

A Comparative Study of Korean and Chinese Fathers' Perceptions of Parenting Role and Parenting Involvement in 5-year-old Children

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Abstract:

The present study is to examine the difference of Korean and Chinese fathers with child at the age of 5 in full age in their perception of and participation in parental role. To do so, the study reviewed related literatures and compared the paternal roles in parenting in two countries. A survey with questionnaires was conducted and the differences in of Korean and Chinese fathers with child at 5 in full age in their perception of and participation in parental role was analysed.

Keywords:

Father's Role Perception, Child, Comparison between China and South Korea

1. Introduction

1.1. Need and purpose of the study

Parental roles are changing in today's society, influenced by a variety of factors, and many child researchers are working to make parenting more specific, scientific, efficient, and actionable.

In particular, there has been a lot of attention recently on the need for fathers, as well as mothers, to take a more active role in raising their children so that they can become desirable members of society.

In Korea, in the past, under the influence of Confucianism, the national ideology of the Joseon Dynasty, the roles of men and women were strictly separated, with men having primary responsibility for social life and women for family life. The centre of the family was the father-daughter relationship, which was prioritised over the husband-wife relationship [17]. A woman could only be recognised as a member of her husband's family if she succeeded in her role as a mother who married into the family and produced a son to continue the family line. Therefore, women were expected to support their husbands, raise their children, and educate them at home according to the standards set by the society, and social activities were taboo.

However, in the 21st century, Korea is a capitalist society that has gone through industrialisation and is now in the information age, and the rapid progression of nuclear families from extended families has changed and relatively weakened the function of the family. In particular, the roles of fathers and mothers in the family have changed as more women enter the workforce. The role of fathers has become relatively emphasised, not only in housework, which used to be the main responsibility of women, but also in child-rearing responsibilities.

Meanwhile, in China, Confucius's Confucianism emerged during the Spring and Autumn Period, and the phrase "it is beneficial for women to be untalented" reflects the perception of women in traditional Chinese society. In the family, women were not given a definite position, but were held in a lowly position as wives who were expected to follow their husbands and mothers who were expected to follow the will of their sons.

The results of this study will provide a basis for understanding the actual situation of fathers' perceptions of parenting roles and participation in parenting in Korea and China. The comparison of the two countries with different socio-cultural backgrounds will also help us to understand the differences between the two countries in terms of fathers' perceptions of parenting roles and participation in parenting. In particular, it will provide a basis for learning about the strengths and weaknesses of fathers' home education roles in both countries.

1.2. Research question

The research questions that were set to achieve the objectives of this study were as follows:

- a. What are the differences between Korean and Chinese fathers' perceptions of their parenting role?
- b. What are the differences in parenting involvement between single and married fathers?
- c. How do Korean and Chinese fathers' perceptions of parenting role and parenting involvement differ by sociodemographic variables?

1.3. Define terms

(1) Father's perceived parenting role

Paternal parenting perceptions are psychological perceptions of the responsibilities of parenting children in the context of cultural, political, economic, and socio-demographic backgrounds, including the value and influence of fathers on children in specific behaviours such as economic, value-transmitting, controlling and harmonising, affectionate, exploratory, and educator roles.

(2) Paternal involvement

It refers to the quantitative extent of the father's participatory behaviour in the physical and physical interaction with the child, including the level and attitude of the father's direct involvement in the child's upbringing, such as guidance, life guidance, household guidance, physical care, learning guidance, and play.

