



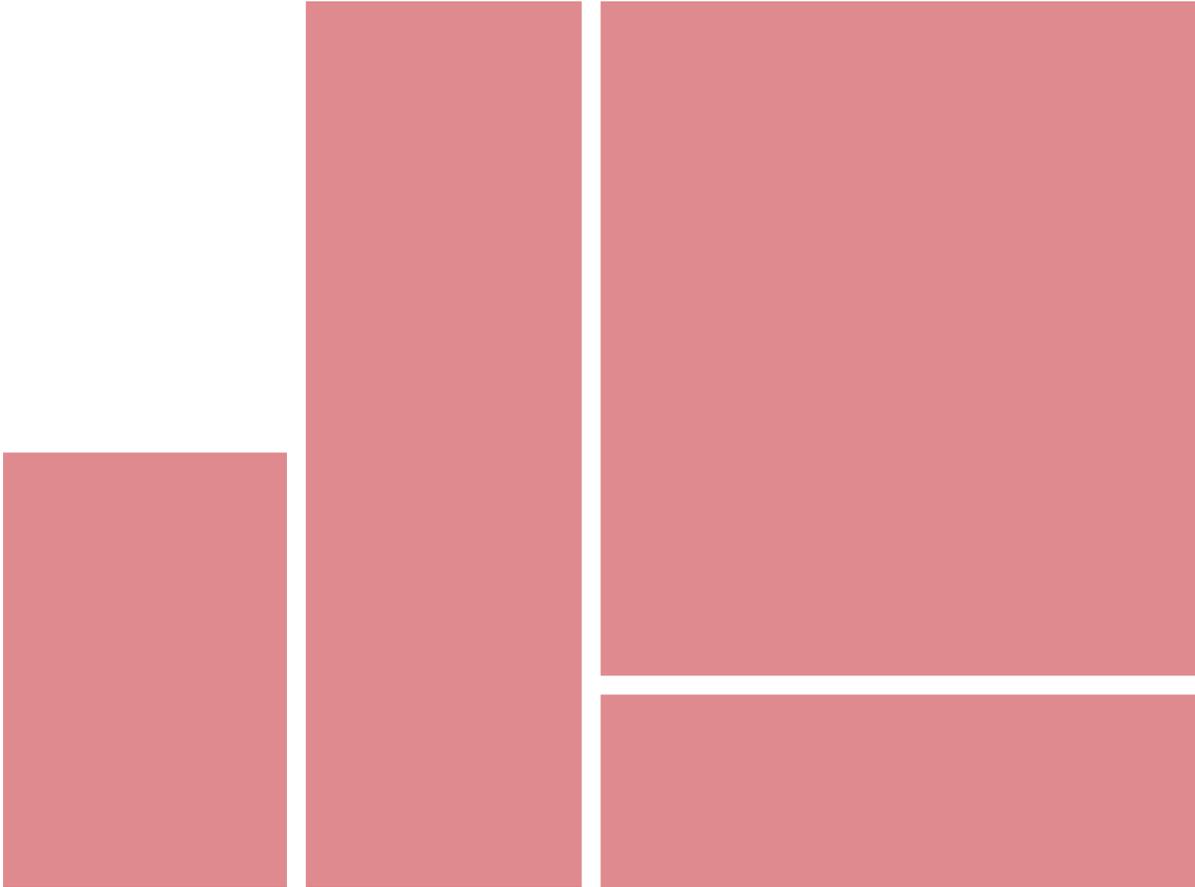
# INVOLVED FATHERHOOD AND ITS DETERMINANTS IN TURKEY

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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# ABOUT AÇEV

AÇEV was founded in 1993 to improve the lives of vulnerable young children and their families through education. AÇEV conducts research, develops and implements programs in early childhood, parenting, and women's empowerment. It has provided education services for vulnerable families, reaching almost 900.000 individuals and has trained over 12,000 teachers and volunteers. AÇEV's programs are implemented widely across Turkey through local and national partnerships as well as in different regions of the world including the Middle East and South Asia. AÇEV also implements distance education programs utilizing TV, radio and mobile communications and has reached a further eight million people across Turkey. AÇEV engages in advocacy activities to inform policy and public awareness and is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular inclusive and quality education in early childhood, role of family in young children's learning, gender equality, and lifelong learning.

For more information, [www.acev.org](http://www.acev.org)



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *Involved Fatherhood and its Determinants in Turkey Report* and the *Fatherhood in Turkey Study*, on which this report is based, has been a collaborative process with an interdisciplinary team of researchers.

The research process has been guided by the valuable experience and meticulous work of the Advisory Committee, including Prof. Dr. Sevda Bekman, Prof. Dr. Yılmaz Esmer, Prof. Dr. Güler Fişek, Prof. Dr. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı, and Prof. Dr. Serpil Sancar. The principal investigator of the *Fatherhood in Turkey* study, Asst. Prof. Mehmet Bozok worked with methodologist Asst. Prof. Yasemin Kisbu-Sakarya and SAM Research and Consultancy. The *Involved Fatherhood and its Determinants in Turkey Report*, as the first publication of *Understanding Fatherhood in Turkey Series*, was authored by Asst. Prof. Berna Akçınar, under the advisory of Prof. Dr. Güler Fişek.

**In the publication of this series, AÇEV honors the memory of one of its founders Prof. Dr. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı, with whom we had the final privilege to collaboratively think, create, and contribute with in this study. We hope that this study will contribute to the field and inform practices and policies aiming to support involved fatherhood in Turkey, in line with our esteemed mentor Dr. Kağıtçıbaşı's ideals.**



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## FOREWORD

The Mother Child Education Foundation (Turkish: Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı; AÇEV) first began working with fathers in 1996 to facilitate increased involvement of fathers in child development and care, upon the request of mothers that were participating in AÇEV's flagship program, the Mother Child Education Program (MOCEP). Mothers expressed that if the family was to be a unit supporting the child then fathers also needed to be engaged. AÇEV developed the Father Support Program (FSP), and over the years it has become one of AÇEV's staple programs.

The FSP aimed to create attitude and behavioral change in fathers through enabling them to assume more responsibility in child development and care; build mutual, affectionate relationships with their children, and use effective parenting methods in these relationships. The program targets fathers with children aged 3-6 and 7-11, and is implemented in weekly sessions for 13 weeks and has reached 60,000 fathers through collaborations with various institutions, most importantly the Ministry of National Education. The program has been evaluated through impact assessments, and its contents have been revised multiple times, in accordance with society's changing needs, as well as new research findings internationally and emerging practices on the importance and impact of fatherhood.

The FSP has not only created significant change in the attitudes and behaviors of fathers regarding their support for their children's development, but also served to promote the importance and impact of fatherhood in communities. With the Father Support Program, AÇEV was able to begin evidence-based advocacy work to facilitate the creation of supportive environments for "involved fatherhood" in families, neighborhoods, friendship circles, and workplaces. Based on the notion that fatherhood is shaped by a multitude of factors, which was highlighted by these advocacy efforts, the strategy for transforming fatherhood was predicated on mobilizing these factors. AÇEV conducted various collaborations and activities over the years to establish a new model of fatherhood, characterized by building a close relationship with the child, assuming responsibility in their development, showing one's affection, playing with the child and building trust, rather than through "power," "toughness," or "earning a living for the family."

As an extension of these efforts, AÇEV launched the *Understanding Fatherhood in Turkey Series*, aiming to produce scientific data for all stakeholders and influence the perception of fathers and fatherhood, among different actors in society including NGO's, academia, central and local governments, as well as traditional and social media. All are invited to take active part in reinforcing and popularizing "involved" fatherhood.

The main goal of the **Understanding**

**Fatherhood in Turkey Series** is to gain better insights as to differing practices, resources, development and transfer patterns of fatherhood and its relationship with masculinity and to share know-how with all influential stakeholders. This series includes multiple studies and reviews, the first and foremost being the Fatherhood in Turkey Study. The series is comprised of three reports to be published in 2017 and 2018, the first of which is **Involved Fatherhood and its Determinants in Turkey**, the second, **Fatherhood in Turkey: In the Midst of Parenthood, Masculinity and Work**, and lastly, **The States of Masculinity and Fatherhood in Turkey**.

We hope that the Understanding Fatherhood in Turkey Series and its first publication, Involved Fatherhood and its Determinants in Turkey Report, provides insight for the policies and practices to support involved fatherhood.



1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. UNDERSTANDING FATHERHOOD IN TURKEY

The Fatherhood in Turkey study, is the first comprehensive research in Turkey on understanding fathers and fatherhood. The study forms the basis of this report and had three major goals. The first goal was **to establish the various “fatherhoods” that emerge under specific societal and cultural conditions, and explore their antecedents.** To this end, the research team strived to identify states of fatherhood, the meanings ascribed to fatherhood, as well as fatherhood practices and how these practices are learned in Turkey.

The second goal of the study was **to explain how different forms of fatherhoods and masculinities construct one another.** In this regard, we aimed to demonstrate how meanings, states, experiences, attitudes, norms, and socialization practices ascribed to fatherhood related to masculinities, and how masculinity shaped fatherhood in Turkey.

The third goal of the study **concerns “involved fatherhood.” We intended to create awareness and a forum for discussion on the regulations and practices necessary to foster more “involved fatherhood” behaviors.** To this end, we strived to gain better insight as to what kinds of regulations and practices fathers need, which could ultimately form the basis of policy recommendations for encouraging involved fatherhood.

## 1.2. DIMENSIONS OF INVOLVED FATHERHOOD

**“Involved fatherhood” is a model of fatherhood, in which the father assumes responsibility in child care and development; provides the necessary environment and opportunities for the child’s development; forms a mutual and affectionate relationship while spending quality time with the child; and uses effective parenting methods in his relationship with the child.** In this regard, contrary to “fatherhood” behaviors dictated by the masculinity patterns driven by gender roles, “involved fatherhood” denotes men’s adoption of a participatory and democratic approach, support for the child’s development, and assumption of a role as responsible as the mother’s in all developmental domains of the child.

**Fathers’ influence on their children’s development is closely tied to their level of “involved fatherhood.”** Being in communication with the child and participating in joint activities; listening to the child, playing with the child; being psychologically/emotionally and physically available when the child is in need; taking care of the child and assuming responsibility to provide the necessary resources for the child are the components of involved fatherhood.

**Research on involved fatherhood demonstrates that children who grow up with affectionate, sensitive, and involved fathers are psychologically better adapted, show fewer behavioral problems, and build better communication with their peers.** The communication between children and fathers during infancy has been established by research findings to influence all domains of development later in life (Cabrera, Shannon, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2007). Findings also point to increased school readiness, higher academic achievement, richer vocabulary, and better cognitive development in the children of involved fathers (Cabrera et al., 2007; Coley, Lewin-

Bizan, & Carrano, 2011; Lamb, 1977; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2004; Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004).

**Activities with fathers have a positive impact on children’s social, cognitive and language development.** Research has revealed that children of fathers who demonstrate fatherhood behaviors, such as reading books to and playing with their children, have higher language and reading skills (Coley et al., 2011; Duursma, Pan, & Raikes, 2008). Playing or simply engaging in meaningful activities with children, not only supports their language and vocabulary development, but also enhances mutual affection, closeness, and bonding (Grossmann et al., 2002).

