

An Exploratory Study on Fathers' Involvement in Parenting Based on Grounded Theory

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Abstract. This study uses a grounded theory approach to explore the behaviors and influencing factors of fathers involved in participatory parenting. Through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with fathers who have childcare experience, relevant data was collected and analyzed step by step using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. This process distilled the core categories of fathers' involvement in participatory parenting. The main aspects of fathers' participatory parenting behavior include emotional support, daily care, educational involvement, and role perception. This study enriches the theoretical framework of paternal parenting behavior, reveals the multifaceted and complex nature of fathers' involvement in parenting, and highlights the importance of enhancing the father's role in childcare policies and practices.

Keywords: Fathers' participatory parenting, Grounded theory, Multidimensional parenting

1. Introduction

With social development and changes in family structure, parenting concepts are undergoing significant transformations. The traditional role of fathers, long regarded primarily as the economic providers for families, often lacks direct involvement in children's growth. However, in recent years, as awareness of gender equality increases, family perspectives shift, and work arrangements become more flexible, an increasing number of fathers are actively engaging in their children's growth and education, playing an increasingly important role as "emotional companions." Data shows that the involvement of modern fathers in family parenting has significantly increased. They not only assume basic parenting responsibilities, such as daily care, playtime, and tutoring, but also play a crucial role in their children's emotional development and psychological well-being. This phenomenon has garnered widespread social attention, and more and more studies are beginning to explore the unique contributions of fathers in family childcare.

Although research on maternal parenting behaviors is relatively rich and in-depth, studies on fathers' participatory parenting behaviors remain insufficient. Existing research often focuses on quantitative indicators such as the degree of fatherly involvement and the time allocation for parenting, lacking a systematic exploration of the specific behaviors, psychological experiences, and motivational factors of fathers during the parenting process. Particularly under the influence of cultural diversity and socioeconomic backgrounds, the behavioral patterns of fathers' involvement in parenting and the driving forces behind them become more complex and diverse. Therefore, it is necessary to employ more detailed research methods to deeply explore the characteristics and influencing factors of fathers' involvement in parenting.

2. Literature Review

In recent years, with changes in family structure and social roles, domestic research on fathers' parenting behaviors has gradually increased. Scholars in China have begun to focus on the motivations behind fathers' involvement in parenting and the influencing factors. Wang Xiangxian and Si Yixuan pointed out that the motivation for fathers' involvement in parenting stems not only from their perception of family responsibilities but also from the influence of social gender role norms and work pressure [1]. Liu Juan and colleagues further indicated that a father's educational level, family income, work environment, and relationship quality with their spouse significantly impact the frequency and quality of their parenting behaviors [2]. Qin Xufang emphasized the importance of social support systems, such as encouragement from friends and family and government policies, in promoting fathers' participation in parenting. Many domestic studies focus on the effects of paternal involvement on children's cognitive and

psychological development [3]. Yuan Haojie and others, through a large-scale survey, found that active father involvement (such as playing together and providing emotional companionship) significantly promotes children's language development and social skills [4]. Gu Yanfang further noted that there is a significant negative correlation between paternal educational support and children's self-control abilities and behavioral problems [5]. These studies demonstrate that fathers are not only important for providing material support to families but also play an essential role in their children's development through their parenting behaviors. However, domestic research still exhibits some notable limitations. First, research samples tend to have regional and economic biases, as they are mostly concentrated in economically developed urban areas, overlooking the parenting behaviors of rural fathers and the unique challenges they face [6]. Second, much of the research content focuses on fathers' educational support and emotional communication, with less attention paid to other comprehensive parenting behaviors such as daily caregiving and serving as behavioral role models [7]. Lastly, most domestic studies are cross-sectional, lacking longitudinal research that investigates the dynamic changes in fathers' parenting behaviors and their long-term impacts [8].

