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## THE CONCEPT OF EQUAL PARENTING: A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR FAMILY WELL-BEING (WORLD PRACTICE)

Submission Date: Aug 09, 2024, Accepted Date: Aug 14, 2024,

Published Date: Aug 19, 2024

Crossref doi: <https://doi.org/10.37547/ajsshr/Volume04Issue08-10>

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### ABSTRACT

The concept of equal parenting is becoming increasingly important in modern society. This model of parenthood promotes the emotional well-being of children, improves the psycho-emotional state of parents and creates a harmonious family atmosphere. The equal distribution of responsibilities helps to reduce stress, supports the professional and personal fulfillment of parents, and also contributes to the destruction of gender stereotypes. As a result, equal parenting creates a solid foundation for family well-being and sustainability, positively affecting all family members and society as a whole.

### KEYWORDS

Equal parenthood, family well-being, emotional connection, psychological support, work-life balance, professional realization, gender equality, family resilience.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the problem

The concept of equal parenting means greater involvement of fathers in the care and development of the child, a more equal distribution of parental responsibilities between the mother and father as one

of the factors of family well-being. In modern conditions of significant changes in views on the gender roles of parents in family life, the concept of equal parenting is becoming increasingly relevant. This concept implies equal participation of both parents in the upbringing and care of children, which contributes

not only to family well-being, but also has a positive effect on the development of children and the quality of life of both parents.

For centuries, all over the world, the man in the family has been the main breadwinner and protector, and the woman has carried out the traditional function of caring for children and "keeping the hearth". With the change in historical conditions of development, many spheres of human activity are transformed. Including in the field of family orders and models. With the increase in the activity of women in the economic sphere, the patriarchal model of the family began to collapse and the need to revise the established family norms, the role of the father in raising children was formed. Research has confirmed that not only mothers and children benefit from the active involvement of fathers, but also fathers themselves. Increasing the level of fathers' involvement in the process of raising children has contributed to the growth of gender equality in both professional and domestic spheres of life. Scientists have called the increased level of fathers' involvement in the processes of caring for children and their development "new fatherhood" or "responsible fatherhood".

Having first appeared in Northern European countries, more active involvement of fathers in raising children on an equal basis with mothers soon became the norm and special laws on equal parenting were adopted. The results of the implemented institutional mechanisms

ensuring the involvement of fathers in the processes of care and education turned out to be so successful that the Scandinavian experience began to be studied and implemented throughout the world. Accumulated world practice shows that the transformation of the system of parental involvement in raising children can be carried out at the level of public administration, the introduction of special paternity leaves, which have proven effective in the even distribution of child care, housework and employment.

Presentation of the main material of the study.

Research examining the unique and important ways that fathers influence their children has found that when fathers are highly involved, encouraging, and supportive of their wives, they feel better about themselves, have better pregnancies, births, breastfeeding, and postpartum mental health. Active fatherhood has also been shown to have a positive impact on the strength of family bonds. Men who are actively involved in raising their children report feeling happier in their marriages 10 or 20 years later [7]. Mutual support for professional aspirations, respect for the partner's achievements, and joint overcoming of difficulties, as well as equality in sharing household responsibilities, create an atmosphere of mutual understanding and partnership, mutual respect, and understanding between parents.

The traditional role of a mother as a housewife no longer corresponds to reality in modern society, as many of them work outside the home and have career ambitions. Therefore, they perceive raising a child as a partnership of two, when both parents must bear responsibility. There are more and more examples of a responsible approach to caring for a child from the first days of his life. This is also evident in the example of celebrity fathers, proving that upbringing is not only a mother's business, but also a father's. Thus, Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo was on maternity leave with his first three children, American actor Matthew McConaughey was on maternity leave with his child for six months, American singer Justin Timberlake spent the first days of his son's life with the child, American rapper Kanye West went on maternity leave twice with his wife Kim Kardashian [9]. Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg took two months off to care for both daughters. On his initiative, the company provides generous compensation and a 4-month vacation, which is rare in the United States [5]. Shinjiro Koizumi, Japan's Minister of the Environment, left his post for two weeks to be with his wife and son [11]. Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, took two weeks of paid leave after the birth of his child [6]. As Alexander Feldberg, a journalist and co-author of the book *Nordic Dads*, notes: "Active fatherhood is good for everyone. It is good for the child, because it is a pleasant change. It is good for his mother, because, firstly, it is easier for her to cope with the child, and