Research findings also demonstrate that involved fatherhood influences children’s reading and math skills (Coley et al., 2011), while fathers’ school involvement has a positive impact on children’s performance on intelligence tests (Radin, 1973). Another study by Radin (1994) reports a close relationship between an increase in fathers’ communication with their children and an increase in children’s cognitive skills,

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*Especially during the early ages of 0-3, when development occurs most rapidly, it is crucial for fathers to take part in child care and build an affectionate relationship with the child.*

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achievement, positive social behaviors, along with increasing flexibility in the fathers’ views of traditional gender roles.

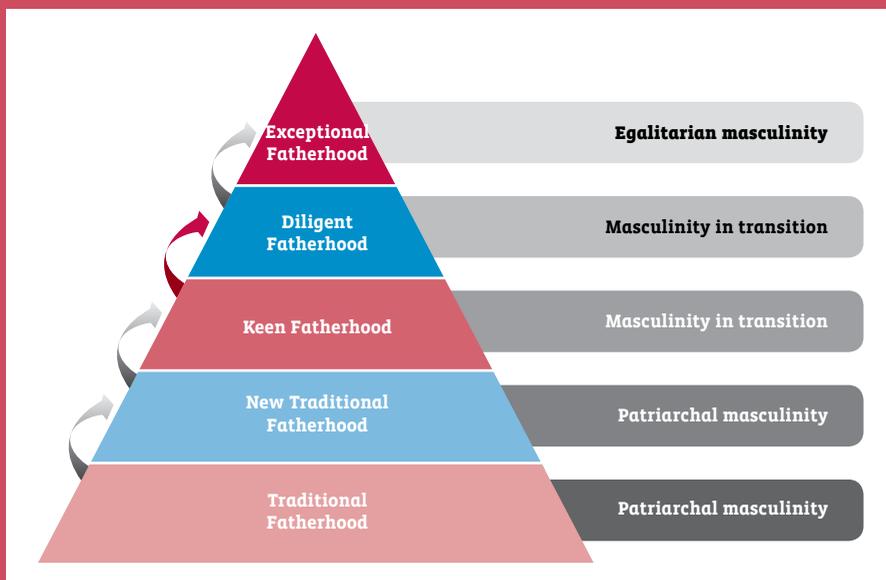
Fathers’ attitudes and behaviors regarding gender roles and traditional masculinity are important in predicting involved fatherhood behaviors. Men, who adopt a traditional, patriarchal view of masculinity, do not participate in domestic chores, display sexist behaviors towards their spouses and children, and do not believe in gender equality, tend to attribute all responsibility related to child care to mothers once they become fathers. Nevertheless, there is evidence that male attributes and discourses, which “real men” are thought to have, such as jealousy, authoritarianism, and belligerence, show a tendency to lose popularity and go through changes as men become fathers (AÇEV, in press).

With this background, AÇEV primarily aimed to better understand fathers and how to better support child development and involved fatherhood in Turkey. **Within the scope of the Fatherhood in Turkey study, involved fatherhood attributes have been grouped under three dimensions: care, affection, and control.** These dimensions, presented by Fişek, have theoretically and empirically been demonstrated to explain the parent-child relationship in Turkey (Fişek, 1991; Boratav, Fişek, & Ziya, 2017).

As part of the Understanding Fatherhood in Turkey Series (which this report also belongs to), the findings presented by the YADA Foundation’s **States of Masculinity and Fatherhood in Turkey** Report provides another guideline for **the understanding of the concepts of masculinity and fatherhood**, as well as the societal notions that shape these concepts (AÇEV, in press). In this study, several indices were created for different states of fatherhood, and five categories of fatherhood emerged out of these indices.

Accordingly, the “traditional fatherhood” category, the most predominant one in Turkey, represents a type of fatherhood characterized by resistance to change, authoritarianism, and distance towards children. These values are congruent with “hegemonic masculinity”, in other words “patriarchy,” which represents a model of masculinity where men are seen as the breadwinners of the family with a tendency for violence, whose authority cannot be questioned. On the other hand, 28% of the participants comprised what is called the “new traditional fathers,” who resemble traditional fathers in their attitudes towards masculinity, but try to go beyond these attitudes in their relationship with their daughters, making an effort to build affectionate relationships with them. A third category of fatherhood, named as “keen fathers,” foster traditional views of fatherhood, however make a conscious choice to display “involved fatherhood” behaviors, and in so doing, play a critical role in the transformation in society. These fathers fall into the “masculinity in transition” category. Comprising 23% of the participants, these fathers were found to preserve their hegemonic masculinities, while also embodying more ideal states of masculinity, such as being an involved father.

The “diligent fatherhood” group is comprised of fathers who go against the traditional gender roles, but do so slightly out of a sense of obligation. This group comprises 12% of our sample. Men who are completely “egalitarian,” on the other hand, are the rarest group of fathers in society. Named as “exceptional fathers,” they assign great importance to the fatherhood experience and strive to become more involved in child care. The rate of this category of fathers in the sample is only 0.9%.



In this regard, as shown in Figure 1, we categorize behaviors in which the father is responsible for the caring and development of the child as **care**; the behaviors through which he establishes a mutual and affectionate relationship with the child, provides experiences and environments to support the child's development, spends time with the child, and builds a mutual and democratic communication and connection with the child as **affection**; and the behaviors by which he establishes rules and limitations using methods that are appropriate for the child's developmental stage as **control** behaviors.

The Fatherhood in Turkey study gives a summary of the current state of fatherhood in terms of these three categories of involved fatherhood behaviors, and identifies for the first time the factors that affect

involved fatherhood. Thus, the study lays the groundwork for recommendations on implementable campaigns, trainings, and policies through providing the components and methods for reinforcing involved fatherhood. This report includes summary of the data and analyses for this study. The second chapter briefly explains the methodology and implementation of the research study. The third chapter discusses the findings of the Fatherhood in Turkey study under the subheadings Fatherhood Behaviors in Turkey, Determinants of Involved Fatherhood, and Fathers' Own Feelings and Thoughts on Fatherhood. The final chapter of the report includes a review of the study findings with an effort to offer ways to create contexts in which we can reinforce involved fatherhood, as well as further recommendations.

**Figure 1.** Involved fatherhood model proposed by the Fatherhood in Turkey study.





**2**

## **METHODS AND PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY**

The field study was conducted in 2016. The participating fathers were a representative sample for Turkey across all age and socioeconomic status (SES) groups with children aged 0 to 10 (early and middle childhood). The study employed both qualitative methods in the form of in-depth interviews, and a quantitative component in the form of surveys. For the qualitative study, 40 fathers were interviewed from İstanbul, Gaziantep, Konya, Trabzon, and Tekirdağ; while the surveys were administered to 3235 fathers from 51 cities.

extent to which they participated in household chores. Further information was collected regarding their own experiences of fatherhood, how they contributed to their children's development, and what kinds of support and education they needed to become better fathers.

For the quantitative study, on the other hand, a total of 3235 men under age 65 with at least one child at the age of 0-10 were administered surveys. The surveys first collected data on the fathers' educational status, their families' socioeconomic status, and their world views. Furthermore, to understand these fathers' relationship with involved fatherhood, we asked questions on patriarchal masculinity and sexism.

To measure fathers' participation in child care and their relationship with their children, several items from the Value of Children survey, the Inventory of Father Involvement, Alabama Parenting Questionnaire and the warmth and punishment subscales of the Child Rearing Questionnaire were used (Elgar et al., 2007; Hawkins et al., 2002; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1981; Paterson & Sanson, 1999; Yağmurlu & Sanson, 2009).

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*The Fatherhood in Turkey study recruited 3235 fathers from 51 cities across Turkey to administer surveys.*

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## 2.1. SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

The sample for the study was collected from across Turkey through the use of a multi-level, stratified random sampling method. The study's strategy aimed to create a representative sample of the overall population in terms of regions and socioeconomic level. Regional distribution of the population was based on data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TSI).

## 2.2. PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

During this qualitative study, fathers were asked about their ordinary, daily routines, their relationships with their own parents, their views on gender equality, and the

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*For the Fatherhood in Turkey study, we conducted in-depth interviews with 40 fathers from İstanbul, Gaziantep, Konya, Trabzon, and Tekirdağ.*

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## 2.3. PARTICIPANTS

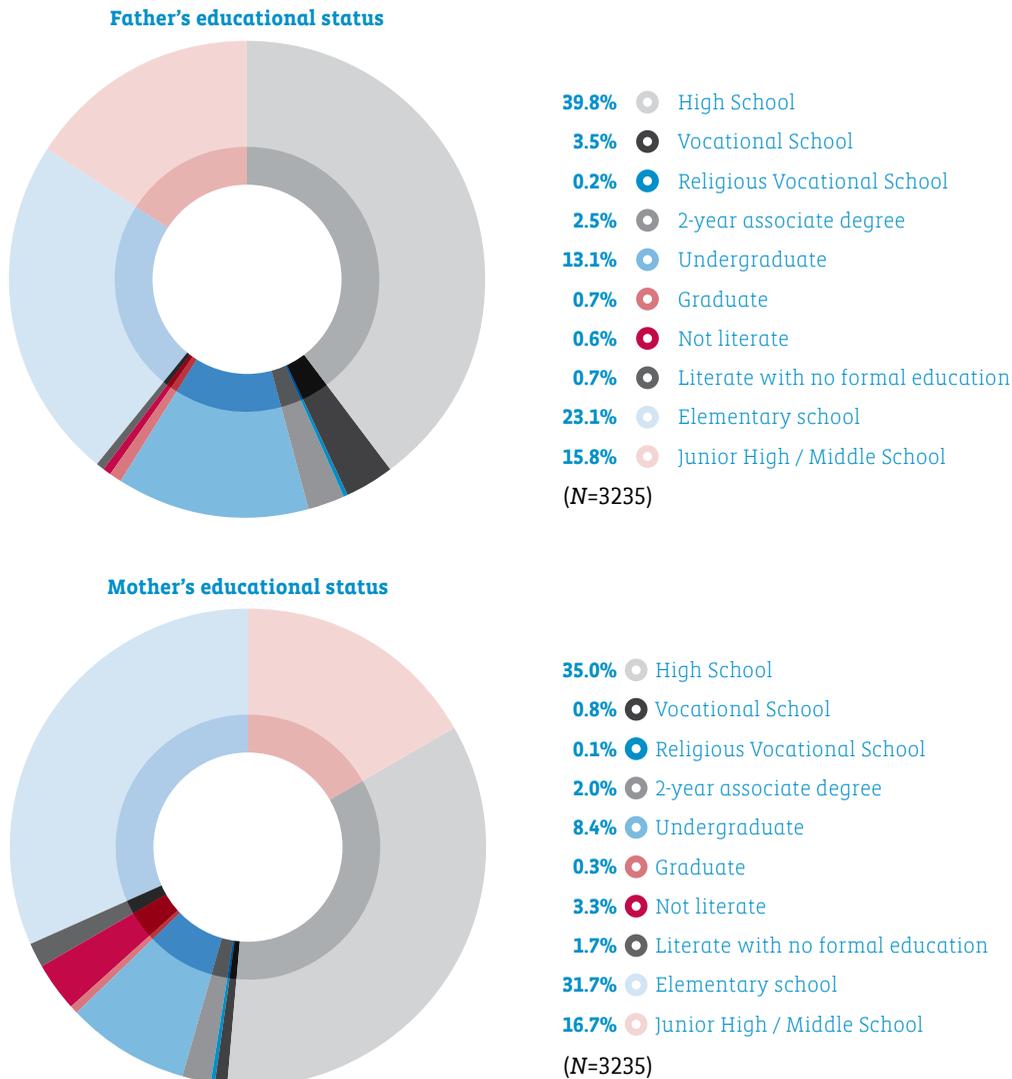
**The majority of the participants were within the 25-44 age group, most of them aged 20-29, married, and living with their spouses.**

Almost all of them were currently married and resided with their spouses (above 99%). Those in their second marriages or those who were divorced/widowed comprised a total of 2% of the sample. Fathers sharing the household with their own mothers were a 6% and those sharing it with their fathers were a 4% of the whole sample. The average number of people in the households was 3.83; while the average number of children per household was 1.71.