1.4. Limitations of the study

As the sample of this study was limited to fathers of toddlers in six kindergartens, including four kindergartens in D, a large city in Korea, and two kindergartens in B, a large city in China, the results of this study are not generalisable to the perceptions of parents in Korea and China as a whole.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. *Father's parenting role*

(1) Fatherhood

In the transition from traditional to modern societies, men were perceived as having the role of acquiring economic resources to support the family through labour outside the home, while women were perceived as having the role of bearing and nurturing children and caring for family members within the home. Parsons and Bales are the most prominent theorists in analysing parental roles, with fathers playing an instrumental role in the family, linking the family to society, and mothers playing an expressive role, dealing with affection and emotional matters. In other words, fathers are the economic provider, the final arbiter of judgement, and the ultimate disciplinarian of their children, linking the home to the outside world, and encouraging their children to follow through with their future plans, so that they become capable and independent adults. Mothers, on the other hand, are in charge of the family's consumption and domestic affairs, and foster harmony in relationships. They are said to play an affectionate and emotional role to ensure co-operation and understanding among family members [8].

On the other hand, Lemester has the following to say about the modern role of fatherhood [8]. First, parenthood is a peripheral or secondary role for men. Men's success and abilities are only confirmed in their social life, i.e. their jobs, and fathers are instrumental in modeling behaviour and values for their children by fulfilling their livelihood. Second, fathers do not have the intimate attachment that mothers do, which comes from continuing to care for a child after birth. Third, fatherhood is closely linked to successful marital relationships. Fathers are only successful in their role if the marriage is successful.

In a study that examined fathers' and mothers' perceptions of desirable fatherhood roles (Kim, 2011), fathers' and mothers' perceptions of desirable fatherhood roles did not differ significantly. Fathers' perceptions were as follows: father as a playmate (35.8%), father as a counsellor (31.5%), father as an emotional support (18.9%), father as an inspiration (5.0%), father as a provider (4.6%), and father as a disciplinarian (4.3%). In other words, most fathers perceive a desirable father as a father who spends a lot of time with his children, is available to play with them, communicates with them to understand their thoughts and feelings, respects their opinions, actively expresses love and encourages them, and is comfortable and affectionate like a friend. Relatively fewer fathers perceive their role as a role model, provider, or disciplinarian, who is responsible for the financial support of the family, or who is able to recognise and correct children's faults.

(2) Father's perceived parenting role

Social phenomena such as the increase in nuclear families and the decrease in the number of children due to demographic changes, the increase in the employment of married women, and the role division issues raised by these phenomena have begun to

expand the meaning of fatherhood from the role of economic provider to the role of husband and parent, which is gradually performed in the realm of the home [13].

In traditional Korean society, the role of fathers in raising children is divided into three types: the emotionless father, who has no love for his children; the incompetent father, who is financially incapable; and the strict father, who is very strict and frightening in his own way, and who pushes his children tirelessly, a disciplinarian father, who educates his children with spirit and wisdom like a teacher in a school, and a motherly father, who raises his children affectionately and devotes himself to family affairs (Signor Won, 2007). Of these, fathers who strictly taught and disciplined their children and mothers who embraced their children with gentleness and compassion were considered desirable. In addition, traditionally, fathers were not expected to participate in the upbringing of their children, so the responsibility of raising children fell solely on the shoulders of mothers [5].

On the other hand, China was heavily influenced by Confucianism, which emphasised social harmony and the need to sacrifice individual needs for the purposes and demands of the group. Fathers' attitudes and behaviour towards daily work had a deep connection with traditional culture and had great influence, so they did not have a close relationship with their children (Compiled by the Children's Work Department of the All China Women's Federation, 2011). The reason why fathers in ancient China did not directly educate their children was due to the social role division of "men out, women in". In the ancient Chinese logic called the Three Rivers of Logic, it is said that "fathers are the role models for their children". Fathers are the role models for their children and have absolute authority, so children must obey them. As an educator, fathers would teach their children with correct theories and principles, with neatness of speech and correctness of behaviour. Mothers teach their children physically, while fathers teach them verbally. Fathers spend a lot of time outside the home due to official duties, studies, business, labour, and military service, which limits the amount of time and space they have with their children compared to mothers. Fathers cannot spend as much time with their children as mothers do, so they communicate with them through home writing. As such, fathers give instruction in the form of gaogao, precepts, and admonitions. If the mother's teaching is too strict, the child may not be able to learn well because the child will be afraid of the mother and will tend to be sulky. However, because the father has a short time with the child, if he is too gentle, the teaching may not go well because the father's temporary leniency may undo what the mother has already done for the child in teaching. Therefore, a strict father, a loving mother, a loving mother, and a strict father is the basic impression of parents that everyday people have of their parents.

