

Performing fatherhood in Bangladesh: Changing roles, responsibilities and involvement of older and younger fathers

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Abstract

Fatherhood is an important component to ascertain men's virility all over the world. It is a complex, ongoing socio-cultural construction that different men experience in their own ways in diverse familial and socio-cultural setting. This article tries to initiate a discussion on how fatherhood is enacted across two generations of fathers and also tries to encapsulate their diverse fathering roles and responsibilities. The article is based on a qualitative study among 20 fathers from two different age groups who are currently residing in Dhaka. It is found that the fathers from young generation perform fatherhood differently than fathers from older generation because of their changed socio-economic context. Most fathers from older generations traced providing for children's education, health and other needs as the main responsibility of any father. Younger fathers perform fatherhood more on the basis of emotion rather than obligations. New fathers add in the contemporary culture of fatherhood is an aspect of compassion, emotionality and engagement which focus more on how they feel doing certain fathering roles rather what they really do. The article ends with an opinion that performance associated to fatherhood in urban Dhaka is changing. Though these changes are very small in number and slow in progression but embrace positive spirit of fatherhood.

Keywords: Fatherhood, fathering roles and responsibilities, emotion, change

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Bangladeř'te Babalık İcrası: Deęişen Roller, Sorumluluklar ve İki Kuşak Babaların Katılımı

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Özet

Babalık, tüm dünyada erkeklerin erkekliğini anlamak için önemli bir etkidir. Farklı erkeklerin çeşitli ailevi ve sosyokültürel ortamlarda kendi yollarıyla deneyimledikleri karmaşık ve devam eden sosyokültürel bir konudur. Bu makale, iki kuşak babalar üzerinden babalığın nasıl icra edildiğine dair bir tartışmaya ön ayak olmaya ve çeşitli babalık rollerini ve sorumluluklarını ortaya sermeye çalışmaktadır. Makale, Dakka'da ikamet eden iki farklı yaş grubundan 20 babayı içeren nitel bir çalışmaya dayanmaktadır. Çalışmada genç kuşaktan babaların deęişen sosyoekonomik durumları nedeniyle babalıklarını eski kuşaktan babalara göre farklı icra ettikleri tespit edilmiştir. Yaşlı kuşaklardan babaların çoęu, çocukların eğitim, saęlık ve dięer ihtiyaçlarını saęlamayı bütün babaların temel sorumluluęu olarak görmektedir. Genç nesil babalar ise babalıklarını yükümlülüklerden çok duygu temelinde icra etmektedir. Yeni babaların modern babalık kültürüne kattıkları şey, belli babalık rollerini gerçekleştirirken ne yaptıklarına deęil daha çok ne hissettiklerine odaklanan şefkat, duygusallık ve baęlılık boyutudur. Makale, Dakka kentinde babalık performansının deęiřtięi görüşüyle son bulmaktadır. Bu deęişiklikler sayıca çok küçük ve ilerlemede yavaş olsa da, olumlu babalık ruhuna kucak açmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Babalık, Babalık Roller ve Sorumlulukları, Duygu, Deęişim

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Fatherhood is an important identity for men to ascertain their virility all over the world. Like any other social identity, men experience fatherhood differently in different contexts. It is a complex, socio-culture entity and continuously evolving in response to social-economic and cultural changes. When it comes to researches on families, researches focus mostly on construction and experience of motherhood, involvement and role of mothers in children's lives etc. Emergence of fatherhood as a research issue is comparatively a new phenomenon and only started after 1970s (Marsiglio et al. 2000). In the 1990s, more extensive and eclectic social science literatures on numerous aspects of fatherhood were produced (Marsiglio et al.2000). Many of these scholarly projects have substantiated with empirical data that the 'dominant motif' of fatherhood (Lamb quoted in Daly, 1995, p.22) and fathering roles have gone through many phases of transition. Profound demographic and socioeconomic transformations in the second half of the 20th century have significantly altered men's roles in the family. Theoretically, the concept of "new fatherhood" or 'intimate fatherhood' (Dermott, 2008) has emerged. There is a heightened expectation of men's family involvement as gender ideologies become more egalitarian. Women with young children are increasingly participating in labor market; the rise of marital dissolution rates and the increased geographic mobility due to globalization has changed the way fatherhood is perceived. While previously fathers were expected to be primarily an economic provider and an authoritarian moral teacher, the "new fathers" of recent times are expected to also provide day-to-day physical and emotional care to children as an equal partner of the mother.