**Overall, the fathers had higher educational status compared to mothers** (Figure 2).

Close to one-fourth of the participants had elementary school education as their highest educational degree. This rate was 37% for the mothers. Fathers with a high school degree comprised 40% of the sample, while for mothers this number was 35%. Likewise, in terms of university degrees, fathers seemed to rank higher than the mothers (13% and 8%, respectively).

Figure 2. Mothers' and fathers' educational status.



**The majority of mothers were not employed.**

Ninety-seven percent of the participants (fathers) were employed (Figure 3). Seventy-one percent of the fathers were salary/wage earners, while 26% were self-employed. The majority of mothers, on the other hand, were not employed (86%). More than one-third of the participants (37%) were skilled laborers. Tradesmen/craftsmen comprised 21% of the sample, while unskilled laborers were 15%, and government employees were 12%.

**Nearly half of the participants (46.5%) had a monthly income of 1,500TL to 2,999TL.**

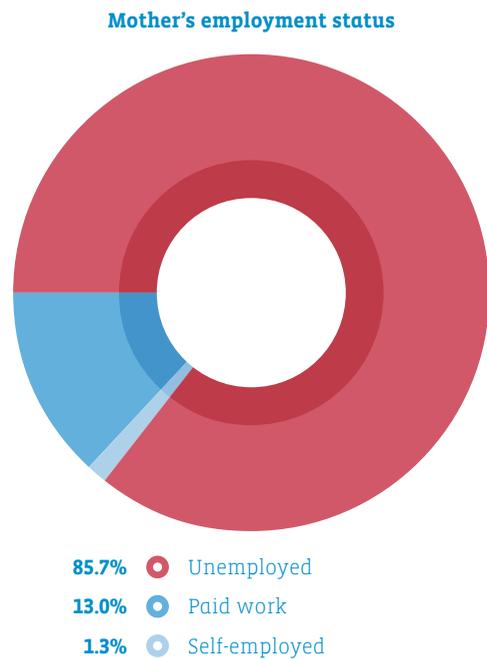
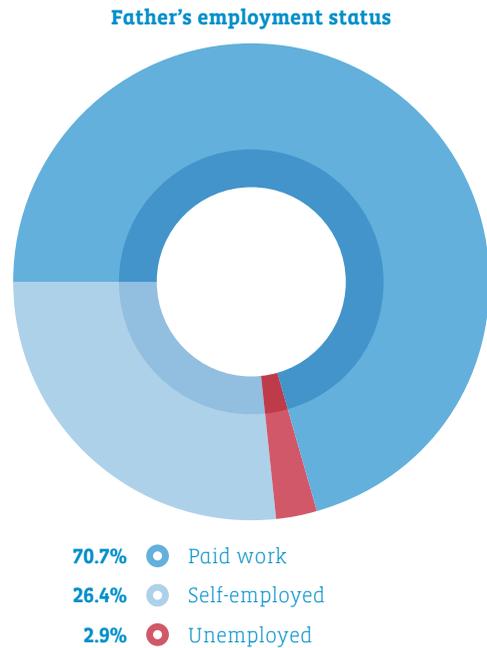
Fifty-three percent of the participants owned a house. Forty percent owned a car. Fifty-nine percent of the participants' houses had central heating. Eighty-one percent of the households had a dishwashing machine. Households with internet access were more than 60%, and those with more than one television were more than 40%.

For equal distribution across age groups, a quota was applied to each group of fathers with children aged 0-3, 4-6, and 7-10. Accordingly, fathers of children aged 0-3 comprised 34% of the sample, while 4-6 and 7-10 age groups each amounted to 33%. Gender distribution of children for each age group was also close to equal.

**2.4. DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative data collected for this study were analyzed using content analysis. The fathers' statements were grouped under three categories of involved fatherhood, fatherhood experiences, and perceptions of masculinity. For the quantitative data, on the other hand, we conducted preliminary, descriptive analyses to examine the current state of variables, and subsequent regression analyses to determine the risk and protective factors that predicted involved fatherhood behaviors and to develop social policy recommendations.

**Figure 3. Mothers' and fathers' employment status.**





3

## THE STATE OF FATHERHOOD IN TURKEY

## 3.1. FATHERHOOD BEHAVIORS IN TURKEY

This section will summarize the current state of fathers in Turkey, regarding the key elements of involved fatherhood, **care**, **control**, and **warmth**. Involved fatherhood behaviors vary across the developmental stages of the child. Therefore, certain involved fatherhood behaviors were assessed differently depending on the child's age. Several fatherhood behaviors were assessed using common items for all ages from 0 to 10. The results will be reported in three categories for the 0-3, 4-10, and 0-10 age groups.

When measuring involved fatherhood, we used the Physical Care and Involved Fatherhood (father participation) Scales for the 0-3 age group, while for the fathers of children in the 4-10 age group we used the Warmth, (father affection), Punishment (father control), Fostering Positive Behaviors, and Father Involvement (father participation) Scales.

### 3.1.1. The Beginning of Fatherhood: Caring

**According to a majority (91%) of the fathers with children aged 0-10, the primary person in charge of child care is their spouse.**

A quote from one of the participants summarized this approach as such:

*“My wife takes care of the kids’ cleanliness, their schoolwork, what time they go to bed and wake up in the morning... When I think about it, it does not feel right for me to change the diapers or prepare food for the kids. Well, if I had to do it, I certainly would, but since there is the mother, I feel like it is not my duty; that is what I think.”*  
(Gaziantep, high school degree, 39-year-old factory worker).

On the other hand, participants with working spouses assumed more responsibility and became more involved in child care:

*“Now, it was like this. Back then, I was the security manager at the maternity hospital here. I went to work at 5am and was finished at 2pm. My wife would go to work at 8:30 in the morning and work until 9pm. My mother-in-law would watch over our child until 3pm. After 3pm, it was all on me. This started when the kid was 20 days old. Feeding the child, changing the diapers, putting her to sleep... It went on like this for 2 years”* (Trabzon, college degree, 37-year-old owner of household cleaning supplies store).

**The fathers of 0-3-year-olds do not assume enough responsibility in their children’s physical care.**

The least participation by the fathers were in care duties, such as taking the children to the bathroom, changing their diapers, and trimming their nails. On the contrary, 51% of the fathers reported either “often” or “always” putting their children to bed, 47% reported that they helped their children change their clothing, and 42% reported feeding their children.

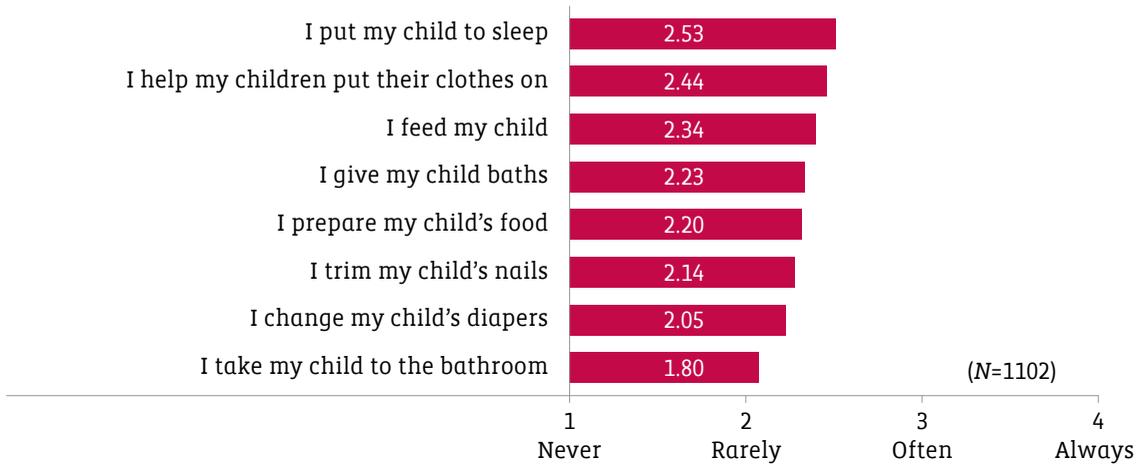
The average score for the physical care dimension of involved fatherhood was calculated by taking the average of the frequency of the eight behaviors listed in Figure 4. The average score for the overall sample was 2.22 over 4.

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*Of these fathers; 50% never take the child to the bathroom, 36% never change the diapers, 35% never trim the child’s nails.*

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**Figure 4.** Participation in physical care (age 0-3)



**Of all the issues concerning child development and care, the issue that most concerns fathers of children aged 0-10 is child health.**

Eighty-four percent of the fathers reported “often” or “always” caring for the child when sick. Providing the child with explanations for social rules (76%) and positive/negative behaviors (83%) also had a high ranking on this list.

**Assuming an active role and a personal responsibility in their children’s education, however, ranks lower.**

As 13% of the fathers reported never attending their children’s school activities, 21% reported attending rarely. Playing an active role in the child’s education seemed a daunting and tedious task for some fathers. One of the fathers explained it as such:

*“When there was too much homework, things got annoying. So one of my 3 kids comes up and asks, ‘dad, what’s this? I couldn’t get that’, and I go on the internet and start working on it. I send that one off, then the other comes up, ‘dad, what’s that?’, ‘go ask your mom, I’ve had it with you!’ I would get too bored.” (Gaziantep, high school degree, 39-year-old factory worker).*

*Fathers who “never” read a book to their children comprise 19% of the sample, while those who read “rarely” are 27%.*

### 3.1.2. The Challenges of Fatherhood: Control and Discipline

**The most common punishment method by fathers of children aged 4-10 is “restriction.”**

When children acted against their father’s will, fathers put restrictions on one of their favorite activities (applying restrictions “often” and “always” had a frequency of 33%). The second group of punishment behaviors involved verbal aggression (24%) and time-out (18%-19%). The third group involved corporal punishment behaviors (12%-13%). A father, who reported using time-outs as a method for discipline, recounted:

*“Like those times he takes a ball to school, and forgets to bring it back home. That’s when I punish him. This is what I do, ‘OK’*

*I say, 'you're not allowed to talk to me for two hours'. He comes after half an hour, and says, 'dad, is it two hours already?'" (Konya, high school degree, 42-year-old construction worker specializing in tile work).*

Some fathers reported giving “just a slap,” when the child misbehaved, but did not consider this as corporal punishment. One father explained:

*“For me it's not, I'm not the kind of guy who gives a beating and such, but, say, he goes overboard and just does not listen to me and just keeps acting out, I just give him a slap. But I don't give a beating or anything like that.” (Istanbul, college degree, 36-year-old sales consultant)*

Some fathers reported not having any rules, perceiving it as “restricting the freedom” of the child. Those fathers striving to be the “good father” seemed to struggle in saying no to their children, trying to allow everything that the children demanded and as a result turning a blind eye to their children's irresponsible behavior.

