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Why father is so important: The role of the attachment with the father in the development of prosocial behavior

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Abstract

Previous major studies of attachment was based on the study of child-mother dyads and traditional fathers are often described as distant, absent and unwilling to show feelings. Research attachment with the father are usually more recent date and make them almost pioneering efforts to incorporate fathers in the primary attachment figures. The aim of this paper was to show the importance of the role that the father has for the mental development of the child. Also it will be critically reflect on the role of a father, as a figure of attachment, in the development of prosociality. From our fathers we learn how to develop social relationships, attitudes and values in order to provide protection and ensure safety, to put our own needs behind the needs of those we care for. The role of the father in a child's development is unique, and even irreplaceable in fields such as emotional intelligence, self-esteem and self-confidence. Father, that some extent ignored but very important figure for the psychological development is the model on the basis of whose behavior the child learns how to behave.

Keywords: *prosocial behavior, father, parents, attachment*

1. Introduction

If we want to understand the close relationship through the entire life span of human, an explanation should be sought in Bowlby's theory of attachment (1982). Attachment refers to authentically, the constant striving for the establishment of close relations with the others. It could be defined as a permanent affective relationship characterized by a tendency to seek and maintain the closeness with a specific person, especially under conditions of stress. Although

the first binding is usually with mother, it can be followed by binding to any other person (Zazo, 1974).

According to the results of some previous studies (Freeman et al, 2010), in comparison with the mothers, secure attachment with the father has a less significant effect on a child's social and emotional development. Earlier, the role of father differ from the one he has today. The role of father has been mainly biological and had a minor importance in the children's social and emotional development. Traditional fathers are often described as distant, absent and unwilling to show the emotions (Bell, 1984, according to Brazelton & Kramer, 2002). Father was more authority than support, that one who provides the material things, but not the emotional security. Changes in gender roles and also the division of responsibilities in parenthood contribute to the increasing of the father's participation in the raising of their child (Klarin, 2006). *While* most previous major studies of attachment (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991) was based on the study of child-mother dyads, research attachment with the father are more recent date. In review articles and empirical research, the father is more and more often listed as one of the key concepts for the child's development and there are less and less scientific articles about the affective attachment in which the term "father" is not mentioned. The aim of this work is to critically review the role of the attachment with the father in developing prosociality, or prosocial behavior.

2. Prosociality and fathers

Prosocial behavior (Vasta et al, 2005) is defined as a form of moral behavior which includes socially desirable behavior, such as sharing with others, helping and cooperation. When behavior is not motivated by egoistic goals and when the purpose of helping to another person is without professional commitments, we talk about prosociality. There are several forms of prosociality and Lindenberg (1998, according to Fetchenhauer et al, 2006) distinguishes them five, namely: cooperation, fairness, reliability, consideration and altruism.

As well as majority of other forms of behavior, children learn prosocial behavior through operant conditioning, observing, imitating and modeling. The role of the father here is extremely important - he is a model who daily spends time with a child, or a child is watching his father, for example, while he interacts with others or solves some problem. In all of these activities father has the same role - he is a model of behavior for the child.

Recent research (Kamenov & Jelić, 2003) emphasize that the concept of attachment is present and active throughout the lifetime of an individual and does not refer only to the relationship between the child and the mother or the person caring for the child. Numerous studies of important figures of attachment often do not mention the role of the father and he is mentioned only in terms of "significant others".

Parent-child or child-parent relationship is very different from all other relationships and the impact of such a relationship is deeper, more important and longer lasting.

Even though most studies have focused on the attachment relationship between child and mother, there is a growing number of studies of the links between child and father. Such studies reveal what fathers already know - that the child-father relationship is not less important than the relationship the child-mother (Pickhardt, 2007). Father, just as the mother, affects the development of the child. Father's sensitivity and responsiveness are a reliable predictors of secure attachment (Thompson 2006, according to Krstić, 2013). Attachment theory includes not only emotional development, but also the cognitive and social development of individuals. Children with secure attachment are more socially competent (Vasta et al, 2005), they are more obedient, have better connections with their peers, and also they are more willing to cooperate and they rarely develop emotional and behavioral problems.

