

Gender roles in modern parenting: A comparative study of working mothers and fathers who remain at home in urban societies

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Abstract

This study examines the evolving gender roles in modern parenting, focusing on the experiences of stay-at-home fathers (SAHFs) and working mothers (WMs) in urban societies. Through a mixed-methods approach, the research explores societal perceptions, challenges, and the impact of role reversal on family dynamics. Findings reveal that SAHFs face stigma and social isolation due to traditional masculinity norms, while WMs encounter workplace discrimination and the "second shift" of balancing career and domestic responsibilities. Despite these challenges, role reversals contribute to more egalitarian relationships and positive child development outcomes. The study underscores the need for policy reforms, workplace flexibility, and societal shifts to support non-traditional parenting roles. Recommendations include gender-neutral parental leave, inclusive support networks, and educational initiatives to promote gender equality in caregiving.

Keywords: Gender Roles; Modern Parenting; Stay-At-Home Fathers; Working Mothers; Role Reversal; Societal Perceptions; Work-Life Balance; Family Dynamics

1. Introduction

Gender roles in parenting have historically been shaped by Economic, social, and cultural factors. Traditionally, Women have been the primary caregivers, responsible for Household and childcare responsibilities, while men have been the primary breadwinners (Connell, 2005). However, contemporary urban societies are witnessing a significant shift in these roles, with increasing numbers of stay-at-home fathers (SAHFs) and working mothers (WMs) challenging conventional family structures (Doucet, 2018).

This transformation is driven by several factors, including economic demands, evolving gender norms, and policies promoting work-life balance. The rise of dual-income households and the increasing cost of living have made it necessary for both parents to participate in the workforce (Gerson, 2010). Simultaneously, progressive gender ideologies have encouraged fathers to take on more active parenting roles, challenging the perception that caregiving is inherently feminine (Kane, 2016).

Despite these changes, traditional gender expectations persist. Working mothers often experience societal pressure to balance career and childcare, facing what Arlie Hochschild (1989) termed the "second shift"—the burden of managing domestic responsibilities after a full day of work. Meanwhile, stay-at-home fathers encounter stigma and skepticism, as caregiving remains largely associated with motherhood (Rehel, 2014). These contrasting experiences highlight the complexities of modern parenting and the need for a deeper understanding of how gender roles shape parenting experiences in urban societies.

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This study explores the lived experiences of SAHFs and WMs, comparing their challenges, societal perceptions, and the impact of role reversal on family dynamics. By examining how gender roles function in contemporary parenting, the research contributes to broader discussions on gender equality, work-family balance, and social change.

1.1. The Problem Statement

Despite increasing societal acceptance of non-traditional gender roles in parenting, significant disparities persist. Fathers who stay at home often struggle with societal skepticism, limited social support, and challenges in establishing their identity as primary caregivers (Doucet, 2018). Similarly, working mothers frequently experience career limitations, wage gaps, and expectations to fulfill traditional caregiving duties despite their professional commitments (Budig & England, 2001).

While prior studies have examined gender roles in parenting, there remains a gap in comparative analyses of SAHFs and WMs in urban contexts. Most existing research focuses on either fathers or mothers in isolation, failing to explore the intersection of their experiences within the same societal framework (Chesley, 2011). Additionally, research on stay-at-home fathers remains relatively underdeveloped, contributing to their continued marginalization in both academic and social discourse (Rehel, 2014).

1.2. Objectives of the Research

1.2.1. The research intends to accomplish the following objectives:

- To examine the societal perceptions and views regarding Working mothers and stay-at-home fathers in urban societies.
- To investigate the issues, the experiences of fathers who remain at home and working mothers in their respective roles.
- To analyze the impact of role reversal on family dynamics, including partner relationships and child development.
- To evaluate policy and workplace initiatives that support non-traditional parenting roles.
- 1.4 Research Questions
- To attain these aims, the study answers the following research questions:

1.2.2. How do societal perceptions influence the experiences of fathers who remain at home and working mothers?

- What challenges do working moms and stay-at-home fathers encounter in their daily lives?
- How does the reversal of traditional gender roles impact family relationships and child development?
- What policies and workplace structures exist to support non-traditional parenting roles?