(3) Changes in Korean and Chinese fathers' perceptions of parenting roles and parenting involvement

Korea and China are geographically close and have benefited from the same Confucian cultural influences in many ways. However, over the millennia, social and political factors such as historical changes, wars, and liberation have affected the Confucian culture of both countries differently. In Korea, Confucianism has been incorporated into the original traditional culture and has played an important role in the development of the culture, politics, and society as a whole, while in China, the traditional Confucian culture has changed a lot through social and political changes such as Western culture, political system, and women's liberation.

(1) Changes in Korean fathers' perceptions of parenting roles and parenting involvement

As Korea grew and developed rapidly economically during the modernisation period, it changed from a feudal production system to a capitalist production system. The idea of pursuing capitalism and the idea of patriarchy combined with each other, and the father's role was to provide for the family and represent the family. On the other hand, the mother's role was to do household chores, raise children, and send them to study to go to university. Therefore, the father worked hard for the family's livelihood and his own career, and the family took it for granted if he returned home late. In addition, the father's lack of involvement in household affairs or contact with the family did not affect his authority [21].

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in fathers as a result of the trend towards nuclear families, changing power structures in couples, and the realisation that fathers can have a significant impact on their children's upbringing. However, despite the fact that fathers are just as important as mothers as caregivers, they are actually less important than mothers in terms of the quality of their interaction and attachment with their children. When children are in their infancy, mothers are more involved in childcare, while fathers are more involved in play activities with their children.

Today's fathers are under more pressure than ever to be good fathers, but the role of a good father has yet to be internalised as we move from traditional to modern ways of thinking about fatherhood. As mentioned earlier, the lack of policy infrastructure to support fathers' participation in childcare and the workplace environment that demands excessive dedication and commitment require both individual efforts and social and institutional support measures to fulfil the role of a good father (Kim, 1985).

(2) Changes in Chinese fathers' perceptions of parenting roles and parenting involvement

In ancient China, fathers did not directly educate their children, as there was an implicit social division of roles of "men out, women in".

Absolute obedience to the father was required because he was the example and absolute authority for the children. As an educator, fathers were well-mannered and taught their children with correct theories and principles. Mothers taught their children physically, while fathers taught them verbally. Compared to mothers, fathers had very limited time and space to be with their children, as fathers spent a lot of time outside the home on official duties, studies, business, labour, and military service. Because fathers could not spend as much time with their children as mothers, they communicated and taught their children in the form of gaoshi (Home Letter), family teachings. If the mother's teaching was too strict, the child would be afraid of the mother and would tend to be spoilt, so the teaching would not work well. However, because fathers spend less time with their children, if they are too lenient, it may not be the right teaching because the father's leniency may undermine the effectiveness of what the mother has already taught and done well for the child. Therefore, the father being strict, the mother being loving, the mother being affectionate, and the father being dignified were the basic ideas that ordinary people had about their parents.

Compared with the past, China's father-daughter relationship has made great progress. This development is closely related to the changing times and social progress. As the employment rate of women has increased dramatically, fathers have

also become more responsible for raising children and doing more housework than ever before. “China has implemented the one-child policy over the past 30 years, which has resulted in major changes in the structure and function of the family. The one-child policy has led to the adoption of Western education methods, which have led to a lack of distinction between sons and daughters, and a family culture centred on children. This is especially true in families with relatively high levels of acculturation”. The relatively high educational level of the new generation of fathers made it easier for them to embrace scientific educational ideology. They broke away from the ideas and theories of China's traditional old education to embrace advanced educational ideology and interact more actively with their children. Although mothers are still responsible for the majority of household chores in many families, many fathers are becoming increasingly involved in household chores. The role of Chinese fathers has evolved from the traditional economic provider and educator to a more diversified one.

