

Women Perceived Practices of Mothering in a Socially Changing Qatari Society

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Abstract: This study proposes to examine the ways in which motherhood as a social phenomenon is constructed within Qatari culture. Understanding the role of mothers in society as well as the mothering practices could lead to understanding how society is changing in Qatar and Gulf nations. This research investigated the role of mothers in parenting their children. The study used a mixed method approach in which a survey questionnaire addressed the parenting of children at a geographic position whether in the house, playing outside or other geographic areas. The respondents to the survey came to n = 263. The research also interviewed n = 30 mothers the role the mother has in supporting their children. The findings, report that mothers doing most of parenting as putting children to bed, feeding, clothing and spending quality time. Fathers are taking a very passive role in parenting and their role in parenting in Qatar is absent. Qatar women seem to take on most of the tasks of mothering themselves with no particular geographic position. While, many of the mothers do have support rather from the family and extended family, they are now relying on domestic help. Further studies, particularly of an ethnographic nature, can provide more complex pictures of what the lives of young children are like in Qatar and the roles that mothers play.

Key words: Mothering, parenting, geographies, fathering, children, society, Arab gulf, Qatar

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 30 years, there has been significant interest within the field of critical childhood and women's studies to better understand the concept of motherhood (O'Reilly and Bizzini, 2009). Particularly, as it relates to mothering young children, research has consistently demonstrated that maternal behavior during the early years of a child's life is critical to a child's development (Yeung *et al.*, 2002; Cooksey, 1997). This scholarship has tended to coalesce around three broad areas: diverse experiences of motherhood including studies of adoptive mothers, single mothers and the concept of motherhood in various cultures (Ruddick, 1989; Collins, 2005). understandings of how the social and political meanings of mothering influence thinking about citizenship, responsibility and human development (Zaatari, 2006; Norat, 2008; Watson-Franke, 2004) and analysis of the institutions of motherhood, created within particular ideologies and histories that have impacted the lives of women (Stevens, 2004; Ginn, 2004; Rich, 1995). Together these bodies of knowledge have directed attention towards the idea that motherhood is not a set of

instinctive "natural" behaviors that all women are born knowing (Glenn, 1994). On the contrary as O'Reilly and Bizzini (2009) argue, "it is specifically and fundamentally a cultural practice that is continuously redesigned in response to changing economic and social factors". For example, Zaatari (2006) has commented on how Palestinian women have used the centrality of their roles as mothers as a platform from which to practice social and political activism. Research from African-American perspectives has challenged the idea that a child can only be "mothered" by one individual, suggesting that in some cultures, children are in fact mothered by their "bloodmothers, other mothers and women-centered networks" (Collins, 2005).

Commenting on current perspectives on motherhood, Hays (1994) has argued that as the numbers of mothers entering the workforce continues to rise, distinct tensions have emerged between the classical separation of life at home (mostly ruled by women, particularly as mothers) and life in the world (dominated by men where motherhood rarely figured as an issue). In almost all Arab countries, for example, large numbers of women, many of whom are mothers are seeking employment and are

encouraged to do so have access to state provided education and resources (Sadiqi and Ennaji, 2006; Neal *et al.*, 2005). Despite, these increased opportunities, Hays believes that it is only in current times that women, particularly in the West have been subjected to the ideology of “intense mothering” which suggests that mothers must locate themselves primarily and supremely as mothers before they are anything else. At the same time however, recent scholarship has tried to “rupture the static vision” of the universal, idealized, self sacrificing, good intense mother by complicating this picture with accounts of actual mothers in actual spaces, living the daily life of mothers in specific social and geographical contexts (Hardy and Wiedmer, 2005), particularly in light of reconfigurations of gendered spaces (Sadiqi and Ennaji, 2006). Current research in non-Western contexts has also shown that what are considered pivotal practices in the enactment of mothering, such as feeding, playing with their children, talking to children and toilet-training, vary widely from culture to culture (Viruru, 2001) and are often connected to deeply embed cultural practices. The study of motherhood thus is at a point where new knowledge is constantly being sought. As Arendell (2000) has said, questions such as how do women feel about being mothers; what meanings they ascribe to mothering and how does mothering complement or conflict with other identities remain unanswered, particularly within non-Western contexts. This study will attempt to answer some of these questions, from the point of view of women in Qatar. It is noticeable that within current discourses about motherhood, voices from the Middle East are conspicuously absent. This study, therefore, attempts to rectify this omission. In summary, it can be said that despite the multiplicity of perspectives on motherhood, one fact seems to emerge clearly: what mothers do is important. Therefore, any society that is invested in moving forward must look to the quality of its’ mothering practices to achieve its’ goals.