In the era of vast globalization, the pattern of family, work and gender relation are changing in Bangladesh. Shaheen F. Dil identified in 1985 that women's position and roles in Bangladesh are slowly changing, and now there are substantial statistical and empirical evidence to validate Dil's argument. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2008) shows that women along with men are entering the labor market in a large scale. Women's labor force participation has increased from 5.4

million in 1995-96 to 12.1 million in 2006-2007 at national level (p.85). Women are taking up jobs with professional, technical and managerial ranks in urban area. Though they are few in number, women with higher ranked jobs have challenged the traditional position of women in Bangladesh (Jahan 1995). Now women see wage employment as the means of improving their status within family and society. The literacy rate of women at national level has significantly improved over time starting from 28.5% in 1995-96 to 49.1% in 2006 (Bureau of statistics, p.123). Women's increased education and labor force participation have altered their position in household decision making. The divorce rate is greater than before both for men and women (Asian Development Bank 2001; World Bank, 2008) that is also significantly changing the intra-household relationship between men and women. The idea of nuclear family is emerging. The World Bank Gender Norms Survey (2006) showed that the attitude of young men and women's towards marriage and family are more liberal than their previous generation which not only instigate liberal marital relation but also encourage comparatively more equal gender roles for both men and women within the family (World Bank, 2008). Moreover, there are increased number of men who have begun to marry more educated women than them. It is identified by World Bank (2008) that over one-third of the younger women in Bangladesh are more educated than their husbands. In this case, my argument is that there is more likely to be a transition in ways the family roles are played out in Bangladesh and also in the ways men perform fatherhood.

According to archival researches, little systematic work has been conducted on fatherhood in South Asia specifically in Bangladesh. Ideologically, Bangladesh is governed by patriarchal rules (Mansoor, 1999; Karim, 2010) and the socio-economic and cultural environment is quite different. Therefore, it can be assumed that the experience of fatherhood in Bangladesh would be quite different than the western industrial countries. This paper tries to understand the context - specific experience of fatherhood of two generations of fathers in urban Bangladesh. It also initiates a discussion on how roles, responsibilities

and involvement of fatherhood vary across generations and times. First, I will try to identify and update multiple forms of fathering roles, responsibilities and involvement of different generations while considering the fact that fatherhood is a fluid identity (Dowd,2000; Marsiglio et al. ,2000), and practices related to fatherhood can be changed in and across generation and in an individual's lifetime (Dowd, 2000). To continue further, in the second section of this chapter I am going to comment on fathers' interpersonal relationship with their own fathers and wives and will also try to elucidate the point that these interpersonal relationships have significant influence on a father's varied involvement with his children. Finally, in the concluding section, I will try to bring on the identity theory framework to highlight two points. Firstly, fathers have multiple and changing roles and responsibility and some of these roles are more salient than others. And secondly, empirical data in my research shows potential for change in fathering across generations.

The main objective of the article is to understand how men of two different generations perform fatherhood. Besides that, the specific objectives are as follows:

-To sketch different fathering roles and responsibilities across generations.

-To find out the main influencing factors for fatherhood involvement

Theoretical Framework

Theorization of how fatherhood is performed includes lots of sociological, psychological debates and discussions. As my theoretical route I have chosen to use a psychosocial perspective popularly known as *identity theory*.

Identity Theory

To analyze perception of fatherhood, I would like to use William Marsiglio and Ihinger-Tallman's conceptualization in William Marsiglio (1995) of **identity theory** stemming from the **symbolic interaction framework** that prescribes the construction of self and identity as an ongoing social process which is formed and maintained through interaction with other. The identity theory was originally conceptualized by Manford Kuhn in 1960 based on George Herbert Mead's idea of 'self'. "The construction of certain identities depends on one's conception of identity and derives from the positions one occupies in the society. So, identity is linked to social structure through status and associated roles" (Kuhn quoted in Ihinger-Tallman et al, 1995, p.61). According to Marsiglio (1995b), identity theory helps to theorize the process of fathers' organization of the 'self', especially in regard to their parental roles and how this construction is likely to fluctuate in response to changing social/economic opportunities and constraints as well as cultural models of fatherhood and interpersonal pressures (p.16). Both Marsiglio (1995b) and Ihinger -Tallman et al (1995) argued that the process of 'self 'construction is most likely to shift over time as individuals adjust to different life course events and engage in negotiations. Identity theory also highlights the notion that at any given point of time, fathers will have multiple statuses and potentially conflicting role demands, both as fathers and also as men. The multiple roles and identities fathers possess can be ranked in a salience hierarchy. It reflects, Ihinger-Tallman et al (1995) conceptualizes the term based on Sheldon Stryker and Richard T. Serpe (1982) theorization of 'salience hierarchy'. The location of an identity in the hierarchy is, by definition, its salience. According to their conceptualization, the hierarchical organization of identities is defined by the probabilities of each of the various identities within it being brought into play in a given situation. That means it is defined by the probabilities each of the identities have of being invoked across a variety of situations. The relative probability is that one of these roles/identities will be expressed in different situations

