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Employed fathers' experience of fatherhood and engagement in parenting practices

Damonze, Stacey

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ABSTRACT

Current literature on the experience of fatherhood in South Africa often portrays fathers as uninvolved and seldom having caring relationships with their children. Much research has focused on father absenteeism which is pervasive within the South Africa context. However, since 2012 there has been an increase in research that focuses more on involved fathers and how they engage in caregiving for their children. This research study explores how employed fathers experience fatherhood and their engagement in parenting practices. A purposive and snowball sampling strategy was employed to recruit participants. Eight South African fathers participated in the study and were interviewed using semi-structured interviews that focused on their experience of fatherhood and how they experienced engaging in caregiving practices for their children. A thematic content analysis guided through an interpretive phenomenological approach was used to analyse the content of the interviews. All the participants were employed, working fathers employed and the findings indicate their engagement, commitment, and their defined roles in care giving for their children. Surprisingly it was also indicated that to some extent the participants experienced emotional engagement with their first born child. The gender and age of their children also seemed to influence how they determine what role they play in their children's lives. This research study contributes real-world insights into how South African fathers experience fatherhood and how they perceive practices of care for their children, as well as how they choose to engage in such practices for them.

Keywords: Fatherhood, parenting practices, caregiving practices, work-related commitments