

Time with Dads: Unique Family Contexts in Singapore

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How do family contexts shape paternal involvement time in children's activities in Singapore?

BACKGROUNDS

- In previous studies, (1) time availability, (2) relative resources, and (3) gender ideology were used to explain unequal childcare and father's involvement time to children's activity.
- The pattern of children's time use with their parents can be varied by national contexts (Garcia et al., 2020)
 - **Singapore's wealth and inequalities** (income and education; assortative marriage)
 - **Familism as a core national ideology** ("Family as the basic unit of society"; grandparent caregiver tax relief)
 - **Outsourced domestic labor and care** (domestic helpers from developing countries)

DATA



Singapore Longitudinal
EARly Development Study
(SG LEADS)



Centre for Family and Population Research
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences

- Singapore Longitudinal EARly Development Study; SG LEADS (PI: Wei-Jun Jean Yeung (ariywj@nus.edu.sg))
 - The Children's Time Diary Data from the SG LEADS
 - A Nationally representative sample of 4,715 young preschool children living in two-parent families (Girl 48.76%; Age M = 3.13yrs; Chinese 68.13%, Malay 16.38%, Indian 10.53%, Others 4.96%) (Multiply Imputed sample by chained equations)

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ANALYSES

MI Tobit Models (adjusted robust S.E. for household clusters; sampling weights)



VARIABLES

DVs: The amount of time a child doing the activity with a father (Father's direct involvement time)

- 1) Overall**
- 2) Caregiving:** eating, bathing, grooming, and medical/health care, etc.
- 3) Play & companionship:** watching TV, using electronic device, non-active or active play, talking, and so on
- 4) Social activities:** visiting, religious activities and ritual ceremonies, attending special events, and shopping
- 5) Achievement-oriented activities:** studying, reading, activities in school, daycare and private lessons, educational playing related to music, arts, and sports
- 6) Travel:** walking and riding vehicles such as bicycle, scooter, taxi, bus, train, or car

Controls: Child's gender, age, and race, father's age, # of children under 18 in HH

IVs

- **Parental education level**
Both Low (secondary or below) 11.6% / M>F 18.1% / F<M 18.3% / Both Mid (post-secondary or diploma) 15.2% / Both High (bachelor's degree or higher) 36.8%
- **Household income per capita** (quartiles)
- **Whether has a live-in helper** 36.3%
- **Whether co-reside with a grandmother** 20.21%
- **Mother's weekly working hours**
not working 29.5% / part-time (1-36hrs) 10.3% / full-time (35hrs+) 60.17%
- **Proportion of mother's earning in household income** (=mother's earning/HH income)
- **Mother's gender ideology**
5 items from NSFH US (Greenstein, 2000), 4-point Likert, Cronbach's α =.81, RMSEA=.033, CFI=.998, SRMR=.009
Sample: "It is more important for a wife to help her husband's career than to have one herself"

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RESULTS

Weekday

- Children of **highly educated parents** & children in **rich families** spent **more time** with their fathers, especially in care, achievement-oriented activities and travel.
- Children **living with helpers and grandmothers** spent **less time** with their fathers, especially in care and travel.

Table 4. Marginal effects of Tobit models for preschool children's time-use with their fathers on a weekday ($N = 4,715$)

	All	Care	Play	Social	Achieve	Travel
	dy/dx (Robust S.E.)					
Parental education level ^{a)} (ref. Both low)						
Father < Mother	23.72*	11.06**	-2.57	2.91*	11.37**	8.39***
Father > Mother	19.81*	7.71*	1.68	1.35	13.18***	7.28**
Both Mid	22.69*	5.17	4.07	2.33	12.30***	6.37**
Both High	26.09**	8.77*	-3.79	1.40	26.45***	10.84***
Household income per capita (ref. 1st quartile – lowest)						
2nd quartile	0.06	3.47	1.41	0.87	11.39**	-1.56
3rd quartile	4.27	5.04	6.46	2.24	12.33***	-2.32
4th quartile – highest	16.59	10.46**	14.95**	1.12	15.69**	-0.80
Live-in Helper(s)	-25.83***	-9.94***	-2.53	-0.41	-0.93	-5.94***
Live-in Grandmother(s)	-27.29***	-7.49***	-4.53	-2.70	-0.84	-8.69***
Mother's weekly working hours (ref. Non-working - zero)						
Part-time (1-34 hours)	13.00	6.16	0.55	-3.60	3.29	6.36*
Full-time (35+ hours)	7.22	0.80	1.42	-5.21	2.08	7.03**
Mother's earning/HH income (ref. 0-25%)						
26-50%	-1.19	-1.59	-8.57	1.66	-0.27	6.00*
51-100%	0.66	0.72	-6.13	6.78	0.51	3.34
Mother's gender ideology	1.98	-0.57	3.66	-0.45	1.40	-0.01

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RESULTS

Weekend

- Children of **highly educated parents** & children in **rich families** spent **more time** with their fathers, especially in social activities and achievement-oriented activities.
- Children **living with helpers** had **less time** to be cared for by their fathers. Children **living with grandmothers** generally had **less time** with their fathers.
- **Working mothers'** children spent **more time** with their fathers in care and play.
- Children of mothers having **non-traditional gender ideology** spent **more time** with their fathers in social activities and travel.

Table 5. Marginal effects of Tobit models for preschool children's time-use with their fathers on a weekend day ($N = 4,715$)

	All	Care	Play	Social	Achieve	Travel
	dy/dx (Robust S.E.)					
Parental education level ^{a)} (ref. Both low)						
Father < Mother	45.01*	13.38*	9.22	22.48	6.48*	12.18*
Father > Mother	56.56**	17.01**	16.25	19.40	6.26*	17.22***
Both Mid	48.88*	16.04**	18.94	23.33*	3.63	16.03***
Both High	71.22***	23.54***	16.62	19.52	17.08***	21.88***
Household income per capita (ref. 1st quartile – lowest)						
2nd quartile	32.34*	2.59	9.72	29.75***	4.11	8.07*
3rd quartile	43.47**	5.84	13.01	37.84***	5.80*	6.98
4th quartile – highest	75.47***	5.17	19.74*	63.64***	11.06***	7.96
Live-in Helper(s)	-12.03	-13.12***	-0.83	13.58*	2.22	-2.09
Live-in Grandmother(s)	-33.24**	-5.01	-9.63	-8.69	0.93	-4.09
Mother's weekly working hours (ref. Non-working - zero)						
Part-time (1-34 hours)	46.23*	21.41**	25.54*	-0.73	2.10	-4.16
Full-time (35+ hours)	25.85	17.75**	20.31	-14.42	-0.19	1.95
Mother's earning/HH income (ref. 0-25%)						
26-50%	-10.05	0.10	-7.16	-3.08	-1.44	3.95
51-100%	-29.20	-1.40	-16.09	-3.88	0.70	5.36
Mother's gender ideology	12.17	-1.66	-10.16	16.84**	-0.16	4.18*

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IMPLICATIONS

- In Singapore, absolute level of family resources – parental education, household income, etc. are more important to explain paternal involvement time in children’s activity than relative earnings and relative work hours between spouses.
 - The rising trend of assortative marriages will widen the gap young children spend with their fathers, hence their development
- Live-in helpers and grandmothers do not substitute father’s time spent in playing and achievement-oriented activities which promote children’s development.
- Social and employment policy interventions are needed to reduce paternal involvement gaps between different familial socioeconomic statuses and to develop public education and care program.

CFPR

Thanks for your attention!

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