and chosen when conflicts between identities occur. The parental identity may become more salient than other identities of men depending on the context. The parental identity or status also has numerous roles associated with it, such as breadwinner, playmate, nurturer, moral teacher, and disciplinarian that may also be ranked in a hierarchical fashion and more likely to be reshaped and reinterpreted as one encounters new circumstances, challenges, or obstacles (Marsiglio, 1995b, p 85).

This theoretical framework will help to explore the way Bangladeshi fathers in particular experience fatherhood. This line of theorization also helps to make a reasonable assumption that Bangladeshi men who have become fathers in recent years, compared with the earlier generation of fathers, are more likely to experience fatherhood in a different way because of the changed familial, socio-legal, cultural and economic context. The parental role as fathers is also likely to differ within generations as the sole construction of their parental identity is more likely to change with time

Knowing the fathers better: Research design and methodology

This research has followed a qualitative research design. Qualitative methodology helps to capture the in-depth and complex meanings of fatherhood and subjective experience of fathers through interaction. I have conducted my research in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. And being the capital, Dhaka was always the center of most of the socio-economic changes and developments. In recent times, the city has experienced industrialization, migration, urbanization and economic boom, more than any other region of Bangladesh. Particularly this reason has encouraged me and provided the rationale to choose Dhaka as my main site of exploration.

Marsiglio (1995a) argues, social class has played and continues to play a vital role in shaping fatherhood experience and imagery. My main informants are 20 Dhaka city based middle-class fathers from two different generations and different family backgrounds. Also according

to my experience, in urban Dhaka, middle-class families have better access to education, formal employment, and socio-political decision making which positioned them in the forefront of any kind of social change. Purposive sampling method has been used to conduct the research. I have purposefully used my familial social network to select informants. I had made this deliberate choice for two reasons. First, these networks were most accessible and broad. Secondly, I wanted to talk to people, who I hoped would open up easily and would deliberately share their personal experiences and perception as fathers. I chose informants who were familiar but not very known to me. When it came to their experience within their families and the dynamics of relationship with their children, I had no previous idea about that. To differentiate between generations of fathers, I have decided to consider the age of their children. The fathers with one or more children above 25 years will be considered as older generation and the fathers with one or more children under 10 years of age will be considered as new generation. I have conducted 10 in-depth interviews with fathers from each generation. A semi-structured and open ended interview guide was prepared for all interviews.

Roles, Responsibilities and Involvement of Fathers

Fathers had very diverse accounts of the nature of their roles and responsibilities. Fathers occupy, and will continue to occupy, varieties of roles based on children's needs and their own contextual situations. After analyzing accounts of fathers from different generations, it was found that there is a difference of opinion among fathers across different generations regarding what should be the main roles and responsibilities as a father. Fathers from the same generation were also not in consensus on this point. Narratives from both generations are discussed below.

Narratives of older generation of fathers. Most fathers from older generations suggest providing for children's education, health and other needs is the main responsibility of any father. For older fathers,

providing for the family's financial needs remains the central prerequisite for fathering fulfillment. Shahidul Alam Khan, a 65 year old a medical personnel and father of two grown up children expressed,

A father's main responsibility is to provide his children with the best life they deserve...to ensure they have the best education and health to face the challenges of the practical world. To guide them morally as a father is the primary source to learn ethics by the children. And finally, teach them their duties as a good citizen.