*“No such thing as rules in our house. You're required to do this, do that, eat at a certain hour, no such thing, no rules. If you're sleepy, you go to bed. If you're hungry, you eat. No set time for tea. We don't have any rules.” (Konya, elementary school degree, 32-years-old worker in knitwear business)*

Some fathers, on the other hand, stated that they preferred to talk to their children about proper behavior and be role models for them:

*“Well, before the age of four you can't really give the child anything. After four, it's all about explaining. 'Son, here's what you're supposed to do', 'look, this is how we do it'. And doing it as we say it. He has to learn through observing. If I don't do what I say, then he goes, 'dad, if you don't do it, why do I have to do it?'. Of course, you need rules to prepare him for real life.” (Trabzon, college degree, 37-year-old owner of household cleaning supplies store).*

### 3.1.3. The Joy of Fatherhood: Affection

**The majority of fathers state that they often display warm and affectionate behaviors towards their children.**

While most affectionate behaviors came in the form of calming the child when frightened or upset, the fathers also showed warmth in the form of kissing, hugging, and feeling close to the child. Some participants deemed the display of love and affection more important than providing for the children materially. Most fathers used a similar discourse in talking about the importance of love:

*“You know, what a child expects first from his father is love. All else is just meaningless. I think... In my opinion, if a father does not love his kids, if he constantly has a frown on his face, whatever kind of money he makes has no value. Well, let me put it this way, let's say you come home from work and you're exhausted, but with a big frown on your face... If your children are running away from you scared, then what you make for a living has no value.” (Konya, high school degree, 42-year-old construction worker specializing in tile work).*

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*Seventy-nine per cent of fathers spend time watching television with their children. For children aged 4-10, this rate goes up to 86%. Fathers who play imaginary games with their children, however, only amount to 43%.*

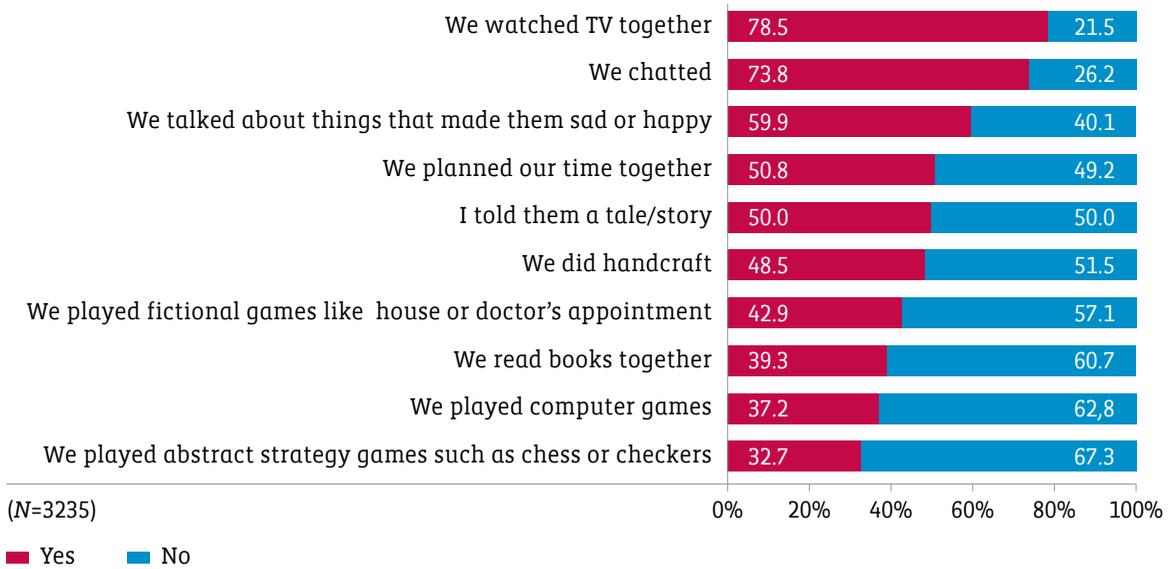
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**The fathers do not seem to be spending time with their children in a way that will support the children’s development.**

It is highly important for the child’s holistic development to spend quality time and engage in activities, indoors and outdoors,

that will support their development. The fathers, despite being in the same room with their children when they came home from work, generally only watched television with them, side by side, and failed to engage in any one-on-one activity that would support child development. (Figure 5).

**Figure 5.** Which one of the following have you done with your child during the past month? (Ages 0-10).



**Figure 5.1.** Which one of the following have you done during the past month? (Ages 0-3).

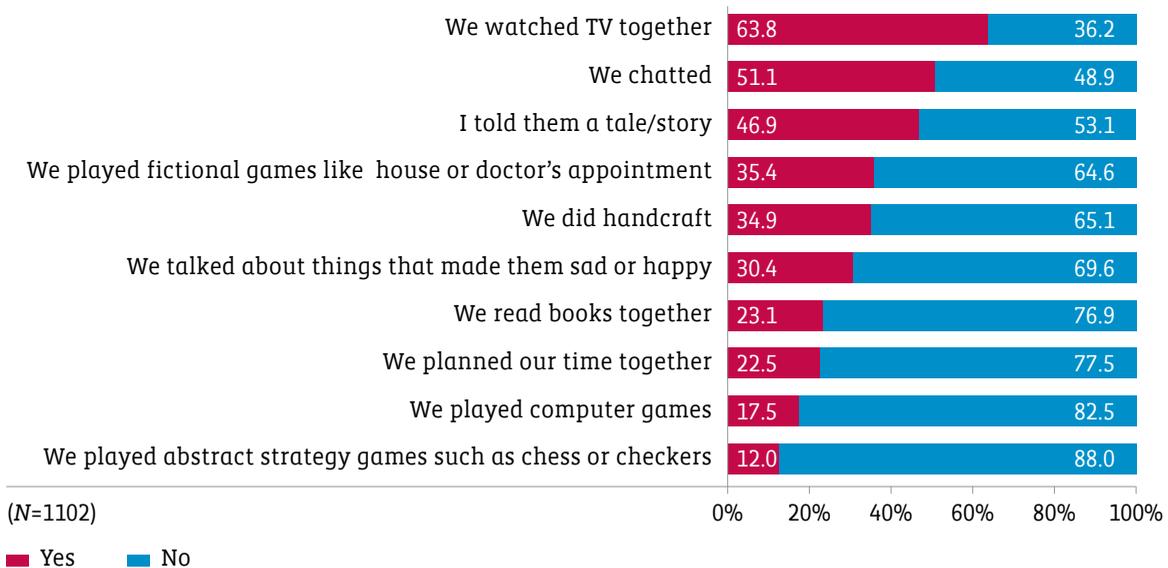
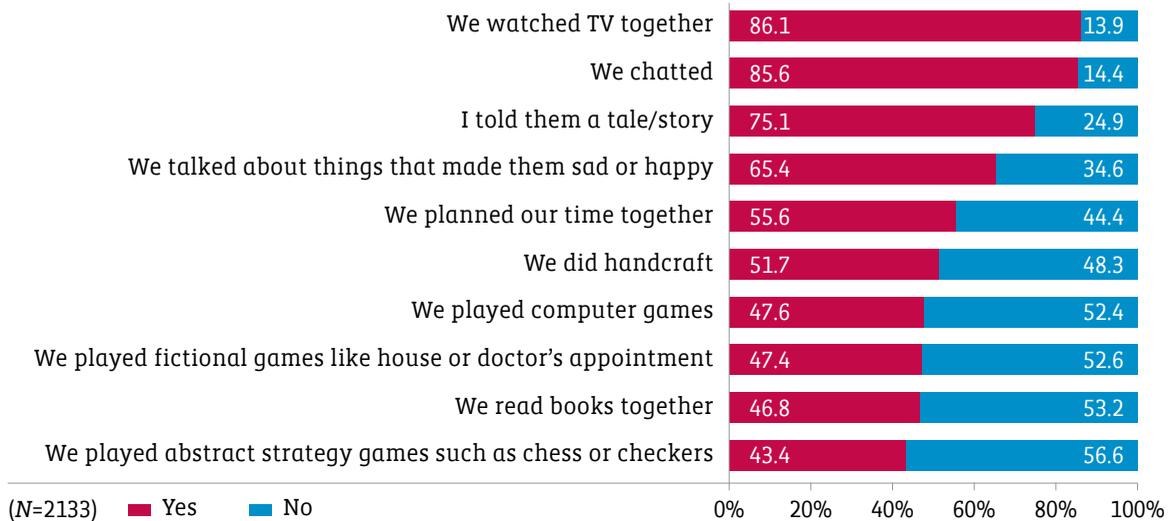


Figure 5.2. Which one of the following have you done during the past month? (Ages 4-10).



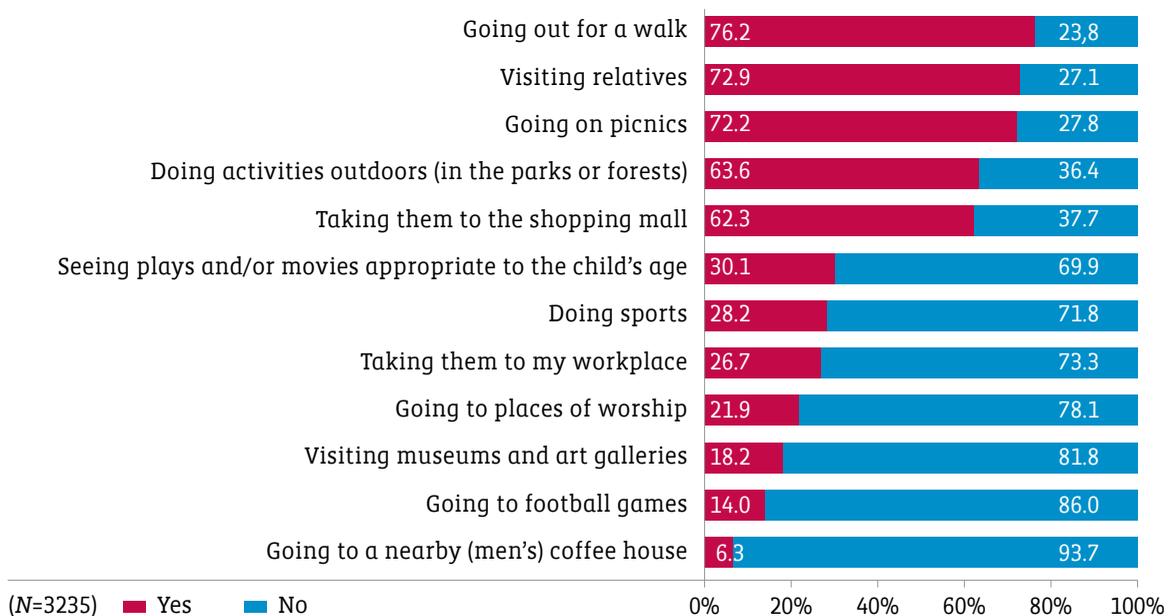
**It is evident that, with 0-3-year-old children, fathers engage less in the kind of activities that support child development.**

While only 51% of the fathers chatted with their 0-3-year-olds, for the 4-10-year-olds this rate was as high as 86%. Similarly, book reading for 0-3-year-olds was at 23%, whereas for 4-10-year-olds 46% of the fathers read books to their children (Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

**As for outdoors activities, most fathers seem to not engage in cultural or sports activities with their children.**

Outdoors activities with children centered around going for walks (76%), visiting family (73%) or going to shopping malls (62%). Unfortunately, very few fathers seemed to engage in activities such as visiting museums/galleries, seeing age-appropriate films or plays, or playing sports with their children (Figure 6).

