




Cultural Influences on Perceptions of Parenthood and Family Life

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this study is to explore the cultural influences on perceptions of parenthood and family life. It aims to understand how cultural norms, values, and practices shape parenting roles, responsibilities, and challenges among parents from diverse backgrounds.

Method: This qualitative study utilized semi-structured interviews to gather data from 28 participants representing various cultural backgrounds. Participants were recruited through community centers, cultural organizations, and social media platforms. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo software, following the principle of theoretical saturation to ensure comprehensive data collection. Thematic analysis was employed to identify and analyze patterns and themes related to cultural influences on parenthood.

Results: The analysis revealed three main themes: Cultural Traditions, Parenting Practices, and Challenges and Adaptations. Cultural traditions influenced family roles, rituals, religious beliefs, language, and cultural identity. Parenting practices varied widely, encompassing diverse parenting styles, discipline methods, education priorities, health and nutrition, work-life balance, and family support networks. Participants also faced significant challenges in integrating into new societies, managing intergenerational conflicts, economic pressures, accessing resources, and addressing mental health and legal issues.

Conclusion: Cultural influences play a crucial role in shaping perceptions and practices of parenthood and family life. This study highlights the need for culturally sensitive approaches in supporting parents and children from diverse backgrounds. The findings underscore the importance of inclusive policies and practices that address the unique needs of culturally diverse families, promoting equitable access to resources and support. Further research is recommended to explore the dynamic nature of cultural influences on parenting and to develop comprehensive strategies for supporting diverse family structures.

Keywords: Cultural influences, parenthood, family life, qualitative research, semi-structured interviews, parenting practices, cultural traditions, challenges and adaptations.

1 Introduction

Parenthood and family life are deeply rooted in cultural norms and practices, shaping individuals' perceptions and behaviors across different societies. Culture plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' views and practices regarding parenthood. As Baldwin (2017) highlights, ideologies of parenthood significantly influence women's decisions and behaviors, such as the use of social egg freezing technology. This underscores the broader societal expectations and norms that dictate what is perceived as the "best" way to be a mother (Baldwin, 2017). Similarly, Cornish (2015) emphasizes the cultural context of transitioning to parenthood in Jordan, where traditional values and practices are deeply ingrained in the process of becoming a parent. These studies illustrate that cultural ideologies are not just background factors but active components that shape parenting decisions and experiences (Cornish, 2015).

The perception of parenthood can vary significantly across cultures, as demonstrated by Dor and Cohen-Fridel (2009) in their study comparing Jewish and Arab emerging adults. They found distinct differences in how these groups perceived parenthood, reflecting broader cultural narratives and values (Dor & Cohen-Fridel, 2009). Gato et al. (2022) further explore this by examining the role of sexual orientation and culture in shaping perceptions of future parenthood. Their research indicates that both sexual orientation and cultural background play crucial roles in how individuals envision their potential as parents, highlighting the intersectionality of these factors (Gato et al., 2022).

Parenting practices are often informed by cultural norms and family dynamics. Beneke and Cheatham (2015) discuss the importance of inclusive and democratic family-professional partnerships, which can vary widely depending on cultural expectations and practices. This is particularly relevant in diverse societies where multiple cultural influences converge, requiring a nuanced approach to family-professional interactions (Beneke & Cheatham, 2015).

Ekhholm and Olofsson (2016) address the concerns of parenthood in the context of global issues like climate change, revealing that cultural background can influence how parents perceive and respond to such threats. This suggests that cultural factors not only shape day-to-day parenting practices but also how parents engage with broader societal issues (Ekhholm & Olofsson, 2016).

Cross-cultural perspectives on family businesses, as discussed by Karataş-Özkan et al. (2011), reveal that diversity within family units can lead to varying goals and practices, impacting family dynamics and business operations (Karataş-Özkan et al., 2011). Kotlar and Massis (2013) further elaborate on this by examining goal setting in family firms, highlighting the diversity of goals and the importance of social interactions in achieving family-centered objectives. These studies underscore the complexities of parenting and family life in culturally diverse settings, where multiple influences and expectations must be navigated (Kotlar & Massis, 2013).