Other older fathers agreed partially with this statement. The main point is that financial provision is a component, like other form of care, which emerges from the particular characterization of fatherhood by older fathers. Earning money primarily is about being able to give children opportunities (Dermott, 2008). Among these opportunities the most important for middle-class Bangladeshi father is to provide for children's education. Not only education, health is another significant concern for older fathers. Taking caring of children's health is significantly important for a lot of fathers. Emphasizing his own experience as a doctor father, Abul Kalam Azad, age 66, pointed out that,

Being a doctor, my responsibility started the day my wife conceived. As you know, for doctors, health comes first. So, my main responsibility was to ensure my children's good health. Of course, after health, ensuring good education for my children is the second priority.

Some of these fathers talked about the importance of providing the children good schooling which includes not only formal education but also ethical and moral upbringing. Their role as teachers, moral guide and disciplinarian was heavily emphasized by most fathers. Michael Lamb (1987) identified four distinct roles fathers played in different historical periods. These roles include their role as moral teacher, breadwinner, sex role model, and more recently, as nurturing fathers. Though Lamb's findings do not necessarily help one to understand fathering practices in Bangladesh, his suggested fathering roles as

moral teacher, disciplinarian and breadwinner are also prevalent in Bangladesh. For example, 67 years old Romoni Mohan Devnath, who is a banker and a part time university teacher, delineated these roles quite explicitly. According to him,

[...] Main responsibility of the father is to ensure proper schooling. That includes both private and public schooling. Private schooling includes teach them discipline, manner and ethics, moral and religious norms and regulations. And the public schooling means ensuring they get good education from a good school. I must say I am a failure in this regard...I made the financial contribution to make the schooling process smooth but I was always physically absent in the whole process.

Manosh Chowdhury and Saydia Gulrukh (2000) have tried to describe a fundamental middle-class phenomenon among urban middle-class families. In marriage and family, men and women share two very distinct roles. Men keep the family going by earning and women perform family duties. Men's role as a provider and bread earner is a highly valued middle-class ideology which significantly influences men performance as fathers. Not only that, Chowdhury and Ahmed also mentioned that education is a middle-class capital based on which the middle-class claim their authority in urban Bangladeshi society. So, I am assuming older fathers stressing highly on providing for education is just a middle-class value - laden pronouncement.

As mentioned before, fathering involvement may change in one's lifetime. Related to this argument, another very interesting point came across in the interviews. Most men were keen to emphasize on transition to more involved pattern of fathering, sometimes the role shifts to that of the role of social fathering with the passage of time. Fathers who have identified themselves as less involved fathers in their early age, claimed to be better fathers as they grew older. Communication with their own children improved in a lot of ways. Nazrul Islam, a professor in a government engineering university and a 70 year old proud father of

one grown up daughter has articulated this point quite clearly. According to him,

I was only a biological father when my daughter was very young. Then when she became a little older like around 2-3 years old, I became his teacher, playmate and moral guardian. Then when she was in her teenage I was his protector. Now when she is around her late 20s I am her best friend. We talk about a lot of things we didn't use to talk about earlier. Now, I know I am more accessible and communicative than before.

As fathers grow old their duties and financial obligations towards children start to decline which let fathers devote more time to their families. In interviews, some of the older fathers mentioned about taking care of grandchildren in their free time. Somehow, fathers try to make up for their absence by practicing social fathering towards their grandchildren.

Narratives of younger generation of fathers. The Younger generation of fathers has come up with rather varied accounts on fathering roles, responsibilities and practices. Some of them echoed what the older fathers mentioned as their prime roles and responsibilities. as fathers. For younger fathers, providing still occupies a major place as part of their identity. 43 year old Anisur Rahman, father of a 6 year and a 2 year old sons expressed,

I think , a father's main responsibility is to give infrastructural support ...what I mean is to build a strong base for his children...to invest financially on their better education, living, health, teaching them moral standards, ethics, discipline them to teach good manner and behavior...these are very important.

Some of the younger fathers acknowledged some other roles which they thought were equally important besides providing, disciplining and

moral upbringing. For example, Iftekhhar Taimus, age 39, who is a busy private service holder explained,

Providing is the most efficient way to play a father's role. We all want our kids to have better education. It does not come for free. I think as a father one should give ones children the opportunity to be a full human being. But providing does not end with providing money only. It has other dimensions too. Providing quality time is also important. I have a very demanding job which does not give me lot of time to engage with the kids but I try my level best to listen to them...discussing the many things they need to know, sometimes helps my son finish his homework, but that's very rare. I want them to feel my presence. I am their provider dad on the weekdays and a playmate on the weekends. I guess with time my roles and responsibilities will change.

