

# The Phenomenon of “Father Absence” in Early Childhood Education

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**Abstract:** For preschool children in the early childhood stage, a complete family education plays an important role in their mental growth and the development of their abilities in various aspects. With the formation of ethical norms in the new era, family education puts higher demands on the participation of fathers, who, as a key member of the family, play an important role in the education of children. However, under the influence of traditional concepts, occupational pressure and insufficient self-knowledge of their roles, the phenomenon of “Father Absence” in children’s family education is becoming more and more common, which has a certain degree of negative impact on children’s growth and development and on the social and educational environment. This paper tries to analyze the phenomenon of “Father Absence” in preschool children’s education and focuses on the “Return of Father’s Duty”.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Education; Father Absence; Return to Father’s Duty

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Early childhood is characterized by unique age and psychological characteristics. Observe life, we can easily find: in the family education book counter, 70% of the carefully selected books are mothers; family education report, listening to the report of the parents 80% of mothers; parents will be surrounded by teachers to ask about their children’s learning and living conditions of 70% of the mothers. According to a survey conducted by the Beijing Women’s Federation, mothers account for 70.2% of family members responsible for their children’s education, while fathers account for only 20%.<sup>[1]</sup> Responsibility for children’s education seems to have become the mother’s specialty.

We analyze the phenomenon of Father Absence in early childhood family education and should understand its current situation. The Father Absence phenomenon is mainly manifested in the following aspects:(1)Fathers spend too little time with their children;(2)The number of fathers’ participation in children’s educational activities is too small;(3)Fathers have little sense of educating their children.

## 1. Causes of “Father Absence”

To explore the phenomenon of “father absence” in early childhood, we need to analyze the causes of this phenomenon. “Father Absence” is not only an educational problem in ordinary families, but also a phenomenon of social educational problems. The purpose of this paper is to elaborate the reasons for the “Father Absence” from the skewed division of roles within family education and the influence of society on family education.

### 1.1 Skewed division of roles in the family

In the traditional family model, the father still plays the role of the main supporter of the family income. For the average urban family, the father will constantly seek promotion in order to pay for the family’s financial expenses. Then, the father’s free time is taken up by endless overtime work and socializing. Fathers have very limited time to meet with their children and are not able to pay attention to and participate in their children’s growth at all times.

### 1.2 Social influence on the phenomenon of “Father Absence”.

#### 1.2.1 The influence of traditional ideological concepts

In real life, men still occupy a certain advantage in political, economic, cultural and social life, and the male-dominated family model occupies a large number of seats. Some fathers are influenced by the traditional idea of “male dominates outside, female dominates inside”, believing that fathers should work hard to earn money outside, while mothers should educate their children at home.

#### 1.2.2 Improper education concepts and methods

Due to the lack of knowledge and experience in scientific education theory, most fathers tend to adopt the image of “Strict Father” to educate their children. Some fathers even believe that “filial sons come out from under the stick”, and that children should be physically punished and scolded in a simple and rough way.

### 1.2.3 The absence of men in early childhood education

In the real society, whether in family education or school education or social education, men are generally not given much importance in education. According to statistics from the relevant departments, 80% of the teachers in primary and secondary schools in China are women. The lack of male education will make children show sentimental, weak character and withdrawn and inferiority complex, which will greatly affect their character, will, emotion and way of thinking.<sup>[2]</sup>

### 1.2.4 Lack of discussion on the phenomenon of “Father Absence” in the academic world

For a long time, psychologists' research on the relationship between family and early childhood development has been limited to the mother-child relationship, and the research on the father's influence on early childhood has been weak, which is not only one-sidedly believe that the child's development is mainly affected by the mother, but also more importantly fails to see the family as a whole, a system.

## 2. The Negative Impact of “Father Absence” on Children's Development

Nowadays, the impact of “Father Absence” on children's growth is getting more and more attention from the society. Comparatively speaking, children living in this kind of family are more attached to their mothers from the early childhood stage, which to a certain extent is conducive to the formation of a good mother-child relationship. However, the long-term lack of fatherhood will bring more harm to family education and children's growth and development, and its negative impact should not be ignored.