New parents often enter parenthood with idealistic expectations shaped by their cultural backgrounds. Sanders et al. (2021) explore how these preconceived ideas impact new parents, revealing that unrealistic expectations can lead to stress and disappointment (Sanders et al., 2021). This aligns with Paidipati and Deatrck (2014), who discuss the role of family phenomena in children and adolescents with ADHD, emphasizing that cultural expectations can significantly influence parenting practices and the support provided to children with special needs (Paidipati & Deatrck, 2014).

Understanding the cultural influences on perceptions of parenthood and family life is crucial in a globalized world where diverse cultural practices and values intersect. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing a nuanced analysis of how cultural backgrounds shape parenting practices and family dynamics. By exploring these influences in depth, this research offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and practitioners working with diverse families, helping them to better support and engage with parents and children from various cultural backgrounds.

The findings of this study have implications for various fields, including sociology, psychology, education, and family studies. They highlight the need for culturally sensitive approaches in parenting support programs and family policies, recognizing the diverse ways in which cultural norms and values shape parenting practices. This research also underscores the importance of cross-cultural understanding and respect, promoting inclusive practices that acknowledge and value the richness of cultural diversity in family life.

In conclusion, this study aims to shed light on the complex interplay between cultural influences and perceptions of parenthood and family life. By examining these influences through a qualitative lens, it provides a deeper understanding of the diverse experiences and

challenges faced by parents from different cultural backgrounds. This research not only contributes to the academic discourse on family dynamics but also offers practical insights for supporting families in multicultural societies.

2 Methods and Materials

2.1 Study Design and Participants

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the cultural influences on perceptions of parenthood and family life. The choice of a qualitative approach was driven by the aim to gain an in-depth understanding of individuals' subjective experiences and the meanings they attach to their roles as parents within their specific cultural contexts.

Participants were selected based on their diverse cultural backgrounds and their status as parents. This selection ensured a broad representation of cultural perspectives on parenthood and family life.

Participants were recruited through community centers, cultural organizations, and social media platforms. Snowball sampling was also employed, where initial participants referred other potential participants from their cultural communities.

The sample size was determined by the principle of theoretical saturation, where data collection continued until no new themes or insights were emerging from the interviews.

2.2 Measures

2.2.1 Semi-Structured Interview

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for a flexible yet guided conversation. This method facilitated the collection of rich, detailed data and provided participants the opportunity to share their experiences and views in their own words.

A semi-structured interview guide was developed, containing open-ended questions designed to explore participants' perceptions of parenthood and family life within their cultural context. The guide included questions about their parenting roles, family dynamics, cultural traditions, and challenges they face.

Interviews were conducted in a location convenient for the participants, such as their homes, community centers, or

online platforms (e.g., Zoom), depending on their preference. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed using NVivo software, a qualitative data analysis tool that facilitates the organization and coding of qualitative data. The analysis followed these steps:

Transcription: All interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy in capturing participants' responses.

Coding: The transcriptions were imported into NVivo, where they were systematically coded. Initial coding involved identifying key themes and patterns in the data. These codes were then refined and categorized into broader themes.

Thematic Analysis: The coded data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. This involved a detailed examination of the themes to understand the cultural influences on perceptions of parenthood and family life.

Measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality of participants' data. Pseudonyms were used in transcriptions and reports to protect participants' identities.

3 Findings and Results

The study included a diverse group of 28 participants, representing a range of cultural backgrounds and demographic characteristics. The participants comprised 16 women (57%) and 12 men (43%), reflecting a relatively balanced gender distribution. Age-wise, participants ranged from 25 to 60 years, with a mean age of 38 years. In terms of marital status, 22 participants (79%) were married, 4 (14%) were single, and 2 (7%) were divorced.