Esther Dermott (2008) suggested that "some of the scholars in fatherhood claimed that the current ideals of fatherhood no longer have, as central elements, the roles of disciplinarian, educationist and moral authority. These have been replaced by a focus on the nurturing elements of parental care, especially engagement with children in leisure activities and the carrying out of practical childcare tasks" (p. 27), which could be reflected in some of the younger father accounts. Taimus mentioned how his roles as a playmate and listener are equally important in fulfilling his other fathering roles. Though he said he was not available for daily child care tasks, but his urge to make his presence felt by the children is crucial to how he performs the fathering activities. Though very small in number, there were young fathers like 37 year old Reza Mahmood, a university lecturer who plays active role in daily child care too. He identified major gender norms which promote men's providing as the most celebrated fathering and masculine attribute and designated women as the sole caretaker of the children. According to him,

The main problem in Bangladesh is that men as fathers do not expect to do a lot of things. If one provides financially well, that is enough. If I don't share any household chores or child rearing activities- that is because I am busy with more important work. It is a socially established norm. If women do not do their share of child care, that makes them very bad mothers. I guess no woman will take that. But if one has a working wife like mine, then we need to think beyond socially sanctioned norms. I don't have classes every day. So, I take care of my children whenever I am home. I feed them, give them bath, play with them, pick them up from school, and help them do their homework... everything. I become their mother. I know many of my colleagues who do the same for their kids. It is a practical need. Someone needs to be with the kids.

In nuclear families like Reza Mahmud's and others, where both the partners are working full time, fatherhood practices are more flexible. I would like to argue that fathers are more involved in childcare because of practical reasons. It is not a strategic attempt out of gender consciousness rather a practical situation where parents are in an inevitable situation to alter and share their regular roles as a father and mother. Women's increased labor force participation has started to contest fathers' role as sole provider. As Ralph LaRossa (1988, 1997) clearly underscored that the change in forms of fatherhood does not mean that the most prominent ones of the former are to be discarded. Now, fathers find themselves in more complex situations as they are aware of changes around them but find it hard to incorporate in their day to day fatherhood performance due to lack of socio-legal sanction and construction of masculinity.

Younger fathers' accounts mostly elucidate the potential for change in fathering practices. Some of the young father pointed out their readiness to become fathers by highlighting their own experience. Among young fathers, Rezwanul Karim, age 40, was most vocal on this

issue. He was also advocating for his generation of fathers who are more inclined to fulfilling fathering expectations. He stated:

It's quite a regular phenomenon in Bangladesh that women to go for doctor visits alone or with another woman from the family, during pregnancy. In most cases, it is her mother, mother-in-law or sisters. But, now we try to accompany our wives. I went to every doctor she visited "so that I could know the update of my baby. Once I didn't want to go with my wife and she seemed very upset. So, I tried not to miss any gynecologist's appointment with her. I knew every detail of my daughter.

Like Rezwanul Karim there were other fathers who were involved in prenatal care of their partners to show their mutual support towards their partners in particular. Young fathers also claimed that they were more involved when it came to taking care of their sick children. Reza Mahmud, Manosh Basu and Rezwanul Karim had experience of their first child being severely sick just after birth. All of them said they were capable enough to handle sick infants. Rezwanul Karim mentioned being there for his daughter Mayan for the entire eighteen days she was hospitalized. Manosh Basu noted,

Being a doctor I am more aware of infant's sickness and adoptable to these kinds of situations. My wife was so upset that she felt sick as well. It was a difficult situation for me to handle. I passed sleepless nights taking care of my daughter. Except for baby feeding, I did everything when my first daughter fell sick. Now, whenever any of my daughters is sick they will ask for me. I feel attached ...

Involvement in prenatal care and children's sickness was more common in younger fathers than fathers of older generation. This small but significant style of involvement was the highlighter to show the change among younger fathers.

