Masculinity And Fatherhood

Introduction

The social construction of manliness is elaborated through traits, roles, attitudes and behaviors, which stress on the different gender roles between men and women (Levant, 2011). Therefore, the discourse of masculinity highlights on the identity of men through their roles and behaviors, emphasizing on what a man should be in society (Hearn et al., 2012). Hegemonic masculinity was originally referred as a means to create a distinguished hierarchical society (Enderstein & Boonzaier, 2015). However, as research increases, hegemonic masculinity is linked to gender roles within a society, which influences the behavior of people living within these societies. Therefore hegemonic masculinity refers to behaviors performed by men which emphasis on patriarchy in society, as well as lead to the insubordination of women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Enderstein & Boonzaier, 2015). However, according to Levant (2011) hegemonic masculinity disregards men from lower socioeconomic backgrounds from the roles of masculinity. Rogers, Sperry, and Levant (2015) examined the perception of masculinity among African American men. According to their results, African American men define their masculinity and their roles through westernized norms, such as the role of the provider; the man should protect his dependants; and his responsibility to guide those who surround him. This emphasizes on the social constructions of masculinity through culturally ingrained social norms. Further, the research also accentuates how westernized ideologies on gender roles, are transferred to other cultures. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to address the gap of literature on masculinity within an African context, by investigating the experiences of fatherhood and the challenges of masculinity amongst fathers in South Africa.

Literature Review

Gender role in monotheistic and conservative religions determine the actions of men and women on society, as a result they influence the perception of masculinity amongst men. Gender roles in Islam highlight the superiority of men and the submission of women. Young Muslim women are taught to play the supporting role for the patriarchal men, thus highlighting the construction of hegemonic masculinity amongst Muslim men (Samuel, 2011). Additionally, Samuel (2011) highlights that the teachings of the Prophets and the Quran in Islam, suggests that men should be strong and assertive when required, yet caring and compassionate at all times. Therefore, the Islamic construction of masculinity highlights men should play a patriarchal and dominant role in society. Shafer, Petts, and Renick (2019) describes this form of patriarchy in society as a traditional masculine behavior conducted by men. They further describe traditional masculinity as practicing authoritative control over women. A study conducted on traditional norms and religiosity highlights that, religion associates masculinity with competitiveness, observing control over women through power and financial capability (Ward & Cook, 2011). Their results further suggest that religion views emotional expression, violence and sexual promiscuous behavior negatively amongst men. Therefore, religious men are expected to practice traditional masculine behaviors (Ward & Cook, 2011). Similarly, a study examining the perception of masculinity among Muslim Malaysian male university students, suggest that masculinity is associated with religious norms (Khalaf, Low, Ghorbani, & Khoei, 2013). Many students highlighted that religious beliefs emphasizes on dominant roles, which are

performed by men in societies. Therefore, their masculinity was driven by the sense of being a respectful and modest man, who has the ability to be financially independent (Khalaf et al., 2013).

Parenting is defined as the process of nurturing the physical, emotional and intellectual wellbeing of a child from infancy to adulthood (Raby, Lawler, Shlafer, & Hesemeyer, 2016). Gender norms in society determine the roles parents play. According to these societal and gender norms, fathers are viewed as the breadwinners and should have the ability to provide financially for their family (Madiba & Nsiki, 2017). On the other hand, mothers are caregivers who are concerned about the emotional and physical wellbeing of their children (Madiba & Nsiki, 2017). As well as inscribing specific parental roles to fathers, gender norms restructure the perception of fatherhood by creating the ideology of a “good father” (Assarsson & Aarsand, 2016). This highlights the intersecting relationship between fatherhood and masculinity. Enderstein and Boonzaier (2015) suggest that masculinity and fatherhood have an overlapping relationship, where masculinities are created through accepting fatherhood and performing the role as a father. The conceptualization of women as the caregivers for children, while men as the breadwinner has led to an identity crisis amongst many fathers when nurturing the emotional development of their children (Schmitz, 2016). These gendered norms have created tensions among fatherhood and hegemonic masculinity.