In the past, fathers were patriarchal and did not have a close relationship with their children, but today's urban fathers are very close to their children because the perception of father-child relationships has changed, and as a result, they trust and understand each other and communicate well enough that conflicts rarely arise.

2.2. Prior research

(1) Prior research in Korea

In her study on fathers' perceptions of their parenting roles with infants, Ahn [13] found that fathers spent more time sharing time with their children than they did participating in childcare, which reflects the nature of fathers' parenting and proves that for fathers, parenting is more of a leisure activity than a caring labour for their children. Therefore, it is important to recognise that fathers' parenting is different from mothers' parenting and to try to understand fathers' parenting time in a way that reflects the change in their perspective on parenting. It is necessary for fathers to use their own leisure time to find leisure activities that can satisfy both children and families.

Hong, Gilhoe, and Hwang, Jeonghae [23] argue that the gap between societal demands for ideal fatherhood and realistic conditions is due to a combination of factors. In the case of Korean fathers, the interest and demand for involvement in childcare has increased, but in reality, fathers are not able to afford the time to care for their children due to their busy work lives.

(2) Prior research in China

Chen Jianxiang (2003)'s *Where Have the Fathers Gone?* - This is the first book on fatherhood education in China. As a doctor of education and a father, he used his own child as a subject of observation for eight years, and then published Suho Murinsky's quote “Fathers must be experts in home education”. He says that a responsible man should think about how he will educate his child when planning his upbringing.

Chen Jiankang suggested ten topics for new fatherhood in the magazine *Home Education* every month from February to December 2002. They are as follows The core included the role of young fathers in the home; the inherent implications, characteristics and influencing factors of “father involvement”; the role of fathers in children's development; the goals and tasks of father education; practical investigation; the perspective, manner, characteristics and timing of fatherly love; and the different

methods and realisation of fatherhood. The result emphasised “father’s involvement in home education”.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research object

In order to obtain basic data that can help fathers of early childhood children perform their roles effectively and to compare the differences between Korean and Chinese fathers, this study conducted a questionnaire with 400 fathers of 5-year-old children, 200 each from public and private kindergartens in D, Korea, and B, China, in areas with similar living conditions. Fathers of 5-year-old children were selected from among the 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds, as they had the longest experience in raising children. A total of 345 questionnaires were collected, but after excluding 51 questionnaires that were filled out incorrectly and were not suitable for analysis, 294 questionnaires (147 each from Korea and China) were returned in good faith and were finally used for analysis.

3.2. Research tools

The instrument of this study consists of three main parts for fathers. It consists of a questionnaire that asks about the basic characteristics of the study population, the perceptions of the father’s parenting role at the age of 5, and the participation of the father in the care of the child at the age of 5.

(1) Questionnaire on basic characteristics of the research subjects

The demographic variables included age, education level, type of occupation, wife's occupation, average household income, average actual working hours per day, primary caregiver/educator, and questions on how fathers felt about the amount of time they spent playing with their children.

Table 1. Basic characteristics of fathers questionnaire items.

Reference papers	Questionnaire question number
A study of infants’ fathering of their children (Mi-Ok Moon, 1983)	9, 10
A study of fathers’ role perceptions and engagement behaviour in child rearing in early childhood (Kim, Yukyung, 2002)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Relationship between paternal parenting behaviour and involvement and children's stress coping activities (Jo, Ju-Eun, 2004)	11
A study of infant fatherhood perceptions (Yan Jing, 2009)	9, 10

(2) Questionnaire on perceived parenting role of fathers

The questionnaire on fathers’ perceptions of their parenting roles at the age of 5 was based on the questionnaire used in Kim Yoo-Kyung’s (2002) “A Study on Fathers' Role Perceptions and Participation Behaviour in Childrearing of Early Childhood Children” and was modified and supplemented in consultation with three early childhood education experts to meet the final purpose of this study. Specifically, the items used in Sung-Hee Kim’s [3] “A Study of Fathers’ Perceptions of Role Performance in Infancy”, Moon-Sook Lee’s “A Study of Fathers’ Perceived Rewards and Costs and Role Performance in Infancy”, and Yan Jing’s “A Study of Infant