This study builds upon the results of previous research conducted on parent involvement in young children’s literacy in Qatar (Viruru, 2001). The latter study had the qualitative data that informed the quantitative approach on the kinds of parent involvement and interactions with young children, several issues emerged that need to be explored further. For example, data indicated that high numbers of parents employ nannies and/or domestic servants and those older siblings are heavily involved in the process of raising children. What the data did not indicate is what mothering tasks are carried out by other caregivers and what do mothers consider their own responsibilities. Data about the kind of conversations that parents had with their children yielded

wide ranging responses being reported; similarly, although parents indicated that they employed a wide range of electronic media to support their child-rearing practices, how these media were used was not clear. For example, although many parents (>75% of the surveyed sample) said that they bought electronic computer games and allowed their children to watch television, it is not known how these activities take place: for example, do mothers watch television or play games with their children? What role do the nannies play in facilitating these interactions? Many unanswered questions thus remain about mother-child interactions in Qatar.

The role of mothers in the development of their children is critical (Cooksey, 1997; Verhoeven *et al.*, 2010; Rullo and Musatti, 2005). As Qatar moves towards an era where the quality of its human resources is what will determine its success in the global economy, understanding the processes of human development in the country is of more importance than ever before. Furthermore, many Qataris who enter the workforce currently are mothers themselves which further deepens the need to understand issues that mothers face in modern day Qatar.

Because of a gender segregated society in Qatar like other Arab Gulf countries, geographically it is imperative where the family engages in interactions with their children. With the growth of the nuclear family, there has been a gradual breakup of the extended family and greater dependence of domestic help in the home (Khalifa and Nasser, 2015). Subsequently, more than often children are less likely to engage in family interactions, especially with the father who is generally distant geographically because of the nature of the segregated gender roles, structures and responsibilities in Qatari society. This basic context of this study draws on this societal structure to understand the mother’s roles of Qatari society. In addition, mothers are more and more relying on “instrumental” mothering which “others” care for their children. Questions about the impact on children are quite perennial but also mothers own practices reflect the impact and change of social structures of the traditional mothering of home nurturing and raising of children.

As indicated previously, although there has been increasing interest in women’s issues in the Middle East, there are very few, if any, studies of mothering practices in the Persian Gulf in particular. This is a significant omission in the literature and this study would fill that gap.

Objectives and significance: In light of the above perspectives, this study proposes to focus on the following research questions:

- What do Qatari mothers believe are their main responsibilities towards their children? Are there certain pivotal practices that mothers consider essential to mothering?
- How do mothers of young children in Qatar negotiate mothering practices across their working and private lives?
- Where geographically does the work of mothering young children take place both within the home and the outside world?
- What are the mothers' perspective on the role of the father?
- What about the role of the father?
- Did you breastfeed your children and for how long?
- How do you balance your work and family commitments?
- If you had the opportunity to change what mothers do now, what changes would you make and why?
- How do you compare being a mother in Qatar to motherhood in the West?
- Among your responsibilities as a mother which do you think are the most important? Why?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a mixed methods research methods (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Miles and Huberman, 1984). Specifically, the study is based on the QUAN-QUAL Model where there is an equal emphasis on quantitative and qualitative data that allow us to analyze data from two different perspectives (Gay *et al.*, 2009).

Within the QUAN-QUAL Model, there has been an approach which we used in this study which plans the qualitative and quantitative analyses at the same time, it allows researchers to report descriptive statistics like means, standard deviation, percentages alongside qualitative findings such as questionnaire and interview data to create a "descriptive, narrative synthesis" (Gay *et al.*, 2009). Specific methods to be employed are described below.

Qualitative methods are used for answering what is known as "why" questions that attempt to uncover the meanings that people attach to practices. As was mentioned in the conceptual framework of literature, there is very little research on understandings of practices of motherhood in Qatar. This study is, therefore, exploratory in nature, attempting to build theory from the data. We used qualitative interviews where participants are asked to provide insight emotions and feelings about their roles as mothers. The researchers used a number of questions to lead the interviews. The responses were scripted with comments and explanations that the mothers make about their lives with their children. The main questions went as follows:

- Tell me about your children (for example how many do you have/gender/what are they like)
- How would you describe your relationship with your children?
- If you do have someone helping you, how do you divide the responsibilities between you and your helpers?