1.3. Importance of the Research

This research adds to the growing discourse about gender roles in parenting and their implications for gender equality, family structures, and workplace policies. By highlighting the experiences of SAHFs and WMs, the research offers several contributions:

1.3.1. Academic Contributions

The study expands the existing literature on gender and parenting by providing a comparative perspective. Previous research has largely focused on working mothers or stay-at-home fathers separately; this study bridges the gap by analyzing them together within an urban context (Chesley, 2011). Additionally, it contributes to the discussion on masculinities and fatherhood, shedding light on how men navigate caregiving roles traditionally associated with women (Doucet, 2018).

1.3.2. Social Contributions

The study challenges societal stereotypes about gender and parenting. By exploring the lived experiences of SAHFs and WMs, the research promotes more inclusive perspectives on parenting and caregiving, encouraging greater acceptance of diverse family structures (Kane, 2016).

1.3.3. Policy Contributions

Findings from this study can inform policies related to parental leave, workplace flexibility, and support for non-traditional caregivers. Employers and policymakers can use the insights gained to develop more equitable workplace policies that accommodate diverse parenting arrangements, ultimately contributing to gender equality in both domestic and professional settings (Gerson, 2010).

1.4. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on urban societies, where shifts in gender roles are more pronounced due to factors such as higher female workforce participation, access to childcare services, and progressive gender attitudes. The research will be conducted in metropolitan areas, where diverse family structures and alternative parenting models are more prevalent.

The study will examine stay-at-home fathers who are the primary caregivers and working mothers who are the primary breadwinners. Participants will be drawn from various socioeconomic backgrounds to ensure a comprehensive understanding of different perspectives.

The research will primarily focus on perceptions, challenges, and family dynamics rather than broad statistical trends, making it a qualitative inquiry into the lived experiences of participants.

1.5. Conclusion

This chapter introduced the research by outlining the background, problem statement, objectives, and significance. As gender roles in parenting continue to evolve, understanding the experiences of SAHFs and WMs is essential for promoting gender equality and developing supportive policies. The next chapter will provide a thorough analysis of the literature, situating our study in the context of larger theoretical and empirical discussions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Gender roles in parenting have undergone significant transformations in recent decades, particularly in urban societies where economic demands, social norms, and workplace policies continue to evolve. Traditional family patterns, in which fathers were the major breadwinners and mothers were the primary caretakers, are being challenged by the increasing prevalence of Stay-at-home fathers (SAHFs) and working mothers (WMs). Despite these shifts, societal expectations regarding gender and parenting remain deeply ingrained, creating unique challenges for both SAHFs and WMs. This chapter reviews existing literature on gender roles in parenting, highlighting key themes such as historical perspectives, the impact of economic and social change, the challenges of non-traditional parenting roles, and the broader implications for family dynamics and policy.

2.2. Historical Perspectives on Gender Roles in Parenting

Historically, parenting roles have been defined by rigid gender norms that placed men in the public sphere of work and women in the private domain of the home. This division of labor was reinforced by social, cultural, and religious institutions that framed caregiving as a natural extension of femininity (Connell, 2005). The Industrial Revolution further cemented these roles by structuring labor markets in a way that prioritized male employment while restricting women's economic participation (Coontz, 2000).

However, the mid-20th century saw a shift, particularly with the rise of second-wave feminism, which emphasized women's rights to education, employment, and economic independence (Friedan, 1963). As women entered the workforce in increasing numbers, traditional caregiving roles began to be questioned, paving the way for more egalitarian parenting structures. Despite these changes, studies indicate that caregiving continues to be associated with femininity, while men who engage in full-time parenting often experience stigma (Doucet, 2018).

2.3. The Rise of Working Mothers and Stay-at-Home Fathers

The increasing participation of women in the workforce has been one of the most significant social changes of the past century. According to the International Labour Organization (2020), Women's worldwide labor force participation is at around 47%, with higher rates in urban settings where employment opportunities are more diverse. In many households, women are now primary or co-breadwinners, challenging the traditional notion that economic provision is solely a male responsibility (Budig & England, 2001).

The rise of SAHFs has been a less visible but equally significant trend. While still a minority, the number of fathers assuming primary caregiving responsibilities has steadily increased. In the United States, for example, the Pew Research Center (2021) found that approximately 17% of stay-at-home parents are fathers, up from 10% in 1989. This trend is influenced by various factors, including economic necessity, increased job flexibility, and evolving gender norms that promote shared parenting responsibilities (Chesley, 2011).