Father's Role Perceptions" were synthesised and composed of six subcomponents. The subscales are as follows

a. the economic role is the role that allows the father to provide material, living and educational conditions for the child.

b. the value transference role is the role of fathers in communicating to their children about friendships, peer relationships, relationships with others, and life values in everyday life.

c. the ruling and harmonising role is the father's role in harmonising marital, father-son and sibling relationships in the home.

d. the affectionate role is one of concern and expression for the child's emotional and physical development.

e. the Exploration Assistant role is where the father explores scientific and kinesthetic experiences based on the child's curiosity.

f. the educator role is the role of the father in imparting educational and cultural knowledge to the child.

The questionnaire on paternal parenting perceptions consists of 28 items. Each question used a 4-point Likert-type scale with four response variables ranging from 1 to 4. Specifically, 1 means not at all, 2 means not at all, 3 means somewhat, and 4 means very much.

Table 2. *Perceived Parenting Role of Fathers Questionnaire Items Source and Questionnaire Item Number*

References \ Subfactors	Economic Roles	Value Forwarding Roles	Command-Harmony Roles	Affectionate roles	Explore Secondary Roles	Educator roles
Research on perceptions of fatherhood in early childhood (Kim, 1990)	4	16	17	10, 22		6
Role perceptions and engagement behaviours of fathers of young children in early childhood. (Kim, 2002)	26, 28	2, 12	18	3, 8	1, 20	14, 23
A study of fathers' perceived rewards and costs and role performance in early childhood (Lee, 2007)	24	21	19	5	25	
Research on infant fatherhood perceptions (Yan Jing, 2009) (Yan Jing, 2009)	27	11, 13		7	9	15

3.3. Research procedures

For the purpose of this study, prior studies related to fathers' role perceptions and parenting involvement in Korea and China were collected from January 2013 to identify the theoretical background of the study and set the research problem. In March 2013, a preliminary survey was conducted among Korean and Chinese fathers

raising 5-year-old infants to determine the appropriateness of the research instruments before conducting this study. In April, a preliminary questionnaire for Korean fathers was developed in Korean by synthesising questionnaires used in previous studies and consulting with experts. Next, the researcher translated it into Chinese to survey Chinese fathers. The questionnaire was then translated into Chinese by the researcher to survey Chinese fathers. In May 2013, we finalised the questionnaire with the same questions that could be applied in both Korea and China. The completed questionnaire was distributed to 200 fathers of 5-year-olds in Korea and China by August, for a total of 400 fathers. In Korea, the questionnaires were delivered to kindergartens in person or by post, and in China, they were distributed by post and email. Of the 345 questionnaires returned, 294 (147 each from Korea and China) were used in the final analysis, excluding 51 that were incorrectly filled out and not suitable for analysis.

3.4. analyse your data

The data collected for this study were analysed using the SPSS Window18.0 programme to determine the mean (M), standard deviation (SD), t-test, ANOVA test and post hoc tests to identify the differences between Korean and Chinese fathers' perceptions of parenting role and parenting involvement.

In the evaluation questionnaire for the programme, the answers to the closed-ended questions were given frequencies and percentages, while the answers to the open-ended questions were categorised by the fathers' responses and the frequency of each type of response was calculated.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Comparing Korean and Chinese fathers' perceptions of their parenting role

There was no significant difference between Korean (M = 3.62, SD = 0.32) and Chinese (M = 3.61, SD = 0.45) fathers' overall perceptions of their parenting roles ($t = -0.32$, $p > .05$). However, when examining the sub-factors separately, there was a significant difference between Korean and Chinese fathers' perceptions of their parenting roles in the "economic role" and "controlling/coordinating role" as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of Korean and Chinese fathers' perceptions of parenting role.

