

INVESTIGATING PARENTAL SELF-EFFICACY AND PATERNAL ANTENATAL ATTACHMENT AMONG EXPECTANT FATHERS

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ABSTRACT

Parental Self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's own parenting skills and knowledge. Paternal Antenatal Attachment is the love and care that expectant fathers have on their unborn fetus. This forms the base for their future attachment and makes them feel secure. In this patriarchal society, fathers are stigmatized to be the disciplinarian and act emotionally distant, leading to errors in parenting. But now most of the paternal figures are getting involved in child care. The origin for most of the behavioural issues lies in the early developmental period of the child. This study aims to understand the interactions between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment. The standardized tools employed in this study are Paternal Antenatal Attachment Scale and Parental Self-efficacy scale. A sample of 142 expectant fathers were taken. Results suggested that there is a significant positive correlation between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment ($r = 0.384$, $**p < 0.01$). Further regression analyses showed 14% of variance was caused by Paternal Self-efficacy on Paternal Antenatal Attachment ($\beta = 0.384$, $**p < 0.01$; $F = 22.830$, $**p < 0.01$). So we can inculcate the required parenting skills like Parenting Self-efficacy through more awareness and training programs. This will pave the way for healthier development of a child.

Key words: Parental Self-efficacy, Paternal Antenatal Attachment, Healthy Development, Expectant Fathers

INTRODUCTION

Aim

This study aims to explore Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment among expectant fathers.

Parental Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura, it is a parent's belief in their ability to carry out parenting tasks and behaviours to positively impact their child's health and development. ^[1] Parental efficacy is a product of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. This theory states that human behaviour is determined by the interaction of three major entities: Personal Factors, Environmental influences and Behavioural patterns. The parental figure's personality, behavioural pattern and their family influences their Parental Self-efficacy. If both the parent anticipate good outcomes from their parental behaviour then their parental efficacy is likely to be good. Self-Efficacy being the centre force of determining parental efficacy acts as a forerunner of it.

Paternal Antenatal Attachment

Paternal fetal attachment is a subjective feeling of love for the unborn child, rather than an attitude or belief, and is at the heart of a man's experience. ^[2] McCall and Simons developed the identity theory. Among the available roles the most predominant role will be acted out by the individual. If the expectant fathers give more significance to their paternal role then they will start exhibiting father-related behaviour. Expected first time fathers are prone to have increased father status prominence as they are preoccupied with thoughts about their manifestation towards fatherhood. But the fatherhood content is more complex to predict. ^[3]

Condon developed the Paternal Antenatal Attachment Scale. He mentioned two major dimensions that helped to assess paternal prenatal attachment: Quality of attachment and Time spent in attachment. Quality of attachment mainly intends on understanding the expected father's emotional and empathetic investment on the fetus. This highlights the significance of the baby on the father's life. Time spent in attention mainly focuses on the time invested for the baby and its relating activities. This dimension has cognitive involvement of the father as the core. So this assesses how the father is imagining the baby to look like, thinking of potential names for the baby and mental representations of the baby in the womb.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Hypothesis

H₁ - There will not be a significant relationship between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment among expectant fathers.

H2 - There will not be predictive relationship between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment among expectant fathers.

Variables

Dependant variable: Paternal Antenatal Attachment

Independent variable: Parental Self-efficacy

Sample

The study's sample comprised of 140 expectant fathers. The participants belonged to the places in Thoothukudi district. This study relied on primary data.

Measures

In this research, the following standardized tools were used:

- Paternal Antenatal Attachment Scale by Condon (2015).
- Parental Self-efficacy scale by Woolgar. M ,et.al (2023).

Procedure

The expectant fathers were the participants of the research and the responses were collected from them. After obtaining the participant's consent to take part in the study, they were requested to fill in their response to a set of questionnaires, which included demographic data. This self-reported measure intends to measure the variables: Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment. The participants were instructed to read the items carefully and respond to each questions by selecting the option that comes first to their mind without over thinking it and they were informed that their responses will be kept confidential. The participants took 15 to 20 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

Statistical analysis

The collected data was analysed statistically using Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the relationship among the research variables. Linear regression was used to determine the predictive relations among the research variables. The analyses was carried out with the statistical package for the social sciences software 23 (SPSS).

Review of Literature

Some of the most relevant researches are explained below.

Donithen, R., & Schoppe-Sullivan, S. (2022) conducted a study to investigate the “Correlates and predictors of parenting self-efficacy in new fathers”. Data was collected from one hundred and eighty two expected fathers. Lower parental efficacy was found if the

fathers had higher attachment anxiety and neuroticism. New fathers parenting efficacy depended on the relationship with the co-parent. [4]

Knappe, S., Petzoldt, J., Garthus-Niegel, S., Wittich, J., Puls, H. C., Huttarsch, I., & Martini, J. (2021) conducted a study on “Associations of partnership quality and father-to-child attachment during the peripartum period. A prospective-longitudinal study in expectant fathers”. The sample included one hundred and nine expected fathers whose partners were in their mid-pregnancy. Results portrayed that the quality of relationship between partners determined the quality of the relationship between the fetus and the expected father. Anxiety symptoms seemed to lower the paternal attachment. [5]

Pinto, T. M., Figueiredo, B., Pinheiro, L. L., & Canário, C (2016) conducted a study on “Fathers’ parenting self-efficacy during the transition to parenthood”. Eighty six expected fathers whose spouse have completed the first trimester of pregnancy were taken as the participants. Result showed that father’s parenting efficacy was influenced by the co-parents support. Expected fathers who displayed more anxious symptoms reported lower levels of parenting efficacy. [6]

