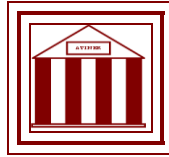


**Athens Institute for Education and Research**

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**ATINER's Conference Paper Series**

**EDU2014-0978**

**Females' Perception of the Role of Fathers  
in Caring for Children**

**Shahrokh Shafaie**

**Professor**

**Southeast Missouri State University**

**USA**

**Gloysis Mayers**

**Associate Professor**

**Zayed University**

**United Arab Emirates**

**Fatima Yousef Al-Maadadi**

**Associate Professor**

**Qatar University**

**Qatar**

**Chris Coughlin, Associate Professor**

**Qatar University**

**Qatar**

**Deborah G. Wooldridge, Professor**

**Bowling Green State University**

**USA**

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Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos  
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Athens Institute for Education and Research  
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece  
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209  
Email: [info@atiner.gr](mailto:info@atiner.gr) URL: [www.atiner.gr](http://www.atiner.gr)  
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## **Females' Perception of the Role of Fathers in Caring for Children**

**Shahrokh Shafaie**  
**Professor**  
**Southeast Missouri State University**  
**USA**

**Gloysis Mayers**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Zayed University**  
**United Arab Emirates**

**Fatima Yousef Al-Maadadi**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Qatar University**  
**Qatar**

**Chris Coughlin**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Qatar University**  
**Qatar**

**Deborah G. Wooldridge**  
**Professor**  
**Bowling Green State University**  
**USA**

### **Abstract**

This study examined perceptions of a group of Qatari females about father's involvement in caring for children. Participants in this study responded to a questionnaire that measures the extent of subjects' beliefs about the importance of the father's role to children's development. The results revealed that the female participants' had positive attitudes regarding fathers' capabilities and their significant roles in children's development. The participants' positive perceptions about the role of fathers were positively related to their level of satisfaction with their own fathers' involvement during childhood. Also, the study examined the relationship between participant's attitude about father involvement and their gender role ideology. The results showed that despite their positive view about their own fathers and overall favorable attitude about the importance of fathers, they scored high in the gender ideology measure, which indicates that the majority of the females in our study favored traditional gendered-specific roles for parents. However, as expected, there was a moderate negative relationship between the subjects' perception of fathers' roles and their gender ideology views.

**Key Words:** Fatherhood, fathering roles, father involvement; females' perception of fathers.

## **Introduction**

This study examined perceptions and beliefs of a group of Qatari females regarding father's role in caring for children and their contributions to children's development. The results are discussed in the context of cultural challenges to balance traditional views about gender roles associated with parenthood and current notions for promoting caring and nurturing fathers. This report focuses on gaining a greater cultural understanding of females' perspectives about father's role in children's development and its impact as a potential barrier to fathers' involvement with their children.

## **Brief Review of Literature**

### *Cultural Influences on Father Involvement*

According to Ahmed (2013), there has been one major study on Arab fathering. Based on research concerned with Arab families, it can be speculated that unlike a Western contemporary view of fathers' roles as becoming less stereotypic, an Arab perspective of parenting would be more traditional given a much more traditional view of the role of husbands and wives. These familial gender role expectations were clearly demonstrated in a Qatari family survey whereby respondents reported on the distribution of family household responsibilities (Al-Ghanim, 2013). These "expected" family roles not only explain family structure but family dynamics as well, both historically and currently (Al-Maadadi & Ikhlef, n.a.). These well-established familial customs and traditions are very much seen today in the Arab Gulf States.

Al Ghanim (2013) writes that even with the profound changes over the past 30 years in the Arab Gulf region, one would expect to find the continuation of traditional male and female, husband and wife roles in societies where the patriarchal model still dominates. Thus, based on what is known in terms of past and current Arab family structure and dynamics, one could predict that traditional views of the parenting role of fathers still dominate beliefs and attitudes concerning the roles of fathers (Ahmed, 2013).

