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Culture and conduct of fatherhood in India: Are they in synchrony

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Abstract--The paper aims to add to the scant fatherhood literature in Asia and focuses on the link between culture and conduct of fatherhood in India. The specific objectives of the research are to: (1) explore men's perception of an ideal father (culture), (2) study men's participation in parenting (conduct), and (3) examine whether men's behaviour is in accordance with the beliefs. Using data gathered through semi-structured interviews with 350 fathers of children aged zero to 10 years in Mumbai, India, the results indicate that although the notion of fatherhood is changing, a sizeable proportion of men still see 'ideal' fathers in the traditional role of surety, economic provider and/or role model. The actual role performance of fathers is not always consistent with their perception of ideal fatherhood. Identifying the gap between fatherhood ideology and practice and, its correlates may help motivate fathers for increased involvement in day-to-day family work.

Keywords---fatherhood, India, culture, conduct.

Introduction

In recent years, fatherhood has become a topic of intense discussion, not only in countries of the West but all around the world. In the developed nations, demographic changes in rates of cohabitation, marriage, divorce, remarriage, and nonmarital childbearing underlie a cultural shift, which has resulted in new ways that men and women define parental roles (Cabrera, 2010). The reasons for the expansion of the field of research on fathering in Asia are, however, somewhat different. Apart from the popular interest in father-child relations, fathering

research has attracted the attention of social scientists in Asia because the images and behavior of fathers changed rapidly under the impact of globalization (Shwalb et al, 2010).

Several researchers have noted that the perception and role of fatherhood have been changing dramatically over the years (Pleck 1987; LaRossa 1988; Coltrane 1995; Shimoni and Baxter, 1996; Lupton and Barclay 1997; Weiss 1999; Ranson 2001; Carpenter, 2002). The shift in the culture of fatherhood has entailed higher expectations for father involvement in the care of young children (Wall and Arnold, 2007). Reasons for such shift may be varied. In case of India, Kakar (2010) noted that a major change in the notions of fatherhood among middleclass Indian men since last few decades has been initiated by the increasing prominence attached to the 'couple' as the fulcrum of family life. Datta (2007) stating that "fathers are now facing a serious challenge in parenting and striving to redefine the idea of fatherhood" attributes this shift to stressful workplace, cut-throat competition, and extended hours and travel.

Understanding Indian fatherhood requires that one has a sense of the traditional Hindu culture which importantly shapes fatherhood. Hindu scriptures delineate the roles and responsibilities of each partner in a marriage. Spousal roles in Hindu Indian society entail greater entitlements for husbands and greater responsibilities for wives (Agarwal, 1994; Jeffery, 1979; Raheja & Gold, 1994). A husband's primary responsibilities are to provide material support for his family and to make important family decisions (Ross, 1967) while women are obligated to cook, clean, labour and care for their husbands and children (Jain and Banerjee, 1985). The Indian father is traditionally an overtly emotionally distant disciplinarian who formulates and embodies the ideals of the family (Roland, 1991). The image of father in ancient Indian society is, however, unclear. Kakar (2000) in defense of his work *The Inner World* stated that fatherly love is no less strong in India than in other societies. He further added that "...autobiographical accounts depict the Indian father as a sensitive man of love and charged with feelings for his sons, for he too grew up with similar needs and longings."

In modern India, which is marked by the fast pace of development, reflected in its remarkable growth in the economic, technological and industrial sectors, the equation between man and woman is changing. The rapid economic changes have a definitive impact on key aspects of family life. Families seem to be employing adaptive strategies in meeting the demands of a more industrialized and literate Indian Culture. Indian men are forced to change their ideological orientations regarding responsibilities for childcare, as their wives become viable economic partners (Roopnarine and Suppal, 2003). The metamorphosis of the role of father can be attributed to society's moving away from being an agrarian society to the new age nuclear families (Fernandes, 2010). These changes necessitate a need to view some Indian families as less centrally driven by folklore and mythology and here, arises the question of culture and conduct of fatherhood.