Türkmen, H., & Güler, S. (2021) conducted a study on “Factors Affecting Intrauterine Paternal-Foetal Attachment and the Responsibility Status of Fathers Concerning Mothers and Babies”. This was a cross sectional study where the expected fathers whose partner were above the 24th week of pregnancy were taken as the sample. The study proved that if the father has a good sense of responsibility on the mother and baby then they are prone to have higher level of attachment with their fetus. [7]

Vance, A. J., & Brandon, D. H. (2017) conducted a study on “Delineating among parenting confidence, parenting self-efficacy, and competence”. A literature review was done to understand in-depth about parenting efficacy. Parenting confidence and competence. Results portrayed that parenting efficacy and parenting confidence reflected the internal attribution of the parent on their parenting behaviour. They also had similar antecedents and consequences. While they stated that competence should be measured objectively. [8]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter summarizes the findings of the current study. It examines the link between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment. The hypothesis was tested using statistical analysis such as Pearson’s correlation coefficient.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics of the study variables*

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Parental Self-efficacy	142	67.34	4.993	-.471	.238
Paternal Antenatal Attachment	142	21.72	2.064	-.200	-.085

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of Parental self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment. The sample records a mean value of 67.34 and standard deviation of 4.993 in the variable Paternal Self-efficacy. In Paternal Antenatal Attachment the sample has a mean value of 21.72 and 2.064 in standard deviation. Skewness value between -2 to +2 and Kurtosis value within -7 to +7 is considered to be normal distribution. So we can assert that the data is normally distributed from the skewness and kurtosis value from table 4.2. Boxplots were used to identify outliers and they were removed. From this observation, the study variables are therefore amenable for hypotheses testing using parametric tests.

Table 2: The correlation between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment

Variables	‘r’ value
Parental Self-efficacy	
Paternal Antenatal Attachment	0.384**

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2 reveals the relationship between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment. This table shows that there exists a highly significant positive correlation between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment with a value of .384 which is significant at $p < 0.01$. Therefore the null hypothesis (H1) stating ‘There will not be a significant relationship between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment among expectant fathers’ is rejected, as there is a strong correlation between the two variables.

Table 3: Regression analyses for Parental Self-Efficacy as predictor of Paternal Antenatal Attachment

Predictor Variable	Standard Coefficient Beta	‘t’ value	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-value
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Parental						
Self-	.384	4.778	.384 ^a	.147	.141	22.830
Efficacy						

Table 3 shows the result of regression analyses for Parental Self-efficacy as predictor of Paternal Antenatal Attachment. F – value (1, 22.830) at $p \leq 0.001$ shows that the regression model has a good fit. The adjusted R^2 value indicates that the Paternal Self-efficacy accounted for 14 percentage of the variance in Paternal Antenatal Attachment in expectant fathers. No variables have been excluded from the regression model. The Beta value implies that for every one unit increase in Parental Self-efficacy there is an increase of .384 in Paternal Antenatal Attachment. Therefore from the above obtained result we can reject the null hypothesis (H2) stating, ‘There will not be predictive relationship between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment among expectant fathers’.

Discussion

Table 1 gives the descriptive statistics. Parental Self-efficacy is seen to be higher in most of the expectant fathers as the mean value is higher. This strong belief might have originated from the harmonious partnership that they share with their partner. ^[4] Paternal Antenatal Attachment records a lower mean value which means the majority of the sample do not have high levels of attachment. Anxiety is a common reaction that can arise in the paternal figure during the antenatal period because of its risks and responsibilities. So this might act as a contributory factor. ^[5]

From Table 2, we have rejected the null hypothesis stating ‘There will not be a significant relationship between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment among expectant fathers’. So as the Parental Efficacy increases Paternal Antenatal Attachment also increases. The increase in these two can lead to the healthy development of the baby. Providing antenatal education to the expectant fathers is necessary. This may in turn promote their level of attachment and parental efficacy. If the father believes in his own parenting skills, he might be more confident. This can positively influence the bond he shares with the baby. ^[8] As the time spent with the baby increases the parental efficacy also increases. Interacting with the baby, feeling the baby and involving the paternal figures in antenatal care might increase the beliefs on their own abilities. ^[9]

From Table 3, we can explore the null hypothesis stating ‘There will not be predictive relationship between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment among

expectant fathers'. Parental Self-efficacy promotes Paternal Antenatal Attachment in mild level. So Parental efficacy is only a moderate predictor. This reveals the notion that there may be other predictors of Paternal Antenatal Attachment like marital satisfaction, social support, antenatal education and mental health. [2]

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to explore Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment among expectant fathers. The independent variable of the study was Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment was the dependent variable. The sample was obtained through Purposive sampling method. The participants of the study were 140 Expectant fathers from the district of Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu. Data was collected both by using Google forms and by collecting in person. In this research the following standardized tools were used: Paternal Antenatal Attachment Scale and Parental Self-efficacy scale. The collected data was analysed statistically using Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the relationship among the research variables. The analyses were carried out with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.

The following conclusions were drawn from this study:

- There is a significant relationship between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment.
- There exists a predictive relationship between Parental Self-efficacy and Paternal Antenatal Attachment.

Implications

- This study has proved that fathers with higher Parental Self-efficacy report to be more attached with their unborn child. So this can ensure proper development of the baby by meeting all its needs.
- Counsellors, medical professionals can become aware about the significance of Parental-efficacy in promoting paternal care.
- This study highlights the role of fathers in prenatal period. So inclusion of the paternal figure in pregnancy and prenatal procedures are needed.

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