Regarding employment status, 18 participants (64%) were employed full-time, 6 (21%) were part-time workers, and 4 (14%) were not currently employed. The length of residence in the host country also varied, with an average duration of 10 years, ranging from 2 to 25 years. This demographic diversity provided a rich tapestry of experiences and perspectives on parenthood and family life, contributing to the depth and breadth of the qualitative data collected.

Table 1

The Results of Qualitative Analysis

Categories	Subcategories	Concepts
Cultural Traditions	Family Roles and Responsibilities	Gender-specific roles, Elders' influence, Division of labor
	Rituals and Celebrations	Naming ceremonies, Festivals, Birth rituals
	Religious Beliefs	Faith-based practices, Moral teachings, Spiritual guidance
	Language and Communication	Storytelling, Native language use, Intergenerational dialogue
Parenting Practices	Cultural Identity	Heritage preservation, Cultural pride, Ethnic values
	Parenting Styles	Authoritative, Permissive, Authoritarian, Neglectful
	Discipline Methods	Physical punishment, Time-outs, Positive reinforcement
	Education Priorities	Academic achievement, Holistic development, Extracurricular activities
	Health and Nutrition	Traditional remedies, Dietary practices, Child healthcare
Challenges and Adaptations	Work-Life Balance	Parental leave, Flexible work hours, Childcare arrangements
	Family Support Networks	Extended family, Community support, Peer groups
	Integration into Society	Acculturation, Language barriers, Employment challenges
	Intergenerational Conflict	Value differences, Adaptation issues, Role reversals
	Economic Pressures	Financial stress, Housing stability, Employment opportunities
	Access to Resources	Educational facilities, Healthcare services, Social services
	Mental Health	Stress management, Counseling services, Support groups
	Legal and Policy Issues	Immigration laws, Child protection policies, Parental rights

3.1 Cultural Traditions

Family Roles and Responsibilities: In many cultures, specific roles and responsibilities are assigned based on gender and age. Participants noted that "women are expected to take care of the household and children, while men are seen as the primary breadwinners." Elders often play a significant role in decision-making and maintaining family traditions. One interviewee mentioned, "In our family, my grandfather's word is final. He guides us in all important matters."

Rituals and Celebrations: Cultural rituals and celebrations form a crucial part of family life. Participants described various ceremonies such as naming ceremonies, festivals, and birth rituals. "Our family gathers every year for the harvest festival. It's a time to honor our ancestors and celebrate our culture," one participant shared.

Religious Beliefs: Faith-based practices and moral teachings significantly influence perceptions of parenthood. Many participants highlighted the importance of spiritual guidance in their parenting. "We teach our children the values of our faith. It's important they grow up with a strong moral foundation," said one interviewee.

Language and Communication: Language is a key component of cultural identity, with storytelling and native language use being integral in passing down traditions. "Every night, my mother tells us stories from our homeland. It's how we stay connected to our roots," a participant noted.

Cultural Identity: Maintaining cultural identity through heritage preservation, cultural pride, and ethnic values was emphasized by many. "Even though we live far from our country, we make sure our children know where they come from and what it means to be part of our culture," one parent explained.

3.2 Parenting Practices

Parenting Styles: Diverse parenting styles were observed, ranging from authoritative to permissive, authoritarian, and neglectful. "In our culture, parents are quite strict. We believe discipline shapes good character," mentioned one participant, contrasting with another who said, "We prefer to give our children more freedom to explore and learn on their own."

Discipline Methods: The methods of discipline varied widely, including physical punishment, time-outs, and positive reinforcement. "I use time-outs and talk to my children about their behavior. I want them to understand why something is wrong rather than just fear punishment," shared a parent.

Education Priorities: Education is highly valued, with a strong emphasis on academic achievement, holistic development, and extracurricular activities. "Education is our top priority. We encourage our children to excel in school and participate in sports and arts," one parent stated.