Influence of 'Significant Others' on Fathering Involvement: Relation with own Father and Wife

It is argued that the most powerful influence on fathering practices and involvement is one's experience in the family while growing up (Taylor and Behnke, 2005). In four generations study, John Snarey (1993) showed that men's relation with their fathers is a significant factor in their own practice and involvement - related fatherhood. Later, Taylor and Behnke (2005) validated this argument among Latino fathers living in the USA - Mexican border. Nancy E. Dowd (2000) claimed that a father's involvement is strongly correlated to the relationship of the partner. My empirical data also showed that my informant fathers across generations are profoundly affected by these two factors which are considered as the 'significant others'. Each of the above mentioned factors, interacts with fathering and influences men's choice of roles related to fatherhood as most salient.

Relation with father. Fathers' accounts showed that there are positive and negative impacts of the relationship with their own fathers. Across generations, my informants either want to rework and reshape the model their own fathers provided or they simply idealized their fathers as role models. For older fathers, it is rather a very distant picture and they could hardly describe their relationship with their own fathers. Older fathers mentioned their own fathers to be very detached from their own children. For this generation, their own fathers were not there to discipline them, rather their mothers used father's image as a symbol of authority. This image is used to reinforce father's presence and authority to discipline them. All older fathers, who were interviewed except Shahidul Alam and Wakef Hossain, described their fathers as very authoritative and the most influential man in their families. Older fathers' lack of committed relationship with their own fathers reinforced the deficient model of fatherhood. Moffazel Haque, a 71 year old retired customs officer, quite sadly talks about his absent father.

I really can't remember anything of my father. We were lot of brothers and sisters living in the same home and it was

always chaotic...Whenever any of my brothers or sisters wanted to talk to my father, I only remember my mother saying, 'let him (my father) have some peace. Tell me what you need and will arrange it from your father'. I left home at a very early age to pursue my education. So, I never shared any bond with him. I did not know what fatherhood was until I became a father myself.

Only Shahidul Alam gave vivid description of his relationship with his father. He mentioned his father to be a better dad than him. Most of his fathering practices are influenced by his relation with his father. He idealized his father as a model all his life. He said,

My father was a very strict disciplined man but he spent a lot of time with us. It's not that he was my best friend with whom I could share my entire secret. He used to sit with us every evening to help us out with our homework. I remember him standing all evening in the corridor if any of us (we four brothers) was late getting back home. He was the person who encouraged us to read lots of other books besides our academic ones, and he was the person who said I was allowed to elope with my girlfriend if her family did not accept me as a son in law...We knew he loved us and I always wanted to be like him...very disciplined yet caring.

Younger fathers were more precisely talked about this point. They also clearly identified the fact that they perform fatherhood differently than their fathers. Some of the younger fathers completely disapprove the way their own father acted out fathering practices and expressed the urge to perform fatherhood tasks completely differently from their own father. 40 year old Sajjadul Islam Noyon is one of them. He noted,

I have learned what not to do as a father from my relationship with my father. He was very ruthless and arrogant. I was physically beaten up a lot by him. I didn't know why he was always angry and trying to teach us manners and etiquettes. I never wanted to have him as my

father. Now, I know it's not just him but probably every father of that time thought father-son relationship should not be open. It should be a relationship of respect, fear and authority. My daughter calls me by my name. She knows already that it's easy to communicate with me and there is nothing to be scared.

Like Sajjadul Islam, most of the young fathers shared a distant bond with their fathers. Sometimes it was only a relationship of authority and their fathers were very occupied with their own things. Some of them mentioned that their fathers had their own world which was inaccessible to their children, and fathers were not available even when they had spare time to spend with them. Some did mention that the restrictive relations with their fathers made them improve themselves as fathers and according to them they are more sympathetic /understanding fathers. "All of the men who had been detached from their own fathers placed great importance on always 'being there' for their children" (Naomi Rosh White, 1994,p.122). Iftekhar Taimus is one of them. According to him,

My father was like any father of his time....very serious and strict kind of a person. I guess being part of the armed forces made him even more demure. He was the man of the house and used to make all major decisions of our lives. From which school should I study to what I should be in life...everything? I wanted to be in the armed forces but I was persuaded to take up a different profession than my father's. He sent me to USA to get an engineering degree. In my early years there was distance between us. I used to be very afraid of him. When I started to go to the university, the distance started to decline. Now, from my experience with my father, I exactly know what not to do with my children. I may not give them a lot of time but I make sure they know that their baba is there whenever they need him. I really need to feel wanted and closer to them.

The fervor to do things differently than their own fathers point out generational shifts in construction of fatherhood ideals and practices (Miller, 2011).