LaRossa (1988) used the terms "culture of fatherhood" and "conduct of fatherhood" to differentiate the dominant imagery of fatherhood and the actual execution of paternal roles. Although culture and conduct often are assumed to

be linked, exactly how they are linked is a matter of dispute (LaRossa and Reitzes, 1993). LaRossa (1988), in an earlier study, stated that many times the two (the culture and conduct of fatherhood) are not synchronized at all. He observed that the lack of fit, or asynchrony, between culture and the conduct of fatherhood can cause problems; it may increase mother's expectations for help in childcare which is not forthcoming. The conflicting ideas of parental roles within the family may create tension between marital partners. This may also lead to anxiety among men towards their performance as fathers. Failing to be whom one wants to be does not feel good and such self-discrepancies lead to emotional distress (Ogilvie, 1987). This is true for fathering too as observed by McBride (1991) who stated that 'one possible consequence of this disparity between culture and conduct of fatherhood may be greater levels of stress experienced by men in their parental roles. Perception of individuals towards fatherhood – be it gender role expectations, or perception of the peer group, or fathering received by individual fathers – has also been found to be important in determining paternal involvement in childcare (Saraff and Srivastava, 2010).

Past Research

Fatherhood ideology and conduct of fatherhood in India have been looked at separately in several studies over the last few decades. However, few previous researches have attempted to explain the incongruence between culture and conduct of fatherhood in India, although culture-conduct connection has often been discussed in Western countries in the recent past. In view of scarcity of pertinent literature in the Indian context, the paper proceeds with a discussion of research in the Indian subcontinent which would, undoubtedly, help us in conceptualizing the study.

Kurtz (1992), in his classic ethnographic work, offers an insight into childrearing practices in India that expand the spheres of involvement of men in child care. He has vividly commented on the interpretations of child rearing, particularly the writings of Carstairs (1967), Kakar (1978), and Roland (1988) and Seymour (1975). Minturn and Hitchcock's study (1966) among the Rajputs of Khalapur (India) also merits citation. Their findings revealed that the mother had the main responsibility occasionally assisted by mother-in-law or other relatives or neighbours; husbands did not help in child care. Seymour (1999) comparing family and child-rearing practices among two systems, representing caste and class system of stratification, opined that gender differentiated roles and responsibilities remain to be strong principle of the Indian family. She found that women were still expected to confine themselves to their private life, looking after the children and engaging themselves in domestic chores. Saseendran (2000) had similar observations in his study of Vettuvans of Kerela. His findings revealed that that male involvement in childcare was restricted to playing with the child outside the house and showing the child the world outside the home. The control exerted by cultural norms on parenthood is quite strong as evidenced by Ramu's (1987, 1989) study. He found that spouses in both single and dual-earner families tend to agree on the ideal husband, with dual earner wives more conservative in the role perception. His study revealed that continuing influence of traditional values governing marital roles has encouraged wives to defer their husbands even though they share the provider role. Moreover, wives consider performing

household duties as part of their obligation as good wives and mothers (Ramu, 1989). Suppal et al. (1996) concluded that husbands and wives showed no difference in ideological beliefs on issues related to childcare, household chores, financial responsibilities, or filial obligations but that differences existed as a function of family structure and whether or not the wife worked outside the home. Using findings from observational studies of parent-infant interactions and care in diverse cultures around the world as a barometer, Roopnarine and Suppal (2003) argued that fathers are more centrally involved in the Indian child's life than has been previously acknowledged.

In addition to most of the literature which have studied Indian fatherhood in general, studies specific to Muslims may also be important because of Muslims form a large part of in the Indian population. Lateef (1990) investigating Muslim fatherhood practices in India found that 69 percent of husbands helped their wives with household chores (as reported by their wives). Jahn and Aslam (1995) researching fatherhood in a squatter settlement in Karachi revealed that apart from their basic role as breadwinners, most fathers participate directly in childcare. As far as working hours allow, most fathers spent some time with their children and engaged in activities like playing, taking them out and carrying them around. They also helped their wives in child care activities like feeding, soothing, bathing, and giving medicine; a considerable minority even change nappies.