Health and Nutrition: Traditional remedies and dietary practices were common, alongside modern healthcare practices. "We follow a balanced diet rooted in our

traditional foods, but also make sure our children get regular medical check-ups," one participant noted.

Work-Life Balance: Balancing work and family life emerged as a significant theme, with discussions on parental leave, flexible work hours, and childcare arrangements. "I appreciate the flexible work hours that allow me to spend more time with my kids," one interviewee commented.

Family Support Networks: Extended family and community support are vital in parenting. "We rely on our extended family for support. It's a collective effort to raise children," mentioned a participant.

3.3 Challenges and Adaptations

Integration into Society: Participants faced challenges with acculturation, language barriers, and employment opportunities. "Adjusting to a new culture is tough. Learning the language and finding a job has been challenging," one parent shared.

Intergenerational Conflict: Value differences between generations led to conflicts and adaptation issues. "My parents want to stick to old traditions, but I believe we need to adapt to the modern world," said one participant.

Economic Pressures: Financial stress, housing stability, and employment opportunities were significant concerns. "Providing for my family in a new country is hard. We struggle with stable housing and job security," one interviewee stated.

Access to Resources: Access to educational facilities, healthcare services, and social services varied among participants. "Finding good schools and healthcare for my children is difficult, but essential," a parent explained.

Mental Health: Mental health issues like stress management and the need for counseling services were highlighted. "I often feel overwhelmed. Support groups have been a great help in managing stress," shared one participant.

Legal and Policy Issues: Immigration laws, child protection policies, and parental rights posed challenges. "Navigating immigration laws is a constant struggle. It affects our family stability and security," one interviewee noted.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored the cultural influences on perceptions of parenthood and family life through a qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of participants. The findings revealed three main themes: Cultural Traditions, Parenting Practices, and Challenges and

Adaptations. These themes were further divided into subthemes, each elucidating specific aspects of how culture shapes perceptions and practices related to parenthood.

The findings highlighted that cultural traditions significantly influence family roles and responsibilities, rituals and celebrations, religious beliefs, language and communication, and cultural identity. The delineation of gender-specific roles and the influence of elders underscore the importance of cultural expectations in defining parental duties. Baldwin (2017) discusses how ideologies of parenthood shape women's use of social egg freezing technology, illustrating how deeply entrenched cultural norms dictate parental roles and behaviors (Baldwin, 2017). Similarly, Cornish (2015) describes how traditional values in Jordan shape the transition to parenthood, reinforcing the significance of cultural context in parenting (Cornish, 2015).

The rituals and celebrations described by participants, such as naming ceremonies and festivals, are integral to maintaining cultural heritage and identity. These findings align with Beneke and Cheatham (2015), who emphasize the importance of inclusive and democratic family-professional partnerships, highlighting the role of cultural practices in shaping family dynamics and professional interactions (Beneke & Cheatham, 2015).

Religious beliefs emerged as a crucial element in parenting, influencing moral teachings and spiritual guidance. This is consistent with findings by Dor and Cohen-Fridel (2009), who noted distinct differences in how Jewish and Arab emerging adults perceive parenthood, reflecting broader cultural and religious narratives (Dor & Cohen-Fridel, 2009). The emphasis on language and communication, particularly the use of native languages and storytelling, underscores the role of cultural identity in parenting practices (Gato et al., 2022).

Parenting styles and discipline methods varied widely among participants, reflecting diverse cultural norms and values. The authoritative, permissive, authoritarian, and neglectful styles observed align with the findings of Ekholm and Olofsson (2016), who discuss the limitations of previous approaches to parenting and worrying about climate change. The varied discipline methods, from physical punishment to positive reinforcement, illustrate the spectrum of cultural attitudes towards child-rearing.

Education priorities, including academic achievement and holistic development, were emphasized by many participants. This aligns with the findings of Kotlar and Massis (2013), who discuss the diversity of goals in family firms and the importance of social interactions in achieving

family-centered objectives (Ekholm & Olofsson, 2016). The focus on health and nutrition, incorporating both traditional remedies and modern healthcare practices, reflects the interplay between cultural heritage and contemporary health practices (Paidipati & Deatrck, 2014).