## **Purpose of Present Study**

Historically, the role of caring for children has been assigned to and assumed by females in most cultures. Considering the recent emphasize on fathers' involvement in caring for children, one wonders if females, especially in traditional non-western cultures, perceive men as capable of assuming this role. Since most of these studies have been conducted in western cultures, we were curious to know if similar findings would be obtained in more traditional non-western cultures.

Therefore, this study examined perceptions and beliefs of a group of Qatari females regarding father's role in caring for children and their contributions to

children’s development. The female participants in this study responded to a questionnaire that examines the extent of subjects’ beliefs about the importance of the father’s role to child’s development, their level of satisfaction with their own fathers roles in their lives, and their overall gender ideology about traditional parenting roles. Also, the study explored possible relationships between participant’s attitude about father involvement and their beliefs about parenting gendered roles.

**Methodology**

*Demographics*

The sample included 79 female university students and others living in Doha, Qatar. Participants included in this report ranged in age from 18 to 35. In terms of marital status, 77.2 % were single and about 87.3% of participants had no children. Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the participants.

**Table1. Qatari Participants’ Demographics**

Demographic Variables	N	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	79	100.0	100.0	2.0	0
<b>Age</b>					
18-24	27	34.2	34.2	1.73	.593
25-30	46	58.2	92.4		
31-35	6	7.6	100.0		
<b>Country of Origin</b>					
Qatar	79	100.00	100.0	3.0	0
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>					
High School Diploma	18	22.8	22.8	2.95	.658
Some College	48	60.8	83.5		
2-year degree from college	12	15.2	98.7		
Bachelor's Degree	1	1.3	100.0		
<b>Type of Degree</b>					
N/A	6	7.6	7.6	2.54	1.185
Social Sciences/Education	5	6.3	13.9		
Natural Sciences	27	34.2	48.1		
Business	25	31.6	79.7		
Public Media Communication	13	16.5	96.2		
Liberal Arts	3	3.8	100.0		
<b>Current Marital Status</b>					
Single	61	77.2	77.2	1.43	.827
Engaged	3	3.8	81.0		
Married	14	17.7	98.7		

Divorced	1	1.3	100.0		
Number of Children					
None	69	87.3	87.3		
One	6	7.6	94.9	1.18	.500
Two	4	5.1	100.0		
Gender of Child/Children					
Does not have children	69	87.3	87.3		
Female only	5	6.3	93.7	.19	.533
Male only	5	6.3	100.0		

### *Procedure and Measures*

The survey instrument includes statements evaluating the participants' viewpoints about the importance of father's role in children's development, their fathers' involvement and overall satisfaction with their own fathers' level of involvement in their lives during childhood, beliefs about family gendered roles and the most important role for fathers. The components of these constructs and specific measures are described in the following sections.

#### *The Role of the Father Questionnaire (ROFQ) Score*

To assess participants' attitude about the importance of fathers to child's development, a revised version of (ROFQ) was used in this study (Palkovitz, 1984; McBride & Rane, 1996). The ROFQ consists of 15 questions on a 5-point Likert scale with a total score range of 15 to 75. A higher score indicates a belief that fathers should be involved in the care and development of their children. Furthermore, higher scores suggest a positive view about father's involvement. McBride and Rane (1996) also report statistically significant correlations between the ROFQ and fathers' level of involvement in caring of their children as an indicator of high construct validity.

#### *Satisfaction With Own Father Involvement (SWOFI) Score*

This questionnaire includes two additional items in the same 5-point Likert scale format; 1) *as a child, my father was involved in my direct care* and 2) *overall, I am satisfied with my father's involvement in my life when I was a child*. These provide information concerning how the participants viewed their own fathers' level of participation in their care and their satisfaction with their fathers' level of involvement during childhood. Participants' ratings of these two items were used to measure subjects' SWOFI score.