Modest attempts to conduct empirical investigations of family structure and functioning in modern India begun in the late 1980s (e.g., Ramu, 1987; Roopnarine, Talukder, Jain, Joshi, and Srivastav, 1990, 1992). However, little has been done to examine the link between culture and conduct of fatherhood in India. This paper uses empirical data to shed light on the question of culture-conduct synchrony-asynchrony. The research aims to explore men's perception about fatherhood ideology (culture) and men's participation in parenting (conduct). It further attempts to examine whether men's behaviour is in accordance with the beliefs. Using responses from fathers, the study seeks to explore the cultural understandings of fatherhood in terms of perceived ideal paternal role and how much do these fathers really do for their child.

Sample

The 350 fathers who participated in the study were selected through purposive quota sampling procedure from a residential locality in Mumbai. Mumbai, has a cosmopolitan population with representatives of virtually every linguistic and religious group of India, hence was chosen for the study. The city is characterized by steadily growing population through in-migration. Very precisely, Mumbai has been described as "Ancient yet modern, fabulously rich yet achingly poor". For administrative purposes, the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai is divided into 23 wards according to Census of India 1991. Each of these wards has several health posts. For the present study, one health post was randomly selected from a ward that was chosen purposively in view of time and money constraints. The total area covered by the selected health post, which caters to a population of approximately 35,600, is further divided into 35 smaller units. Each residential colony, housing society and slum is identified as one unit. Equal number of fathers from single-earner and dual-earner families was included in the study. All

respondents were biological parents to at least one child aged 10 years or below. Ten households – 5 single-earner and 5 dual-earner households – from each of the units was selected purposively. In order to begin selecting the sample, we started with any one household in each unit, and proceeded by going from one household to the other screening for eligible couples on the basis of the following criteria: 1) Couples having at least one child less than or equal to 10 years and 2) Work status of mother of the said child. Eligible households were selected alternatively, that is, one household where the mother was working and the next where the mother was not working was selected for the study till the quota of 10 households from each of the sections was reached.

The sample consisted of predominantly Hindu fathers (72%). With regard to the distribution of the fathers by caste and tribe, it was found that nearly 26 percent belonged to scheduled castes, less than two percent to scheduled tribes and 17 percent to other backward classes. Twenty-eight percent of fathers were migrants out of which 35 percent had migrated from urban areas. Residing in nuclear family households was more widespread (58%) compared to residence in joint or extended families. The sample included mainly middle-aged fathers (median age of fathers was 35 years). The number of respondents in the age-group 30-34 was highest. Three-fourth of men were married by the age of 29 years. There was a median age gap of five years among the spouses and most of the fathers (60 percent) were married for four to 10 years. A majority of the respondents were educated up to high school or above (76%). While a very few respondents were illiterate, a fairly large proportion of the respondents reported that their level of education as graduation or above (31%). The occupational distribution of the fathers was as follows: professional/ technical/ managerial jobs (15%), clerical and related jobs (13%), sales activity (22%), unskilled manual workers (15%), skilled manual workers (12%), and services (23%). With regards to income, analysis revealed that a majority of them had an average monthly income between Rs.3000 to Rs.7000. Twenty-two percent belonged to the lowest income category while average monthly income above Rs.7000 was reported by the same percentage of fathers. The classification of fathers by standard of living is as follows: low (21%), medium (61%) and high (18%).

Data and Methods

Sampled fathers were personally interviewed by the authors in a face-to-face setting using a semi-structured interview schedules. It was thought necessary to interview fathers because studies have shown that there is less information available about fathers' opinion of themselves than mothers' opinion about fathers. Efforts were made to interview most informants in their homes, although a few had to be conducted in public places or in offices. Data regarding fathering was collected for the youngest child of the respondent father; henceforth, referred to as the "Focal Child." Quantitative as well as qualitative techniques have been adopted for the present study.

The analysis of data has been done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) package. Univariate and bivariate techniques have been used for the analysis of data. Results have been explained through contingency tables and graphs. Chi-square test has been applied to explore significant differentials.

Qualitative data collected through open-ended questions have been cited in order to support some of the findings that emerged out of the quantitative data.