Internationally, especially in Western countries, research on fathers' parenting behaviors has developed a relatively mature theoretical framework and accumulated extensive empirical data. Scholars abroad have widely explored the role of fathers in family life and their multiple impacts on child development. Studies on paternal parenting behavior often employ various theoretical frameworks for explanation and prediction. Lamb's model of paternal involvement divides fathers' parenting behavior into three dimensions: interaction, accessibility, and responsibility, highlighting how fathers engage in their children's growth through different approaches [9]. In recent years, these theories have been widely applied to study fathering behaviors across different cultural contexts [10]. Numerous international studies indicate that paternal involvement is closely linked to various aspects of child development. Research by Lamb and Lewis found that a father's emotional support and the quality of interaction are closely related to children's academic achievements and emotional stability [11]. Bronfenbrenner's longitudinal study in the United Kingdom demonstrated that active father involvement reduces the risk of behavioral problems during adolescence and enhances social adaptability [12]. Despite the maturity of international research, certain limitations persist. First, many studies are based primarily on Western cultural contexts, with limited research examining variations in paternal behaviors in other cultural backgrounds, such as in Asia or Africa [13]. Second, while empirical studies abroad predominantly focus on quantitative analysis, providing extensive data support, they often fall short in understanding the subjective experiences and emotions of fathers in depth [14]. Finally, most studies still analyze parenting behaviors separately, lacking systematic research on the cooperative parenting models and interactions between both parents.

A comparison of domestic and international studies reveals that, despite differences in research methods and focal points, both acknowledge the critical role fathers play in children's development. However, the research gaps and limitations identified provide directions for future studies. While both domestic and international research on paternal parenting behaviors offer rich theoretical frameworks and empirical data, there is a need for deeper exploration into areas such as cultural diversity, cooperative parenting models between parents, and the impact of policy environments on parenting behaviors. Such exploration will contribute to the development of a more comprehensive model of paternal parenting behavior, offering more diverse perspectives for future research.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Subjects

1. Age Groups:

Young Fathers (20-35 years old): These fathers are often first-time parents with relatively little parenting experience, facing more challenges as novices in the parenting process.

Middle-aged Fathers (36-50 years old): Typically, these fathers have some parenting experience and may be balancing their careers and family responsibilities, with their roles in parenting tending to stabilize.

Older Fathers (51 years and above): These fathers usually have adult children and can reflect on their parenting experiences from a well-informed and experienced perspective.

2. Occupational Background:

High-pressure, high-intensity professions: This includes roles such as corporate executives and doctors. These fathers usually have long working hours and high work-related stress, which may affect their level of involvement in parenting.

Stable jobs with fixed hours: Examples include civil servants and teachers, whose work is relatively stable, allowing them more time and energy to participate in parenting.

3. Cultural Background:

Urban and Rural Fathers: This distinction helps to reveal how cultural differences between urban and rural areas influence fathers' parenting behaviors.

Fathers from the South and the North: By comparing the influence of regional cultures, this study explores differences in parenting concepts and practices between fathers from the southern and northern parts of the country.

3.2. Interview Format

This study employs semi-structured interviews. During the interview process, the researcher focuses on key questions but adjusts them flexibly based on the interviewee's responses to ensure that the discussion is in-depth and fully explores the behaviors and feelings of fathers involved in participatory parenting.

Interview 1: Young Father (27 years old, Corporate Executive, Urban)

Occupational Background: High-pressure, high-intensity profession

Researcher: "As a young father, how do you usually participate in your child's daily care?"

Respondent A: "I'm usually quite busy, and my work hours are long, but I make sure to take my child to school every morning. The evening time is precious, so I try to put my phone down and play with him for a while. Although it's not much time, I feel it brings me closer to my child and helps strengthen our bond."

Researcher: "What do you think is the biggest challenge?"

Respondent A: "I think it's definitely time. My job is demanding, and I often have to work overtime, even on weekends. I want to spend more time with my child, but I genuinely don't have the time. My partner takes on most of the parenting responsibilities, and sometimes I feel guilty about that."

This 27-year-old young father, living in an urban area and working as a corporate executive, faces a high-pressure and high-intensity work environment. He admits that his long work hours, including frequent overtime and even weekend work, limit his time with his child. Despite these challenges, he makes an effort to take his child to school every morning and sets aside a short period in the evening to play together. He emphasizes that, although his time is limited, every interaction is valuable as it is a crucial way for him to build an emotional connection with his child. However, his main struggle remains the lack of time—his demanding job prevents him from being as involved as he wishes in his child's life. His partner assumes the majority of the parenting responsibilities, which sometimes makes him feel guilty. This father's experience highlights the common dilemma faced by young professional parents today: the difficult balance between work pressures and spending time with their children. Despite his tight schedule, he cherishes every moment he can spend with his child, demonstrating his deep commitment to fostering a strong parent-child relationship.

Interview 2: Middle-aged Father (42 years old, Doctor, Rural)

Occupational Background: High-pressure, high-intensity profession

Researcher: "How do you balance work and parenting?"