	South Korea (n=147)		China (n=147)		t	p
	M	±SD	M	±SD		
Economic roles	3.27	±0.37	3.43	±0.48	3.33	0.001
Value delivery roles	3.56	±0.35	3.48	±0.46	-1.81	0.071
Lead-coordinate roles	3.71	±0.37	3.58	±0.51	-2.44	0.015
Affectionate roles	3.63	±0.30	3.56	±0.47	-1.52	0.131
Exploration assistant roles	3.56	±0.37	3.53	±0.47	-0.59	0.555
Educator roles	3.32	±0.49	3.36	±0.50	0.62	0.539
All	3.62	±0.32	3.61	±0.45	-0.32	0.746

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

As shown in Table 3, Chinese fathers ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.48$) perceived “economic role” as a higher role for fathers than Korean fathers ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.37$), with a statistically significant difference ($t = 3.33$, $p < .01$).

On the other hand, Korean fathers ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.37$) scored higher than Chinese fathers ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.51$) on the “controlling - harmonising role”, with a statistically significant difference ($t = -0.244$, $p < .01$).

(1) “Economic role” of Korean and Chinese fathers by socio-demographic variables

Table 4 shows the significant results for the 'economic role' of Korean fathers by socio-demographic variables.

Table 4. “Economic role” of Korean fathers by sociodemographic variables.

Variables	Category	N	M	±SD	t	p
Number of games you play with your child per week	0-3	127	3.23	±0.37	-2.60	0.010
	4 or more times	26	3.43	±0.35		
Time spent playing games with your child during the week	One hour or less	126	3.30	±0.37	3.33	0.038
	1-3 hours	19	3.08	±0.34		
	3-5 hours	2	3.00	±0.00		

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

As shown in Table 8, there is a significant difference in Korean fathers' perceptions of their “economic role” according to the number of times they play games with their children per week ($t = -2.60$, $p < .01$), with fathers who play games with their children 0-3 times per week ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.35$) having higher perceptions of their “economic role” than those who play games with their children 4 or more times per week ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.37$). There was also a significant difference in perceptions of fathers' “economic role” based on the “number of hours per week they play games with their children” ($t = 3.33$, $p < .05$). Fathers who reported playing games with their children for an hour or less ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.37$) were more likely to have a higher perceived economic role than those who reported playing games with their children for 1-3 hours ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.34$). Fathers with a high perceived “economic role” were more likely to spend more time with their children but less time at a time.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, which examined fathers' perceptions of parenting roles and involvement in child care among Korean and Chinese 5-year-olds, we can conclude that:

Firstly, both Korean and Chinese fathers rated the parenting role of fathers as important overall, and there was no significant difference between Korean and Chinese fathers.

Secondly, in terms of Korean-Chinese father involvement, Chinese fathers are more directly involved in their children's upbringing than Korean fathers overall.

Thirdly, there are differences in Korean and Chinese fathers' perceptions of their parenting roles and participation in parenting according to socio-demographic variables.

Fourthly, the perception of fathers' parenting roles has changed significantly from the Confucian view of fathers in the past.

Suggestions for follow-up research on this study include:

Firstly, because this study was limited to a few regions in Korea and China, especially kindergartens in China, where fathers' perceptions of their parenting roles and participation in parenting roles were higher in areas with higher education and living standards, it is difficult to generalise the results of this study to the differences between Korean and Chinese fathers in general.

Secondly, this study was limited to a questionnaire survey, which may have limited questions about fathers' perceptions of their parenting roles, such as value transmission, affectionate role, exploration support role, and educator role, so future studies should use various research methods such as questionnaires and interviews to exclude this possibility.

Thirdly, in order to identify more specific reasons for the differences between Korean and Chinese fathers in this study, future research should include a wider range of subjects, such as mothers and teachers, in addition to fathers.

Fourthly, in order to change fathers' perception of their parenting roles and actively participate in child rearing, fathers should be given opportunities to participate in child rearing and have more family time with their children.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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