Conceptions of Parenthood and Parental Satisfaction among Filipino Families with Adult Children

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Abstract: While parenting is seen as a practice of raising children, parenthood, on the other hand, is seen as a social role – the expectations as set by culture and society. The expectations placed by society on parents' roles are said to be "converging". Fathers, although still primarily expected to provide for their family, are becoming more engaged in child-care; while mothers' presence in the workforce is now more pronounced. The current study explores Filipino families' perceptions, views, and expectations of parenthood and parental satisfaction, building on the work of previous studies. Using snowball sampling, each of the researchers recruited two families each. A total of ten fathers, ten mothers and six sons and four daughters participated in the study. The parents' age ranged from 40 to 67 (Mother's age M = 51.8 years, SD = 7.65; Fathers' age M = 53.3 years, SD = 7.82). Utilizing an exploratory, qualitative research design, the participants were interviewed using in-depth, open-ended, semi-structured interviews which were conducted online via video conferencing platforms (Zoom, Google Meet) and face-to-face interviews. The inductive thematic analysis of the families' responses resulted in five key themes: 1) Parenthood as shared responsibility; 2) The traditional and converging roles of parents; 3) Children as sources of parent's satisfaction, 4) The parent-child relationship; and 5) Present and emerging concerns. This study demonstrated that although parents' roles are converging, and that the roles of men and women are now changing, traditional roles of parents in the family are still largely the norm. Finally, parents view their children as extensions of themselves. Their satisfaction is anchored on their children's achievement and success.

Key Words: Parenthood; Parental satisfaction; Parent-child relationships; Family

1. INTRODUCTION

Some gender convergence has been observed between the roles mothers and fathers play in the family (Pew Research Center, 2013). Fathers were now more engaged in housework and child-care while more mothers were in the workforce. The increased participation of women in the workforce has changed the amount of time mothers spend with child-care, however, mothers still spend more time with their children than fathers (PRC, 2013). These evolving and converging roles may impact parents' overall satisfaction, family dynamics, and in how parenthood is conceptualized.

The varied experiences of parents from when their children were just toddlers through adolescence and adulthood is also an important area of research interest. Parent-child relationships are said to go through several stages, from the dependent nature of the parent-infant/child relationship until the child becomes an adult and are increasingly more independent (Kirby & Hoang, 2018). The quality of the parent-child relationship may influence the child's experiences and the parent's well-being (Kirby and Hoang, 2018). Over time, patterns of declining parent-child conflict, acceptance, and sibling negativity were observed among families with adult children

(Whiteman, et al., 2010).

Similarly, the changing structure and composition of Filipino families (traditional vs. non-traditional) necessitates the need to do more research on this topic. This change in structure among families around the globe have been brought about by the changing role of women and mothers, economic capability of parents, feminist movements, opportunities for career advancement, and call for gender equality, among others (Polinova, 2018, Tarroja, 2010). Since society attaches great importance to parenthood, it becomes more difficult for parents to meet these expectations. The present study builds in the work of past researchers by examining Filipino families' conceptions of parenthood and parental satisfaction among families with adult children. It aims to examine the views, perceptions, expectations, parental satisfaction and relationships among parents and their adult children.

Conceptions of Parenthood

A distinction is made between parenthood (social role) and parenting (raising a child) (Polivanova, 2018). While parenting is seen as a practice of raising children (upbringing), parenthood, on the other hand, is seen as a social role – the expectations as set by culture and society. Consistently, parenthood is viewed as a psychosocial construct rather than biological (Leon, 2002). The conceptualization and problematization of parenthood were said to have evolved due to the changing landscape of society, particularly, the rise of feminist criticism and the changing roles of women in the family (Polivanova, 2018). In contrast, Urbano et al. (2018) conceptualized parenthood as the arrival of children, the start of which is the birth of the first child. In the present study, parenthood is conceptualized as a role, rather than a skill, or a style.

Parental Satisfaction

Earlier conceptualizations of parental satisfaction refer to it as the quality of affect associated with parenting or the degree of satisfaction derived from the role (Johnston & Mash, 1989). Parental satisfaction is perceived to be the quality of parent-child relationship (Yoo, 2020). It is distinguished from marital satisfaction which pertains to marriage quality, although the two have been found to be positively correlated (Yoo, 2020).