Respondent B: "As a doctor, work is indeed very busy, and sometimes with night shifts and emergencies, I can't go home. However, I try to spend as much time as possible with my children when I have free time. I believe that, as a father, even if I can't be with them all the time, quality is more important than quantity. I make the most of holidays or weekends to take them to places they want to visit or to get food they like. This helps strengthen our bond."

Researcher: "How does rural life influence your parenting style?"

Respondent B: "I think the influence is quite evident. I want my children to understand the hardships of rural life, which is something they might not easily comprehend in the city. So, I try to expose them to the fields and nature, teaching them to be independent."

This 42-year-old middle-aged father is a rural doctor, whose busy schedule is often disrupted by emergencies and night shifts, making it difficult for him to maintain regular family life. He is fully aware of his time limitations but firmly believes that "quality is more important than quantity." His parenting philosophy is deeply influenced by rural life, emphasizing exposure to nature and manual labor to develop his children's independence and resilience in facing life's challenges. Although he cannot always be physically present with his children, he aims to make his time with them meaningful and impactful, believing that these high-quality interactions allow him to play a crucial role in their growth. This father's approach illustrates how rural fathers find creative ways to engage in parenting despite demanding work schedules. It also reflects the high value rural culture places on labor education and the development of children's independence.

Interview 3: Middle-aged Father (39 years old, Civil Servant, Urban)

Occupational Background: Stable job, fixed hours

Researcher: "As a civil servant, do you think your job has an impact on your parenting?"

Respondent C: "Compared to friends with high-intensity jobs, I am indeed a bit luckier. I have fixed work hours, so I can spend most evenings and weekends with my family. I play with my child, help with homework, and attend school events. Overall, my work schedule is quite family-friendly."

Researcher: "What is the biggest challenge you face in parenting?"

Respondent C: "I think the biggest issue is that as my child gets older, education becomes more complicated. I have time to spend with them, but now it's more about how to guide them, especially when it comes to electronics and academic pressure. My wife and I often discuss how to balance our child's studies and leisure time."

This 39-year-old urban civil servant enjoys a stable career with fixed working hours, which allows him more opportunities to engage in his child's daily life and education compared to many fathers in high-pressure jobs. He actively participates in his child's recreational and educational activities, taking time to help with homework, play, and attend school events. This work-life balance enables him to be involved in every aspect of his child's growth. However, as his child grows older, he faces new challenges—how to guide his child in managing electronics and coping with academic pressure. He and his wife frequently discuss how to

strike a balance between fostering good study habits and maintaining their child's right to play and relax. This reflects the complexities of modern parenting, where even with ample time, parents still navigate various pressures and temptations as their children grow. This father's approach demonstrates how a stable job in an urban setting allows for deeper involvement in a child's development while also highlighting the educational challenges faced by contemporary parents.

Interview 4: Older Father (65 years old, Retired Teacher, Northern Rural Area)

Occupational Background: Stable job, fixed hours

Researcher: "Your children are already adults. Looking back on your parenting experience, what is your biggest takeaway?"

Respondent D: "Looking back, the most important things in parenting are companionship and patience. I was a teacher, and although I had fixed working hours before retirement, the job still carried a lot of pressure. I'm grateful that I was able to provide my children with stable support during their growing years. Rural life was very beneficial for them; they had exposure to nature and learned how to face various challenges in life."

Researcher: "Do you think there is anything unique about the role of fathers in northern rural life?"

Respondent D: "Life in northern rural areas is relatively traditional, and the father's role is often seen as the pillar and authority of the family. But I believe that a father should not only be an economic provider but should also be emotionally involved, communicating with the children so that when they grow up, they don't feel distant from their father."

This 55-year-old father, a retired teacher from northern rural China, reflects on his parenting experience with a blend of traditional values and introspection. As a father in a rural area, he acknowledges that rural traditions often view fathers as the pillars and authorities of the family. However, he emphasizes that a father should be more than just a financial provider; he should also be emotionally connected with his children, maintaining close relationships to prevent emotional distance as they grow older. His parenting philosophy demonstrates the profound influence of traditional rural culture while also highlighting his long-term focus, as an educator, on nurturing his children's character and independence.

Interview 5: Young Father (32 years old, Teacher, Southern City)

Occupational Background: Stable job, fixed hours

Researcher: "How does southern culture influence your parenting style?"

