

## A Descriptive Study to Assess the Psychological Wellbeing of First Time Fathers in Selected Areas of Gandhinagar, Gujarat

Divya Gigy<sup>1</sup>, Harimohan Singh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor <sup>2</sup>Principal,  
Apollo Institute of Nursing, Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad, Gujarat 382424, India.

### Abstract

The postnatal period is a stressful transition period for new fathers. *Aim:* The main objective of the study was to assess the psychological wellbeing of postnatal first-time father within 1 year after child birth from selected areas of Gandhinagar and to identify the association between the effect of psychological wellbeing and selected variables. *Method:* A quantitative approach with descriptive study design was used and the samples consisted of 70 first time fathers of selected area of Gandhinagar. The convenient sampling technique was used. A structured questionnaire was used to assess the psychological wellbeing of postnatal first-time fathers and the tool was found reliable. *Result:* The study shows that the majority of the fathers were in the age group of 21- 40 year and also, most of the fathers didn't have any preparations. The study also showed that most of them (52.86%) had poor psychological wellbeing. Sleep appeared to deteriorate markedly followed by recreation, anxiety and despondent feeling and sexual relationships from pre-pregnancy levels among postnatal first-time fathers. There was significant association between ages of father, age of baby, type of family, economic status, mother's working status, preparation of father, mode of delivery. *Conclusion:* It shows that there were some factors that influence their psychological well-being and all postnatal first-time fathers were exposed to them in their partner's pregnancy and after delivery. Fathers who had insufficient information about pregnancy and childbirth were also at risk of being distressed, suggesting that more attention needs to be paid to

providing information to men about their partner's pregnancy, childbirth and issues relating to caring for a new born infant.

**Keywords:** Psychological Wellbeing; Postnatal First Time Fathers' Sleep; Recreation, Anxiety.

### Introduction

The mother takes care of the child most of the time but father also did get responsibilities over his shoulders, especially when the father is first time father. First-time parents experience a decline in happiness after initial excitement. Many studies related that lack of sleep and financial worries can place a great strain on new parents. We always focus on the mother's problems to handle the baby but we never see the father's psychological wellbeing. Pregnancy, rather than the postnatal period, would appear to be the most stressful period for man undergoing the transition to the parenthood. In India, the postnatal first-time father may not have only one problem in handling the child however, there are other areas which might get affected, like relationship with their partner, financial problem, professional life, social gatherings etc.

An empirical study conducted by Elsters and Panzarina, examined adolescent fathers' primary stressors and postpartum experience with a sample of 20 participants. Elsters and colleagues subsequently studied three groups of first-time fathers, including 21 adolescent fathers with adolescent partners, 14 adult fathers with adolescent partners, and 55 adult fathers with adult partners. Interviews were conducted at two separate times: within 2 weeks after birth and at 3 months after birth. 20% of the participants rated financial responsibility as the most stressful factor. Another 13% reported that their rigorous schedule and not knowing what the child wants were the most stressful events in being a father. 10% indicated lack of sleep as a significant

**Corresponding Author:** Divya Gigy, Assistant Professor  
Apollo Institute of Nursing, Gandhinagar Ahmedabad,  
Gujarat 382424, India.

**E-mail:** [divyajosnedu@gmail.com](mailto:divyajosnedu@gmail.com)

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stressor. Some less frequent responses were related to working versus being at home with the child, not having enough time, being a good father, finding adequate day-care opportunities, experiencing a lack of sexual relations, having concerns for the child's well-being, and cleaning up of the child [1].

An Expectant father should be screened for depression; experts found 13% of first-time fathers experienced depressive symptoms. Antenatal 'baby blues' increase the risk of postnatal depression [2].

Machin A. in his project took 15 first-time fathers from two months before their child's birth to six months after. The fathers' in this study, whatever their intentions about sharing roles with their partners, found they were ending up in quite traditional structures where mother raised the child and father worked to support them. Often, that came down to the attitudes of work colleagues and health professionals. Of the 15 fathers involved, five showed signs of mild to moderate depression two weeks after their child's birth and one showed symptoms of moderately severe depression at six months. The study showed fathers wanted the same relationship with their child that they saw the mother having with the child [3].

Shapiro J.L. conducted a study and he had given seven common fears faced by fathers-to-be: - that are Security fears, Performance fears, Paternity fear, Mortality fear, fear for your partners or child health, Relationship fear, Fears of "women's medicine". More than 80% of fathers have performance fear, about half of the fathers have paternity fear, and Men often fear that their partner will love the baby more than anyone on earth [4].

A study done by Ramchandani PG et.al. on "Paternal depression: an examination of its links with father, child and family functioning in the postnatal period": A controlled study comparing individual and familial outcomes in fathers with (n=54) and without diagnosed depressive disorder (n=99) And the result was depression in father associated with an increased risk of disharmony in partner relationships, reported by both father and their partners, controlling for maternal depression. Few differences in infant's reported temperament were found in the early postnatal period [5].