According to Madiba and Nsiki (2017) the aspect of a “good father” is emphasized by the ability to provide financially for their children. An exploratory study conducted on the perception of fathers towards fatherhood, suggests that parenting is assessed on the ability to provide for their family (Chideya & Williams, 2013). The results from their study suggests that fathers judge financial provision as the role of a “good father”; hence, successful parenting is determined by a man’s ability to provide financially. However, majority of the research conducted on the discourse of masculinity and fatherhood, focuses primarily on the experiences of fathers from westernized contexts. Therefore, men from low socioeconomic backgrounds are affected by the financial support they are able to provide for their family. Thus they are viewed negatively by society and they are unable to fulfill their role assigned to them by gender norms (Chideya & Williams, 2013). A study conducted on the experiences of black father’s living in poverty stricken areas of South Africa, states that the struggle to provide for their families, influences the masculinity of these fathers (Hendricks, Swartz, & Bhana, 2010). Hendricks et al. (2010) emphasizes that living in communities which are impacted by poverty, influences the ability for fathers to provide financially and emotionally to their family. These fathers state their experiences of feeling emasculated due to not adhering to societal norms (Hendricks et al., 2010).

Similarly, Shafer et al. (2019) examined the factors affecting father involvement within religion. Their results suggest that religion emphasizes on patriarchy where fathers are authoritative and commanding. Fathers who believe in the hegemonic view of masculinity, are less nurturing and less involved with their children (Shafer et al., 2019). Therefore accepting a masculine approach to fatherhood, suggests that religious fathers are more dominant and engage in authoritarian parenting. Likewise, cultural norms and religion has an influence during the redefinition of masculinity amongst fathers (Bhana & Nkani, 2014). According to Enderstein and Boonzaier (2015), the process of renegotiating their identity in fatherhood, fathers are excluded from religious communities and experience an identity crisis due to their inability to be a “good father”. A study conducted in Iran examining the experiences of Muslim fathers, suggest that religious beliefs create an image of a perfect father (Eskandari, Simbar, Vadadhir, &

Baghestani, 2016). Furthermore, Islam emphasis on the role of fathers as the provider for financial support for thei children (Eskandari et al., 2016). Their results highlight that masculinity amongst Muslim fathers is underlined by their ability to provide financially for their family. Similarly, Blell (2018) examined the experiences of masculinity amongst Pakistani Muslim fathers. Many fathers experienced feelings of shame, guilt and hopelessness due to the inability to provide financially for their family. These feelings led to a negative renegotiation of their masculinity in terms of their skills and ability, to adhere to norms created by the ideology of hegemonic masculinity in society (Blell, 2018). Furthermore, the inability to provide financially resulted men moving towards aggressive and violent behaviors to counteract the threat direscted towards their masculinity (Blell, 2018).

Rationale and Aims.

Literature emphasizes on the influence of societal and cultural norms on the experiences of fatherhood. The ability to provide financially determines the classification of a “good father” has a colossal impact on masculinity. Research conducted on fatherhood focuses primarily on the experiences of fathers from westernized contexts; therefore, limited research examines the ideologies of masculinity among fathers from non-westernized contexts, such as Africa. South Africa is a racially diverse country, with a large number of its population being Muslims. However, the discourse on fatherhood in South Africa emphasizes on the experiences of non-Muslim South African fathers with limited research existing on Muslim fathers. Therefore, the current literature intends to address this gap by examining the experiences of Muslim fathers in South Africa through aiming to address: I) The influence of Islamic beliefs regarding fatherhood amongst Muslim fathers; II) the challenges faced by Muslim fathers in South Africa when redefining their masculinity and identity.

Relevance of Research Question.

The current literature will examine the experiences of Muslim fathers in South Africa and the challenges they face in redefining their masculinity. Therefore, this study will address the gap of limited research in South Africa regarding the experiences of Muslim fathers and masculinity. Furthermore, this current study will provide a further insight into existing research by increasing the literature, and promoting further discussions around masculinity amongst fathers in South Africa. Therefore, through this qualitative research, future research can be conducted comparing the experiences of Muslim fathers in an Africa context against the experiences of fathers in a western context.