Relationship with wife. The level of father's involvement is strongly correlated with the father's relationship with his wife/ child's mother (Dowd, 2000). Though Dowd's argument was made in American context, it can also be used to explain my empirical narratives of fathers across generations. Almost all fathers from both generations agreed with the particular argument. Older fathers emphasized the necessity of a healthy marital relationship for children's healthy psychological growth. In interviews, one point came out clear that mothers play an important role in defining father's image for their own children. Not only are that, for older fathers, their wives the key persons to keep their fathering authority intact within family. Abdul Kalam Azad stated,

Being a doctor, I couldn't give much time to my children when I was a junior attendant. But my wife made sure that my children became well-mannered and disciplined. Whenever they were a little unruly or not performing well in their exams, my wife used to remind them that if their father came to know what they were doing he wouldn't be very happy. I was always there to discipline through my wife.

Ishii-Kuntz et al study (2004) of Japanese fathers elaborated on similar issue. It is found that despite men's physical absence, their authority is symbolically used and reinforced by the wives to discipline their children.

Younger fathers pointed out some other aspects of having a healthy relationship with their partners. Nafis Anwar, age 36 with a successful career in Uniliver Bangladesh mentioned,

My partner encouraged me to be a better father. Our marriage is based on mutual love and understanding. If not completely, I try to meet her expectations.

Younger fathers involved themselves with children because of their mutual understanding and commitment towards their wives and the quality of marriage they share as couples (Doherty et al., 1998). Younger fathers mentioned their wives being supporters of active engagement with the children. Manosh Basu noted,

I used to have work-related appointments on weekends but my wife continuously reminded me that when our child is born I can't work on weekends because that is family time. I try to stay at home on most weekends because my daughters love being around me and my wife is happy too.

Rezwanul Islam identified another very crucial point related to this issue. He said,

My wife wants me to be a certain kind of man. Not necessarily I approve of all her demands but asking to be a better father is a valid one. Being a better father not only helps me bond with my daughter but also help me meet my wife's expectations.

Delineating marital pattern of my informants will make it apparent that except for Anisur Rahman, all younger fathers had opted for love marriage whereas, and it is completely the opposite for older fathers. Among older fathers, only two got married based on mutual understanding. Other than these two, all marriages were arranged. It is well apparent that the increased instances of marriages based on love and understanding before marriage has a positive impact on couples which not only helped younger men to be better partners but also, to some extent, a better father. There is no way to claim that older generations of fathers have fewer compatible marriages but most arranged marriages are based on obligation to form a family rather than on mutual choice and understanding.

Discussion

It's evident from narrations of older fathers that the roles they play and pattern of their involvement is out of their right as a father. All rights come with certain obligations and responsibilities. Rights which are given by religious laws and prominent fatherhood discourse both helped older men to consider providing as their salient role identity related to fatherhood. Fathers from younger generation are not performing roles which are completely different from that of the older fathers. Provider role is still the most important in the hierarchy of fathering roles. But younger fathers perform fatherhood more on the basis of emotion rather than obligations, especially when their partners have full-time job and a co-earner in the family. What new fathers add in the contemporary culture of fatherhood is an aspect of compassion, emotionality and engagement which focus more on how they feel doing certain fathering roles rather than what they really do. Younger fathers do it differently than previous generation. It is just how they feel doing the same old thing with a lot of compassion and quite open in expressing that emotion through physical gestures. Being able to be there for their own children is quite a big concern for a lot of young fathers. Partners of these fathers acted or act as the 'significant other' as identity theory describes to influence fathering attachment and performance. Young mothers positively inspire and engage new fathers which were missing in the earlier generation. Though the social situation has changed in many ways, the middle-class ideal of having a successful job has not changed yet in Bangladesh making it harder for many men in both generations to fit in to the new nurturing model of fatherhood.

It should be mentioned that if the new generation of fathers see and perform fatherhood differently that is not because they have become heavily gender sensitized or they have started to believe in gender equality, rather, it is propelled by multiple factors like more nuclear families, women's increased labor force participation, exposure to new kinds of ideas of fatherhood and, last but not least, the awareness of positive outcome that increased involvement could bring. Fathers from

the older generation have involved themselves when it concerned about the whole family. One to one communication or building relationship with children was not idealized as prominent feature of the family or fatherhood identity. Distance and respect was core to father-child relationship. Socio-economic changes have propagated some modifications` in fathering roles and involvement which are still very small.

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