#### *Gender Ideology Measure (GI)*

The following four items were also included to measure the participants' beliefs about traditional family gender roles: 1) it is much better if a man earns the main living and the woman takes care of the home and family; 2) preschool children are more likely to suffer if their mother is employed; 3) I do not approve of mothers who work full-time when their youngest child is under age 5; and 4) I disapprove of mothers who work part-time when their youngest child is under age 5. These items examine the impact of gender ideology in parental involvement

with children and these items were derived from Wave 1 of the *National Survey of Families & Households* and the four-item scale discriminate egalitarian and traditional parents in terms of their gender ideologies (Bulanda, 2004). To generate the GI score for each subject, the total of the numerical value for these 4 items were calculated using the same 5-point Likert scale format with a score range of 4 to 20 and higher scores indicate more traditional attitude and stronger commitment to traditional gendered family roles.

Overall, a higher score on these six additional questions indicate the respondent 1) experienced a father who was involved in her care, 2) is satisfied with the relationship with her father, 3) considers in a more traditional father-mother role, 4) believes young children suffer if their mother works outside the home, 5) disapproves of mothers working full-time, or 6) part-time when children are under the age of 5. On these six specific items, no validity or reliability measures were conducted.

#### *Perception of Paternal Roles and Parenting Domains (PPRPD) Score*

The final portion of the questionnaire included a list of eight parenting roles and participants were instructed to indicate which ones they thought were the most important role(s) for fathers to do for their children. Participants were asked to rank these roles on a scale of 1-8, with responses ranging from the Most Important=1, to Least Important=8. The eight items were 1) taking time to play with his child; 2) taking care of his child /children financially; 3) showing his child love and affection; 4) giving his child moral and ethical guidance; 5) directly caring for his child; 6) making sure his child is safe and protected; 7) helping his child learn by encouraging his or her curiosity; and 8) disciplining his child appropriately. These statements characterize two sets of parental roles and functions. Statements, 2, 4, 6, and 8 represent more traditional roles and statements 1, 3, 5 and 7 imply non-traditional roles.

## **Results**

#### *Descriptive Analysis*

The means and standard deviations of scores for the *Role of the Father Questionnaire (ROFQ)*, *Satisfaction With Own Father Involvement (SWOFI)*, and *the Gender Ideology (GI)* measures are presented in Table 2. The Qatari females in our sample scored with strong ratings of 80.76% for perceptions of father's roles (ROFQ), and 77.0% for the *SWOFI measure*, and 69.6 % in the *GI measure*. This indicates that overall the females in our sample are supportive of a more proactive father. Also, most subjects (77.0%) indicated they were satisfied with their father's level of involvement in their up-bringing. However, in terms of gender ideology their high ranking of 69.6% suggests that majority of subjects believed in a more traditional father-mother roles, consider young children suffer if their mother works outside the home, and disapprove of mothers working full-time or part-time when children are under the age of 5.

**Table 2.** Means and Standard Deviations for the Role of the Father Questionnaire (ROFQ scores), Satisfaction with Own Father Involvement (SWOFI scores), and the Gender Ideology Measure (GI scores) and The Composite Gender Ideology (CGI) Measure

Measures	N	Mean	Percentage	Std. Deviations
Role of the Father Questionnaire (ROFQ)...	79	60.57/75(***)	80.76%	6.15
Satisfaction With Own Father Involvement (SWOFI) .....	79	7.70/10(***)	77.00%	2.15
Gender Ideology Measure (GI) .....	79	13.92/20(***)	69.60%	3.59
Composite Gender Ideology Measure (CGI) ...	79	23.92/35(***)	67.89%	5.14

\*\*\* $P < .001$

*The Results of Correlational Analysis*

Pearson correlational analysis was conducted to determine possible relationships between the two variables of the *ROFQ*, and *GI* measures with the *SWOFI* score. The Pearson correlations' findings revealed that there was small positive relationship ( $r = 0.223, p < .05$ ) between participants' perceptions of fathers' roles in children's development and the participants' reflective report about their own fathers' level of involvement in their care.

