

ABSTRACT

There is an increase in dual earner families globally and in South Africa. This increase is attributed to mothers' increased participation in the labour force. Unlike a nuclear single earner family where the provider role is fulfilled by the father, in a dual earner family both parents work to earn an income. Therefore the provider role is fulfilled by both mother and father. From this observation this study contends that the dual earner family phenomenon bears significance on the way fathers' experience fatherhood in a family where the other parent also fulfils the provider role. This contention is based on the long-established concept that being a good provider is the epitome of fatherhood.

The aim of this study was to explore young fathers' subjective experiences of fatherhood in a family where both parents work to earn an income. The objectives of this study were to explore young fathers' objective experiences of fatherhood in dual earner families from Johannesburg metropolitan. To explore how young fathers experience being a father in a dual earner family. To explore how young fathers experience their relationships with their partners in a dual earner family.

An interpretivist and constructionist research paradigm was adopted in order to meet the aims and objectives of this study. These research paradigms were complemented by implementing a qualitative research approach and a phenomenological research design. The research methods that were employed were in line with the research paradigm, research approach and research design of the study. The participants were sampled using a non-probability sampling technique such as purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The actual sample included four fathers from dual earner families who were between the ages of 20 and 30 years old. All four participants met the following criteria:

- Living within the regions of the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan;

- Formally employed full-time and received an income from salaries;
- Each of the participants was living with the mother of their child or children;
- Their partners were also formally employed full-time and received an income from a salary;
- The fathers had a child or children who were younger than seven years old.

Data was collected from the participants using semi-structured interviews. Interview data was analysed using interpretive phenomenological analysis. Ethics clearance was issued by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) at the University of the Witwatersrand. The researcher had consent from each participant. The researcher ensured honesty and trust through privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of the participants.

For fathers in dual earner families, it was found that it was easier to fulfill provider role expectations. This was because in this instance fathers had financial assistance from their partner's income. This in turn made it easier for fathers to meet provider role expectations in their families. It was also found that there was an increase in father involvement in childcare and housework. It was also found that the increased contributions to childcare and housework were not equal to mother's contributions in these areas.

In regard to the finding that for father's in dual earner families it was easier for them to fulfill provider role expectations it is contended that if a father is less preoccupied with meeting the provider role expectations of fatherhood, then he is more likely to explore other ways of relating to his children and family such as increased father involvement in childcare and housework. It is also contended that in this instance their partners became assistants to fathers reaching the hegemonic masculine ideals of fatherhood, such as being a sole breadwinner. As such, fathers in this situation were complicit in reproducing hegemonic masculine ideals, by enforcing discrete forms of gendered power to create conditions around

their partner's employment which were in favour of the father's needs. In regard to the finding that fathers increased their involvement in childcare and housework in the household, it is contended that a father's increased involvement in housework and childcare can be attributed to endorsing egalitarian gender ideologies.

It is concluded that the experience of fatherhood in a dual earner family is fluid. This means that the construction of fatherhood is in constant movement and it is always being deconstructed and reconstructed in relation to money. The emphasis on money in dual earner families is what moderates the movement of the constructions of fatherhood.

In light of the conclusion of this study, it is recommended that further research into the experience of fatherhood in dual earner families, should place emphasis on studying the nature of father's and mother's income from employment. This may include detailing information such working hours, level of salary, type of employment, level of employment and educational attainment. It is suggested that this will provide a better context of money in dual earner families from which to understand and analyse the experience of fatherhood. It is also recommended that further research into the experience of fatherhood in dual earner families should prioritise collecting data from a sample of fathers in dual earner families from low income and high income groups. This recommended is based on this study's conclusion that money is what moderates the experience of fatherhood in dual earner families. It can therefore be hypothesised that the experience of fatherhood in dual earner families from those income groups will be markedly different to what was found from the middle class income group in this study.

Key words: dual earner, families, fatherhood, father involvement, father presence,