### 2.1 The Father Absence affects children's gender role development

In the process of children's gender role socialization, parents play different roles, and the unique role modeling of the father's role enables children to acquire clearer concepts and knowledge of gender roles, which is conducive to the formation of children's behavioral characteristics consistent with their gender roles.<sup>[3]</sup> On the one hand, fathers provide boys with a basic model of masculine behavior, so that boys tend to look to their fathers as models for their future development and imitate them.

If the father is absent during the child's development, it will easily lead to the boy's character thinking and behavior tend to be “feminine”, “feminine beauty” is obvious and lack of masculinity, which will lead to the child's misaligned sense of gender. On the other hand, the absence of fathers will make the role of mothers in family education more and more prominent, in today's mothers take their sons into the women's bathrooms to take a shower and other incidents are common, this is because of the “absence of fathers” caused by the “forced feminization”.<sup>4</sup> This kind of “forced feminization” caused by the “Father Absence” will easily lead to the lack of gender boundaries, gender awareness confusion, may grow up to have gender identity difficulties, cannot distinguish between their own gender roles.

### 2.2 Father Absence affects children's moral character development

Correct family education is the foundation of children's good moral behavior and personality traits, and it should be the result of the joint participation of both parents. Compared with mothers, fathers have more male character traits of perseverance, strength and rationality, which are indispensable elements for children's character development and perfection, along with mothers' female qualities of gentleness and carefulness.

In a family where the father is absent, the child can only draw some of the best qualities from the mother, and over time, his or her qualities and personality development will be incomplete due to the lack of guidance from the father.

Secondly, in “father-absent” families, mothers take on too much housework, child rearing and other tasks, which makes the division of family responsibilities confusing, and children cannot distinguish which are the duties of parents, which is easy to cause the blurring and loss of the child's sense of responsibility, and become an obstacle to the path of their personality development.

In addition, the traditional concept of “strict father and loving mother” is still universal today, and fathers present a strict and authoritative image in family education, which has a stronger binding effect on children's bad behavior. Some surveys show that the juvenile delinquency rate of children living in “father-absent” families is three times higher than that of children whose parents are jointly involved in the education of their children.

### 2.3 Absence of fathers affects the development of children's comprehensive abilities

The early childhood stage is the foundation period for the development of all aspects of a person's ability in his or her life, and the educational function of both parents is indispensable. In the process of children's growth, fathers are more likely to take a rational and independent educational approach, which is conducive to prompting children to think independently about problems and develop cognitive ability and creativity in self-exploration.

Secondly, “Father Absence” will also hinder the development of children's self-care and independence. In the process of nurturing children, mothers focus more on “protective” education, not tolerating their children to suffer and worrying about their children being harmed by the outside world, which to a certain extent restricts the development of children's self-care and self-reliance. In addition, children's interper-

sonal skills, thinking skills and other training will also be “father absence” impact.

#### **2.4 Father Absence affects the overall effectiveness of early childhood education.**

Nowadays, the society is advocating the early childhood education model of “home and family co-education”, for the education of pre-school children in the early childhood stage, which requires the full cooperation and effective communication between parents and kindergartens. The phenomenon of “Father Absence”, on the one hand, will hinder the effective communication between kindergartens and parents and reduce the efficiency of communication, and on the other hand, will also make the family education mode monolithic, making it difficult to form a solid tripartite “father-mother-kindergarten”. On the other hand, it will also make the family education mode single, difficult to form a “father-mother-kindergarten” tripartite solid chain of early childhood education, which is not conducive to the implementation of the “home and family co-education”. In this sense, the absence of father's role will reduce the overall effectiveness of early childhood education.

### **3. Conclusion**

The British educator Spencer once said in his book: “The father is the child's guide to the outside world. In children's education, whether it is character development, emotional education, intellectual training, or the development of morals and qualities, the father plays a great influence, good and bad influences are equally great.” The critical role of the father's role in the development of a child's personality. It is of profound practical significance to study the internal mechanism of the phenomenon of “Father Absence” and to think about the way of “father's return” for the development of family education and the creation of a harmonious and happy social atmosphere.

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