Despite these changes, working mothers continue to face workplace discrimination and career penalties. Research shows that mothers are more likely to experience wage stagnation and are often passed over for promotions due to assumptions that they will prioritize family over work (Correll et al., 2007). Conversely, SAHFs frequently encounter social stigma and a lack of support networks, as parenting spaces are often dominated by women, making it difficult for them to integrate fully into caregiving communities (Rehel, 2014).

2.4. Societal Perceptions of Stay-at-Home Fathers and Working Mothers

Societal attitudes toward non-traditional parenting roles remain deeply gendered. Research indicates that SAHFs often face skepticism regarding their caregiving abilities, as men are not traditionally seen as nurturing or emotionally available in the same way that women are (Doucet, 2018). Studies suggest that SAHFs frequently experience social isolation and are less likely to be invited into mother-dominated parenting groups, reinforcing the perception that childcare remains a feminine domain (Kane, 2016).

Working mothers, on the other hand, often face a "double bind," where they are expected to excel in their professional careers while also fulfilling traditional maternal responsibilities. Hochschild (1989) describes this as the "second shift," where working mothers are disproportionately responsible for housework and childcare, even when they are the primary earners. This double burden contributes to increased stress and burnout, affecting both work performance and family well-being.

Cultural variations further influence perceptions of SAHFs and WMs. In Scandinavian countries, where parental leave policies are more progressive, stay-at-home fatherhood is more socially accepted (Eydal & Rostgaard, 2014). However, in more conservative societies, SAHFs are often viewed as failing in their traditional provider role, leading to diminished social status and, in some cases, marital strain (Connell, 2005).

2.5. Challenges for Stay-at-Home Fathers

The experiences of SAHFs are often shaped by a combination of societal stigma, financial concerns, and a lack of peer support. Many SAHFs report feeling judged for not conforming to the traditional masculine role of provider, leading to identity struggles and psychological distress (Rehel, 2014). Economic challenges also play a role, as men who leave the workforce to care for children may face difficulties re-entering the job market later due to employment gaps (Gerson, 2010).

Additionally, SAHFs often struggle with inadequate institutional support. Many parenting programs, childcare facilities, and school communication channels are geared toward mothers, making it difficult for fathers to feel fully included in their children's educational and social development (Doucet, 2018). This exclusion reinforces the idea that caregiving remains a female responsibility, discouraging men from fully embracing their roles as primary caregivers.

2.6. Challenges Faced by Working Mothers

For WMs, balancing career and family responsibilities presents numerous obstacles. According to research, working mothers are more likely to face workplace discrimination, with employers often assuming that their family obligations will interfere with job performance (Correll et al., 2007). This "motherhood penalty" results in lower income, fewer promotions, and restricted access to leadership roles compared to their male counterparts (Budig & England, 2001).

Furthermore, WMs often struggle with feelings of guilt and societal pressure to conform to traditional maternal expectations. Studies suggest that working mothers frequently experience higher levels of stress and anxiety, as they are expected to handle both professional and household duties seamlessly (Hochschild, 1989). Unlike SAHFs, who are often praised for their caregiving contributions despite facing stigma, WMs are frequently judged for prioritizing work over family, reinforcing the gendered double standard in parenting expectations (Kane, 2016).

2.7. The Impact of Role Reversal on Family Dynamics

Research suggests that role reversal in parenting can have both positive and negative effects on family dynamics. On the positive side, families that embrace non-traditional parenting roles often report higher levels of partnership equality

and shared decision-making (Gerson, 2010). Studies indicate that children raised in homes with SAHFs and WMs benefit from diverse caregiving styles, fostering adaptability and broader gender perspectives (Chesley, 2011).

However, challenges remain. Some studies highlight marital strain when traditional expectations clash with reality. In cases where SAHFs feel emasculated or struggle with societal judgment, tensions may arise within the household, leading to relationship dissatisfaction (Connell, 2005). Similarly, WMs who bear the dual burden of work and home responsibilities may experience resentment, particularly if their partners do not take on an equal share of domestic labor (Hochschild, 1989).

2.8. Policy and Workplace Support for Non-Traditional Parenting Roles

Policies that support gender equality in parenting are essential for facilitating role reversal. In countries with generous parental leave policies, such as Sweden and Norway, fathers are encouraged to take on active caregiving roles, reducing stigma and promoting shared parenting (Eydal & Rostgaard, 2014). Workplace flexibility, including remote work options and family-friendly policies, also plays a crucial role in supporting both SAHFs and WMs (Budig & England, 2001).