In addition to the interviews, we developed a questionnaire to understand the mothering practices within a geographic location. This included child-rearing practice questions and geographies of mothers engaged in child rearing practices as well as tasks they performed for their children. The survey also elicited socio-demographic information and will yield mostly quantitative data. The response to the questions were rated on a Likert scale from "1" = Never to "4" = Often. The instruments went through a cyclic review by bilingual mothers $n = 3$ who made reiterative corrections until they reached agreement on the questions. The questionnaires were setup on SurveyMonkey or distributed by hand to randomly selected sample. The pencil and paper response data was entered by hand and merged with the SurveyMonkey data.

Sample: A survey was administered to a random sample of women in Qatar. The women were informed through social network groups and circles in a combination with paper and pen surveys. The sample was considered to be opportunistically selected. The questionnaire was placed on SurveyMonkey and women were told to respond to the questions. There were approximately 280 Qatari women who respond to the questionnaire: the first part of completion of the surveys and following preliminary data analysis, in-depth qualitative interviews were collected from a sub-group of approximately 30 women. The sample was made of Qatari women having lived in Qatar all their lives. The average age was 35, 82% married, 4.6% divorced, 6% widowed, approximately 60% had completed or were obtaining an undergraduate degree and 20% had finished high school. Large families were common 37.7% of the women had 4 children living with them, 15% had 6 children living with them.

RESULTS

The analysis of the findings was drawn from the qualitative and quantitative measures taken at the same

time. Most of the interviews were conducted in English; others were conducted in Arabic with a trained translator who would perform immediate translations. During the interviews as some questions were somewhat sensitive in nature, respondents had the freedom not to answer particular questions and often chose not to do so. While, interview questions were used to guide the discussions with women (mothers) during the interviews, these questions led to discussions that not necessarily reflected the questions at the outset of the interviews but converged on specific themes.

The first findings reflected women concerned for their children. Women were stressed that were less likely to spend time and care for their children. Another strong theme that emerged from the interview data was that women often felt overwhelmed by all their responsibilities. Their comments included statements such as:

- I feel lost with my work. I don't have enough time to work, go back home after work and have main lunch with them (the children). I have to be with them for lunch but I always feel like not giving them enough time
- It means I don't have the energy, enough energy to give them what I should be
- I do everything, the cooking and taking care of the child, changing diapers. I think it is better, plus my child is very precious I don't trust anyone with her. If I have to go to a medical appointment I leave her with my mom not with the maid

Some women were aware of domestic support, they felt the need to be there for their children even they thought that domestic help which is predominant in Gulf Nations (Pande, 2012). These women were consciously aware of their ability and their potential to deal with their children and give them the needed delicate and women care that they felt they should provide to their children. Even with that, the resources women felt that they needed to be close to their children by things that mothers should do.

I like to do everything for my kids even if they are boys. I have a driver, I like to drop them off. I make sure they go to school. I give them breakfast, give them hugs before they leave then I am happy financially I am good with my husband, he is good my father is rich, I have everything. Money is not important for me. You can bring everything with money but not to take care of children.

After 6 or 7 year, I got one nanny to help with the house not the babies. Not even one percent were they left

with the nanny. I am very stressed on this issue. I don't leave baby with the housekeeper. From bathroom to bed. I feed them, bathe them, change dresses, cleaning, washing, teach them. send to school and bring them back. I do everything, the cooking and taking care of the child, changing diapers. I think it is better, plus my child is very precious I don't trust anyone with her. If I have to go to a medical appointment I leave her with my mom not with the maid.

The most important finding result was the women's attitude of the role of the father. Many of the women felt the absence of the father in the parenting of children. They felt that father's role was of financial support, these were some of the statements:

His role is 80% financial. If he is in the house he holds her for about half an hour and that is usually when I am putting dinner on the table. On the weekends, it's when I am making lunch and she happens to be awake. I do wish he was more involved. I think about that all the time. He has no role at all. Only for money.

In Qatar, you must know about the man. He thinks about himself. Father has no role at all. In general in the Gulf the men do not have a role. They just pay. In terms of their parenting role; fathers were believed to be absent. The father was seen to entertain children outside the home in geographic spaces outside the rims of the mother. These two geographic spaces neither the mother nor the father could tread on the other. The only connection for both segregated spaces is the child.