secondly, she has the opportunity to return to work earlier and not lose her qualifications. And it is, of course, good for the father himself - both for his self-esteem (as one of the heroes of our book says, if a father begins to care for his own child, then for some reason everyone around him thinks that he is a wonderful, exceptional person), and for the understanding that he is more than a derivative of his own work or career. And of course, the main thing is that involved fatherhood makes people happier. So an increase in the number of active fathers will lead to an increase in what sociologists call the happiness index" [10]. Dag Lokrantz-Bernitz, CEO of the railway company Vy Tåg AB, is sure that paternity leave has only helped his career. In his book *Nordic Dads*, he says: "In a sense, it was a psychological reboot, and I returned to work much more active, focused and with the opportunity to look at many things in a new way. Now I often share my own experience with my subordinates and always support those who want to take parental leave - both men and women." Marriage researcher John Gottman from the United States (where paid leave is given to only one parent) calculated that the relationships of 67% of divorced couples deteriorated sharply with the birth of a child. Conversely, a survey of 7,515 men and women in Nordic countries (where leave is provided for both) found that in couples with an equal division of responsibilities, relationships change for the better [10]. In today's world, equality in marriage has a beneficial effect on the physical, emotional, and

psychological development of children, who, growing up in an atmosphere of respect and equality, form their own understanding of family relationships. They see that success and happiness are achieved through joint efforts and cooperation, and not through one partner's subordination to the other. In their comprehensive report, "The Consequences of Father Involvement: An Updated Evidence Synthesis," researchers Sarah Allen, PhD, and Kerry Daly, PhD, define an involved father as "sensitive, warm, close, friendly, supportive, intimate, nurturing, affectionate, encouraging, comforting, and accepting." They classify fathers as involved if their child has developed a strong attachment to them [3]. Kinder Barometer Survey: "Kinder®. When a little means so much" (2019) shows that parents play an important role in all emotional aspects (reassurance, consolation, encouragement, congratulations, protection...). However, both parents and children regret not spending enough time together (30% of parents noted "lack of time", 41% in France, 36% in Russia, 23% in Germany and 20% in Italy) [8]. Fathers themselves feel better in many ways when they are involved with their children. They are more confident, effective and satisfied with their parenting than fathers who are less involved. They evaluate their interactions with their children more positively and become more attentive, understanding and accepting of their children [1a]. It turned out that the happy moments that children share with their parents, barely noticeable to adults, are just as significant and

important for the healthy development of their personality as serious investments in their education and well-being [11].

Many studies have confirmed that father involvement can have a powerful impact on a child's cognitive development. This begins to become evident in infants as young as 5 months old. By the age of 1, children whose fathers are more involved have higher cognitive functions. At the age of 3, they have a higher IQ. When children reach school age, the benefits of father involvement become even more evident across the entire spectrum of educational competencies – from getting better grades and doing better at school to being more motivated and placing a higher value on education [3]. American scientists have proven that children deprived of paternal care perform worse on cognitive tests than their peers from intact families, receive low grades at school, and are more likely to be depressed, withdrawn, aggressive, and promiscuous (the latter especially applies to girls). "As a doctor, I know first-hand the harm that a lack of parental attention can cause to children," writes Trond-Viggo Torgersen, a doctor and children's ombudsman, in his book *Nordic Dads*. They grow up irritable, broken, anxious. Active fatherhood is a good way to reduce the number of such people in society" [10].