The Filipino Family

The Filipino family is known to be closely knitted. Even when children become adults, most would still stay home with their parents. Research suggests that the traditional Filipino family tends to be characterized by strong cohesion among immediate and extended family members (Garcia & de Guzman,

2020). Low-income Filipino parents also tend to value education as it is seen as a tool to escape poverty and providing for the child's basic needs is considered a fundamental parental obligation (Garcia & de Guzman, 2020). Filipino parents show their involvement and support to their children's education by helping them in their schoolwork, participating in school-led activities, motivating them, and punishing them for undesirable outcomes (Garcia & de Guzman, 2020).

Research Objectives

This study explored the conceptions of parenthood and parental satisfaction among Filipino parents. It attempted to answer the following questions: 1) What are the beliefs, views and expectations of parents and their children on parenthood? 2) What are the parents' perceptions of parental satisfaction? 3) How do parents relate with their children during the different developmental stages? and 4) How is parenthood differentially experienced by the mothers and fathers?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The present study is exploratory and qualitative in nature. Since the main objective of this study is to explore the range and detail of the experiences relating to parenthood and parental satisfaction in the Filipino context, the use of exploratory approach is appropriate. The research design is multiple case study and utilized in-depth, open-ended, semi-structured interviews to elicit qualitative data on beliefs, values and perceptions on parenthood, parental satisfaction, and family demographics.

2.2 Research Instrument

Two interview guides with open-ended questions were constructed for this study. The interview guide for parents has four parts: 1) transition to parenthood, 2) going into the present, 3) here and now, and 4) looking forward to the future and looking back. The questions focused on the families' experiences on parenthood and parental satisfaction. Sample questions include, "Before getting married and starting a family what were your initial perceptions, views and expectations on parenthood?", "Were your belief, views and expectations on parenthood changed and in what way?" and "How do you think your experience as a mother/father differs with that of your wife/husband?"

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The interview guide for the adult children also consisted of four parts: 1) growing up years (warm-up questions), 2) conceptions of parenthood, 3) relationship with parents, and 4) looking forward to the future. The questions were aimed at exploring the perspectives and point of view of the adult children on the roles of parents. Sample questions include: "How is your relationship with your mother/father?" and "What were your beliefs and views on the roles of parents?"

2.3 Participants

Using snowball sampling, each of the researchers recruited two families each, with the following criteria: (1) the families should be composed of a mother, father, a son and or a daughter, or both sons and daughter; (2) the children should be 18-35 years old at the time of the interviews; (3) both parents and child(ren) are living together in the same household. A total of 10 fathers, 10 mothers and 6 sons and 4 daughters participated in the study. The parents' age ranged from 40 to 67 (Mother's age M = 51.8 years, SD = 7.65; Fathers' age M = 53.3 years, SD = 7.82). The family members have given consent to participate in the study and all were informed of their right to withdraw at any point during the interviews. No remuneration was given for their participation. Participants are in Manila, Nueva Ecija, and Iloilo province.

2.4 Procedure

Nine interview sessions were conducted online through video conferencing platforms (Zoom, Google Meet). One interview session was conducted face-to-face. Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) regulations, such as social distancing and wearing of masks were observed for the physical interview. The parents were interviewed either individually or together. The adult children were all interviewed individually. The interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours per session. Written and verbal (audio recorded) consent were obtained from the families. The nature and purpose of the study, nature of their participation, and how the data might be used were explained to participants prior to the interview proper.

The interview guide focused on the families' views, beliefs, expectations, and experiences on parenthood and parental satisfaction. The interviews were conducted in English, a mix of Filipino and English, and a mix of English and Hiligaynon. Permission to record the interviews were obtained from all the family members. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. A pseudonym for each member of the family was used, and other measures to ensure anonymity and confidentiality were conducted. The transcripts of the interviews were coded and organized into themes.

2.5 Data analysis

Responses were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The six-phase approach involved the following procedure: (1) familiarizing with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Five researchers conducted the coding. All transcripts were read, reread and recoded by at least two researchers to establish agreement and member validation. Participant validation was also conducted with one family.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The inductive thematic analysis of the families' responses resulted in five key themes: 1) Parenthood as shared responsibility; 2) The traditional and converging roles of parents; 3) Children as sources of parents' satisfaction; 4) The changing parent-child relationship; and 5) Present and emerging concerns.