He spends with them is in the afternoon when he sits and plays with them, ask about their day, pats them on the head, eats a platter of fruits and shares stories with them that is it. On the weekend he takes them out. Friday is father son day. He takes him (their son) out to the desert and the sea.

He is always busy. Doesn't have time, he comes for only two hours in the afternoon and goes to sleep, does not want noise. He doesn't really spend much time with them. Takes them out every weekend.. always buy them toys when he comes from travel.

Other women indicated that they had very positive relationships with their spouses and really admired their roles as fathers. Their comments included statements such as: main role and responsibility is that of the mother but he asks about them, especially when there is a problem, he tries to help find solutions. We talk things over together solve problems.

The baby is really attached to him whenever he sees him he wants to be picked up. He likes his dad a lot. He comes home early and spends most of the time when he is awake. He teases me that I got to play with him and you didn't. The only thing that he does not do is change

diapers; he says I can change clothes but not diapers. He gives bottles and everything. Women felt also much protected because of the behavioral structure of Islam, a statement made by one woman about her rights as a Muslim: thank god I am Muslim, we respect our religion and we don't do these things. Here in our society, everything our husbands must take care of. He cannot take even one riyal from my salary. In our religion if I want to leave my husband, he has to give me the house and he must pay from his salary to his children even if I work.

Another strong issue that emerged from the data was the issue of what women could change about being mothers if they could. Even though, most of the women felt overwhelmingly stressed and over-stretched, they mostly said that they would not change anything about their current situations. Motherhood in their minds was the kind of work that you could not scrimp with: it had to be carried out with full dedication. Comments included the following: it is impossible to take our some of her responsibilities. you can add something but you cannot take it out. Motherhood is beautiful I wouldn't change anything. I continue the work of my mother.

I like everything. Sometimes I don't like the role of my husband in some ways; he says if I travel then you do it. I'm filling in all the time. If he can't do something, he expects me to fill in and that is very hard because I am busy.

Survey results: At the same time of the interviews, the surveys were sent out both electronically and in a paper and were in both English and Arabic. Table 1 provides the sociodemographic information of the sample of respondents. The study found that the average age of the mothers was 35 years old, 82% of them were married, 4.6% were divorced and 6% were widowed. Approximately, 60% had completed or were obtaining an undergraduate degree and 20% had finished secondary school. "Large" families were common: 37.7% of the women had 4 children living with them and 15% had 6 children living with them. The study found that it was common to have other family members living with the mothers: the most common relative to live with the mothers was the mother-in-law. Some (about 2%) had other wives of their husband living with them.

About 80% of the respondents answered the questions about income; out of those about one quarter of those had annual income over \$100,000. Approximately 60% of women breastfed their children at least for a while, most of the children slept in their own beds but the survey indicated that children also slept with their mothers and with siblings. The <1% of the women indicated that their children slept with a nanny. More that 60% of the respondents indicated that they had domestic help for tasks such as cooking and cleaning. Approximately 40% indicated that they had nannies to help with child-related tasks.

Table 1: Sociodemographic information

Variables	Attributes	Parameters	N
Age		Mean = 34.77 (SD = 10.23)	
Marital status	Married		235 (82.7%)
	Divorced		13 (4.6%)
	Widowed		6 (2.1%)
Educational level	No schooling		5 (1.8%)
	Elementary school		11 (3.9%)
	Middle school		5 (1.8%)
	High school		56 (19.7%)
	College or university		167 (58.8%)
	Graduate school		17 (6.0%)
	Other		2 (0.7%)
	Child 1	Living with family = 230 (81% of the total) Age: Mean = 10.93 (SD = 8.47)	115 (female) 112 (male)
	Child 2	Living with family n = 178 (62.7% of the total) Age: Mean = 10.63 (SD = 7.44)	97 (female) 86 (male)
	Child 3	Living with family n = 143 (50.4% of the total) Age: Mean = 10.63 (SD = 7.44)	68 (female) 57 (male)
	Child 4	Living with family n = 107 (37.7% of the total) Age: Mean = 10.44 (SD = 7.34)	61 (female) 48 (male)
	Child 5	Living with family n = 74 (26.1% of the total) Age: Mean = 10.58 (SD = 7.59)	39 (female) 35 (male)
	Child 6	Living with family n = 25 (8.8% of the total) Age: Mean = 9.63 (SD = 7.59)	22 (female) 18 (male)
	Child 7	Living with family n = 25 (8.8% of the total) Age: Mean = 10.33 (SD = 7.64)	13 (female) 10 (male)
	Child 8	Living with family n = 10 (3.4% of the total) Age: Mean = 12.8 (SD = 10.77)	6 (female) 3 (male)
	Child 9	Living with family n = 6 (2.1%) Age: Mean = 15.6 (SD = 14)	3 (female) 2 (male)