However, research indicates that many workplaces remain resistant to accommodating non-traditional parenting roles. SAHFs often struggle to find part-time or flexible employment options, while WMs frequently encounter career limitations due to the assumption that they will prioritize family over work (Correll et al., 2007). Addressing these challenges requires a combination of policy reform, cultural change, and organizational commitment to gender-inclusive practices.

2.9. Conclusion

The literature on gender roles in modern parenting highlights the complexities of non-traditional caregiving arrangements. While SAHFs and WMs challenge traditional norms, they continue to face societal resistance, economic challenges, and institutional barriers. Understanding these experiences is crucial for promoting gender equality, shaping supportive policies, and redefining parenting roles in contemporary society.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The research is explained in this chapter, methods used in studying gender roles in modern parenting, focusing on the comparative experiences of stay-at-home fathers (SAHFs) and working mothers (WMs) in urban societies. The research used a mixed-methods approach to acquire a thorough knowledge of how gender roles influence parenting dynamics. This chapter discusses the Research design, demographic and sample methodologies, data gathering methods, data analysis tactics, ethical issues, and study limitations. By integrating qualitative and quantitative research approaches, this methodology ensures a robust exploration of the complexities surrounding gender roles in modern parenting.

3.2. Research Design

The study uses a mixed-methods research strategy that combines using both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a holistic analysis of gender roles in parenting. A comparative case study approach is used to examine the experiences of SAHFs and WMs in urban settings, allowing for an in-depth exploration of similarities and differences in their roles, challenges, and societal perceptions.

The study's qualitative component consists of In-depth interviews and focus groups discussion, designed to capture the lived experiences of SAHFs and WMs. The goal is to understand how they navigate their roles, how society perceives them, and what coping strategies they employ to balance parenting and external expectations. The quantitative component involves a structured survey distributed to a larger sample population, collecting statistical data on parenting experiences, role perceptions, and the impact of role reversal on family dynamics.

The rationale for this mixed-methods approach is that qualitative data provides rich, contextual insights into individual experiences, while quantitative data allows for broader generalization of trends within the target population. Combining these methods ensures that the study captures both subjective personal experiences and objective statistical patterns regarding gender roles in parenting.

3.3. Population and Sampling Techniques

The study focuses on urban societies, where shifting gender roles in parenting are more pronounced due to economic demands, progressive gender ideologies, and increased workforce participation of women. The target population includes SAHFs who serve as primary caregivers and WMs who are the primary financial providers in their households.

A purposive sampling technique is employed for the qualitative component, ensuring that participants meet the specific criteria of being either SAHFs or WMs in urban areas. This technique is ideal because it allows for the selection of participants who can provide rich, relevant, and diverse perspectives on the research topic. Participants are drawn from different socioeconomic backgrounds to capture a variety of experiences and challenges associated with gender role reversals in parenting.

For the quantitative component, a stratified random sampling method is used to ensure a representative sample. The sample is divided into two strata—one for SAHFs and another for WMs—to allow for comparative analysis. The survey is distributed to a sample size of approximately 250 SAHFs and 250 WMs, ensuring statistical significance in identifying trends and general patterns related to parenting experiences and societal perceptions.

3.4. Data Collection Methods

The research uses a mix of interviews, focus groups, and surveys to collect comprehensive data. These methods are chosen to balance depth and breadth in understanding gender roles in modern parenting.

The qualitative component involves semi-structured interviews with 30 SAHFs and 30 WMs, each lasting between 45 minutes to an hour. These interviews explore themes such as motivations for assuming their respective roles, societal reactions, psychological impacts, and personal reflections on parenting. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility, allowing participants to share their unique experiences while ensuring that key research themes are consistently explored.

Additionally, focus group discussions (FGDs) are conducted separately for SAHFs and WMs, consisting of five to six participants per group. FGDs facilitate interactive discussions that reveal shared experiences and collective challenges, offering deeper insights into societal norms and expectations surrounding parenting roles.

The quantitative component consists of a structured survey administered to 500 participants. The survey covers both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions, focusing on societal attitudes, perceived stress levels, work-family balance, and financial implications of role reversal. This survey is conducted online and in person to maximize reach and participation.

3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

Given the mixed-methods nature of the study, data analysis involves quantitative statistical analysis as well as qualitative thematic analysis.

The Thematic analysis of qualitative data is used to find recurrent themes and patterns in the interview and focus group transcripts. The data is coded manually and through NVivo software, ensuring systematic identification of key insights. This method helps categorize experiences related to stigma, work-family balance, emotional well-being, and parenting dynamics.

