

Poorer parents are just as involved in their children's activities as better-off parents

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Poorer parents are just as involved in education, leisure, and sports activities with their children as better-off parents, a new study has found.

Dr Esther Dermott and Marco Pomati analysed survey data on 1,665 UK households and found that poorer parents were as likely to have helped with homework, attended parents' evenings, and played sports or games with their children in the previous week.

Dr Dermott, of the University of Bristol, and Mr Pomati, Cardiff University, say they found no evidence of a group of poor parents who failed their children.

"Those with lower incomes or who felt poor were as likely to engage in all of the good parent-child activities as everyone else," they say in an article published online in the journal *Sociology*.

"The findings support the view that associations made between low levels of education, poverty and poor parenting are ideologically driven rather than based on empirical evidence. Claims that families who are poor or are less well educated do not engage in high profile good parenting practices are misplaced." They found no evidence of a group of parents who failed to participate in parent-child activities, they say.

"This is potentially important since recent political discourse has not only promoted the idea that poor parenting exists but also emphasised the existence of a group of parents who persistently fail to engage in

parenting activities that are beneficial for their children."

The researchers used data from the '2012 Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK' survey on parents of children aged up to 16 years old.

When questioned, over 50 per cent of all parents said that during the previous week they had read to their children and played games with them on at least four days. A similar result was found for helping with homework and with eating a meal and watching TV with their children. It also found that 28 per cent of parents had done sports with children at least four days during the previous seven.

The researchers then compared responses between poorer parents - defined as those whose household income was below 60% of the average (median) - and the others in the sample.

They found that there was no significant difference between the proportion of poorer parents and other parents who had done sports or games with their children on four or more days during the past week, or who had read to them or helped them with their homework. Poorer parents were more likely to have watched TV with their [children](#) on four or more days during the previous week (34%, compared to 24% of other parents).

The researchers note that the results indicate that poorer parents engaged in a wide range of good parenting practices despite their lack of resources. It might have been expected that those who are poor engage in good [parenting practices](#) less frequently because they lack the material resources to do so, they say.

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