Respondent E: "In the south, the family atmosphere is relatively gentle, and the father doesn't necessarily play an authoritative role but rather acts more as a friend and supporter. I spend a lot of time chatting with my child and playing games together. I believe it's important to interact with children as equals so that they feel comfortable communicating with you."

Researcher: "How do you balance work and parenting?"

Respondent E: "I feel quite fortunate. As a teacher, I have summer and winter breaks, which give me more time to be with my child. Balancing work and parenting is relatively easy for me; I make an effort to spend time with my child outside of work, especially to engage in their learning and support their development."

This 32-year-old teacher from a southern city reflects the gentle and harmonious atmosphere characteristic of southern culture in his parenting approach. His perspective is deeply influenced by southern cultural values, emphasizing harmony and respect. He believes that in a warm and open family environment, children are more likely to express themselves and build a strong emotional bond with their parents. His parenting style illustrates the more open and egalitarian family dynamics typical of southern cities. Additionally, it shows that, with a stable profession, fathers can actively participate in their child's growth and education through consistent companionship and guidance.

3.3. Data Analysis

3.3.1. Open Coding

Table 1. Open Coding

ID	Original Text Fragment	Initial Concept Extraction
1	"I try to spend time with my child every day, even when I'm very tired."	Active companionship, persistence in parenting
2	"Work pressure is high, and sometimes I can't make it home on time, so the time I have with my child is limited."	Work pressure reducing parenting time
3	"I believe that emotional connection is the most important part of interacting with my child."	Emphasis on emotional connection
4	"As a rural doctor, my work is often disrupted, making it difficult to spend time with my child regularly."	Challenges of irregular work hours in parenting
5	"We always discuss how to balance our child's study and play time."	Balance and compromise in parenting

From Table 1, the initial concepts extracted include "active companionship," "work pressure reducing parenting time," "emphasis on emotional connection," and "challenges of irregular work hours." These concepts reflect the actual behaviors, feelings, and difficulties that fathers face in parenting.

3.3.2. Axial Coding Analysis

Table 2. Axial Coding

Initial Concept	Categorized Theme	Category Description
Active companionship, emphasis on emotional connection	Fathers' Emotional Involvement	Reflects the importance fathers place on emotional interaction and their actual effort in parenting.
Work pressure reducing parenting time	External Obstacles in Parenting	The impact of work and time pressure on fathers' ability to engage in parenting.
Challenges of irregular work hours	External Obstacles in Parenting	The effect of irregular work hours on the stability of parenting.
Balance and compromise in parenting	Balance in Parenting Style	The balance fathers seek between work, parenting, and life.

Table 2 groups similar initial concepts under unified categories (e.g., "Fathers' Emotional Involvement," "External Obstacles in Parenting," "Balance in Parenting Style"). This categorization helps integrate the data and analyze the relationships between these categories. For example, external obstacles (e.g., work pressure) may limit a father's emotional involvement, further impacting the balance in parenting.

3.3.3. Selective Coding Analysis

Table 3. Selective Coding

Subcategory	Core Category	Theoretical Framework Construction
Fathers' Emotional Involvement	Father's Role Identification	The importance fathers place on recognizing their emotional role in parenting.
External Obstacles in Parenting	Balance and Compromise in Parenting	The limitations and balance trade-offs influenced by external factors in parenting behavior.
Balance in Parenting Style	Influence of Socio-Cultural Context on Parenting Behavior	The expectations and influence of society and culture on fathers' roles and parenting styles.

Through selective coding in Table 3, core categories such as "Father's Role Identification," "Balance and Compromise in Parenting," and "Influence of Socio-Cultural Context on Parenting Behavior" are identified. These core categories lay the foundation for constructing a theoretical framework that explains fathers' parenting behaviors, revealing the complexity and interplay of multiple factors in the fatherhood experience.

3.3.4. Theoretical Framework Construction

Table 4. Theoretical Framework

Coding Stage	Data Analysis Step	Data Analysis Outcome
Open Coding	Initial Concept Extraction	Concepts such as "active companionship," "work pressure reducing parenting time," and "emphasis on emotional connection" were extracted.
	Capturing Diversity	Captured both the positive behaviors of fathers in parenting and the multiple challenges they face.

Table 4. (continued).