Figure 6. How do you spend time outdoors with your children? (Ages 0-10).



**Fathers tend to talk with their children mostly on everyday issues and school, and occasionally about relationships or family ties.**

Eighty percent of the participants reported talking with their children about their frustrations, happiness, success, or failures. Next on the list come friends, family, and siblings (78.5%). Relatively fewer fathers talked with their children about their own feelings and thoughts (61%).

**Some fathers seem to not be able to differentiate between a casual chat and giving advice.**

Many fathers perceived chatting with children as an opportunity to give advice on life, and share their wisdom.

*“What does it mean to build a relationship with my child? Well, it means caring for them, talking to them. It means communicating through words... I sometimes say: ‘look, son, you go to school to learn all of these...but you really have to work on them at home, too.’” (Konya, high school degree, 30-year-old real estate agent).*

## 3.2. THE DETERMINANTS OF INVOLVED FATHERHOOD

This research study explored involved fatherhood in terms of the three dimensions of “care,” “control,” and “affection.” This section discusses the factors that influence fatherhood. These factors not only help us understand involved fatherhood, but also lay the groundwork for developing policy and practice recommendations. Thus, we aim to ultimately support child development through improving various factors that contribute to it, starting with involved fatherhood behaviors.

In this section, we will briefly cover the current state of factors and variables that influence involved fatherhood and discuss their relationship to involved fatherhood. The influences on involved fatherhood behaviors were classified as either a risk or a protective factor. As listed in Table 1, under each of the five categories of influence, namely individual factors, factors in the family context, work, masculinity and gender roles, each variable can either serve as a risk or a protective factor.

**Table 1.** Determinants of Involved Fatherhood

Main Factors	Variables
Individual Factors that Influence Fatherhood Behaviors	Father's socioeconomic status Father's satisfaction with fatherhood and life Value attributed to the child
Factors in the Family Context that Influence Fatherhood Behaviors	Mother's education Marital satisfaction Perceived spousal and family support
Factors in the Social Environment that Influence Fatherhood Behaviors	Perceived friend support Time spent in social settings
Factors in the Work Life that Influence Fatherhood Behaviors	Time spent at work Paternal leave
Gender Roles That Influence Fatherhood Behaviors	Sexist attitudes towards the child Sexist attitudes towards women Perception of being the breadwinner of the family Gender-based distribution of household chores

### 3.2.1. Individual Factors That Influence Fatherhood Behaviors

**Fathers' positive parenting behaviors are correlated with their life satisfaction.**

Eighty-six percent of the participating fathers responded that they were "satisfied with their lives." Three fourths of the participants thought that they had attained everything of importance to them. For fathers of children aged 4-10, life satisfaction proved to be an important factor in predicting involved fatherhood and warmth/affection behaviors, as well as their attitudes towards instilling positive behaviors in their children.

**Satisfaction with fatherhood also has an influence on involved fatherhood.**

For fathers of all age groups (both 0-3 and 4-10), increase in satisfaction with fatherhood predicted increases in involved fatherhood behaviors (examples include higher involvement in overall child care and development for the younger ages, and higher provision of the child's needs and more time spent with the child for the older ages).

*The majority of the participants reports joy and contentment with fatherhood. Ninety-four percent of the participants agree with the statement "Fatherhood gives me pleasure," and 93% agree with "I take joy in being a father." A majority also take pride in being the fathers of their children (93%).*

Also, for fathers of 4- to 10-year-olds, increase in fatherhood satisfaction levels predicted increases in warm/affectionate behaviors, such as kissing and hugging, as

well as positive reinforcement skills, such as praise and inductive reasoning for rules. Increase in fatherhood satisfaction levels also predicted decreases in punishment behaviors, such as yelling at their child or restricting their favorite activities.

**Fathers’ socioeconomic status (SES) influences involved fatherhood.**

Fathers from different SES groups differed in their level of involved fatherhood. This difference was in favor of fathers from high SES groups. However, life satisfaction had a higher influence on the involved fatherhood behaviors of low SES fathers than that of the high SES group.

**The value attributed to the child by the father is another important determinant of involved fatherhood.**

Fathers attributed three different types of values to their children, namely, (1) psychological, (2) social, and (3) economic. These values determined the rationale behind having children. The majority of fathers seemed to have children due to psychological reasons.

Across all age groups, higher psychological value attributed to children predicted more involved fatherhood behaviors.

The second most commonly attributed value to children was social value (“I had children to become the head of a family;” or “I had children, so that my lineage continues”).

Economic value of children came last in the priority list (“I had children, so that there would be somebody to take care of me and my wife when we get old;” “I had children to have one more hand at home to help with household/family chores”).

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*The most agreed statements in the survey as reasons for becoming a father are “Because I am very fond of children” and “Because children bring joy to a home” (92% and 91%, respectively).*

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**For fathers of 0-3 and 4-10-year-old children, psychological value of the child is an important factor in determining their level of involved fatherhood.**

The more fathers emphasized reasons for having children, such as the love, joy, and enthusiasm they felt for their child, and the happiness their child brought to their lives, the more they displayed involved and positive fatherhood behaviors in terms of care, education, and other responsibilities. For fathers of 4-10-year-olds in particular, the most important factor in predicting warmth/affection towards the child, as well as attitudes towards instilling positive behaviors, was the psychological value attributed to the child.

**On the contrary, higher social value attributed to the child predicts less of overall positive fatherhood behaviors.**

To the extent that fathers attributed reasons for having children, such as continuing the lineage or attaining the status of “head of the household,” which denote sexist attitudes, their incidence of overall positive fatherhood behaviors showed a decline. These fathers tended to display less warm and affectionate behaviors, were less involved with their children, and showed less of an effort to instill positive behaviors in their children.

### 3.2.2. Factors in the Family Context That Influence Fatherhood Behaviors

**Mothers' educational status has an influence on involved fatherhood behaviors.**

To explore the impact of mothers' educational status on father involvement, we compared mothers with high school or higher degrees to those with degrees lower than high school. The results demonstrated that in families where mothers had a minimum of a high school degree, fathers displayed less of punishment behaviors to their 4-10 children compared to fathers in the other groups.

**Among all factors related to the family context, having the support of one's spouse and family has the highest impact on involved fatherhood.**

This finding demonstrated that a majority of the participants received support from their spouses, families, and social environments. The highest support came from the spouses. Next was family and social environment.

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*Ninety-four percent of the fathers agree with statements such as "my wife is always there when I need her;" "I share my joys and sorrows with my wife."*

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Support from the spouses increased involved fatherhood behaviors. When fathers with children aged 4-10 perceived higher support from their spouses, their involvement with their children increased.

Especially for fathers of 4-10-year-olds, perceived family support was the most important determinant of involved behaviors (such as being involved in their children's education and attending activities together) and warm/affectionate behaviors (such as playing with their children and displaying their affection physically).

### 3.2.3. Factors in the Social Environment That Influence Fatherhood Behaviors

Although spouses were the first resource for the fathers in cases of emotional distress, they received considerable amount of support from their friends, as well. The participants used different ways of phrasing the support they received from their friends. Eighty-eight percent agreed with the statement "My friends really try to help me out;" while 87% agreed with "I can talk to my friends about my problems." However, the impact of support from the social environment could have either a positive or a negative impact on involved fatherhood behaviors.

**For individuals, who are new to being fathers, social and emotional support from friends contribute to their improvement as fathers.**

For fathers of 0-3-year-olds, higher perceived support from friends predicted higher levels of involvement in the physical care of their children (changing diapers, preparing food, etc.).

**Time spent outside of home, however, has a negative impact on involved fatherhood.**

Participating fathers spent approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes with their children, as they spent approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes out with their friends.

On the other hand, increase in fathers' time spent outside of home predicted less participation in the physical care of children and a decreased involvement overall (such as knowing how much food the child needs or attending to the child when he/she wakes up), for fathers of 0-3-year-olds.

For fathers of 4-10-year-olds, also, increased time spent outside of home was associated with a decrease in involved behaviors (such as involvement in the child's school work or engaging in activities that the child liked), as well as warmth (such as kissing and hugging) and instilling positive behaviors (such as being a role model for positive behaviors).

### 3.2.4. Factors in the Work Life that Influence Fatherhood Behaviors

Participants stated spending most of their days at work. As they spent the majority of their time at work, they also seemed to be negatively affected by problems in the workplace. The biggest causes of stress were financial problems and related concerns (52%). Forty-one percent of the fathers shared their problems at work.

**Due to long working hours, fathers struggle to have enough time in their schedules for themselves and their families, and have a hard time handling family and work at the same time.**

Here are a few examples:

*“The biggest constraint on our time at home, well, sometimes it's work, the stress and exhaustion that sometimes gets in the way. So, you come home, your kid wants to play with you, but your body can't take it, it's exhausted.” (Gaziantep, high school degree, 33-year-old security guard).*

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*On a normal week day, fathers spend an average of 9 hours and 20 minutes at work, 2 hours and 20 minutes with their children, and 1 hour and 20 minutes with their friends.*

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*“Generally, when I go to work early, I come home at 4pm; I feel a bit too tired and take a nap on the living room couch. So, when the kids play, I sometimes yell at them saying ‘hey, go play in the other room or be quiet’. Sometimes I feel too sleepy; so, it's better when I take a nap in that case. If I don't, then I get all the more aggressive; when I feel sleep-deprived and tired I can't really do anything positive. I tend to get mad.” (Gaziantep, high school degree, 39-year-old factory worker).*

Some participants reported that they were able to take leave from work or spare some time to spend on their own or with family. Those fathers, who were able to take leave, were better at creating a work-life balance. One of the fathers explained it as such:

*“Well I saw that the job had a lot of good benefits; like my kid would get sick, and I could easily go take care of that. I am grateful for the managers for being so thoughtful in those situations. Like, for instance, they were of great help in times when I needed to go and take care of kids” (Istanbul, college degree, 39-year-old administrative staff at Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality).*

*Twenty-eight percent of the participants do not know about their right to paternal leave. Twenty-one percent of the fathers do not use their paternal leave due to their employers not allowing them.*

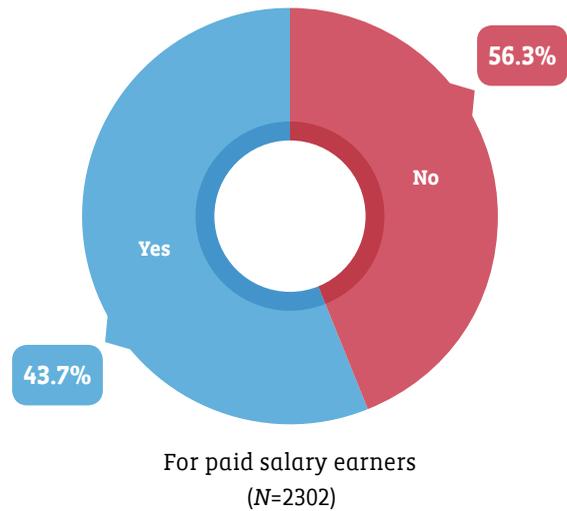
**Paternal leave, especially for the 0-3 age group, is a critical factor with a positive impact on involved fatherhood behaviors.**

Using their legal right to paternal leave enabled fathers to become more involved in their child’s development. Forty-four percent of the salary/wage earner fathers reported having used their paternal leave (Figure 7).

