

**A Study to Understand the Beliefs about Fatherhood among Fathers Living in the  
Slums of Bangalore**

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**Abstract**

This thesis analysed the key beliefs about fatherhood among the fathers living in the slums and their role models. It was eye-opening research to know how fathers are fulfilling their duty, their struggles, and who their role models are.

Fathers are unable to fulfil certain duties of fatherhood despite knowing it's their duty. They lack education and their family ethics and beliefs also greatly influence them

The study concluded that fathers need to be intentional in their role even as children move from adolescence to teenage and to youth. And the responsibility will not end just by providing their financial support. The children need their father to play with them, talk to them and stand as a role model to their children, as character formation takes place at home.

**Background and Purpose of the Study**

Bangalore, a cosmopolitan city, records an overall population of 12.7 million (1.27 Crore) in 2021. There are 2,804 slum areas in the state of Karnataka, out of which 597 slum areas are in Bangalore City. It is estimated that the population of the slums in the state is

about 40.50 lakhs, which works out to 22.56% of the state's urban population, according to the survey done by Karnataka Slum Development Board 2011 ("Slums in Bangalore").

The researcher's own background and growing up in the slums gave insights into the issues of missing fathers. Having an alcoholic dad who was irresponsible and did not care about the family or their needs also played a role to understand the struggles of such families. The researcher's family spent several sleepless and peaceless nights because of the fight following father's drunkenness almost every day. The role of bread-winning and parenting entirely fell on the mother. The absence of the parents affected the researcher personally. Living at friends and relatives houses till the mother returned from work caused the researcher to be a victim of sexual abuse by several friends and relatives that includes one of the worship leaders from a local church where he was attending Sunday school. Eventually, the researcher was introduced to smoking, and drinking in the company of bad friends. Stories like Savitha's (name changed) and researchers' are the bare minimum representations of several such stories of children living in the slums.

The purpose of this research is aimed to understand how fathers in the slums of Bangalore are carrying out their roles and responsibilities, and what are their beliefs about fatherhood.

## **Literature review**

### **The Lifestyle of Slum Dwellers**

People who live in the slums are more likely to be uneducated and/or addicted to substances. They are also forced to take up odd jobs for their survival. The government has come up with some policies to help people in the slums by building houses and toilets and providing water, right to education to the children living in the slums of Bangalore. Several NGO's also do the above mentioned however, it is often insufficient to the needs of the

people in the slums. There is a cycle of eloping, child marriage, addiction that often continues in the slums (“Policy Favours PPP Model to Redevelop Karnataka Slums”).

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Fatherhood**

A father’s role as a provider should certainly not be restricted to providing financially, but also includes providing for their children emotionally, intellectually, physically, and spiritually. In other words, providing towards the holistic well-being of the child

*(Reflections).*

When children fail to have happy memories of fun and joy while they are young, fathers may have lost the way to influence them with a Godly character later in life

*(Parenting Matters).*

Tony Evans describing the responsibilities of fatherhood says, fathers’ ought to encourage, discipline and instruct the child just as the Bible commands fathers to ( Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21 (Evans 93–106).

Character formation of a child and the way they treat others is reflected by what the child observes and learns at home, specifically from parents. So, when parents (Fathers) fail to set the right standards, boundaries, the child learns from wrong sources (Rainey).

It is very important for fathers to give sex education to their teenage children, especially to boy children, because if they are not taught, they would learn it from wrong sources. They may become the victims of abuse or become addicted to practices like pornography (Evans).

Fathers’ role in the family is equal to their wives, fathers are team-players along with mother and must share responsibilities. Instead of taking ownership only for the financial support of the family, their role is also caring for the children and helping in other domestic duties (“A Father, A Husband, A Man”).

## **Nurturing Faith Early in their Life**

A father who nurtures faith in their child can do so only by spending ‘quality time in a quantity way’. On the contrary, when fathers fail to nurture the faith of their children it would be unsurprising if they walked away from their faith or church at some point in their life even after baptism or confirmation (Freudenburg and Lawrence).

Parents are God’s first choice to train children in God’s ways, because faith formation begins at home, for both children and adults. But many Christian parents feel inadequate in this task, especially men (Fathers) find it very difficult to nurture a child (Rainey).

Children spell the word “Love” as T-I-M-E. The children feel loved and special when their fathers spend more time with them. When the fathers do not spend sufficient time with their children, it affects their self-esteem (Slayton and Colson).

An adolescent child needs a father who deeply loves their mother to display the understanding of what a healthy marital relationship is (Henslin).

An absentee father leaves a child with no positive male role model figure who could impact them positively (East et al.).

## **Methodology**

The proposed method of this study is quantitative research. The term quantitative research refers to approaches to empirical inquiry that collects, analyses, and displays data in numerical rather than narrative form. The quantitative study was used to find the factors influencing fatherhood or role models of fatherhood for the fathers in the slum, as perceived by the fathers themselves.

Participants are fathers who are living in the slums of Bangalore, whose children are below 16 years. The inclusion criteria for the age below 16 years is because the marriageable age in slums is between 16 and 18 years. Four slums in Bangalore are chosen, selecting 10 fathers in each slum. They were interviewed in person by asking the questions, filled in on

their behalf the answers provided by them verbally, as most of them come from low literacy backgrounds. The five-point Likert scale was used as one of the quantitative research methods. It consisted of a 4-point variation range, from strongly disagree to agree, that the respondents had to choose from. The researcher reviewed the completed questionnaire to analyse the data to justify the methodological choices.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

#### ***Research Question#1***

**What are the roles and responsibilities of fathers according to fathers living in the slums?**

This question provides the framework to understand the beliefs about the roles and responsibilities of fathers living in the slums of Bangalore. This question also probes into their background as fathers and factors that helped them develop their beliefs about fatherhood.

