

# Fathers' Parenting Practices and the Children's Approaches to Learning From Three Through Five Years; A Case of Mityana District, Uganda

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The Approaches to Learning addresses how children learn- this includes children's attitudes and interests in learning. This domain reflects behaviours and attitudes such as curiosity, problem-solving, maintaining attention and persistence. The research study focused on examining the fathers' parenting practices and the children's approaches to learning from three through five years. The study used a cross sectional research design and data was generated using focal group discussions, interview guides and child behaviour rating scale on how fathers' parenting practices contribute to children's approaches to learning. Results revealed that, Fathers' parenting practices and Children's curiosity were found to have a very positive relationship ( $r = 0.396$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Fathers' parenting practices and children's learning were found to have a significant positive relationship ( $r = 0.420$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Findings also indicated that fathers' parenting practices and children's creativity were found to have an average positive relationship ( $r = 0.379$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Arising out of the findings, the study recommended that fathers' parenting programs be put in place to help them up bring the child in holistic manner.

*Keywords:* father, child, growth, approaches to learning, parenting

## Introduction

Approaches to learning focus on how children learn. They refer to the skills and behaviors that children use to engage in learning. The Approaches to learning incorporate emotional, behavioral, and cognitive self-regulation under a single umbrella which guides teaching practices that support the development of these skills including children's attitudes and interests in learning. This domain reflects behaviors and attitudes such as curiosity, problem-solving, maintaining attention and persistence. As children move into preschool, they are able to concentrate for longer periods of time and persist towards competing tasks after encountering obstacles. This is a time for children to develop specific areas of interest. They become more confident in their ability to learn through play and explore how the world works.

Parents/Guardians can help children develop positive learning approaches by setting up safe environments and offering a variety of learning materials that children can explore. Encouraging curiosity, creativity, problem solving, and risk-taking will help child development. It's important that teachers recognize that children vary in

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learning styles. These differences may be the result of the child's temperament, cultural differences, and/or disabilities that may affect how children process information. Teachers and caregivers must be attuned to these differences and provide support and guidance.

Children also develop cognitive self-regulation skills—often referred to as executive functioning. These skills include sustained attention, impulse control, and flexibility in thinking. Another related skill is working memory, the ability to hold information and manipulate it to perform tasks. Executive functioning skills are present in rudimentary form during the infant and toddler years and develop even more in the preschool years. For example, children become increasingly able to rely on their memory to recount past experiences in detail and follow multi-step directions. Whether climbing onto a couch to retrieve a toy, building increasingly elaborate block structures, or deciding on the roles in pretend play, young children draw upon their curiosity, persistence, and creativity to gather information and solve problems.

Many factors influence how children approach learning. Some children seem to be born risk takers who are eager to try something new, while others prefer to observe for a while others are born without disabilities. As children with disabilities learn how to learn, they may require more individualized instruction and accommodations to aid with sustained attention or regulation of feelings. Many fathers' keep away most of the time and therefore contribute little to the children's behavior that aid learning.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To examine the fathers' parenting practices that promote children's curiosity
- To explore how the fathers' parenting practices promote children's learning
- To analyze the fathers' parenting practices that contribute to the children's creativity

### **Hypotheses**

- There is a relationship between Fathers' parenting practices and Children's curiosity,
- There is a relationship between Fathers' parenting practices and Children's learning
- There is a relationship between Fathers' parenting practices and Children's creativity

### **Methodology**

The study being that it focuses on Fathers' parenting practices and children's cognitive development three through five years. In this study the researcher employed cross sectional designs. A cross sectional design refers to the type of research design where data can be collected different respondents at a single point in time (Kothari, 2014). This research design was preferred because it is cheap in terms of time and resources as the data was collected simultaneously from respondents at single point in time. It also enabled the researcher to triangulate information from study questionnaires and interviews. Under the cross sectional design, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to adequately analyze the data (Amin, 2005). Amin recommends use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques as an important form of triangulation especially in studies that involve large numbers of people and this subsequently made it easy to have a clear and scientific view on the opinions by having them on questionnaires (Creswell, 2016). The study may have had the experiences related to the phenomenon in question and wants to gain better understanding of the experiences of others. The study gave priority to the qualitative aspect of the study and the findings were integrated during the

interpretation phase of the study. Mityana District is the geographical site where data was generated using a number of sources including Likert scale guide, Key Informative Guide and child behavior rating scale.