For the quantitative data, descriptive and inferential statistical analysis is done using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, like means, percentages, and standard deviations, summarize general trends, while Inferential statistics, like regression analysis and chi-square tests, look at relationships between variables. For instance, chi-square tests assess whether societal perceptions differ significantly between SAHFs and WMs, while regression analysis determines the impact of work-family balance on stress levels.

Combining these analysis methods ensures a comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of how gender roles in parenting influence individual experiences and family dynamics.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity is a fundamental aspect of this study, ensuring that participant rights, confidentiality, and informed consent are upheld. Before data collection, ethical approval is sought from an IRB (institutional review board) to guarantee adherence to ethical research standards.

Every participant is obliged to provide informed consent, acknowledging their voluntary involvement as well as their freedom to discontinue at any moment without consequences. Anonymity and confidentiality are strictly maintained, with participants assigned coded identifiers instead of real names in all research documents.

Sensitive topics, such as societal judgment and workplace discrimination, are handled with care to minimize emotional distress among participants. If needed, participants are provided with referrals to counseling services. Additionally, the research adheres to data protection regulations, ensuring that collected data is securely stored and only accessible to authorized personnel.

3.7. Reliability and Validity

Ensuring reliability and validity is crucial for maintaining research credibility. In the qualitative component, triangulation is used by comparing interview responses with focus group discussions and secondary literature to ensure consistency in findings. Member verification is also used when participants examine interview transcripts to verify the veracity of their statements.

In the quantitative component, pilot testing of the survey is conducted with 20 SAHFs and 20 WMs to refine questionnaire clarity and reliability. The Survey Instrument is used to calculate Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency, ensuring reliability of Likert-scale responses. Construct validity is assessed by comparing the survey findings with existing literature and prior studies on gender roles in parenting.

3.8. The Study's Limitations

Although the study is designed to provide comprehensive findings, it is important to recognize a number of limitations. First, sample diversity may be limited, as SAHFs and WMs in urban societies do not represent all parenting experiences across different cultural and economic contexts. Results may not be entirely applicable to rural communities, where traditional gender roles remain more rigid.

Second, the self-reporting bias potential Concern, since individuals may make socially desired replies rather than entirely honest accounts of their experiences. To mitigate this, assurances of confidentiality and anonymous survey responses are emphasized.

Third, time constraints may limit the depth of qualitative interviews, as participants may not be able to explore all aspects of their experiences in a single session. To address this, follow-up interviews are conducted where necessary.

Despite these limitations, the study employs rigorous methodological and analytical techniques to ensure that findings are credible, insightful, and contribute meaningfully to the conversation on gender roles in parenting.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter explained the methodological framework for investigating gender roles in modern parenting, detailing the research design, population, Data collection, and analysis methodologies. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the research provides a robust, comparative examination of the experiences of SAHFs and WMs. The research will be presented in the next chapter's findings, presenting empirical insights into how gender role reversals shape parenting dynamics in urban societies.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

The results of the study are presented in this chapter on gender roles in modern parenting, focusing on the experiences of stay-at-home fathers (SAHFs) and working mothers (WMs) in urban societies. The findings are derived from data that is both qualitative and quantitative, providing a comparative analysis of how role reversals affect family dynamics, societal perceptions, and individual well-being. This chapter is structured into two main sections: quantitative findings, which include statistical analysis of survey responses, and qualitative findings, which explore in-depth themes from interviews and focus group discussions. The results are then discussed in relation to existing literature to provide a contextual understanding of modern parenting trends.

4.2. Quantitative Findings

4.2.1. Demographics of Participants

The survey was distributed to 500 participants, comprising 250 SAHFs and 250 WMs. The respondents were primarily from urban settings across different socioeconomic backgrounds. The age distribution of participants showed that 65% were between 30 and 45 years old, an age range commonly associated with active parenting. Among SAHFs, 80% were married, while 20% were either single, divorced, or widowed. Similarly, 85% of WMs were married, with the remaining 15% in other relationship statuses.

4.2.2. Economic and Occupational Factors

A key aspect of the study was to examine the financial implications of role reversal. The data revealed that among WMs, 60% held mid-to-senior management positions, while 40% were in junior or entry-level roles. Despite being the primary earners, 70% of WMs reported experiencing the “motherhood penalty,” where they faced reduced career growth opportunities after having children. In contrast, 45% of SAHFs had left professional jobs to take on full-time caregiving responsibilities, with 35% previously holding white-collar jobs and 10% from blue-collar industries.