Variables

Perception about ideal fatherhood: Men's perception of an ideal father was captured through an open-ended question, "What does being an ideal father mean to you?" The responses obtained from fathers were categorized into seven roles/responsibilities of a father: (1) Caretaker, (2) Surety, (3) Economic provider, (4) Playmate and friend, (5) Role model, (6) Family head, and (6) Resource. 'Caretaker' role included responses such as an ideal father is one who is aware of his child's needs, takes care of the needs, takes care of child, takes care of child's health, and/or ensures proper bringing up of his child. Planning child's future and/or being concerned about his/her studies were considered as father in the role of surety. Ideal fathers were termed as 'economic provider' if they were expected to fulfill material requirements of the family. Understanding the child, being a friend to one's child, keeping child happy are some of the responses included in father's 'playmate and friend' role. Fathers as 'role model' were those who said that an ideal father should be a role model for his child and/or make their children well-cultured. The answer that ideal father is one who takes responsibility in all family matters was termed as the 'family head.' Treat child's mother well, give time to the child and do any odd jobs for the child are the items which were put into the 'resource' role of ideal fathers.

Practice of fatherhood: In order to gauge information about practice of fatherhood, the question asked to the respondents was, "How do you involve yourself in your child's upbringing?" Fathers' responses were put in same role categories as the perception on ideal fatherhood. *Wife's work status:* The spouses of fathers were considered working if they were reported to be in paid employment irrespective of their part-time or full-time work status. *Current age of father:* Fathers were grouped into three age categories based on the exact age in years as reported by them. Fathers aged 30 years and below were designated as young fathers. Middle-aged fathers were the respondents who were 31 to 40 years old. Men above forty years were among the group of old fathers.

Standard of living index: This was a 21-item summary household measure used as a proxy to assess the economic condition of the households of which fathers were the members. The standard of living index was worked out in a manner similar to that of National Family Health Survey (NFHS)—1998–1999 (IIPS and ORC Macro 2000). It was calculated by adding up scores given to the dwelling pattern of the respondents, facilities available to the household and possession of various durable items. Higher score meant higher standard of living. *Family type:* Since this study draws sample from intact two-parent families with young children, two family types were identified – nuclear and non-nuclear. Extended and joint families were categorized as 'non-nuclear' families.

Findings

Culture of Fatherhood

The accounts of fathers about ideal fatherhood highlighted the fact that scarcely any of them saw ideal father as a ‘resource,’ that is, one who involves himself in day-to-day care of the child or spends time with children or helps his wife in household chores. Data presented in figure 1 indicate that a substantial number of fathers (59 percent), however, perceived that taking care of children is an attribute that an ideal father should possess. A considerable proportion believed in the traditional role of fathers where the father is a surety (19 percent), economic provider (15 percent), role model (12 percent) and/or family head (5 percent). It is interesting to note that providing good treatment to the child’s mother is considered to be the responsibility of an ideal father by one of the respondents. One of the fathers believed that:

“It is of utmost importance for an ideal father to ensure that he does not pass to his child any loan and/ or debt that he might have borrowed during his lifetime.” Another father said, “An ideal father is one who is always there for the child. Ideal father makes it a point to spend more and more time with the child, teaches them especially when the child is young as this is the age when the child is in his/her formative years. Ideally, fathers should be doing small little things – all odd jobs – for the child.”

One Father said: “If wife is earning and husband looks after home, only then he can be an ideal father.”

It may be pointed out that fathers spoke mainly about intangible (abstract) dimensions of fatherhood. Not even a handful of fathers – more precisely, just one respondent – mouthed participation in concrete activities (activities which require participation on one-to-one basis) as something expected of an ideal father. Few child-care activities which would require attention on a one-to-one basis without being engaged in a separate activity was included among the attributes of ideal fathers (a more detailed discussion on fatherhood ideals among Indian fathers appears in Saraff and Srivastava, 2008).