## RESULTS



The results of studies by various scientists indicate that fathers' involvement in raising children helps reduce manifestations of antisocial behavior - such as drug use and crime [1]. Studies have shown that children with involved fathers better cope with stress and frustration, solve problems better, and control their emotions and impulses better. When conducting empathy tests among elementary school children, researchers noticed that those who had a secure attachment to their fathers in childhood were better able to recognize the feelings of other children and take steps to make them feel better [3].

When fathers are involved in caring for their babies, they become attached to their fathers, become more cheerful and inquisitive, and they develop and explore the world more confidently. These skills developed in childhood are retained in later life. Children with involved fathers have better relationships with their siblings and peers. On the other hand, negative or hostile relationships with fathers can lead to negative social behavior and difficult relationships with peers. According to a report by Allen and Daly, "In the absence of fathers, boys are, on average, more likely to be unhappy, sad, depressed, dependent, and hyperactive. Girls...are more likely to become overly dependent and to have internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression." Research shows that father-child relationships even affect a person's future marriage. People who had fathers are more likely to

have long-lasting, successful marriages and fewer divorces. In fact, the quality of the father-child relationship is the single variable that is most consistently associated with positive life outcomes [3]. Fatherhood also affects how a father treats a mother. In particular, it influences the father's role in the family, whether and to what extent he supports her during pregnancy, whether he takes part in the birth, and to what extent he is involved in raising the child. These relationships are influenced by the norms and ideas accepted in the private life of the immediate social environment. This applies both to the relationship with the child's mother (and marital satisfaction) and to the mother's views on the father's involvement in raising children. Research shows that a cooperative marriage, as well as mother-encouraged involvement in raising children, increase father's involvement, and vice versa. Thus, the relationship between marriage (or stable cohabiting relationships) and parenting is stronger for men than for women [4]. The quality of a man's relationship with his partner can also influence his relationship with his children. When fathers are in good, healthy marriages, they are more likely to be involved in childcare and have better relationships with their children. The reason for this may be that when men are committed to their marriage, they are committed to everything, including their children. On the other hand, in relationships full of conflict, fathers are less likely to maintain good and caring relationships with their children[1a].

Positive relationships between parents serve as models for children as they develop their own relationships in the future. “Fathers who treat their children’s mothers with respect and who resolve relationship conflicts in an adult, appropriate manner are more likely to have boys who understand how they should treat women and who are less likely to act aggressively toward women,” according to a report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “Girls who have caring fathers understand what they should expect from men in their relationships and are less likely to engage in violent or unhealthy relationships. In contrast, studies have shown that men who display anger, contempt, or obstruction toward their partners (the “silent treatment”) are more likely to have anxious, withdrawn, or antisocial children.[3] Children thrive when their parents have consistent, respectful, and high-quality relationships. Research shows that a man’s emotional involvement with his children can enhance his career in many ways, as well as protect him from work-related stress. Paternity leave, flexible work schedules, and telecommuting help address work-family balance by allowing family and work life to be more fully integrated. Children feel their father’s love when he spends time with them. According to a report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there are three main reasons why time spent with children is critical: “First, spending time together allows a father to know his child better and to be

known by his child. “A father can learn best about his child’s strengths and weaknesses, hopes and fears, aspirations and ideals by spending a lot of time with his child. Secondly, a father who spends a lot of time with his child is usually a better caregiver. Time spent together makes a father more sensitive to his child’s needs for love, attention, guidance and discipline. And thirdly, children often actually view time as an indicator of their parent’s love for them” [3].

## CONCLUSIONS

The concept of equal parenting, in which both parents take an equal part in raising children and in household responsibilities, allows for better organization of family and work life, increasing the time for personal and professional activities for both parents. Joint problem solving contributes to more harmonious relationships and reduced stress, better relationships between all family members, emotional resilience to life’s difficulties and overall well-being of the family. It also serves as a role model for children, forming their ideas about family and gender roles. Such families are more actively involved in social life and support other families, creating stronger and more sustainable communities and can serve as an example for other families. Implementing this concept into the daily life of families can significantly improve the quality of life of all family members and form new behavior patterns for future generations.

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