There were several factors causing fathers not to use paternal leave. First of these factors was lack of knowledge. Twenty-eight percent of the participants stated that they did not know about their right to paternal leave. Twenty-three percent said that they did not feel the need to take leave, since there were enough people to help their spouses. Twenty-one percent of the fathers were not able to use their paternal leave due to their employers not allowing them.

Other reasons stated by the fathers for not using their paternal leave were their lack of belief that they would be of help to their spouses (5%), and not knowing of anybody around them who had used paternal leave before (4%).

**Figure 7.** Have you taken paternal leave?



### 3.2.5. Gender Role Attitudes That Influence Fatherhood Behaviors

A majority of the fathers expressed no sexist attitudes towards their children. Three fourths of the participants had no preference for having a girl or a boy. The difference between fathers who wanted boys and those who wanted girls was not significant (13.5% and 11%, respectively).

We observed that sexist attitudes on issues such as women’s employment were viewed differently when they concerned daughters. Many fathers in the sample supported the idea that their daughters should be well-educated and financially independent.

The lowest scores on gender role attitudes were for the items “boys can play with dolls” and “a father can change the diapers of his daughter as well as his son” (69% and 66%, respectively). While it was deemed important for girls to be competent, it was not desired for boys to violate gender norms.

**Patriarchal masculinity influences fatherhood behaviors. The higher the fathers’ traditional views on masculinity are, the lower they score on involved fatherhood behaviors.**

How fathers scored on sexist attitudes was an important determinant of various outcomes. For instance, in the 0-3 age group, increases in sexist attitudes towards children predicted a significant decrease in involved fatherhood behaviors, especially for lower SES fathers.

To understand how fathers perceived masculinity, we asked them when they first felt like a man. Earning money and being self-sufficient were perceived by participants as highly important elements of masculinity. Another concept emphasized by the participants as a defining feature of masculinity was “power.”

A majority of the participants regarded themselves as the head of the household (88%). The more the fathers viewed themselves as “head of the household,” the less they were involved in the physical care of their infants (such as changing diapers, preparing food, etc.).

The fatherhood behaviors which were influenced most by perceptions of masculinity and being the leader at home were punishment behaviors for fathers of 4-10-year-olds, such as yelling, giving time-outs or corporal punishment. An increase in patriarchal masculinity was correlated with

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*Overall, the fathers highly agree with the statements “girls should continue school after adolescence;” “girls and boys can play together;” and “my child can sit at the same desk with a child from the opposite sex” (87%-88%).*

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*A majority of the participants thinks a woman must stay silent in conversations with her husband, when they have to (66%). Also, a significant number of fathers agree with the statement “One of the most important attributes of a man is his ability to have people listen to him when he speaks” (65%).*

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an increase in punishment behaviors of the fathers in the 4-10 age group.

**Sexist attitudes towards women affect fatherhood behaviors.**

Especially for fathers of 0-3-year-olds, having sexist attitudes towards women was an important determinant of fathers’ involvement in children’s physical care. In cases where fathers believed in gender inequality and that women should not have a career, the fathers were less involved in their children’s physical care.

An important majority of the participants (78%) believed that women, by nature, were weaker and more emotional than men. Again, an important majority expected women to stay silent and be obedient towards their husbands, when necessary (66%). Also, a significant number of fathers agreed with the statement “One of the most important attributes of a man is his ability to have people listen to him when he speaks” (65%).

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*An important majority of the participants (78%) believe that women, by nature, are weaker and more emotional than men.*

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While 75% agreed with “Women can work outside the home at a paid job,” a similar majority (72%) nonetheless believed that children were negatively affected by their mothers’ busy work schedules. Such contradictory statements were due to financial concerns. Fathers, who normally would not want their wife to work, seemed to change this opinion as the economy went worse and financial problems arose. The fathers viewed it positively, if the mothers started working to contribute to the household income, once the children were old enough. A father explained this view as such:

*“She was not lucky enough to find a job. Well, in fact she did start working at a job. But then quit. One time, I was the one who told her to quit. The house, the kids, all became a mess. When the children’s education was affected and all, I myself told her to quit. There it was, things were falling apart. The order in the house was affected badly. It was nothing like the order we once had at home, and since things were getting out of hand, I told her to quit, stay home, and take care of her children. The kids go to school. Then they come home. The nanny can’t take care of them like you and I would. She was taking care of everything, from feeding them to helping with school work...without that, things really got out of hand. So, we decided to wait, like when they grow up, then you’ll get a job if you can.” (Gaziantep, high school degree, 40-year-old blue collar worker at a government office).*

**The participants, whose spouses are working, assume more responsibility and are more involved in child care.**

These fathers tended to hold patriarchal views of masculinity; however, in everyday life, took on household chores and child care duties, when their spouses were at work or sick.

*“Well, so for instance, my wife is the one who cooks normally. But if she is a position where she can’t do it, I’ll do it. I am good at it, so I mean if there is cleaning to be done, normally it’s the wife’s duty. But never did I say ‘hey, this is your job, I can’t do it, I won’t do it’, we never had an issue like that. There were times when she was sick, and I swept the floors, did the cleaning, fed the kids, and cooked for us. So, we never really had a set rule for division of labor like that” (Trabzon, high school degree, 30-year-old manager).*

**Fathers’ attitudes on division of labor in the home influence their fatherhood behaviors.**

Some of the participants believed that it was not in the nature of men to be able to take care of children every day. A father recounted:

*“He can’t do it. A man, I mean even men who say they are easy going, I’ve seen it, they get mad, they can’t handle kids. So, I think a man’s nature just can’t deal with the child’s nature.” (Konya, high school degree, 30-year-old real estate agent).*

The most common household chore undertaken by the participants was grocery shopping; 40% of the participants did it once a week, and 24% did it every day. Other household duties were either very rarely or never undertaken.

One father explained:

*“So, I would get out of work, pick up the kid, pick up my wife from work, come home, and told her to cook for us. ‘Hey, come help me’ she would say. To which I would say, ‘hey it’s none of my business.’” (Trabzon, high school degree, 39-year-old grocery store manager).*

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*More than half of the participants have not ever cooked or cleaned the house. More than three fourths of the fathers never do housework, such as wiping the windows, doing the laundry or hanging the laundry to dry.*

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**Fathers' attitudes towards gender-based division of labor are the most important determinant of fathers' involvement in the physical care of their 0-3 year-old children and their overall involved fatherhood behaviors.**

Fathers who shared household duties with their spouses and helped with everyday cleaning and chores, tended to be much more involved in the physical care of their 0-3-year-old children, and showed overall involvement in the child's development.

As for the fathers of 4-10-year-olds, only in the lowest SES group, fathers' decreased engagement in household chores predicted less involved or positive behaviors towards children (such as instilling positive behaviors in their children).

### **3.3. HOW FATHERS REFLECT ON THEIR OWN FATHERHOOD**

It is important to know fathers' own reflections on their fatherhood experience to be able to cater efforts in supporting

involved fatherhood towards the actual needs and concerns of the fathers themselves. To this end, this research study explored fathers' needs regarding child care and related responsibilities, as well as the support mechanisms through which fathers can meet these needs. This section presents a summary of the fathers' views on the concept of fatherhood and policies that can support involved fatherhood.

**Most families want three basic things for their children: A good education, a good career, and a good marriage.**

The fathers saw education as the basic and most prominent tool for maintaining or improving one's social status; and thus, highlighted the importance of education for their children to become well-equipped (better than themselves) for a successful life.

**More than half of the participants share feeling not so ready for fatherhood, when they became fathers.**

Fifty-eight percent of the fathers said that they felt as if they did not know what to do, when they first became fathers. Although fathers defined having children in terms of positive feelings, such as happiness and bonding with family, they also expressed negative outcomes associated with fatherhood. First of these was the expense of raising a child, and the second, was not having the sense of freedom they had before the children.

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*Fathers, who felt like they did not know what to do when they first became fathers, comprise 58% of the sample.*

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### Most fathers claim that they learned fatherhood on their own.

Forty-four percent of the fathers said that they learned fatherhood on their own. On the other hand, 38% reported learning fatherhood from their fathers. A significant number of fathers shared that they still remembered negative experiences they had with their own fathers. The participants explained how the impact of these negative experiences were still felt, how they could not forget the violent acts by their fathers, and how these memories felt like “scars.” One father shared:

*“My father used to just sit, so to speak, he would talk rough, yell, and beat us if he wanted to. ...He said to always work, do this, do that. And if I didn’t, he would beat me or swear at me. There was this coldness, because of his pressure like that.” (Istanbul, high school degree, 36-year-old security manager)..*

### A majority of the fathers never attended any trainings on fatherhood.

Those fathers, who were willing to attend such trainings, brought up concerns about their “masculinity” and “toughness,” claiming that such an endeavor would cause them to be ridiculed among their friends. One father who attended a training recounted:

*“So, take my aunt’s son, for instance. He also has four kids. Two boys and two girls. ‘I won’t come’ he said. ‘What have I got to do there? Does one need training for that?’ he asked. ‘So, there you are, you’re a father’ he said.’ Will those people teach me how to act?’ ‘Whatever you got to do, you already know it’. Me and my friends, we were the laughing stock of the neighborhood. So, you change diapers? They have training for that? This type of thing is ridiculed, especially by the less-educated people. But in fact, what could be more natural than to know how you’re supposed to*

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*While 97% of the fathers have not attended any trainings on child development, 44% say that they learned fatherhood on their own.*

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*treat your child, it is no laughing matter, but people get it differently. There is also this male hegemony, like, ‘oh you change the diapers, oh you prepare baby food?’ I got these reactions even from my father.” (Gaziantep, college degree, 39-year-old planning specialist).*

Thirty-eight percent of the participants expressed a willingness to attend trainings and/or support programs, if provided. Another 43% also expressed willingness, however thought they would not be able to find the time to actually attend such a program.

### The most cited means for accessing the information fathers need on fatherhood are the internet, as well as in-person training settings.