Table 2: Parenting practices by mother and others as perceived by female respondent (mother) (%)

Variables	Cooking child meals	Bathing	Toileting	Putting them to bed	Feeding	Ready for school (clothes/hair)	Reading or singing
Myself	104 (36.6)	202 (71.11)	189 (66.5)	211 (74.3)	194 (68.3)	183 (64.4)	188 (66.2)
House maid	169 (59.5)	38 (13.40)	36 (12.7)	19 (6.7)	53 (18.7)	47 (16.5)	9 (3.2)
Nanny	4 (1.4)	13 (4.60)	17 (6.0)	12 (4.2)	24 (8.5)	20 (7.0)	10 (3.5)
Father	3 (1.1)	7 (2.50)	5 (1.8)	27 (9.5)	20 (7.0)	8 (2.8)	23 (8.1)
Other relatives	11 (3.9)	6 (2.10)	4 (1.4)	6 (2.1)	12 (4.2)	5 (1.8)	11 (3.9)
Older siblings	6 (2.1)	7 (2.50)	11 (3.9)	12 (4.2)	12 (4.2)	9 (3.2)	20 (7.0)
Others	8 (2.8)	3 (1.10)	1 (0.4)	2 (0.7)	4 (1.4)	2 (0.7)	8 (2.8)

An interesting finding from the survey sample was the domestic help was common among women respondents; domestic help was used only in certain areas that were labor intensive outside the realm of child care. Most of the “intimate” tasks involved in raising children such as bathing, toileting and putting children to bed, getting them ready for school and reading and singing with the children were carried out by the women-mothers. Many of these activities were carried at home. Less intimate tasks such as cooking child meals were carried out by domestic helpers. Even if, the domestic helpers did prepare the food, women indicated that most of them fed their own children.

Family influences on parenting styles were found to be the most dominant influence as most women said they were influenced most by their own mothers and fathers in how they parented their children. Relatives were also the most common source for advice on parenting issues. The 15% of the women surveyed indicated that their fathers were their most influential role models as parents.

The survey data thus clearly indicated that women i.e., seemed to take on most of the tasks of mothering themselves with supplementary roles being assigned to others, even though they often had numerous helpers and lived with other family members. These tasks took place at home when women had control of the situation. Qatari mothers were more prone to feed than cook the child’s meal. The women relied on domestic help and were prone to feed her children herself. Table 2 reported mother’s involvement the most and substantive involvement appeared with the child care activities.

DISCUSSION

Universally, mothering definitions and practices follow agreement as being a social practice in which women take roles on nurturing and caring for dependent children (Arendell, 2000). It is evident that despite the abundant resources available, women being mothers are taking on a great deal of the responsibility of raising young children which is very labor intensive work. Francis-Connolly (2000) reported that the American women believed that mothering is non-ending, seeking the highest levels of ideal roles in caring and supporting

their children. Interview data by Dunbar and Roberts (2006) underlined the support that women thought to raise their children away from their partners but from other women who were also alienated because of social or economical factors.

Most of the Qatari women of this sample were guilt ridden and idealized their roles as “good” mothers caring and nurturing and believed they were doing the utmost to be close to their children. The survey result showed the greater role of women interacting and nurturing their children. Although, the domestic help or nannies were there for them, according to Qatari women, the domestic help was there to support the mothers as in preparing the food or cleaning the child’s cloth.