[Figure 1 about here]

Conduct of Fatherhood

The conduct of fatherhood – what fathers do in their day to day life in terms of fulfilling their fatherhood role – forms the theme of discussion for this section. Data pertaining to practiced fatherhood in figure 1 reveal that the responses of fathers regarding their actual fathering role performance were not always consistent with their perception of ideal fatherhood. Personal interviews also depicted variations in practiced fatherhood among the study group. No involvement to active involvement was exemplified by researcher’s observation during the course of data collection and from the findings of the case studies (these findings have appeared in an earlier publication, Saraff and Srivastava 2010.) While interviewing one of the fathers, the researcher observed that the father was holding the child throughout the interview as he did not want his wife

(who was taking rest) to be disturbed. Another father prepared and served tea and snacks to the interviewer while the wife was being interviewed. The statements of some of the fathers regarding practice of fatherhood would also highlight the differences in the ways they involve themselves in their child's care:

Mr. X, a businessman-father of a 5-year-old son, belonging to medium standard of living and wife being housewife said: "I involve myself in the same way my wife does. I participate in all childcare activities that my wife does, e.g., giving bath to child, feeding the child, making him ready for school, preparing favourite delicacies of child."

Mr. Y, a highly educated, contractor-father of 2 daughters, having working wife expressed: "I earn enough to take care of my child's demands."

Another father reported his participation in the care of his child by saying: I keep an eye on my child when I am around the house – where is he, what is he doing, what's up with him. Moreover, I regularly keep asking my wife about him to keep myself updated about his whereabouts.

Another viewpoint was: "I try to do as much as I can for my child. I even read books on childcare."

Ideal and Actual Fatherhood: A Comparison

There may be substantial differences between ideal and actual behaviour. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (1997) noted that a new ideal of fatherhood is emerging, both in developed and developing countries. While this ideal is, indeed evolving, practice is slow to change. LaRossa (1988) argues that the beliefs, the "culture" of fatherhood, have changed far more than the conduct of fatherhood.

The line graph (Figure 1) demonstrates that, there are no marked differences in the ideals and practices of fatherhood when we consider fathers in the role of surety and economic provider. Nevertheless, for other roles, fathers have yet to adjust their ideal view of fatherhood to reality. Noteworthy is the fact that only one father said that an ideal father should be doing "women's work" (ideal father as a resource), but in practice, 18 percent are found to do these tasks. It may be said that although fathers are taking up tasks which women were supposed to do earlier, they probably do not see these as one expected of ideal fathers. Even though three-fifths of fathers have stated that ideal father is a caretaker, their practices contradict this belief (caretaker role is perceived by 59 percent of the fathers but only 7 percent actually perform this role of the father – 52 percent point difference). An ideal father as playmate and friend is perceived by 15 percent of fathers whereas half the fathers (51 percent) say they act as playmates and friends to their children.

Differentials of Fatherhood Ideals and Practices

As discussed in the preceding section, the ideals and practices for some of the roles of the father vary considerably, while there are minor variations in other

roles. This intrigued the researchers to further examine if fathers differ by socioeconomic demographic characteristics. The analysis of data revealed statistically significant differences for some of the background characteristics of the fathers among almost all categories of fatherhood roles, both in ideology and behavior (Table 1). Interestingly, differential by fathers' educational attainment was not statistically significant for any of the paternal roles in ideology as well as practice. Caste differentials in ideal and practiced fatherhood were also not found to be significant. A look at distribution of fathers role-wise would give us a clearer picture of the existing differences.

Among men who believe fathers are caretakers, no significant differences were observed by socioeconomic status and demographic characteristics of fathers. Surprisingly, fathers in nuclear families were less likely to act as caretakers to their children. The possible reason for this discrepancy could be that the focal child for fathers in non-nuclear families (which are all joint families in this case) were mainly the first-born child while in nuclear families, they were all later-born child except for one. As expected, the proportion of 'caretaker' fathers was higher in dual-earner families, although we noticed that work status of wife did not make much difference in perception of ideal fatherhood. In addition, men whose wives worked for more number of hours in job were more likely to be caretakers to their children (not shown in the table). This establishes the fact that a considerable proportion of men believe in traditional division of labour even today whereby, the task of childrearing is assigned to women. However, men in dual-earner families participate in caretaking activities because it has become a compulsion for them more than choice. It would not be incorrect to say that men whose wives are working tend to share the childcare activities in order to ease their wives' workload. Hindu fathers were less likely to perform the caretaking role for their children as compared fathers from other religious groups. [Table 1 about here]

Data in table 1 shows that fathers do not differ much in their role of surety, neither in ideology nor practice, except for significant differences by standard of living. The figures clearly reveal that largest proportion of fathers with a medium standard of living believe ideal fathers to be surety to their children. Less than one in 10 fathers from households with low standard of living report that fathers should ideally be surety, probably because the primary concern for these fathers is to provide for their family and hence, they believe ideal fathers should be economic providers.