The previous studies showed that there is a great effect on the sleep, daily routine, responsibilities, economic status, professional life and relationship with the partner of the first- time fathers and it leads to the disturbance in their life. In India, we

always focused on the mothers physical & mental health, we never focused on father's psychological wellbeing. Very few researches have been done on that, and we found that father is also having the psychological stress in handling the baby. It is important to study the father's point of view, so that the health care professionals can appropriately assist new fathers in the postpartum years. Thus, the present study focused on the psychological wellbeing of postnatal first-time fathers.

## Materials and Methods

The study was conducted on postnatal first-time fathers within 1 year after child birth from selected areas of Gandhinagar. Quantitative approach with descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The sample consisted of 70 postnatal first-time fathers who were within 1 year after child birth and a convenient sampling technique was used. Approvals were taken from the selected societies of Gandhinagar from where the samples were selected. The fathers were given a questionnaire and the tool was divided into 2 parts. Part 1 consisted of 10 questions related to demographic variables. Part 2 consisted of 32 questions to assess the psychological wellbeing of first time father, which were divided under 9 domains. This was a 4-point scale. The scores of both positive and negative items were added to get total score on psychological wellbeing of first time fathers.

## Results

### *Part I: Findings related to sample characteristics*

The table depicts 53 (77.71%) postnatal first-time father were between 21-30 years, 32 (45.71%) babies were in the age group of 0-4 months, most of the fathers belonged to nuclear family 50 (71.43%). The gender of the babies was near to equal. Maximum number of fathers had private job 32 (45.71%), economic status of the father revealed that the maximum numbers were of middle class 65 (92.86%). The data shows that most of the mothers were housewives 56 (80%), all 70 (100%) babies were healthy, almost all fathers had no preparation and they consulted their friends and families 26 (37.14%). Furthermore, the majority had normal mode of delivery 41 (58.57%).

**Table 1:** Frequency and percentage distribution of first time fathers by their sample characteristics. N=70

Sr.no	Sample characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age of father		
	a.21-30	53	75.71%
	b.31-40	17	24.29%
2	Age of baby		
	a.0-4 months	32	45.71%
	b.5-8 months	25	35.71%
	c.9-12 months	13	18.57%
3	Type of family		
	a. Joint	20	28.57%
	b. Nuclear	50	71.43%
4	Gender of child		
	a. Female	34	48.57%
	b. male	36	51.42%
5	Occupation of father		
	a. Government job	26	37.14%
	b. Private job	32	45.71%
	c. Business	12	17.15%
6	Economic status		
	a. High class	2	2.86%
	b. Middle class	65	92.86%
	c. Lower class	3	4.29%
7	Mother's working status		
	a. Yes	14	20%
	b. No	56	80%
8	Health of the baby		
	a. healthy	70	100%
	b. unhealthy	0	0%
9	Preparation of father		
	a. Antenatal classes	3	4.29%
	b. Self study	18	25.71%
	c. Consultation with friends and family	26	37.14%
	d. No preparation	23	32.86%
10	Mode of delivery		
	a. Normal	41	58.57%
	b. Instrumental delivery	2	2.86%
	c. Cesarean section	27	38.57%

*Area wise analysis of psychological wellbeing of first time fathers*

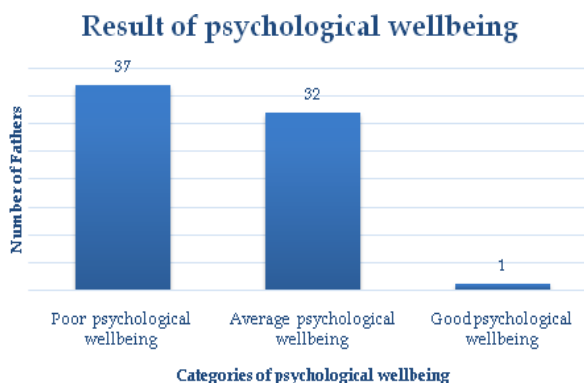
The structured questionnaires had 9 domains and the number of items in each domain varied from 1 to 7. The data given in Figure 2 indicates

*Part II-Findings Related to psychological wellbeing of first time fathers.*

The data given in table 2 indicates that the possible ranges of scores were 0-92 and range of obtain score for the subject was 13-62. The mean value of total scores of psychological wellbeing of first time father was 32.085; median 30, standard deviation was 12.40. The data in Figure 1 reveals that out of 70 first time fathers, 37 had poor psychological wellbeing, 32 had average psychological wellbeing and 1 had good psychological wellbeing.