Coding Stage	Data Analysis Step	Data Analysis Outcome
Axial Coding	Grouping Similar Concepts	Grouped "active companionship" and "emphasis on emotional connection" under "Fathers' Emotional Involvement"; "work pressure" was categorized as "External Obstacles."
	Analyzing Relationships Between Categories	Found that "External Obstacles" influence "Emotional Involvement" and "Balance in Parenting Style."
Selective Coding	Identifying Core Categories	Identified core categories such as "Father's Role Identification," "Balance and Compromise in Parenting," and "Influence of Socio-Cultural Context."
	Building the Theoretical Framework	Integrated core categories to explain the behavioral patterns of fathers in parenting and the multiple influencing factors they encounter.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Main Categories of Fathers' Involvement in Parenting

(1) Emotional Support: This category includes the ways fathers build close relationships and emotional connections with their children. Fathers provide emotional support by spending time with their children, listening to their emotional needs, and being present for them.

(2) Educational Guidance: The educational category encompasses the role fathers play in guiding their children's learning and development. Fathers often act as mentors who provide knowledge, skills, and values, especially in areas like academics and career planning. Some fathers emphasize leading by example through real-life situations, while others are directly involved in helping with homework and supporting extracurricular learning.

(3) Daily Care: Daily care refers to fathers' active participation in their children's everyday routines, such as helping them with personal hygiene, preparing meals, and taking them to and from school. Although traditionally, daily care has been considered the mother's responsibility, the data indicates that many fathers are challenging this gender division and are actively participating in managing their children's daily lives [15].

(4) Behavioral Role Modeling: Fathers serve as role models for their children through their behavior in both work and life. Whether it is demonstrating perseverance in their careers or modeling ways of interacting with others, fathers subtly influence their children's behavioral patterns and attitudes toward life.

4.2. Analysis of Fathers' Motivation for Involvement in Parenting

(1) Need for Parent-Child Bonding: Many fathers emphasize that participating in parenting allows them to build closer relationships with their children. Particularly for those who seek opportunities to be with their children amidst their busy work schedules, involvement in daily activities enhances parent-child interaction and improves the quality of their relationships.

(2) Social Expectations and Pressure: Society has raised its expectations for the image of a "good father." Many respondents mentioned that external expectations and societal guidance have made them pay more attention to their role in the family. In recent years, the promotion of the "new good man" image, along with positive media portrayals of the all-rounded father, has led fathers to feel that involvement in parenting is a part of fulfilling social expectations.

(3) Need for Personal Growth: Some fathers expressed that they have experienced personal growth through their involvement in parenting. They believe that the parenting process has made them more patient and considerate, and it has also helped them reassess and re-prioritize aspects of their lives.

4.3. Influencing Factors of Fathers' Parenting Behaviors

(1) Socio-Cultural Background: Different cultural contexts have varying expectations for the role of fathers in parenting. In some traditional cultures, fathers are more often seen as the "economic pillar" of the family, with childcare responsibilities typically falling to the mother. However, in modern societies, as gender equality becomes more widespread, the involvement of fathers in parenting has increased [16]. For instance, fathers in more developed areas are more likely to participate in their children's

education and care outside of work, whereas in rural or traditionally oriented areas, fathers still tend to focus primarily on economic support.

(2) Family Support: The support system within the family, especially the attitude of the mother, significantly influences a father's involvement in parenting. If the mother encourages and supports the father's involvement, he is more likely to participate actively. Additionally, the role of grandparents is also crucial; in some families, grandparents may take on some childcare responsibilities, thereby reducing the father's direct involvement.

(3) Occupational Pressure: The nature and intensity of work are also critical factors affecting a father's involvement in parenting. High-intensity, long-hour jobs significantly limit the time and energy fathers can devote to their families, reducing their opportunities to participate in childcare. Conversely, fathers with stable and flexible jobs are in a better position to engage in parenting activities.

(4) Economic Factors: Some fathers mentioned that economic pressure is a key factor limiting their involvement in parenting. Their sense of economic responsibility often compels them to devote most of their time to work, thus reducing the time available to spend with their children.

(5) Personality Factors: Each father's personality and attitude toward parenting also influence their level of involvement. Some fathers who are extroverted and enjoy close interactions may be more actively involved in daily care and play activities, while those who are more introverted may prefer to provide support from behind the scenes.

4.4. Challenges and Constraints of Fathers' Involvement in Parenting

(1) Time Conflicts: Time conflicts are one of the most common challenges fathers face. Many fathers struggle to find a balance between work and family, especially those with high-pressure jobs, who often find it difficult to allocate sufficient time to spend with their children. These time conflicts result in inconsistent or limited depth in their parenting involvement.