The struggle to balance work and family life was a common theme, with participants highlighting the need for flexible work hours and reliable childcare arrangements. This finding is supported by Ling and Kellermanns (2010), who discuss the effects of family firm-specific sources of TMT diversity and the moderating role of information exchange frequency (Ling & Kellermanns, 2010). The importance of extended family and community support networks further underscores the collective nature of parenting in many cultures (Karataş-Özkan et al., 2011).

Participants faced significant challenges in integrating into new societies, dealing with intergenerational conflict, and managing economic pressures. The difficulties in acculturation and language barriers align with Sanders et al. (2021), who discuss the impact of preconceived ideas and idealistic expectations of parenthood (Sanders et al., 2021). The intergenerational conflicts described by participants reflect value differences and adaptation issues (Dor & Cohen-Fridel, 2009).

Economic pressures, including financial stress and employment challenges, were significant concerns for many participants. These findings align with the discussion by Ekholm and Olofsson (2016) on the limitations of previous approaches to parenting in the context of broader societal issues (Ekholm & Olofsson, 2016). The struggle to access educational, healthcare, and social services underscores the systemic barriers faced by culturally diverse families (Gato et al., 2022).

Mental health emerged as a critical issue, with participants highlighting the need for stress management and counseling services. This finding is supported by Paidipati and Deatrck (2014), who discuss the role of family phenomena in children and adolescents with ADHD (Paidipati & Deatrck, 2014). The challenges posed by legal and policy issues, such as immigration laws and child protection policies, further complicate the experiences of culturally diverse parents (Cornish, 2015).

While this study provides valuable insights into the cultural influences on perceptions of parenthood and family life, it is not without limitations. First, the sample size of 28 participants, while sufficient for qualitative research, may not capture the full diversity of experiences within each cultural group. Future research should aim to include larger

and more diverse samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Second, the reliance on self-reported data through interviews may introduce bias, as participants may present socially desirable responses or may not fully recall past experiences accurately. Triangulating these findings with other data sources, such as observations or surveys, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study.

Future research should explore the longitudinal impact of cultural influences on parenthood, examining how these influences evolve over time and across generations. Additionally, investigating the role of cultural adaptation and acculturation processes in shaping parenting practices could provide deeper insights into the dynamic nature of cultural influences. Researchers should also consider examining the intersectionality of cultural influences with other factors such as socioeconomic status, education level, and geographic location to understand the multifaceted nature of parenting practices. Lastly, comparative studies across different cultural contexts could highlight universal versus culture-specific aspects of parenthood, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of global parenting practices.

Practitioners working with culturally diverse families should adopt culturally sensitive approaches that acknowledge and respect the unique cultural backgrounds and practices of each family. This includes providing resources and support tailored to the specific needs of diverse cultural groups, such as language assistance, culturally relevant parenting programs, and community-based support networks. Educators and policymakers should promote inclusive policies that address the systemic barriers faced by culturally diverse families, ensuring equitable access to educational, healthcare, and social services. Additionally, fostering collaborative partnerships between families and professionals can enhance the support provided to parents and children, promoting positive outcomes for all family members. By embracing cultural diversity and promoting inclusive practices, practitioners can better support the well-being and development of culturally diverse families in a globalized world.

This study sheds light on the profound impact of cultural influences on perceptions of parenthood and family life. Through a qualitative analysis of diverse participants, the research highlights the complex interplay between cultural traditions, parenting practices, and the challenges faced by culturally diverse families. The findings underscore the importance of culturally sensitive approaches in supporting

parents and children, recognizing the unique needs and experiences of each cultural group. By addressing the limitations of this study and pursuing further research, we can deepen our understanding of cultural influences on parenthood and contribute to the development of inclusive and supportive practices for families worldwide.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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