Moreover, there was a moderate positive relationship ( $r = 0.333, p < .01$ ) between the subjects' level of overall satisfaction with their fathers' involvement in their lives (i.e., the statement *Overall, I am satisfied with my father's involvement in my life when I was a child* and *their own attitudes about the importance of fathers to child's development*). However, the Gender Ideology (GI) score was correlated only with the statement *Overall, I am satisfied with my father's involvement in my life when I was a child* ( $r = 0.260, p < .05$ ). The results of these correlations are offered in the Tables 3(a), 3(b), and 3(c).

**Table 3(a).** Results of Pearson Correlations for Three Measures: The Satisfaction With Own Father Involvement (SWOFI scores) with the Role of the Father Questionnaire (ROFQ scores), and the Gender Ideology Measure (GI scores)

Measures	Role of the Father Questionnaire (ROFQ)	Gender Ideology Measure (GI)
<u>Satisfaction With Own Father Involvement (SWOFI)</u>	$r = .311(**)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .005 N=79	$r = .203$ Sig. (2-tailed) .07 N=79
• “As a child my father involved in my direct care (e.g., feeding, dressing, etc.)”	$r = .228(*)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .044 N=79	$r = .115$ Sig. (2-tailed) .313 N=79
• “Overall, I am satisfied with my father's involvement in my life when I was a child”	$r = .333(**)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .003 N= 79	$r = .260(*)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .021 N= 79

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level



**Table 3(b).** Results of Pearson Correlations for Three Measures: The Satisfaction With Own Father Involvement (SWOFI scores) with the Role of the Father Questionnaire (ROFQ scores), the Gender Ideology Measure (GI scores), and the Composite Gender Ideology (CGI scores)

Measures	SWOFI →	As a child my father involved in my direct care (e.g., feeding, dressing, etc.)	Overall, I am satisfied with my father's involvement in my life when I was a child
<b>(ROFQ)</b>	$r = .311(**)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .005 N=79	$r = .228(*)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .44 N=79	$r = .333(**)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .003 N=79
<b>(GI)</b>	_____	$r = .333(**)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .003 N=79	$r = .260(*)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .021 N=79
<b>(CGI)</b>	_____	$r = .043$ Sig. (2-tailed) .706 N=79	$r = .242(*)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .031 N=79

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

**Table 3(c).** Results of Pearson Correlations for Two measures: The Gender Ideology Measure and the Composite Gender Ideology Measure

Measure	Composite Gender Ideology (CGI) Measure
The Gender Ideology (GI) Measure	$r = .897(**)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .0001 N=79

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level

*Post hoc Analysis*

Given the correlational analysis results, we developed a new Composite Gender Ideology measure based on the participants' scores from our previous *Gender Ideology* measure (Bulanda, 2004) and sum of their scores from the following three statements listed in our *ROFQ* measure (McBride & Rane, 1996). We were curious to see if this new measure would be a better predictor of subjects' beliefs about the importance fathers' role in children's development. These three *ROFQ* statements are: *a- fathers should be the disciplinarians in the family; b- the father's role is to provide for his family, not baby sit the children; and c- taking care of his children financially is the best way for a father to show he cares about them.* The score for each subject in this new CGI measure was calculated by adding the total of the numerical value for these 4 items from the previous GI and the sum of the scores from the 3 statements mentioned above. Using the same 5-point Likert scale, this procedure produced a total score for each subject which ranged from 7 to 35. Higher scores indicate more traditional attitude

and stronger commitment to traditional gendered family roles. The results of this post hoc Pearson correlational analysis revealed a significant positive association between subjects' attitudes about fathers' roles and subjects' satisfactions with their fathers' involvements ( $r = .311, p < 0.01$ ). However, as expected, there was a moderate negative relationship ( $r = - 0.366, p < 0.01$ ) between the subjects' POFQ scores and their CGI score (See Table 4).