Methods

Theoretical framework

The experiences of fatherhood results to a renegotiation of masculinity and identity. According to the masculinity theory, gender norms determines the roles an individual plays in society (Hearn et al., 2012). Gender norms highlight that men should perform authoritative and dominant roles, and should avoid expressing their emotions. While women should perform the role of the caregiver, encouraging emotional development within her dependents (Madiba & Nsiki, 2017). Additionally, masculinity theory highlights on a hegemonic masculinity in fatherhood, where fathers play the vital role as providers in families (Connell & Messerschmidt,

2005). Furthermore, according to Enderstein and Boonzaier (2015) masculinity highlights the assumption of masculine behaviors within fathers, such as providing for a family. The theory suggests that rather than encouraging the emotional development of their children, fathers should be the main source of protection and financial provision for the family. As a result, this has led to an identity crisis amongst those fathers who are not able to financially provide for their family, yet are able to encourage the emotional development of their children (Enderstein & Boonzaier, 2015). Similarly, the practices of hegemonic masculinity and fatherhood is prevalent in monotheistic religions, such as Islam (Shafer et al., 2019). Therefore, using a social constructionist approach; the current qualitative study will examine how masculinity is socially constructed amongst Muslim fathers in South Africa.

Research Design

Qualitative research provides in-depth information and an extensive understanding of a phenomenon within a context (Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 47). In order to examine the social construct of masculinity and fatherhood, the current study will assess masculinity through the lens of the experiences from Muslim fathers. Furthermore, experiences of a certain group within a context can be examined through a phenomenological paradigm within qualitative research (Blanche et al., 2006, p. 275). The current study, seeks to examine masculinity directly from the experiences of Muslim fathers, thus providing an insight into the experiences of the sample. Additionally, during qualitative research, information emerges through the use of language (Blanche et al., 2006, p. 47). As a result, language allows comparisons to be made within groups, by identifying common themes within data.

Context and Setting

The current study is based in a South African context by examining the experiences of masculinity within Muslim fathers. South Africa is racially divided, thus the participants used in the current research will be influenced by the history of South Africa. Therefore, it is important to consider the cultures of different Muslim communities when examining the experiences of Muslim fathers.

Sampling and Participants

Phenomenological research often examines small samples between six and twenty-five participants (Morse, 2000). For this reason, the present study will examine in-depth experiences of ten Muslim South African fathers, between the ages of 18 and 25. All participant must be currently residing in Cape Town, and must have fathered a child within the past five years. In order to obtain participants, a non-probability purposive sampling method will be used. Purposive sampling refers to the deliberate selection of participants based on certain characteristics (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). However, according to Blanche et al. (2006, p. 139) this sampling technique depends on the willingness of Muslim fathers to participate in the study, therefore a further snowball sampling technique will be used, by asking mosque managers for referrals for additional participants. Snowball sampling refers to using key informants to accumulate a large sample through their contacts (Blanche et al., 2006, p. 139). This homogenous sample allows the study to focus on participants that share similar features and traits (Etikan et al., 2016).

Data Collection

Data collection will be conducted using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, to uncover the experiences of South African Muslim fathers. According to Blanche et al. (2006, p. 297), interviews result in rich details of a diverse set of experiences of individuals. Furthermore, open-ended questions allow participants to illustrate their own experiences about a specific phenomenon in their own words, without feeling restricted (Blanche et al., 2006, p. 486). Thus, detailed information on their experiences are highlighted throughout the interview. Interviews will last for approximately 60 minutes and with the permission of the participant, each interview session will be recorded using an audio recording device. The interview will be carried out in the participant's desired location, to allow participants to feel comfortable. Prior to the interview session, participants will be required to read and sign an informed consent (Appendix A). In order to obtain information regarding the experiences of Muslim fathers in South Africa and the challenges they face in redefining their masculinity, the interview will be conducted using pre-set questions and probes, which highlighted in the interview schedule (Appendix B).