Financial stress was a significant concern for SAHFs, with 55% reporting that they relied entirely on their partner’s income, and 30% supplementing household earnings through freelance or part-time work. In contrast, 80% of WMs expressed concerns about balancing financial security with family responsibilities, highlighting the persistent pressure on women to contribute both financially and emotionally to the household.

4.2.3. Societal Perceptions of Role Reversal

The survey results revealed significant societal challenges encountered by stay-at-home fathers (SAHFs) and working mothers (WMs) as they navigate role reversals in caregiving and professional responsibilities. Among SAHFs, 68% reported feeling stigmatized for assuming the role of primary caregivers, with 40% stating they had received negative comments from friends, family, or colleagues about their parenting choices. These comments often reflected traditional gender stereotypes, such as questioning their masculinity or ability to provide adequate care. For example, one respondent shared, “I’ve been told that I’m ‘less of a man’ because I’m not the breadwinner,” highlighting the persistence of outdated societal expectations.

Similarly, 57% of working mothers reported experiencing societal judgment for prioritizing their careers over full-time caregiving. Of these, 38% faced workplace bias, including assumptions that they were less committed to their jobs because of their maternal responsibilities. One participant noted, “My boss once implied that I wouldn’t be able to handle a major project because I have kids at home.” This bias not only undermines their professional capabilities but also perpetuates the stereotype that mothers should prioritize caregiving over career advancement.

The survey also explored perceptions of societal support for these non-traditional roles. Only 20% of SAHFs felt that there were adequate community resources tailored to their needs as stay-at-home fathers. Many expressed frustration at the lack of parenting groups, workshops, or social networks designed for fathers, with one respondent stating, “Most parenting classes are geared toward mothers, and I often feel out of place.” In contrast, 75% of WMs believed that existing support structures, such as workplace policies and community programs, were more focused on working mothers than working fathers. While this reflects progress in supporting women’s career aspirations, it also highlights a gap in addressing the needs of fathers who take on caregiving roles.

These findings underscore the enduring influence of traditional gender norms on societal perceptions. SAHFs often struggle to integrate into parenting communities dominated by mothers, while WMs face persistent biases in the workplace. The lack of inclusive support systems for both groups exacerbates these challenges, making it difficult for families to fully embrace role reversals without facing judgment or stigma. Addressing these issues requires a cultural shift toward recognizing and valuing diverse family structures, as well as the development of policies and resources that support both SAHFs and WMs in their respective roles.

4.2.4. Family and Emotional Well-being

The study explored the emotional impact of role reversal on participants’ mental health and family relationships. Among SAHFs, 45% reported experiencing loneliness and social isolation, while 60% struggled with self-esteem issues related to traditional masculinity expectations. In contrast, 65% of WMs reported high levels of stress and exhaustion from balancing career and family responsibilities, with 50% mentioning feelings of guilt for spending less time with their children.

Despite these challenges, 72% of SAHFs and 68% of WMs reported strong marital satisfaction, suggesting that when both partners accept their roles, the arrangement can lead to stable family dynamics. Interestingly, 80% of respondents believed that their parenting roles positively influenced their children, as children were exposed to more diverse caregiving and professional role models.

4.3. Qualitative Findings

4.3.1. Thematic Analysis from Interviews

The qualitative findings provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of SAHFs and WMs, highlighting common challenges, emotional responses, and coping mechanisms. Through thematic analysis of 30 interviews with SAHFs and 30 interviews with WMs, four major themes emerged.

Redefining Masculinity and Femininity

A recurring theme among SAHFs was the struggle to redefine masculinity. Many participants expressed that their role as caregivers often clashed with societal expectations of men as financial providers. One SAHF stated, "People assume I'm either unemployed or incapable of providing for my family. It's frustrating because caregiving is just as important as working."

Conversely, WMs faced challenges in asserting themselves in professional spaces. Many reported that they had to work harder than male colleagues to be taken seriously, with one participant stating, "As a mother, I constantly have to prove that I am just as competent and committed as my male counterparts." These findings align with previous research on gender role conflict, where individuals in non-traditional roles experience identity struggles (Doucet, 2018).

Social Isolation and Lack of Support

Many SAHFs reported difficulty finding social support networks, as parenting groups were predominantly designed for mothers. One participant noted, "When I take my child to playgroups, I'm often the only dad there. It can feel uncomfortable because people assume I don't know what I'm doing."