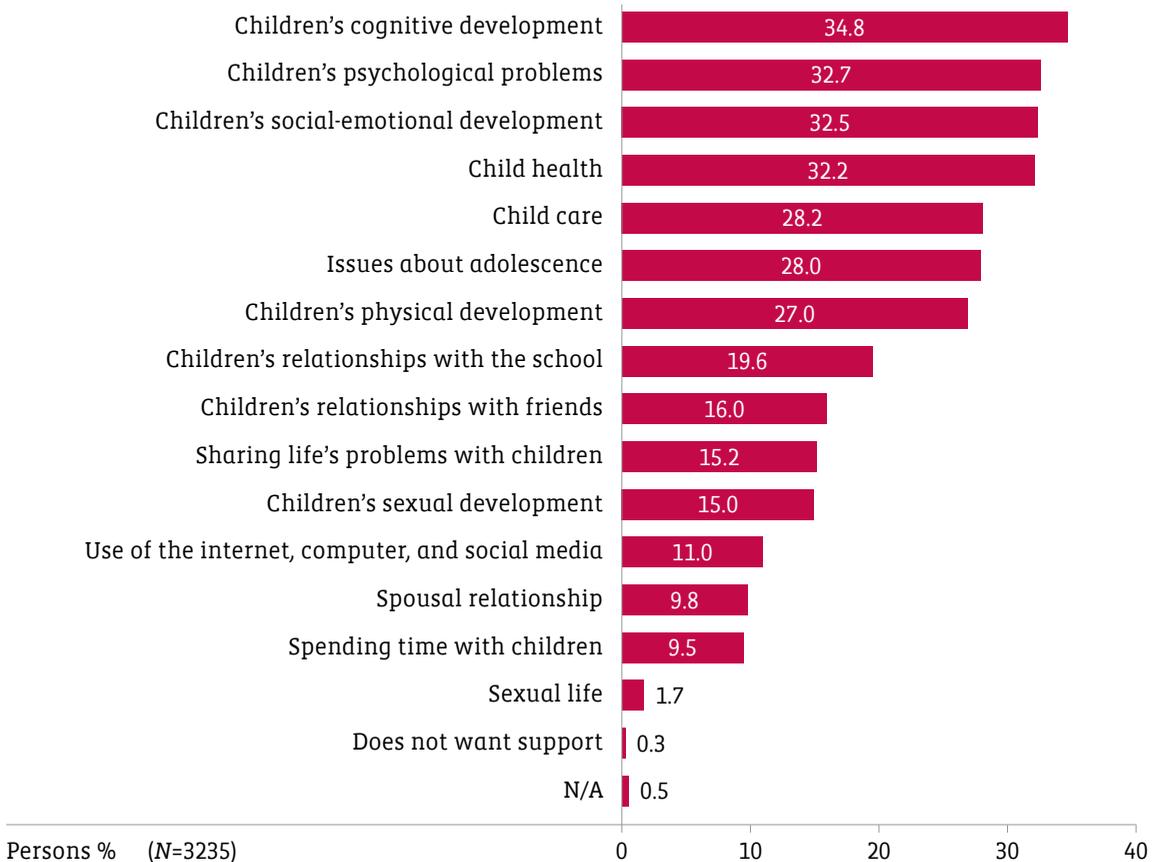
“Reading on the internet” was the preference of 32%. The rest of the participants preferred being trained at home (25%). “Attending training programs” was also a popular option (23%). The participants thought that these trainings should be provided by non-governmental organizations at easily accessible locations. Some fathers considered training over social media or television to be more effective.

**The two critical issues that the fathers most needed the trainings to address are children’s cognitive development and emotional problems.**

We also asked the participants what kind of trainings they needed to become more involved fathers. Figure 8 lists the responses given by the fathers. Put in order of frequency, these responses demonstrate that the issues fathers regarded the most important and needed educational support with were children’s cognitive development (35%) and psychological problems (33%).

*The issue that the fathers need the most support is children’s cognitive development (35%), and the most needed services are counseling for when they have problems with their children (41%).*

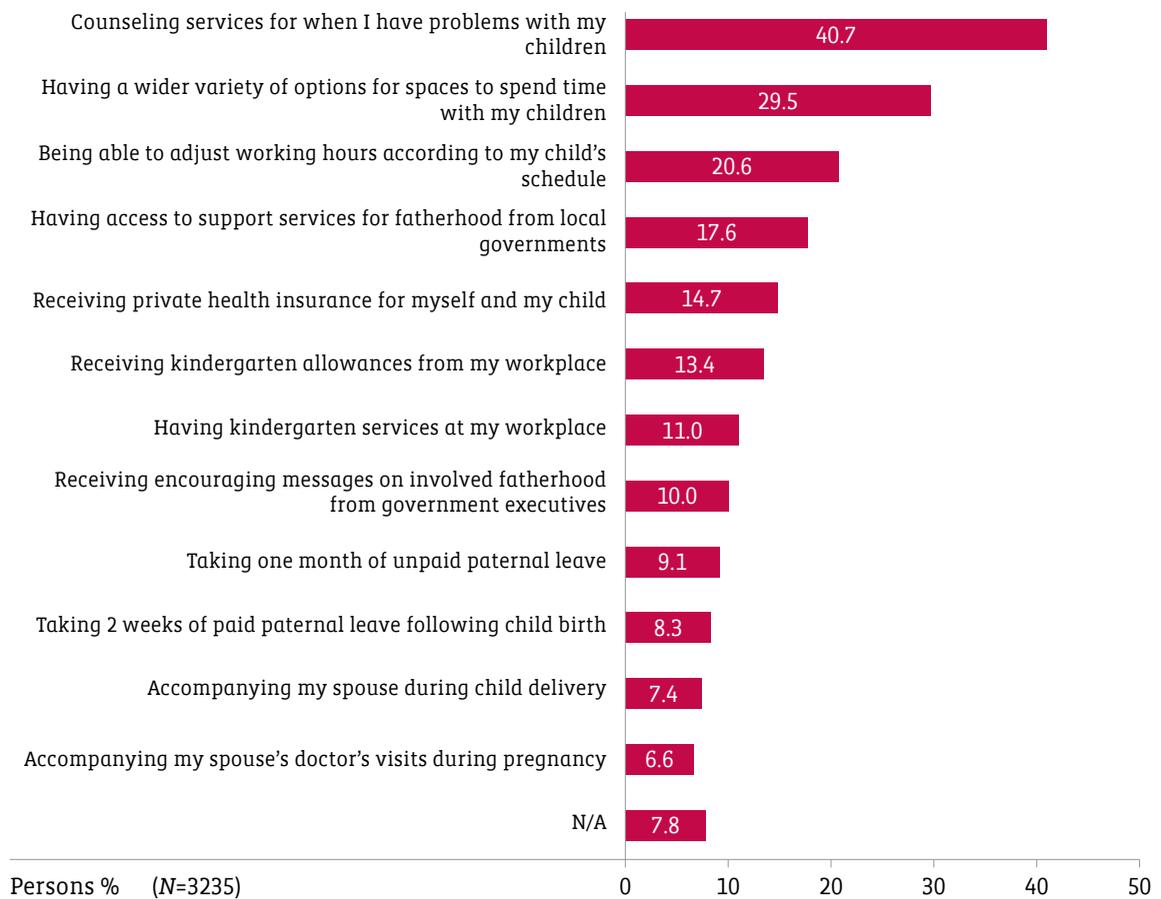
**Figure 8. As a father, which of the following issues would you like to receive training and support?**



**To become more involved fathers, the participants need a place to seek counseling and advice for when they have problems with their children; also, dedicated spaces to spend time with their children and a readjustment of their work schedule.**

Three main issues emerged as the most pressing needs in terms of policy and services for fathers to become more involved: a place to seek counseling and advice for when they had problems with their children (41%), dedicated spaces to spend time with their children (29.5%), and a readjustment of their work schedule in a way that allowed them enough time to spend with their children (21%; Figure 9)..

**Figure 9.** The most needed public policies and social services.





4

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations and social policies put forth by the findings of the Fatherhood in Turkey study can enable fathers to spend more time with their children and display more involved and positive fatherhood behaviors, especially during the early years of their children's development. These recommendations and policies are key to healthy child development. This section aims to review the current state of fatherhood in Turkey and provide recommendations for programs and policies to reinforce involved fatherhood. Some of these recommendations are micro-level, addressing child development, and some are macro-level, concerning social perceptions and attitudes.

## 4.1. SUPPORTING INVOLVED FATHERHOOD BEHAVIORS IN THE FATHER AND CHILD RELATIONSHIP

### 4.1.1. Affection towards the Child

Some parenting behaviors are known to be critical for healthy child development, such as display of love, affection, and warmth; in other words, offering physical closeness by kissing, hugging or holding children, and giving them verbal expressions of love. In addition, spending quality time with children means talking with them and listening to them. Research findings demonstrate that children, who talk and chat with their parents more, tend to have better language skills and vocabulary (Farah et al., 2008; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007; NICHD, 2000).

A majority of the participants of this study reported displaying very warm and affectionate behaviors to their children. During the in-depth interviews, they stressed the importance of raising a child with love; expressing the realization that a child's greatest expectation from a father was love

and affection. Nevertheless, their interest seemed to decline, when it came to matters of responsibility, such as playing an active role in the child's education. Also among the findings was the lack of quality time spent with their children. Therefore,

- We need to rethink the concept of love in terms of fatherhood, reevaluate and redefine it, keeping in mind its impact on child development,
- We need to highlight the importance of activities such as reading and playing during the early years of life, through fatherhood trainings and/or traditional or social media. We need to present fathers with examples of activities they can do at home with their children with no or very little equipment,
- We need to inform fathers on the importance of spending quality time with their children, as well as listening to their children in an effort to build good communication, and simply playing with their children. To this end, collaborations with public and private institutions could serve well to raise awareness through campaigns or to create free-of-charge activities and venues for fathers to attend with their children,
- We should pinpoint the important findings that negative behaviors, such as lying, seeking the affection of a father in different places, relationships, or activities (bad habits), are seen much less in children who grow up with a strong father-child bond.

### 4.1.2. Control as Part of the Father-Child Relationship

Research in Turkey and worldwide has repeatedly shown that a certain level of discipline and rule setting without hindering the development of the child's autonomous self is necessary. However, children who grow up with an extreme level of discipline, corporal punishment, or children who are raised with no rules or boundaries, have been found to demonstrate negative developmental trajectories (Akçınar & Baydar, 2014; Granic &

Patterson, 2006; Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2005). Nevertheless, it is emphasized that disciplinary methods that involve behaviors which would harm the emotional bond between parent and child, such as yelling, hitting, or beating, have never proven successful at any stage of child development.

The findings of this study demonstrated that the most commonly used method for discipline by fathers of 4-10-year-old children in Turkey was “restriction.” Some fathers did not consider it as corporal punishment, when they “just gave them a slap” or asserted themselves by “taking a few steps towards” their child. Some participants, on the other hand, did not set any rules or boundaries for the child, claiming that these would “limit the freedom” of the child. Fathers, who punished their child by abusing their psychological/emotional bond or threatening the child (e.g., distance themselves from the child, interrupt the conversation), in fact, seemed unaware of the harm they did on the existing emotional bond and the father-child relationship.

Therefore, we suggest the following as recommendations regarding discipline in fatherhood training contexts:

- We should rethink the concepts of discipline and punishment and accurately conceptualize them in terms of their implications for fatherhood,
- We should inform fathers of the impact of each type of fatherhood behavior on child development, delineating the associations between these behaviors and definitions of fatherhood.

### 4.1.3. Child Care

It makes a huge impact on the child’s overall development, when fathers assume responsibility for child care from the child’s early years, thus strengthening the emotional bond between father and child. Our findings demonstrated that fathers of 0-3-year-old children do not assume enough responsibility in the physical care of their children. In the light of these findings,

- Through father support/training contexts, as well as traditional and social media, we should highlight the importance of father participation in young children’s physical care, in terms of developing a healthy emotional bond between father and child,
- We should provide fathers with practical information on the specifics of children’s physical care, such as changing diapers and trimming nails.

## 4.2. SUPPORTING INVOLVED FATHERHOOD IN THE FAMILY AND THE SOCIETY

### 4.2.1. The Individual and Family Context

Ample research evidence exists on the positive effect of support received and perceived from one’s social environment on individuals’ health and emotional states. In addition to a positive father-child relationship, fathers’ relationship with their spouses and extended families also constitute the key elements of a healthy family context (Lamb, 1977).

The findings of the Fatherhood in Turkey study revealed that the higher the fathers emphasized love and desire for a child, and the happiness the child brought to their lives, the more they displayed involved and positive fatherhood behaviors, such as responsibility for child care and education. On the contrary, the more the fathers ascribed meanings to fatherhood, such as fulfilling the duty of manhood, continuing one’s lineage, or gaining status as head of the household, their positive fatherhood behaviors showed an overall decline.