#### ***Research Question #2***

**What are the influences or role models of fatherhood for the fathers in the slum?**

This question seeks to understand who taught them about the roles and responsibilities of a father, their role models of parenthood, and whose model they imitate in their parenting as fathers.

### **Findings**

The key findings from the research have been listed below according to the two research questions posed to the respondents.

#### **Research Question 1**

**Most fathers acknowledge that their role as fathers does not concern with any household chores and disciplining their children.** The survey shows that 84.2% fathers

agree in principle that they should be involved in their child's life as much as mothers, and around 15.8% of the participants disagreed and believe that it's not the fathers' role.

However, when asked personally while taking the survey, about sharing household chores and disciplining the children, the statistics clearly shows 52.7% of fathers feel that doing household chores and disciplining their children is not their duty to do. Around 5.3% were neutral responses as they couldn't answer clearly. 42% of fathers are involved in household chores and disciplining their children.

**Fathers strongly agree that it's their duty to give puberty education to their child but fail practically to teach their children.**

The survey shows that 60.6% of fathers agree that it's their main responsibility to give puberty education to their children, rest 39.4% of the fathers believe that it's not fathers duty to give puberty education. Further questioned asked if they were able to give to their children the statistics stands only 18.4% fathers give puberty education of any kind to their children.

**Spanking their children is considered important**

76.3% of the fathers also feel they should not only love but also spank their children to discipline them and correct their ways. Whereas 23.7% of fathers disagree with the concept of spanking. In fact, many of them personally said they haven't spanked even once in the lifetime of their children.

**Expressing Love physically is considered important.**

The survey shows 86.8% fathers agree on expressing love by hugging and kissing their children. Around 13.2% of fathers disagree on expressing the love by hug and kiss they believe it's against their cultural practices.

**Many fathers do believe that their financial support towards the children is more important than their physical presence at home.**

The survey shows that 44.8% of the fathers agree that it's okay for them to stay away from their children and family to take care of the financial needs and support their child. Many expressed directly that given a chance they would migrate and work so that their children receive better food, education, and shelter. However, 55.2% of fathers believe that their presence is more important to their children's growth.

**Fathers believe that intentional spending time and playing with their children is essential for a child's well-being, but practice varies.**

The survey shows that 73.4% of fathers believe that spending time and playing with their children is very essential for the well-being of their child, of which 52.6% practically spend an hour with their children daily, the remaining 47.4% are able to give 15mins-30mins a day for their children.

## **Research Question 2**

**Most fathers learn about fatherhood from their own fathers who are often negative in their influence.**

The survey shows that 44.7% of fathers agree that they learned about fatherhood from their own fathers, 34.2% of fathers learned it from their neighbours, 13.2% of fathers learned fatherhood from church teachings, and 7.9% of fathers caught it from Media and few from their own mothers. Almost 68.4% of them say that they are different when they compared themselves with their own fathers. When asked the question as to how they are different from their fathers, all of them speak out their unmet needs such as education, food, shelter and not receiving love. So, they came to a conclusion that fatherhood is all about meeting their unmet needs for their own childhood.

**Most fathers believe that providing education is the most important thing to pass on to their children.** The survey shows that when asked as to what they as fathers want to pass on to their children, less than 5% say good character, 5% Godly character and believe

that, but close to 50% of fathers believe that providing education is key for the children. 5% of fathers feel the best thing they can pass to their children is wealth and good health. The other 35% of fathers want to pass on material blessings such as house, money etc.

**Most fathers have not been taught or received puberty education from their fathers.** Survey shows that 65.8% of the fathers got the needed puberty education addressed by their friends. 21.1% haven't received puberty education at all and only 13.1% of fathers received puberty education from various sources such as relatives, Media, and their own fathers.

**Most fathers don't drink alcohol at home, although most of them are alcoholics.** Survey finds that almost 86.9% of fathers don't prefer to drink alcohol at home in front of their children though most of them are into alcoholism, 10.5% of fathers couldn't answer this question and 2.6 % of fathers are okay to drink alcohol in front of their children at home.

**Expressing love to their wife in front of their children.** Survey shows that 79% of fathers believe in expressing their love to the wives in front of children but close to 21 % of fathers disagree with the idea of expressing love to their wives in front of children, as they believe it is not right in the culture they grew up.

### **Recommendation**

The researcher recommended that the Non-Profit Organisations, Churches, and Self-Help Groups to take the following initiatives to build a better society by building better fathers.

- ✓ Organise street plays to educate about the responsibilities of fathers and how absent fathers affect their children.
- ✓ Develop family life educational videos in vernacular language to educate the fathers about their roles and responsibilities in every life stage of the child.



- ✓ Set up fathers' clubs in the communities to share and encourage them in the struggles that they are facing.
- ✓ Church to initiate and prioritize ministry among fathers.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of the results indicates that fathers in the slums of Bangalore understand the importance of roles and responsibilities. They are doing their best to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. However, they lack education, awareness and are influenced by their beliefs and limitations. Fatherhood is more than a duty. It is a calling to nurture, steward and guide the children in the right way. Fathers can be an excellent role model for their children, aiding and walking them through life challenges. Complacent or absent fathers negatively impact their children's well-being, and it may require a big shift for their recovery to the right path. Creating awareness and teaching about the importance of fatherhood can impact families significantly.

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