As regards the economic provider role, men whose wives were not working were more likely to report an ideal father in this role. In dual-earner families, men might have lesser tendency to report ideal fathers as economic providers since their wives also make an economic contribution to the family. Nevertheless, the behaviour of fathers does not go in line with the ideal, that is to say, the proportion of men with working wives was higher compared to those whose wives were not employed (though not significant). A comparison of ideal and practiced 'economic provider' fathers by standard of living revealed that the proportion of fathers in the medium category was much higher in conduct than in perception of ideal father, though the results were not statistically significant for conduct. The obvious reason could be that these men, though not deliberately, are busy providing for their children as the cost of living is rising day by day and it is

becoming difficult to make both ends meet. Looking at distribution of fathers in ideal and practice by family type, we find that more fathers actually do the economic provider role than they perceive. It may be said that though fathers in nuclear families do not perceive the provider role to be ideal fatherhood, they are tempted to do so in practice because they might feel that they are the only ones to fulfill the needs of their children.

The proportion of men who belong to Hindu religion is higher among fathers who purported that the responsibility of an ideal father is to be playmate and friend. Unlike ideology, the conduct of fathers in this regard does not show significant differences. Fathers in nuclear as well as non-nuclear families seem to be equal in terms of being playmate and friend to their children.

Pertaining to duty of being a role model, the proportion of men staying in nuclear families is higher among those who said this role as ideal for fathers. On the contrary, a higher proportion of fathers among those who put this role into practice live in non-nuclear families. It is noteworthy that fathers with working wives were less likely to act as role models to their children.

Not much can be said from the available data about fathers in the role of family head because of the small number of the cases. Same is true for ideal fathers as resource. Nevertheless, as has already been said, quite a few fathers in the sample actually report themselves to be a resource to their children, and differences in this fatherhood role are significant for fathers' age and religion. Middle-aged fathers are more likely to be doing small little jobs for their child as compared to younger or older fathers. Similarly, higher proportion of Hindu fathers performs the role of a resource when compared to fathers from other religions.

Do fathers practice what they perceive and vice-versa?

A look into incongruence between fathers' perception and conduct shows low level of agreement between the two. It stands out clearly that a maximum of 19 percent of the fathers (total of all cases where there is agreement in ideal and practice) perform their role in the same manner as they perceive it (Table 2). More interestingly, none of the fathers who believe that fathers should be family head or a resource perform this role in actual practice. The number of men who claim that they perform the role of caretaker, surety, or economic provider in accordance to their belief of an ideal father lies mainly between 11 and 13. Fathers with concurrent reports of playmate and friend and role model, as ideal as well as practice of fathering, are 27 and four in number (40 percent and 9 percent) respectively. [Table 2 about here]

One can say *a priori* that whatever a person perceives, he would practice the same or vice versa. To put it differently, whatever one practices, he would justify that particular behaviour as ideal. Speaking of fathers who practice what they perceive, it can be said that more than half the male respondents who perceive fathers to be playmate and friend also actually prove to be the same. Results presented in table 2 shows that around one in five fathers are economic providers or sureties in perception as well as conduct. Among men who believe ideal fathers

to be caretakers, only three out of every 50 perform this role in their day-to-day life.

An analysis of fathers who perceive what they practice shows that more than half the fathers who report themselves as caretakers to their children also perceive this role as part of ideal fatherhood. Twenty-one percent of the fathers who are sureties or economic providers to their children perceive ideal fathers in the same role. Three out of twenty fathers who act as playmate and friend to their children perceive the same responsibility of an ideal father. Near about the same proportion of men who said they are role models agree on ideal father's role being the same.