Similarly, WMs described feeling judged by other mothers who adhered to traditional caregiving roles. One working mother stated, "I've had people tell me that I should stay home with my children, as if my career is a selfish choice." These findings align with previous studies that highlight how social norms create barriers for non-traditional parents (Rehel, 2014).

Work-Life Balance and Family Dynamics

The interviews also revealed how role reversals impact household dynamics. Many SAHFs and WMs described their relationships as more egalitarian, where responsibilities were shared rather than dictated by gender. One participant stated, "My wife and I don't see our roles in terms of gender. We see them in terms of what works best for our family."

However, some challenges were noted, particularly regarding division of household labor. Several WMs mentioned that they still handled a significant portion of domestic work despite being the primary breadwinners, reinforcing Hochschild's (1989) concept of the "second shift."

4.4. Discussion of Findings

The study's findings reinforce existing literature on gender roles in parenting while highlighting emerging trends in urban societies. The persistence of gendered societal expectations remains a significant barrier for SAHFs, with many reporting stigma and social isolation (Doucet, 2018). Likewise, WMs continue to face workplace discrimination and unrealistic family expectations, a phenomenon well-documented in feminist labor studies (Budig & England, 2001).

However, the findings also indicate that role reversals can have positive impacts on family dynamics, as many SAHFs and WMs reported higher levels of marital satisfaction and effective co-parenting structures. This supports research suggesting that non-traditional family models can lead to more gender-equal parenting practices (Gerson, 2010).

Despite these benefits, the lack of institutional support remains a challenge. Both SAHFs and WMs indicated that existing social structures are not adequately designed to accommodate changing family dynamics. Policies supporting paternity leave, workplace flexibility, and childcare support are crucial for facilitating gender-inclusive parenting roles (Eydal & Rostgaard, 2014).

4.5. Conclusion

This Chapter presented both quantitative and qualitative findings of the study, highlighting the challenges and opportunities associated with gender role reversals in parenting. The findings suggest that while SAHFs and WMs are redefining traditional parenting roles, they continue to face societal resistance and institutional barriers. The next chapter will provide a comprehensive conclusion, summarizing key findings and offering policy recommendations for supporting non-traditional parenting models.

5. Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the study's major results, conclusions, and recommendations for policy, societal change, and future research. The study examined gender roles in modern parenting, specifically comparing the experiences of Stay-at-Home Fathers (SAHFs) and working mothers (WMs) in urban societies. The findings indicate that while role reversals challenge traditional gender norms, both SAHFs and WMs face significant societal stigma, workplace discrimination, and emotional struggles. Despite these challenges, the study also highlights positive family outcomes, such as improved father-child relationships and increased partnership equality. This chapter presents a synthesis of the findings, discusses their broader implications, outlines recommendations for various stakeholders, and suggests domains for further investigation.

5.2. A summary of Key Findings

The study's results revealed both challenges and benefits associated with role reversals in parenting. Quantitative and qualitative data showed that SAHFs and WMs face distinct yet interconnected experiences, shaped by economic realities, societal perceptions, and family dynamics.

5.2.1. Societal Perceptions and Gender Norms

The study found that 68% of SAHFs experienced societal stigma, with many reporting negative comments or skepticism regarding their caregiving abilities. Social expectations regarding masculinity and fatherhood remain deeply entrenched, making it difficult for men to be fully accepted as primary caregivers (Doucet, 2018). In contrast, 57% of WMs faced workplace bias, with employers often assuming that their family responsibilities would interfere with career progression. These findings align with previous studies that highlight gendered workplace discrimination (Correll et al., 2007).

5.2.2. Work-Life Balance and Emotional Well-being

The study revealed that 65% of WMs reported high levels of stress and exhaustion, primarily due to the double burden of career and domestic responsibilities. Hochschild's (1989) notion of the "second shift" is still applicable, as many WMs continue to manage household duties despite their full-time employment.

For SAHFs, 45% reported experiencing loneliness and social isolation, reflecting the absence of support networks tailored to Stay-at-home fathers. The lack of male-oriented parenting communities and resources exacerbates feelings of marginalization among fathers who choose caregiving over traditional employment (Rehel, 2014).

5.2.3. Economic Implications of Role Reversal

The study found that 70% of WMs experienced the "motherhood penalty," where career opportunities were restricted post-parenthood. In contrast, 55% of SAHFs relied entirely on their partner's income, raising concerns about financial security and long-term career re-entry. The economic dimension of role reversal remains significant, as men stepping out of the workforce face difficulty in regaining employment due to prolonged caregiving gaps (Gerson, 2010).