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis will be used to examine the narratives of the participants. Thematic analysis involves the process of identifying certain themes within data, analyzing these themes through codes, and reporting patterns within a specific data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The current study will follow the guidelines highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2006) when conducting thematic analysis. After the interviews with the participant, each session will be transcribed, where each interview will be written down using the recordings. The researcher will immerse themselves with the data in order to familiarize with the themes. Familiarization with data, will result in the development of codes which will allow the researcher to organize data within broader themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes will be analyzed according to the aims of the research, when examining the influence of Islamic beliefs regarding fatherhood towards Muslims fathers in South Africa; and the challenges faced by Muslim fathers in South Africa when redefining their masculinity and identity. Thematic analysis will benefit the current research by providing a holistic interpretation of the lived experiences of Muslim fathers in South Africa. Furthermore, thematic analysis will enable the researcher to examine the impact of the broader religious context of Islam and its influence on fatherhood amongst Muslim fathers. Thus, thematic analysis is highly flexible in examining two similar aspects of a broader research topic.

Ethical Consideration

Informed consent and Confidentiality.

Prior to the interview, the purpose of this qualitative research will be verbally explained to the participant. Additionally, each participant will be required to read and sign an informed consent

form (Appendix A), which will explain the nature of voluntary participation within the study. Due to the sensitivity of the data, only the researcher will access recordings of interviews and participants will be referred using pseudonyms in the final report of the research.

Nonmaleficence and beneficence.

Since the study will examine the lived experiences of Muslim fathers and their challenges in redefining their masculinity, participants will be free to leave the interview at any stage of the process. Further, after the interview participants will be verbally debriefed on the specific aims of the study, and will be referred to a counselor for any distress caused due to the nature of the research.

Reflexivity

The researcher identifies herself as a Muslim women, as a result her views and beliefs of Islam may influence the participant's responses. Further, participants may omit mentioning their experiences, which are against Islamic teachings in fear of negative judgment from the researcher. The researcher is seen as the source of authority and controls the research process, through deciding the demographic from which participants will be achieved. Further, the researcher will control the direction of the interview and will determine what information is published.

Section C

The history of apartheid in South Africa has created a racially segregated society within South Africa, which is divided in terms of race, class and gender. Therefore, the proposed research examines the role of masculinity and the intersecting identities of fathers in South Africa. According to Blanche et al. (2006, p. 403) in order to gain scientific relevance, research should address the gap of knowledge in the natural science of human and social issues that are prevalent in today's world. The current research will address the gap of knowledge of masculinity in South Africa by examining the challenges of masculinity amongst Muslim fathers in South Africa. Furthermore, limited research exists in South Africa, which focuses on the experiences of Muslims, thus the proposed study will concentrate primarily on Muslim Fathers. Scientific research should aim to develop equity by examining a phenomenon in its full scale by including disadvantaged groups that have previously not been researched (Blanche et al., 2006, p. 395). Since the current research will focus on Muslim fathers, this will provide a deeper insight on the intersecting role of religion and identity, and the influence it has on determining the role of a father in society. Therefore, the study will expound the current literature existing on fatherhood and masculinity within South Africa. The Islamic world comprises of multiple different communities, whose values, beliefs, traditions, cultures and teachings differ from one another. As a result, future research could be conducted, using this study, to emphasis on the role of masculinity and fatherhood, within different Islamic teachings and cultures.

Scientific rigor refers to the quality of trustworthiness of research which applies appropriate tools in order to investigate the objectives of the research (Smith & McGannon, 2018). In order to achieve rigorous results, which contains generalizability and transferability, the current research will use thematic analysis to account for emerging themes within the data, highlighting similar experiences amongst Muslim fathers. Furthermore, thematic analysis will indicate rigor within

the current research through transferability, as findings of this study can be compared with the findings of other scientific research, to relate these findings to a broader research context. Additionally, theories existing on masculinity and fatherhood may influence the process of data collection and data analysis, to direct participants' experiences to match with the existing theories of masculinity (Smith & McGannon, 2018). Therefore, the researcher will perform member reflections in order to achieve an independent truth of the participants' experiences. As a result member reflections produce a rigorous qualitative research as reflections of participants are analyzed to create a thorough and complete understanding of the dialogue (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

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