Identification of fathers who exhibited conformity was followed by an investigation into the characteristics of these fathers. For this purpose, we looked at the distribution of fathers by socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. The analysis revealed that higher proportion of middle-aged fathers (31-40 years) conformed to their statement of ideal fatherhood, and so did better-educated men. Likewise, men with a better standard of living, staying in nuclear families, and having working wives tended to exhibit conformity. When fathers are compared in this regard by religious group, it is found that the proportion of Hindus is higher compared to the non-Hindus. Fathers' characteristics were however not significant in multivariate analysis, thus indicating that conformity/non-conformity in ideal and practiced fatherhood is not typical of any particular group of fathers.

A case study, where a 'traditional' father exhibited extreme conformity in perception and practice of fatherhood, may be interesting to mention. year old son. His graduate wife is a homemaker. Although a native of Bihar (a relatively backward State of India), he has spent major part of his life in Mumbai as his well-educated father (a doctorate) was an officer in a cotton mill. He spends 6-7 hours at his job including commutation time and is entitled to quite a few leaves annually. Time being no constraint for him, his participation in fathering activities is limited. He believes, "it is women's task to look after children and men's responsibility is to take care of their financial needs." Although, he has no time constraint, he agrees that he hardly participates in childcare activities. His parenting role is limited to being an economic provider and surety to his child.

Conclusion

The results of the study suggest that the traditional cultural expectations of fathers have changed little even in urban India. Some of the traditional images of ideal father are retained by fathers in actual practice (that of surety, economic provider, role model and family head); however, real transformation has occurred in terms of increasing number of fathers being their child's playmate and friend. The findings reveal that fathers are taking on roles of "new father", and participating in child care activities that they are culturally not expected of. Present-day fathers are more flexible in their conduct though the culture does not seem to have changed much. Men (particularly, in dual-earner families) participate in caretaking activities probably because it is kind of compulsion for them more than choice. Fathers view their participation in care giving more as a

practical adjustment to everyday demands rather than an expression of their ideas of a good father (Sriram, Ali and Karnik, 2002, c. f. Sriram and Navelkar, 2012). In line with Sriram's (c.f. Datta, 2007) observation, it may be concluded that fathers are in conflict; fathers are confused as they are caught between old and new values. There is an urgent need to educate men and their significant others so as to bring a change in the mindset of people regarding men's role in the family. Using appropriate mass media images and conducting discussion groups with young fathers may also be helpful in spreading awareness.

Study Limitations

As an initial attempt, this study provides important evidence about the connection between ideal- actual fatherhood among Indian men. However, the results of the study must be interpreted cautiously since true representations can only be obtained from larger randomized samples. Secondly, measures of fatherhood ideals and paternal participation are based on reports from fathers. Hence, "confusion" or ambivalence about the fatherhood roles discussed in this paper is solely father's voice. Further investigations whereby opinions of other family members are sought is warranted.

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Figure 1: Percentage of fathers by ideal and practiced fatherhood

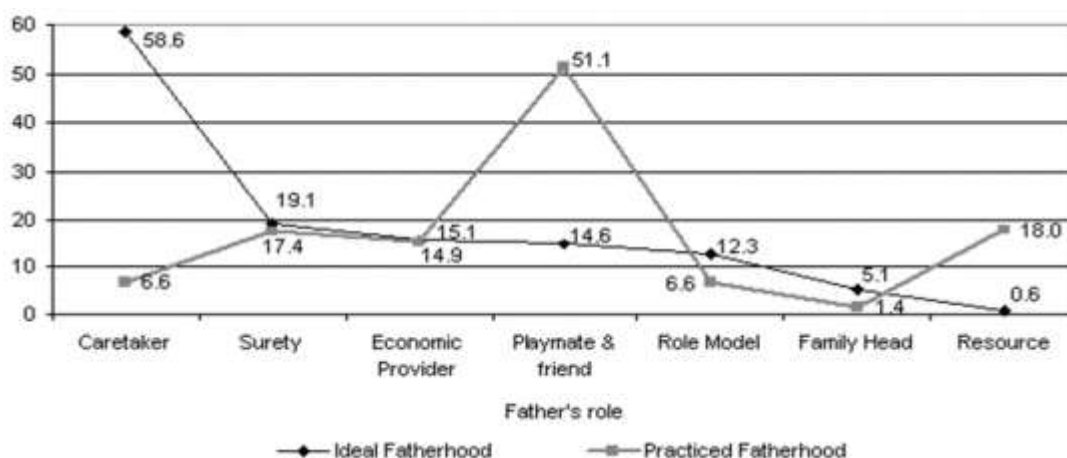


Table 1. Percentage distribution of fathers by ideals and practices of fatherhood according to background characteristics