5.2.4. Family Dynamics and Parenting Outcomes

Despite the challenges, 72% of SAHFs and 68% of WMs reported high levels of marital satisfaction, suggesting that role reversals can lead to more egalitarian relationships. Moreover, 80% of participants believed that their children benefited from non-traditional caregiving arrangements, as it exposed them to diverse gender roles and caregiving models. These findings support prior research indicating that involved fatherhood leads to positive child development outcomes (Lamb, 2010).

5.3. Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that while urban societies are gradually shifting towards gender-inclusive parenting, traditional norms still pose significant challenges. Stay-at-home dads and working moms disrupt conventional gender roles, yet they continue to face social scrutiny, economic limitations, and psychological strain. The persistence of gender stereotypes in parenting has implications for family structures, workplace policies, and social support systems.

Despite these obstacles, the study highlights the potential benefits of role reversals, including stronger father-child relationships, increased gender equality in household decision-making, and a more balanced distribution of caregiving responsibilities. However, these benefits are contingent on social acceptance, economic support, and institutional changes that facilitate gender-inclusive parenting practices.

5.4. Policy and Practical Recommendations

Addressing the challenges faced by SAHFs and WMs requires multi-level interventions, including policy changes, workplace reforms, and societal shifts in gender norms.

5.4.1. Workplace Policies for Working Mothers and Stay-at-Home Fathers

Employers play a crucial role in mitigating workplace discrimination against working mothers. Organizations should implement gender-neutral parental leave policies, allowing both mothers and fathers to take time off for childcare without career penalties (Budig & England, 2001). Providing flexible work arrangements, such as remote work or part-time options, can help WMs balance career and family more effectively.

For SAHFs, workplace policies should facilitate career re-entry programs for fathers who choose to return to work after extended caregiving periods. This can include upskilling programs, mentorship initiatives, and networking opportunities to bridge employment gaps.

5.4.2. Social Support and Community Integration

Governments and community organizations should establish parenting groups that are inclusive of fathers, rather than centering resources exclusively around mothers. Male-centered support networks can help SAHFs combat social isolation and normalize father-led caregiving (Kane, 2016). Similarly, public campaigns should promote gender-inclusive parenting, challenging traditional stereotypes about caregiving roles.

5.4.3. Addressing Economic Barriers

Financial instability remains a key concern for SAHFs, as many lack income-generating opportunities after leaving the workforce. Policies should encourage financial literacy programs for stay-at-home parents, equipping them with the skills needed for entrepreneurship or remote employment. Additionally, tax incentives should be introduced for dual-income and single-income families, reducing the financial burden on households that adopt non-traditional caregiving structures (Gerson, 2010).

5.4.4. Cultural and Educational Initiatives

Long-term societal change requires educational interventions that challenge gendered assumptions about parenting. School curricula should include discussions on shared parenting responsibilities, helping future generations embrace gender-equal caregiving roles. Media representation also plays a crucial role; mainstream portrayals of nurturing fathers and career-driven mothers can shift public perceptions and reduce stigma surrounding role reversals (Connell, 2005).

5.5. Recommendations for Future Research

- While this study gives useful insights, further research is required to investigate different elements of gender roles in parenting. Future studies should examine:
- The long-term impact of role reversals on children's development and career choices, particularly with gender identity formation.
- Cross-cultural comparisons of SAHFs and WMs, analyzing how role reversals manifest in different socioeconomic and cultural contexts.
- The psychological well-being of SAHFs and WMs over extended periods, assessing how role reversals affect mental health, self-esteem, and identity formation.

- The role of social media and digital communities in providing support for non-traditional parents, examining how online networks shape parenting experiences.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the evolving nature of gender roles in modern parenting, focusing on the challenges and benefits of role reversals among SAHFs and WMs. While progress has been made in challenging traditional norms, structural and societal barriers persist, affecting economic stability, social inclusion, and workplace equity. Moving forward, policy changes, social support mechanisms, and cultural shifts are essential for fostering an environment where gender-equal parenting is fully recognized and supported. By acknowledging the complexities of modern parenting, Society may progress to a future where caregiving responsibilities are determined by choice rather than gender, ensuring a more inclusive and equitable framework for families.

Compliance with ethical standards

Statement of ethical approval

Ethical approval was obtained

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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