(2) Traditional Gender Role Perceptions: Although societal views are gradually evolving, traditional gender role perceptions remain deeply rooted in some fathers' parenting behaviors. Some respondents noted that both within the family and in their external environment, there are still opinions suggesting that "taking care of children is the mother's responsibility." This belief somewhat dampens their enthusiasm for participating in childcare.

(3) Lack of Parenting Experience and Skills: Many fathers admit that they lack experience in parenting, especially when it comes to daily childcare tasks, and often feel at a loss. For example, some fathers are not familiar with how to manage the daily needs of infants and toddlers, leading to a lack of confidence and even fear of making mistakes when they try to get involved.

(4) Lack of Social Support: The absence of a robust social support system is another significant constraint on fathers' involvement in parenting. Compared to mothers, there are fewer resources available for fathers, such as parenting courses for fathers and policies supporting paternity leave [17].

5. Discussion

This study, based on grounded theory and through in-depth qualitative analysis, fills a gap in existing research on fathers' parenting behaviors and proposes a new theoretical model to explain the evolving role of fathers in modern family parenting. Traditional research on fatherhood has often focused on socioeconomic factors, paternal identity, and the pressures of parenting, neglecting the multidimensional forms of father involvement in the family and the motivations and constraints behind them. This study refines the understanding of fathers' roles in parenting by identifying specific behavior categories such as emotional support, educational guidance, daily care, and behavioral role modeling. This expanded understanding not only enriches the concept of fatherhood but also provides a theoretical framework for other scholars to explore further. In particular, this study highlights the influence of socio-cultural background, family support, and individual differences on fathers' parenting behaviors, revealing how these factors intertwine to shape fathers' participation in childcare. Such a comprehensive analysis of multiple factors provides a more holistic and multidimensional understanding of fatherhood, offering new perspectives for future research. Based on the study's data, we propose a new theoretical model to explain the transformation of fathers' roles in modern families: 1. Role Expansion and Reshaping:

Fathers' roles in parenting are evolving from the traditional "economic provider" to a more "multi-functional" role, driven by multiple motivations and societal expectations. Modern fathers not only focus on fulfilling their children's material needs but also engage in emotional communication, educational guidance, and behavioral modeling in a multidimensional way. 2. Dynamic Balance Model: The dynamic balance model we propose suggests that the role of fathers in balancing family and work is not static but is dynamically adjusted based on time, family needs, and personal preferences. This model emphasizes how fathers navigate the challenges of parenting by adjusting their time allocation between family and work to achieve a dynamic balance. 3. Participation Ladder Model: This study also introduces a "Participation Ladder Model," which categorizes fathers' parenting behaviors into different levels of involvement: from basic material support to deeper emotional engagement and educational involvement. Fathers may exhibit varying levels of participation at different stages and in different contexts. This model helps to understand how fathers gradually deepen their involvement in parenting, influenced by their environment and personal development.

6. Conclusion

This study finds that the motivations for fathers' involvement in parenting are multidimensional, primarily including emotional connection, reflection on gender roles, and social expectations. Many fathers aim to establish deep emotional bonds with their children through high-quality interactions (e.g., storytelling, playing games) to compensate for the emotional distance associated with traditional roles. Moreover, as societal gender norms evolve, some fathers are beginning to reflect on the traditional "economic provider" role and actively take on more parenting tasks, even sharing some responsibilities traditionally associated with mothers, to present a more comprehensive image of fatherhood. Social expectations of the "good father" and the desire for self-identity and a sense of accomplishment through parenting also motivate them to take a more active role in childcare. Fathers' parenting behaviors are influenced by multiple factors: personal factors (e.g., educational level, occupational characteristics), family factors (e.g., spousal support and family economic status), and socio-cultural factors (e.g., social recognition and family-friendly policies). These factors collectively shape their behaviors in areas such as emotional support, educational guidance, daily care, and role modeling. Despite the in-depth analysis of fathers' participatory parenting behaviors using grounded theory, this study has limitations, such as sample size and regional constraints, as well as potential social desirability bias inherent in qualitative research. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs to track changes in fathers' parenting behaviors, conduct cross-cultural comparisons to explore the influence of cultural backgrounds, and combine quantitative and qualitative methods to enhance the study's breadth. Additionally, further exploration of cooperative parenting models between mothers and fathers and their comprehensive impact on child development is warranted.

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