers with high level of education are more likely to be involved more with their children than fathers with low level of education.

Finally, the study indicated that gender role attitude and orientation, cultural and societal expectations, traditional proverbs/sayings, traditionally defined sex-roles, fathers' perceived high workload in outdoor activities, patriarchal family structure and fear of being humiliated by the society were generally perceived as factors affecting Arsi Oromo father's level of involvement in childrearing activities. Hence, the finding of this study is consistent with the existing body of literature. For instance, Nkwake (2009) showed that apparent lack of fathers' involvement in child care could at least, in part, be influenced by traditional family structure and, in part, be influenced by culture, in which male and female members of the society are assigned different roles. Similarly, as suggested by McBride et al. (2005), the way in which fathers define their roles (bread-winning or home-making) influences the quality and quantity of child-father behaviors. As also indicated by Sanderson and Thompson (2002) fathers' gender orientation (masculinity, femininity or androgynous) influences the level of fathers' involvement in child care activities. Moreover, Bonney et al. (1999) found out that fathers who reported more liberal gender role

ideology were more involved in the day-to-day care of their children than were the traditionally masculine fathers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions of the results made above, the following conclusions could be drawn. The results generally revealed that most of the Arsi Oromo fathers perceive their fathering roles as financial provider and disciplinarian. This implies that the emotionally involved, nurturing and co-parenting model of fatherhood was not dominant and did not still receive adequate recognition as well as yet to be practiced in the context of Arsi culture.

It is also indicated that paternal involvement in the interactional or engagement dimension of fatherhood (direct participation in the childrearing activities) was still minimal. This implies that Arsi mothers are still overburdened with the early socialization of children, domestic tasks and child care activities. It also implies that despite the attempts made so far no concrete transformation of gender relation was achieved or no transition was made so far from the distant breadwinner to the co-parent fatherhood model. It might also imply that the efforts exerted at creating a balance between the paid work and family life as well as egalitarian gender roles and attitudes among Arsi households were not a success story. The reported low level of Arsi Oromo fathers' engagement in the lives of their children could also be related to lack of adequate information about good and shared parenting.

Moreover, the study showed that the major factors perceived to affect Arsi Oromo fathers' level of involvement in childrearing tasks include patriarchal family structure, sex-segregated division of roles, lack of egalitarian gender attitude and identity, and harmful traditional beliefs and practices. This implies that the necessary interventions need be taken to curb the situation and increase fathers' direct interaction with their children.

In sum, though the present study had several strengths such as the use of mixed methods research design as well as triangulation of data sources (childrearing mothers and fathers, community elders, religious

leaders, primary school teachers); data collection instruments (self-report questionnaire, FGD, and observation); and data analysis techniques (qualitative and quantitative), it is not without limitation. For instance, though older children are capable of accurately reporting about their parents' behaviors, their perceptions of paternal behaviors were not assessed in the current study. Therefore, in interpreting and using the results of the current study, this limitation needs to be taken into an account.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions made above, the following suggestions are forwarded. As revealed in the present study, most of the Arsi Oromo fathers perceive their fathering role as bread-winning; and scored low in the engagement dimension of fatherhood. Similarly, fathers' level of involvement in childrearing activities was found to be minimal and increased with increased educational level of fathers. This means that well-educated fathers than less educated fathers are found to be more involved in child care tasks. Therefore, social welfare organizations and various government structures need to design parental education in which fathers will get continuous and adequate training on child development, their roles and expectations and the importance of their involvement in shaping the behavior of their children as suggested in various theories of development and policy documents.

At the same time, the social and family policy makers can include in the revised family code and women's policy documents that will explicitly describe about the necessity of shared parenting, how spouses make a balance between the paid work and family life; and how gender equality and egalitarian gender attitudes can be developed.

The public administrators set up at various levels are also advised to prepare concrete and workable manuals and guidelines for social workers, professionals and practitioners so that they can design and provide awareness creation training on the importance of shared parenting and egalitarian gender roles for parents (mothers and fathers) at various local and institutional settings such as Kebele

administration, local and informal social support organizations (*senbete, idir, ikub* and *mahiber bet*), public gatherings, religious settings, and work place settings.

This study also has implications for future research. In addition to self-report and observations of paternal behaviors, further research should also employ children's perception of their paternal involvement in domestic and childrearing tasks.

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