While mothers usually provide love, care and tenderness, fathers learn children how to build and develop good social connections and their own attitudes and values, as well as learn how to provide protection and security, to put own needs behind the needs of those we care for. The variety in relation to father-child relationship which exists in different societies of the world, confirms the complexity of testing these dyads. Koestner et al (1990) found that the time which child spends with its father, as well as father's care about a child, are good predictors and show predictability of child's future empathy, compassion and caring about the others. The role of the father in a child's development is unique (Amato, 1998, according to Anđelković et al, 2009) and even irreplaceable in fields such as emotional intelligence, self-esteem and self-confidence.

Father, some extent neglected but very important figure for the psychological development of any future man, presents a model based on whose behavior the child learns how to behave in order to gain the respect of its father and continued with the development of values adopted by its father. Being a model is neither simple nor an easy task. The manner in which a father interacts with others, is the pattern how the child will behave in its interpersonal relationships - to partner and friends, at school and at work (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006).

If the child has developed a secure attachment with its father, then the father would be a safe base for the child. In this case, father's behavior will be considered as social desirable and acceptable in the eyes of the child. This conclusion is made on Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura & Walters, 1963).

Observational learning or imitation are synonymous referring to the social learning through imitation of role models, where child spontaneously adopts complex patterns of behavior, without the intention of the model to influence to the other, but that effect is a consequence of emotional attachment to the model. According to this theory (Bandura & Walters, 1963), most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. Also, learning by identification represents a higher level of learning than a learning through modeling, because in learning by identification the student is identified himself with the model, not just copying the model, but adopting the values which it represents.

If we apply these settings on the theme of our study, it is obvious that in a secure attachment with the father who behave prosocial (helps others, puts others' needs before his own, expressed heroism, etc.) can be expected that the child shows prosociality. If the father behave asocial, the child who has a secure attachment with the father could these behaviors interpreted as correct and adopt such, a distorted, picture of the socially desirable.

3. Conclusion

Good father: the rule; not an exception

This work is not aimed to highlight the importance of the father for mental development of the child, and to the detriment the importance of mothers. The father should not be considered as a possible replacement for the mother. There are actions that only a mother can provide and which can not be replaced, but the role of the father is the same - irreplaceable and unquestionable. One parent should not be an alternative to the other parent, and they shall satisfy, only together, all child's needs and provide him optimal conditions for a healthy and quality development. Growing and developing with both parents with whom, both of them, the child has developed a secure attachment - is a final goal for creating a family.

French developmental psychologists insist on the importance of the role of the father as a figure of attachment (Dumont, 2011). Safety that the child needs to, not only explored the world through communication with strangers, but also to examine their own borders, is an essential factor of discovering himself.

We can see that the quality of close connections with the father not only affects the child's sense of self and others, but also the view of the world in general. At the time when more time is spent with his father, the child can just by observing adopt the correct, desirable and necessary for the survival of humanity, behaviors.

Perhaps we could lack of research on affective attachment of the child with the father explain by the lack of ideas. In fact, a large number of research in this area remains limited with the role of the mother so frequently is compared the quality of attachment to the mother and the quality of attachment with the father or they examined does the attachment with the father has the same importance in the development of the child as an attachment to the mother (Bloom, 1998). However, focusing on the performances of the father-child connections in light of attachment theory usually - is absent.

Still, although modest, research on the impact of attachment with the father on the child's development highlight the importance of this relationship and confirmed that the infant forms significant and close relationships with the mother and with the father. Lower self-esteem, poor social skills, low self confidence and vulnerability to peer pressure (Klarin, 2006) are problems which are typical for children who do not grow up with their father.

The aim of this study was to show the importance of the role that the father has for mental development of the child. Quality dyad father-child relationship can significantly affect social development of the child with the behaviors which it will to adopt as an appropriate and desirable. Under the influence of his father's availability for the sensibility, or emotional relationships which the child has built with his father and from which he learned about the world around them, child is formed as a human being, with his cognitive, emotional, behavioral with social achievements.

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