The study was carried out in Mityana District. According to (UBOS, 2017) the population for households headed by male is 15, 854. The children's total enrolment by gender from 3–5 years is 2,308 boys and 2,393 girls. The target population included a total of 160 respondents including; 100 fathers, 60 children from different nursery schools. The study points out that two age ranges of 3 years and five years has been adopted because the two age categories include periods in which children have rapid growth and development. These categories also represent entry points for children to move from one level of stimulation to another.

The study used stratified sampling techniques to select one sub-county from 3 sub counties in Mityana county north constituency of Mityana district where the research was conducted. These sub counties were grouped into strata after which the researcher randomly selected one of them. Kothari (2014) explains that stratified sampling is applied if the population from which a sample is to be drawn does not continue a homogeneous group. Snowball sampling was to identify the children who stay with their father. The study explains that this type of sampling requires one to select a member and that member leads you to other members. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select the nursery school. Kothari (2014) explains that simple random sampling is where each and every item in the population has an equal chance of inclusion in the sample and each one of the possible samples, in case of finite universe has the same probability of being selected. A Pearson's correlation was used to find a linear relationship between two variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient is the test statistics that measures the statistical relationship, or association, between two continuous variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient, often referred to as the Pearson R test, is a statistical formula that measures the strength between variables and relationships. To determine how strong the relationship is between two variables, you need to find the coefficient value, which can range between -1.00 and 1.00.

## Findings and Discussions

### Fathers' Parenting Practices and Children's Curiosity

Curiosity is the expression of the urge to learn and acquire facts and knowledge. It widens the mind and opens it to different opinions, different lifestyles and different topics. Curious children ask questions, read and explore. Curiosity prepares the brain for learning. The father is able to arouse child's curiosity about something they're naturally motivated to learn; they'll be better prepared to learn things that they would normally consider boring or difficult.

Table 1

*Relationship Between Fathers' Parenting Practices and Children's Curiosity, From Three Through Five Years*

		Father's parenting practices	Children's curiosity
Fathers' parenting practices	Pearson Correlation	1	0.396(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.025
	N	160	160
Children's curiosity	Pearson Correlation	0.396(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.025	
	N	160	160

Results in Table 1 revealed that, fathers' parenting practices and Children's curiosity to learn, were found to have a very positive relationship ( $r = 0.396$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, the hypothesis that stated that father's parenting practices have a significant influence on children's curiosity to learn is accepted. This means that father's parenting practices have a positive effect on Children's curiosity, which implies that children's curiosity improves if the father's parenting practices are good. Thus good father's parenting practices in Mityana District lead to increase in the children's curiosity from three through five years. During interviews a respondent was quoted as saying "children should be helped and encouraged by their parents/fathers to play with new objects such that they are able improve their curiosity and eagerness to learn".

### Fathers' Parenting Practices and the Children's Learning

Young children learn holistically, which means they learn from everything all at the same time. Something they learn from one experience will connect with something else seemingly unrelated and form a connection which builds context and meaning.

Table 2

#### *Relationship Between Fathers' Parenting Practices and Children's Learning From Three Through Five Years*

		Father's parenting practices	Children's learning
Fathers' parenting practices	Pearson Correlation	1	0.420(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.025
	N	160	160
Children's learning	Pearson Correlation	0.420(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.025	
	N	160	160

From the findings in Table 2, Fathers' parenting practices and children's learning were found to have a significant positive relationship ( $r = 0.420$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, the hypothesis that stated that father's parenting practices have a significant influence on children's learning is accepted. This means that father's parenting practices positively affect their children's learning by affecting their initiative, effort, engagement, and persistence, which implies that children's learning abilities inform of initiative, effort and persistence depends largely on their father's parenting practices. Thus good father's parenting practices lead to improvement in children's initiative from three through five years in Mityana District.