Parenthood as shared responsibility

The first theme depicts the nature of parenthood as experienced by the participants. Parents receive many types of support from the other spouse, and it is emphasized and evident in their responses. Fathers, for instance, receive moral, spiritual, and emotional support from their wives, while mothers acknowledge the hardships and sacrifices their husbands do in providing for the needs of the family. All mothers were viewed as "very supportive" by their husbands, as all fathers were viewed as "good providers". Apart from taking care of their children, mothers also take care of their husband's needs, oversee budgeting and managing resources to make both ends meet, and household chores. Fathers, on the other hand, provide for their

children's education, clothing, food, and pay for the bills and other expenses. The family is considered a team, where efforts from all parties are encouraged and deemed crucial in the achievement of goals.

On deciding the number of children

Some families decided to just have two to three children because "life is hard". Despite this, parents believe that "children are gifts from God". Even when parents have decided to have just a few children, when a child comes, they would welcome them. There is no observed preference for either gender. However, one mother preferred not to have a daughter, as she would not want her daughter to experience the same difficulties she had experienced growing up in a poor family.

Parents not only share responsibilities at home, but the decision to get married and start a family is also shared by both spouses. Where others marry for love, some marry because they have achieved a sense of security. Age is also a factor in deciding to start a family.

Life-changing decisions

Almost all fathers mentioned that having a family changed them. They became more responsible, mature, and flexible. They are more responsible in handling money, decided to cut their vices, and became less carefree. They would rather buy bread for their children than to spend money on "useless things".

Marriage is viewed as both an easy and a difficult decision. When soon-to-be husband and wife are financially secure (or in the case of the father participants, merely holding a job), marriage is an easy decision. When both are not yet stable, marriage becomes a difficult decision to make. However, for some, marriage is something that must be done due to certain circumstances (wife already pregnant; to avoid problems in children's last name in school records).

Traditional and converging roles of parents

Traditional roles

While fathers are still the primary family providers, mothers are largely responsible for their children and the home. Parents want the best for their children, to give them a bright future, to be able to provide for their needs, and for them not to experience the hardships that their parents have experienced in the past. Since fathers are primarily providers, the pressure for them to find work is immense: *"There are times that there is no food on the table, and I have no work. So occasionally, I would work in construction. I really tried to find money to feed my family, give them clothes, send them to school so they can have good character and behavior." (Father 10).* The mothers on the other hand are home managers: cooks food, cleans house, takes care of the children, does laundry and other house chores. Mothers also feel more stressed when their children get sick. Both parents and children regard the roles of parents as not just providing financially (giving money) for the families' everyday needs. Parents are also teachers, role models, and providers of emotional and spiritual support. Parents provide guidance and shape children's character.

Converging roles

Consistent with recent trends, parent roles are converging, and this can be traced to the changing roles of men and women in society. Fathers are engaging more in household chores and child-care, while mothers are working/ holding jobs. Fathers are stepping in as caretakers and home managers when mothers are away. Fathers also acknowledge that the mothers cannot do everything alone, and they have to share the responsibility of maintaining the home.

Although parent roles are converging, and that the roles of men and women are now changing, traditional roles are still largely the norm. Working mothers are still expected to be the primary caretakers and homemakers, and fathers' chief responsibility is to provide for the family. This perception of gender roles in parenthood is shared by the children.

Children as sources of parents' satisfaction

Children as extensions of themselves

Parents' satisfaction on their roles as parents are anchored on their children's outcomes. Children's achievements bring happiness, pride, and satisfaction: *Syempre yung matapos yung mga anak mo, yun ang pinakarewarding sa lahat. Yun ang importante, yun. Kahit wala na bagay bagay na yan. Matapos lang yung mga anak mo masayang masaya na. Yun ang number 1 saken.* (Mother 7). Their children's achievements are like their own; their children's success is also their success. Knowing that they have raised good citizens (mabuting tao) gives

them great joy. Having obedient, respectful children is a "blessing itself". Parents also derive satisfaction from knowing that their children are doing well, free from sickness, and happy.

Completing an education, finding a stable job

All parents expect their children to complete a college education, regardless of socio-economic status, and gender of the child. This is consistent with the results from Licuanan's (1979) study where graduating from college is a set goal for both male and female children. They believe that their children will have more job opportunities if they are college graduates and that there is a greater likelihood that they would end up with secure occupations in the future. Even if parents are limited in terms of finances, they still strived to send their children to school. They expect their children to have jobs and build their own family. Parents want their children to be financially independent regardless of gender. One mother encouraged her daughters to pursue postgraduate studies and to build their careers even if they were to have their own families.