The shrinking of the extended family and creation of the nuclear family, women’s active role in the labor market and pressures of modern life all have led to resourcing home-care and child-care to domestic assistance in homes (Shah *et al.*, 2012). Many of the domestic help being women from the Indian-subcontinent have little education, training or even being mothers. Their role extended from domestic help to care for children (Khalifa, 2009; Khalifa and Nasser, 2015). The conditions of domestic servants in Qatar and elsewhere in the Arab Gulf has changed the role of the women in the home from being geographically home bound to out bound with roles as managers of home care rather nurturing and caring at home. Our findings suggest that Qatari women felt a sense of owe to their children and longing to be able to care for them. While research suggests that women were not willing to compromise time and care for their children they were less likely to reduce their time in other household duties (Craig, 2006). As the data and analysis had shown that the women were less likely to prepare the child’s food than to spend time caring for them. The women were finding that they were more likely to manage their household and domestic responsibilities. When compared to western context even if the male partner is sharing the responsibility for planning and organization, according to Coltrane (2000), it is the woman that assumes the responsibility for planning and organization. In the context of the Arab Gulf, it is the possibly in authoritarian styles in keeping the domestic help in custodial settings, the women were more likely to manage the house while

relying on the domestic help rather than on the father. The women in Qatar are thus juggling between the two identities from being the managerial overlord to the delicate motherly role has no doubt several identifiable behavioral challenges for children. According to Khalifa (2009) in her extensive work on domestic servants in the gulf, parenting and parenting styles has profound impact in the way that child perceive the parent and plays the role in upbringing of the child. According to Batoul (2009), the child is torn by seeing his mother in the two roles; on the one hand, they see the mother shifting her identity being the agent of care in what is known instrumental parenting to a genuine and maternal mother. According to Batoul, this could produce disenchantment with the mother or parent leading to a loss of identity, deviance in behaviors and child's detachment from family members.

The most significant finding suggests that many Qatari women identified the absent role of the father in the parenting of children. Many women believed that the father role was more of financial support and security related and that men are generally more likely to assist than to manage the whole job. This means that women were totally taking care of children not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. Women were mentally managing the care of children were fathers were more probably doing the care that is out of the house care whether entertainment or play and transportation. While time inside the house which far exceeded that of outside might entice the women to act as a gatekeeper to the father interaction with the child. This may have consequences not only for equitable division of care but also limit the women from other pursuits (Graig, 2005) but also allows the women to act as a gatekeeper alienating the father in equitable child care. While, the father's role outside the house may cause attrition in intact families and in reverse to cause women to seek the alternate help from the family unit.

CONCLUSION

The image of the self-sacrificing devoted mother still abounds in the media and popular culture. Because motherhood maybe universally accepted as the most wonderful state for a woman, the role expectations of society are enormous. The state of things in Qatar is changing drastically with the domestic help at home, many women are now spending a fraction of their time raising children. This might not be so alien to Qatari culture as motherhood has been and was a social exercise in which the extended family generally took the load off the mother in parenting. With the rise of the nuclear family

this mothering is offset to the domestic servant. Much more is needed now in the aspect of instrumental mothering in Qatar. Many studies indicated that through instrumental mothering there is a general trend where there might be a possible loss in language, identity or tradition which many national strategist have significant impact on the cohesion and loyalty to the nation. In general the impact of this study is on children and few studies in the Middle East have come out to investigate the affective and emotional aspects of children and their psychological well-being.

Many of the women indicated that they already considered themselves to be the beneficiaries of the research, as answering the survey and participating in the interviews helped to reflect up on and clarify their own ideas about motherhood. Many of the women doing this research are also either employed full time or students.

Thus, dissemination of this research could encourage a public dialogue on what the roles of parents should be and how family roles can complement one another. This research can also benefit policy makers as they explore how to create family-friendly policies for the workplace where many women are. The larger social science research community in early childhood studies will also benefit from reading more about this research as it highlights the lives of women and children in the Gulf.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The first and foremost recommendation that this study can make is that further research needs to be carried out in the area of parenting whether by mother and father. A limitation of the study is that it is based on mostly self-reported data. Further studies, particularly of an ethnographic nature, can provide more complex pictures of what the lives of young children are like in Qatar and the roles that mothers play.

As the interview data clearly showed, a major concern that many women expressed had to do with the roles of the fathers in the lives of their children. Many of the women indicated that although fathers were very generous with financial support and followed religious doctrines about providing for their children, they were not very involved in the daily lives of their children. The women often worried about what impact this would have on their children's development. Thus, a major recommendation of this study would be that a parallel study be carried out exploring the perspectives of fathers. This would enable researchers and policy makers to obtain a more complex picture of how parenting responsibilities are being fulfilled.

Another recommendation that this study can offer has to do with research methods: some women were somewhat surprised by the length of time that was spent in each interview. It would be important for future researchers to carefully explain the need for in-depth data collection.

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