### Fathers' Parenting Practices and Children's Creativity

Creativity can be defined as imagination or original ideas, especially in the production of an artistic work. To stimulate creativity, one must develop the childlike inclination for play". By the age of three, children have officially entered Piaget's preoperational period, the hallmark of which is the ability to use symbols and representational thought (example., have one thing like a word, drawing, or item) to represent something else (example, like the letters "cow", or picture of a cow, or even a stick with a sock on it, all representing an actual cow). The three year old discovers that he can place blocks in an arrangement, or scribble lines on a paper in way that represents an object or action. His fine motor skills are developed enough that he can control writing utensils or manipulate objects with more precision, which develops further over the preschool years. Children in this age begin to create with intention purposefully drawing a monster or a flower. By the time they are 5, many children add details and annotate with words and narrated stories. Supporting divergent thinking means providing activities that allow for child appropriate inquiry, reflection, wondering, curiosity, and even

supported confusion. Divergent thinking, and hence creativity and creative problem solving, are more than art, it is thinking, predicting, imagining, and creating.

Table 3

*Relationship between Fathers' Parenting Practices and Children's Creativity Three Through Five Years*

		Father's parenting practices	Children's creativity
Fathers' parenting practices	Pearson Correlation	1	0.379(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.025
	N	160	160
	Pearson Correlation	0.379(*)	1
Children's creativity	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.025	
	N	160	160

Findings in table 3 indicated that fathers' parenting practices and children's creativity were found to have an average positive relationship ( $r = 0.379$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, the hypothesis that stated that father's parenting practices averagely influence children's creativity is accepted. Thus if the father's parenting practices are good, then the children's creativity and inventiveness also becomes high. During FGDs, respondents observed that; parents especially fathers need to expose their children to different things which they think can positively impact or improve a child's learning abilities like charts, asking them to describe images of objects thereby improving the thinking of the child to learn new things.

**Regression Model**

To further confirm the relations obtained in the correlation analysis tables above using Pearson correlation coefficient, the researcher carried out regression analysis not only to examine the relationships between variables, but also to predict the influence of one variable from another.

Table 4

*Overall Regression Model Coefficients*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.891	0.361	4.089	0.002
	Children's curiosity to learn	0.168	0.081	0.591	3.290
	Children's learning	0.0832	0.342	0.039	0.519
	Children's creativity	0.298	0.0498	0.097	3.019

Table 4 above gives the overall model coefficients and the significance of these values which indicate the individual contribution of the variables in the Fit model for fathers' parenting practices, children's concept formation, development of language and problem solving. The value of  $B = 1.891$  means that when fathers' parenting practices are not effective; then children's curiosity, information-seeking and eagerness, children's initiative, effort, engagement, and persistence and children's creativity will decrease by only 1.891 units.

**Discussion of Findings****Fathers' Parenting Practices and Children's Curiosity to Learn**

For objective one, the study found out that majority 71% of the respondents agreed that fathers' parenting practices that promote children's curiosity to learn from three through five years, through providing the child

with a variety of safe and interesting objects that increase interest and such findings are in line with Christine (2015) assertions that one of the responsibilities of a parent/father is to make sure he helps his child to learn by availing him/her all the possible measures including giving the child different interesting objects to arouse the child's interest in learning thus develop curiosity. Then majority 63% of the respondents agreed that fathers encourage their children to discuss objects and events they have observed. Such findings are in agreement with Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) (2014) who argued that once fathers should be actively involved in the learning process of their children by discussing with them the objects they have observed so as to help them improve on their curiosity. The study also found that fathers assist children to find answers to why questions by exploring together which was supportive of Crystal (2014) who observed that children develop interest in learning when they are assisted in solving some of the hard questions since such activity makes it simpler for them by arousing their curiosity.

Further still, it was also discovered by the researcher that a significant number of respondents (74%) agreed that fathers provide opportunities for the child to interact with a variety of people. The findings are in tandem with Louca (2016) who noted that regular interaction with children and other peers or those older than them is healthy for their social life as this improves their emotions which eventually increases their curiosity to learn. Study findings revealed another majority agreement (79%) of the respondents that fathers take the child out to explore his/her environment. Such findings are in line with Michael (2010) who asserted that children who are given opportunities to explore are better learners than those who do not explore since exploration arouses a child's curiosity which contributes significantly to their learning process.