- For all fathers of 0-10-year-old children, psychological value attributed to the child was an important determinant of involved fatherhood. The more social value the father attributed to the child, the more their positive fatherhood behaviors suffered.

- Involved fatherhood behaviors increased with the level of support fathers perceived from their families and spouses.
- Therefore, in parent trainings/support programs, we should be informing parents of the positive impact of relieving the material and psychological burden of parenthood by supporting one another,
- The trainings should also provide practical examples of how this social and psychological support can be offered.

## 4.2.2. Father's Work Life

A stressful work environment changes the quality of fatherhood behaviors as much as the quantity of time spent with children. The negative impact on fatherhood behaviors is inevitable, when we consider the limitation on time spent with children and the lack of quality of this time due to leftover stress and fatigue from the work day. While the weekly average of hours worked is 48 for Turkey, in European countries this average is 37 (OECD, 2012). Overall, 23.3% of employed individuals work more than 60 hours a week. The OECD average for 60+ hours a week is 5.6%.

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*Turkey ranks the highest among OECD countries in weekly work hours.*

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Participating fathers spent an important amount of their daytime at work. Some fathers also had to work on the weekends. Fathers, who were thus unable to find a healthy work-family balance due to long working hours and stresses at work, failed to be involved in child care. Therefore,

- We should inform private and public institutions on the importance of fatherhood, and encourage more flexible

working hours and leave policies with higher sensitivity for the fathers' needs,

- On-site child care and kindergarten services should not only be catered towards a certain number of women but also men,
- Seminars should be offered on work-family balance, and resources for fathers should be made more readily available.

## 4.2.3. Paternal Leave

In this study, paternal leave stood out as an important variable influencing involved fatherhood. Among our participants, 44% reported using paternal leave. Two main reasons emerged for not using paternal leave: lack of knowledge and employers withholding this benefit.

Legally, Civil Servants Law allows 10 days of paternal leave for fathers employed by the government, while Labor Law allows 5 days for fathers employed elsewhere. According to the Rules and Procedures for Employing Contracted Personnel, fathers employed under section 4/B are allowed two days of paternal leave upon delivery of a child by their spouse.

Paternal leave is six months in Finland, four weeks in Norway, and in Sweden the total amount of leave offered for either parent is two months. Other developed countries in Europe, such as Belgium, France, Holland, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom offer two to eleven days of paternal leave.

It is highly important for fathers to use their legal right to paternal leave on several grounds, which include changing stereotyped behaviors and attitudes that cause gender inequality by allowing equal distribution of domestic chores; providing the mothers with social and emotional support; and facilitating father's bonding with their children from very early years (ILO, 2014). Fathers who took paternal leave were found to take more responsibility and be more involved in child care, while children of these fathers

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*According to the ‘State of the World Fathers’ Report, the ratio of fathers taking paternal leave is 61% in Brazil and 53% in Mexico (Barker et al., 2011). This ratio is 44% for fathers in Turkey.*

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scored higher on cognitive assessments and intelligence tests (Huerta et al., 2013). Therefore,

- We should inform public and private institutions on the right to paternal leave, and ensure that the necessary regulations are in place, protecting those fathers who cannot claim this right,
- Fathers should be encouraged to use their paternal leave following the birth of their child, and not leave it for later, by making this benefit non-negotiable,
- Taking into consideration the paternal leave policies in developed countries, the number of days offered for fathers should be increased to facilitate more father involvement,
- We should educate fathers on gender equitable parenting attitudes and involved fatherhood practices, as they prepare to use their paternal leave. For instance, through collaborations with physicians, fathers can be given videos to watch or booklets to read on the importance of fatherhood upon child birth.

### **4.3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MASCULINITY, GENDER ROLE ATTITUDES AND INVOLVED FATHERHOOD**

One of the most critical elements factoring into fatherhood as a parenting practice is perceptions and practices regarding masculinity. Masculinity shapes men’s potential as fathers by constructing the underlying concept of fatherhood (what they are able to offer their spouses and children, as well as how they do things with them; and their relevant skill set) (Connell, 1998). Quite naturally, this societal construction occurs under the influence of the culture, perceptions, and values in which one is situated. In fact, we can claim that fathers’ involvement as parents is not universal and/or biological, but rather cultural (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2012; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987; Marsiglio, 1995).

A traditional (patriarchal) view of masculinity does not appear to be desirable for healthy child development, especially regarding father involvement and positive fatherhood behaviors. Likewise, the path to involved fatherhood in fact begins with a belief in gender equity and the right attitudes and behaviors towards the spouse.

The Fatherhood in Turkey study found that a majority of the participants viewed themselves as the head of the household. The stronger the fathers’ traditional views on masculinity were, the lower they scored on involved fatherhood behaviors. The fathers openly expressed that since they worked, they assumed less responsibility in the home, did not generally participate in household chores, and viewed the women’s responsibility to be higher when it came to domestic matters. The separation of duties for mother and father in fact goes back to gender norms. It reflects the identification of men with the public sphere and the women with the private.

*Women's employment in Turkey amounts to 26.7% (TSI, 2015), while women with younger children have a much lower participation in labor force. This rate is 17% for women with children aged 0-3, and 21% for women with 3- to 5-year-old children (OECD, 2011).*

defined by power does not appear to be desirable for healthy child development, especially regarding father involvement and positive fatherhood behaviors. Therefore,

- The path to involved fatherhood in fact begins with a belief in gender equity and the right attitudes and behaviors towards the spouse. We should strive to create awareness in fathers regarding positive father-child and spousal relationships with an emphasis on this fact,
- Policies should aim to increase women's employment, and public and private institutions should likewise support and facilitate this increase,
- We should educate parents on the fact that fathers who interact with their spouses have a positive influence on children's overall development, that mothers who receive their spouses' support are in better psychological conditions, and can in turn be better parents,
- Trainings should aim to make participants question their acceptance of the identification regarding public and private spaces in terms of gender norms. These trainings should begin at earlier ages (school age and adolescence), and should ultimately strive to raise awareness in all fractions of the society, especially adult men.

An overpowering majority of the participants' wives (86%) were not employed. The high number of women, who were neither in employment not in education and had lower educational status, should be considered along with a patriarchal structure and value system. Therefore, a strong relationship exists between women's employment and involved fatherhood. Involved fatherhood and women's employment are indeed in a two-way mutual interaction.

Just as much as the majority who considers child care to be the mother's responsibility is the majority who deems it a bad influence on child development for mothers to work. In fact, ample research evidence puts emphasis on the quality, rather than the quantity, of time spent with children. Research also shows that it is work-related stress, and not women's employment, that has a bad influence on children.

As a matter of fact, a view of masculinity

## 4.4. FATHER TRAININGS TO SUPPORT INVOLVED FATHERHOOD

We deem father trainings to be highly necessary, first and foremost, to increase fathers' awareness on several issues: their self-development, their discourse on children and family, and healthy child development. Only 3% of the fathers had attended trainings about their children. A majority of the fathers expressed a concern that such trainings would be ridiculed in their social circles, making this a matter of their "masculinity" and "toughness." We had explained in the previous section how current attitudes on masculinity and gender may obstruct involved fatherhood behaviors. In the light of this information, the fathers gave us important clues, especially during the in-depth interviews, as to what kind of education and support they could benefit from.

- The calls for a more involved fatherhood can in fact be more effective by underlining the potential harm of patriarchal masculinity on the communication between father and child (such as punitive parenting and neglectful fatherhood), and explaining how a gender equitable approach can contribute to children's healthy development,
- It is evident that the fathers still felt the scars of negative interactions they had with their own fathers throughout their childhood, such as physical violence. It can be a very powerful message that would raise awareness in fathers to emphasize such long-lasting negative effects of early interactions, prompting them to treat their children differently. Efforts in this regard should also aim at changing the discourse and overall portrayal of fatherhood in the TV shows and films,
- Fathers also emphasized the possible "imported" nature of such parent support programs/trainings. To address this issue,

training curricula should reflect universal values and the current state-of-the-art in child development worldwide, while also taking into consideration the latest research in Turkey, strengthened by actual culturally relevant examples, and not be too "European,"

- The most convenient venues for these trainings, suggested by fathers, were public schools and health centers. Fathers also thought trainings in the workplace could be useful; however, highlighted voluntary participation for such trainings, as well as the importance of strict confidentiality,
- Some fathers preferred online or at-home training programs, as well as informational material presented over social media and television.



5

**AFTERWORD**

This study, the first of its kind in Turkey, provides us with extensive information on the current state of fatherhood, as well as the influential factors that shape fatherhood.

The study defines “involved fatherhood” in terms of fathers’ **“care”, “control”** and **“affection”** behaviors. Fathers’ practices in these three domains demonstrate the extent of their involved fatherhood. The current state depicted by the findings reveals that fathers do not engage in **child care**, and instead leave this task to the mothers. Fathers tend to **control** their children through negative discipline methods, and are not aware of the harm done by these methods. On the other hand, they do show **affection** and spend time with their children. However, not only are the fathers not showing any effort towards improving the quality of time spent together, but they are also not aware of its importance.

The study reveals several important factors that influence involved fatherhood. The current state of these factors, which either facilitate or thwart involved fatherhood, informs our efforts to support involved fatherhood in Turkey. One of the **personal** factors, life satisfaction, increases the likelihood of fathers to be more involved in child development. There were differences in fatherhood behaviors across different SES groups, such that fathers in the higher SES groups had more advantages. Nevertheless, for low SES fathers, life satisfaction has a higher influence on involved fatherhood behaviors. Fathers’ satisfaction with the fatherhood experience is another important determinant of involved fatherhood. The kind of value attributed to the child also predicts involved fatherhood. Fathers, who attribute psychological value to their children, display more involved fatherhood behaviors than those who attribute economic or social value. The support the father receives from his **family and social** environment also positively affects involved fatherhood. Another important predictor of involved fatherhood is the educational status of the spouse. Fathers’ **working conditions** are also

important for involved fatherhood, where long working hours and a stressful work life have negative consequences. Overall, fathers seem to not know of their right to “paternal leave;” but those who utilize this right demonstrate more involved fatherhood behaviors. Another important determinant of involved fatherhood is attitude towards **gender**. Having a traditional view of masculinity, displaying sexist attitudes towards women, and refusing to distribute domestic chores equally emerge as factors that affect involved fatherhood negatively.

These findings provide important insights as to how we can help increase “involved fatherhood,” which has a significant positive impact on child development. One important step will be encouraging the private sector to adjust fathers’ working conditions to allow for a better work-life balance. An increased awareness and encouraged use of paternal leave will enable a much stronger father-child bond from the earliest period. Both educating fathers and putting in place the necessary readjustments of communal spaces will help fathers assume more responsibility in child care and increase the quality of time they spend with their children. Efforts towards transforming gender role attitudes, one of the most important determinants of involved fatherhood, should start at early stages of life and reach every member of the society. Creating gender equality will not only reinforce involved fatherhood, but also provide a gender equitable ecology for the developing child. Lastly, collaborations and dissemination policies to provide easier access to fatherhood education are of utmost importance.

This research study provided us with a deeper understanding into fatherhood and its determinants, based on the premise that involved fathers enable a healthier and more supportive environment for child development. We hope that this report will provide a guide for all children, fathers, as well as persons and institutions that support fatherhood in Turkey.

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