**Table 2:** Mean, Median and standard deviation, possible range of scores, range of obtained scores of psychological wellbeing of first time fathers. N=70

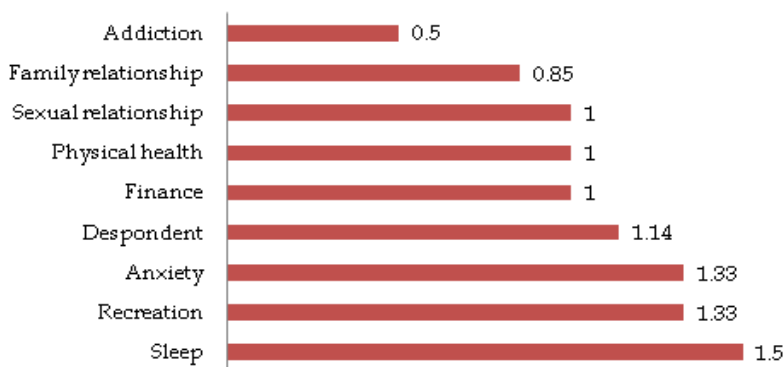
Group	Possible range of scores	Range of obtained scores	Mean	Median	Standard deviation
First time fathers	0-92	13-62	32.09	30	12.40



**Fig. 1:** A Bar Diagram showing the frequency Distribution of first time father by the psychological wellbeing

descending order of domains of psychological wellbeing of first time fathers were sleep (1.5), recreation (1.33), anxiety (1.33), despondent (1.14), finance(1), physical health (1), sexual relationship (1), family relationship (0.85), addiction (0.5).

**Modified mean**



**Fig. 2:** A horizontal bar diagram showing areas of psychological wellbeing.

*Part III: Findings related to association between the psychological wellbeing of postnatal first-time fathers and selected variables like age of father, age of the baby, type of family, gender of the child, father's occupation, economic status of family, mother's working status, preparation of father, mode of delivery.*

Chi square value was computed after Yates correction to find out the association between the psychological wellbeing of first time fathers and age of father, age of baby, type of family, gender of child, father's occupation, economic status of

family, working status of the mother, health of baby, preparation of father & mode of delivery.

The data presented in Table 3 shows that there was significant association between psychological wellbeing of postnatal first time fathers and age of father, age of baby, type of family, economic status, mother's working status, preparation of father, mode of delivery whereas there was no significant association between psychological wellbeing of postnatal first time fathers and gender of the baby, father's occupation, health of baby.

**Table 3:** Chi square value showing the association between the psychological wellbeing of first time fathers and age of father, age of baby, type of family, gender of child, father's occupation, economic status of family, working status of the mother, health of baby, preparation of father, mode of delivery.

N=70

Category	Good psychological wellbeing	Average psychological wellbeing	Poor psychological wellbeing	Chi square value	p value
<b>Age of father(years)</b>					
21-30	0	28	28	1.472	0.479*
31-40	1	4	9		
<b>Age of the baby</b>					
0-4 months	1	13	18	1.102	0.894*
5-8 months	0	12	14		
9-12 months	0	7	5		
<b>Type of family</b>					
Joint family	13	7	0	1.131	0.5681*
Nuclear family	24	25	1		
<b>Gender of the baby</b>					
Female	19	15	0	0.031	0.9846
Male	18	17	1		
<b>Father's Occupation</b>					
Government job	15	11	0	0.799	0.9386
Private job	16	16	0		
Business	6	5	1		
<b>Economic status of family</b>					
High class	2	0	0	14.9	0.0049*
Middle class	35	29	1		
Lower class	0	3	0		
<b>Working status of the mother</b>					
Yes	4	9	0	3.009	0.222*
No	33	23	1		
<b>Health of baby</b>					
Healthy	37	32	1	0.265	0.8759
Unhealthy	0	0	0		
<b>Preparation of father</b>					
Antenatal classes	3	0	0	13.318	0.03825*
Self study	10	8	0		
Consultation of family and friend	18	8	0		
No preparation	6	16	1		
<b>Mode of Delivery</b>					
Normal Delivery	19	21	1	8.744	0.0678*
Instrumental delivery	2	0	0		
Caesarean section	16	11	0		

## Discussion

The first-time fathers have a range of psychological problems, as is described by various studies. While going through the literature on psychological well-being of first time fathers, it showed that there are some factors that influence their psychological well-being and all first-time fathers are exposed to them in their wife's pregnancy and after delivery.

According to finding of present study the majority of first time fathers in the age group of 21 to 30 years had poor psychological wellbeing, which is similar to the findings of the study of Bragstrom M [7]. where the younger father had increasing depressive symptoms. In present study dual earner whose babies were in age group of 0-4 months had poor psychological wellbeing. These findings are in line with the study done by L.B. Whitbeck [8] where both the parents in job affect the parenting behaviour.

In present study the poor psychological wellbeing was seen among the first-time father in the area of sleep, which is similar to study of L. Cary [9] in which it is showed that both parents experience more sleep disturbance at night. In present study It is concluded that the occupation of first time father has no effect on the psychological wellbeing which is in contrast with the study done by Akiko N and Kazutomo O [10]. Which showed that the psychological wellbeing of first time father in a way that those with the unstable or temporary employment have shown more depressive symptom. The present study showed that the gender of the baby, working status of mother and mode of delivery does not have more effect on the psychological well-being of first time fathers.

## Conclusion

The findings of the present investigation suggested that majority of the first-time fathers experienced poor psychological wellbeing. Therefore, more attention needs to be paid to providing information to men about their partner's pregnancy, childbirth and issues relating to caring for a new born infant. This study's findings can be used to involve fathers and design future supportive educational programs to promote positive parenting experiences and family dynamics.

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