#### **Fathers' Parenting Practices and the Children's Learning**

Study findings also revealed majority 79% agreement from respondents that fathers' talk with the child about what he/she is doing, which is in tandem with Anol (2014) who opined that it is the father's/parents' responsibility to ensure he shares with the child about what the child does as this will help the child know what is wrong or right therefore improve his/her learning abilities. Study findings further revealed that 68% of the respondents agreed that fathers give children opportunities to make choices. These results agree with Miller Birch, Mouter, and Jessop, (2012) who noted that children must be always given chance to make their own choices as forcing them to do what they don't like does not help improve their learning activities.

On another note, majority 65% of the respondents disagreed that fathers respond warmly to the initiative of the child and give him/her attention and that fathers tend to dismiss what the children have chosen. This was in disagreement with Rebecca (2016) who argued that children's choices should be respected and supported fully if they are to benefit from them and continue to further their learning because being dismissive of a father eventually discourages their children from learning. The study also found out that an average 64% of the respondents agreed that fathers supervise and support the child not to give up, which agrees with Roux and Ragin (2016) ideas that children should be fully monitored and where need be supported by their parents if their learning process is to move on smoothly. The researcher also found out an average agreement of 61% that fathers talk lovingly to the children. This was supportive of Anol (2014) who argued that parents must talk positively and encourage their children so as not to discourage them though some parents are irresponsible and may not care about the way they talk to their children about learning matters and this discourages them. Finally, the study found out that majority 78% of the respondents agreed that fathers make frequent constructive comments about the children which was in tandem with Louca (2016) arguments that regular positive

comments about the child's efforts are motivating and encourage the child to put in more effort in their learning process and that however, some of the parents never care to encourage their children to learn as they are always negative about their children's efforts.

### **Fathers' Parenting Practices and the Children's Creativity**

The study found out that fathers' parenting practices contribute to the children's creativity from three through five years where majority 57% of the respondents agreed that fathers children combine and use his /her toys in pretend play. Such findings agree with Barry (2013) who posited that children love to play as they learn better while seeing what they are learning about since it improves their creativity in learning process. The researcher also discovered 59% of the respondents agreed that fathers recognize when the child gets a problem and ask for or accept help. The study further pointed out that fathers' should be involved in their children's learning activities such that they are able to notice when their children have problems and assist them in acquiring the skills.

It was also found out that majority 69% of the respondents were in agreement that fathers explore the processes of using a variety of art materials, music, dramatization and movement and this was in line with Bethel (2014) who posited that exploration is one of the most important aspect in a child's learning process therefore must be supported by their parents in all ways possible. It was also revealed by the study that majority of respondents (67%) who agreed that fathers express ideas through different creative means/activities and this was helping their children to improve their creativity in learning as observed by Joseph and Stein (2018) who believed that children need to express themselves in different means so as to improve on their creativity.

### **Conclusions**

The study found out that very few fathers were giving their children opportunities to make choices, few fathers who were warmly responding to the initiatives of their children and giving them attention, that a few fathers were able to talk lovingly and make frequent constructive comments about their children, few fathers encourage child to discuss objects and events they have observed and that fathers were not assisting children to find answers to why questions by exploring together and they were not providing opportunities for the children to interact with a variety of people. There study therefore concluded that fathers' parenting practices that promote children's curiosity, learning and creativity both negatively and positively as seen in above aspects.

### **Recommendations of the Study**

Non-Government Organization, Faith Based Organizations, community based organizations and school administration should organize seminars where fathers can be trained on how to empower their children to be self-reliant through choice making as this will help them to live independently on their own in future without burdening their parents.

Fathers with the help of school administration should acquire more learning materials for their children to practice such that their innovativeness is improved.

The Government through its relevant ministries, agencies, departments example probation office, National Council For Children Authority, Special Needs Department, National Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education & Sports should pass laws against child neglect where by any father who is found to neglect and not giving their children attention is reprimanded.

The Government should sponsor media coverage electronic print on parenting with specific emphasis on

the roles of fathers

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