Background Characteristics	Caretaker		Surety		Economic Provider		Playmate and Friend		Role Model		Family Head		Resource	
	I (205)	P (23)	I (67)	P (61)	I (53)	P (52)	I (51)	P (179)	I (43)	P (23)	I (18)	P (5)	I (2)	P (63)
Current Age of father														
Young fathers	26.3	30.4	22.4	14.8	24.5	25.0	13.7	24.6	23.3	13.0	38.9	--	--	30.2
Middle-aged fathers	62.9	43.5	61.2	72.1	66.0	65.4	68.6	66.5	60.5	73.9	44.4	20.0	100.0	49.2
Old fathers	10.7	26.1	16.4	13.1	9.4	9.6	17.6	8.9	16.3	13.0	16.7	80.0	--	20.6
Educational level of father														
Illiterate/ Middle school & below	23.4	34.8	17.9	19.7	22.6	21.2	29.4	24.0	16.3	26.1	33.3	--	--	27.0
Higher secondary & below	42.4	26.1	47.8	42.6	43.4	40.4	45.1	47.5	41.9	39.1	38.9	60.0	--	46.0
Graduate & above	34.1	39.1	34.3	37.7	34.0	38.5	25.5	28.5	41.9	34.8	27.8	40.0	100.0	27.0
Wife's Work Status														
Working	50.7	82.6	58.2	55.7	37.7	55.8	60.8	49.2	46.5	21.7	61.1	100.0	50.0	52.4
Non-working	49.3	17.4	41.8	44.3	62.3	44.2	39.2	50.8	53.5	78.3	38.9	--	50.0	47.6
Standard of living														
Low	18.5	17.4	9.0	14.8	34.0	15.4	19.6	22.9	11.6	8.7	27.8	--	--	27.0
Medium	64.4	47.8	62.7	60.7	50.9	71.2	64.7	58.7	62.8	73.9	38.9	60.0	50.0	55.6
High	17.1	34.8	28.4	24.6	15.1	13.5	15.7	18.4	25.6	17.4	33.3	40.0	50.0	17.5
Family type														
Nuclear	56.1	39.1	52.2	62.3	64.2	78.8	70.6	50.8	44.2	56.5	66.7	80.0	100.0	57.1
Non-nuclear	43.9	60.9	47.8	37.7	35.8	21.2	29.4	49.2	55.8	43.5	33.3	20.0	--	42.9
Religion														
Hindu	72.2	43.5	79.1	67.2	81.1	80.8	54.9	75.4	74.4	87.0	77.8	100.0	50.0	57.1
Others	27.8	56.5	20.9	32.8	18.9	19.2	45.1	24.6	25.6	13.0	22.2	--	50.0	42.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

I = ideal fatherhood; P= practiced fatherhood; Numbers in parentheses represent N; shaded cells are significant at 1%, 5% or 10% level of significance.

I had also looked at the distribution by caste ('Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes/ Other Backward Classes' as one group and 'Others' as the second group). However, the figures have not been presented in the table as there was not much variation and none of results showed statistical significance.

Table 2. Percentage of the fathers who exhibit congruence in ideal and practiced fatherhood

Father's role	% of fathers who practice what they perceive	% of fathers who perceive what they practice	Number of cases where there is agreement in perception and practice (N=67)
Caretaker	5.9	(205)	12
Surety	19.4	(67)	13
Economic Provider	20.8	(53)	11
Playmate and Friend	52.9	(51)	27
Role Model	9.3	(43)	4

Note: No respondent agrees in perception and practice with respect to fathers' roles of family head and resource.
 Figures in parentheses form the base (number of fathers who perceive/practice a particular role) for calculation of percentage.