To do good

Parents expect their children to be "good persons". Parents define a good person as respectful, obedient, and kind to others. They value being God-fearing, spiritual, respectful, and kind to others as more important than being intelligent.

The parent-child relationship

The nature of the parent-child relationship has evolved from dependence to independence. When the children were younger, parents focused on providing for their needs – food, clothing, shelter, education. For parents with children who are already working, the relationship is characterized as providing emotional and spiritual support. When the children were smaller, they were more dependent on their parents. Growing up, their children became more independent. They can now think on their own. Children are also given more freedom at this stage.

Close relationship with children

All parents maintain that they have a good relationship with their children. Parents mentioned that they are close with their children and treat them now as friends but that there is a limitation because they are still their parents. When children become disrespectful, parents would use their authority to discipline them. Most parents mentioned that they feel the same affection towards their children, but it is now expressed differently. Parents reported that they used to show affection (hugging, kissing) when they were younger, but rarely do this now because their children feel awkward. There is less physical contact.

Emotional involvement

The mother-child relationship is characterized by warmth, closeness, indulgence, and strictness. While fathers are viewed as disciplinarian, sometimes distant, short-tempered, relaxed, open-minded, joker, and "always busy". Mothers are more emotionally involved than fathers. They get affected when their children get sick, or when they feel sad. Mothers worry for their children and both parents accept this as "natural" for mothers. Mothers also regret that they spend too little time now with their children because they spend more time with friends or on social media while working mothers regret that they spend little time with their children because of work.

Mothers also are more involved in the education of their children in terms of school-related activities, helping them in assignments and projects, and monitoring their progress. Fathers, on the other hand, relate with their children through discipline. Fathers acknowledge that girls would relate to their mother more because they have the same gender. Fathers also fear that their children would become rebellious if they are too authoritarian.

Closer to mothers

Most children mentioned that they are closer to their mothers than their father because they are around them more often. All parents maintained that they do not have favorites. However, one mother said that because her second son was sickly when he was young, she spent more attention on him. Parents feel that it is important to maintain good relationships with their children so they would not find happiness elsewhere.

Present and emerging concerns of aging parents

The impact of the pandemic is greatly felt by the families. Most of the parents are struggling financially due to loss of stable jobs (*Medyo kinakapos na, pandemic e, wala ng delihensya, ang hirap kumita.* – Father 7) and are concerned with their family's health (*Ah ngayon yung panahon ngayon*

uneasy talaga, biro mo pandemic ngayon, hindi mo din masigurado, hindi mo din alam kung tatamaan ka ba o hindi e. – Father 7). Parents are also worried about their children's health and safety, their own health, getting sick, old age, and impending death. They are also concerned about their children's future (*"I'm afraid to die because we are not stable. I'm thinking about my daughter...."* – Mother, Family 4).

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored Filipino families' views, beliefs, and perceptions of parenthood and parental satisfaction. Inductive thematic analysis revealed that parenthood as conceptualized by Filipino parents revolve around five themes that centers on shared responsibility, parents' and children's views of parenthood, parental satisfaction as dependent on children's outcomes, the changing parent-child relationship, and their present and emerging concerns.

Additionally, the value that parents place on education is highly evident. For parents in the low and middle SES, education is the only inheritance they can leave them with. Parents believe that education can help them secure better opportunities in life.

No gender-related expectations for children were observed. Consistent with previous research, sons and daughters are both expected to finish their education, be obedient, respectful, and good persons (Licuanan & Gonzalez, 1976). Gender stereotypes on the parents' preferred occupation for their children was also not observed. Children can take on any job/ profession they wish to have. This study demonstrated that although parents' roles are converging, and that the roles of men and women are now changing, traditional roles of parents in the family are still largely the norm. Finally, parents view their children as extensions of themselves. Their satisfaction is anchored on their children's achievement and success.

Sampling bias limits the results of the study as only nuclear families were included, except for one family whose wife's siblings live together with them. This limitation is acknowledged and invites future investigations to explore conceptions of parenthood and parental satisfaction in single-parent households, extended, blended, or dysfunctional families.

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