**Table 4.** Results of Pearson Correlations Post hoc Analysis for Three measures: ROFQ scores, SWOFI scores with GI scores, and the CGI scores

Measures	ROFQ	SWOFI	CGI
(ROFQ)	—————	$r = 0.311(**)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .005 N=79	$r = -.366 (**)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .001 N=79
(SWOFI)	$r = 0.311(**)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .005 N=79	—————	$r = 0.149$ Sig. (2-tailed) .191 N=79
(CGI)	$r = -.366 (**)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .001 N= 79	$r = 0.149$ Sig. (2-tailed) .191 N=79	—————
(GI)	$r = -.0182$ Sig. (2-tailed) .108 N= 79	$r = 0.149$ Sig. (2-tailed) .191 N=79	$r = .897(**)$ Sig. (2-tailed) .0001 N=79

(\*) Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

(\*\*) Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

*The Results of Regression Analysis*

A series of regression analysis and independent one-way ANOVA's were performed to explore whether subjects' attitudes about the importance of fathers' roles in a child's development is associated with any of the socio-demographic variables (See Tables 5-7). The results indicated a significant main effect for the age variable; there was negative relationship between subjects' age and their perceptions of fathers' roles in child's life.

**Table 5.** Qatar Regression of Perception of Father Questionnaire (POFQ) Scores and Demographic Variables Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.282(a)	.080	.003	6.138

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender of Child/Children, Type of Degree, Highest Level of Education Completed, Age, Current Marital Status, and Number of Children

**Table 6.** *Qatar Regression of Perception of Father Questionnaire (POFQ) Scores and Demographic Variables NOVA (b)*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	235.204	6	39.201	1.041	.406(a)
	Residual	2712.163	72	37.669		
	Total	2947.367	78			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender of Child/Children, Type of Degree, Highest Level of Education Completed, Age, Current Marital Status, and Number of Children

b. Dependent Variable: Perception of Father Questionnaire (POFQ) Score

**Table 7.** *Qatar Regression of Perception of Father Questionnaire (POFQ) Scores and Demographic Variables Coefficients (a)*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	63.065	4.439		14.207	.000
	<b>*Age</b>	<b>-3.027</b>	<b>1.400</b>	<b>-.292</b>	<b>-2.163</b>	<b>.034</b>
	Highest Level of Education Completed	-.914	1.133	-.098	-.806	.423
	Type of Degree	.636	.609	.123	1.044	.300
	Current Marital Status	.454	1.244	.061	.365	.716
	Number of Children	2.898	3.219	.236	.901	.371
	Gender of Children	-1.218	2.909	-.106	-.419	.677

a. Dependent Variable: Perception of Father Report (POFQ) scores \*  $p \leq .05$

The Tables 8-10 illustrate the regression analysis for the *Satisfaction With Father Involvement (SWOFI)* score and demographic variables. The result yielded a significant positive relationship with the *number of children* variable; this suggests participants with more children reported higher level of satisfaction with their own fathers' involvements in their lives.

**Table 8.** *Qatar Regression of Satisfaction with Father Involvement (SWOFI) and Demographic Variables Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.318(a)	.101	.026	2.122

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender of Child/Children? Type of Degree, Highest Level of Education Completed, Age, Current Marital Status, Number of Children

**Table 9.** *Qatar Regression of Satisfaction With Father Involvement (SWOFI) and Demographic Variables ANOVA (b)*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	36.497	6	6.083	1.351	.246(a)
	Residual	324.212	72	4.503		
	Total	360.709	78			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender of Child/Children, Type of Degree, Highest Level of Education Completed, Age, Current Marital Status, and Number of Children

b. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction With Father Involvement (SWOFI)

**Table 10.** *Qatar Regression of Satisfaction With Father Involvement (SWOFI) and Demographic Variables Coefficients (a)*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.821	1.535		4.445	.000
	Age	-.868	.484	-.239	-1.793	.077
	Highest Level of Education Completed	.208	.392	.064	.530	.597
	Type of Degree	-.139	.211	-.077	-.662	.510
	Current Marital Status	-.342	.430	-.132	-.796	.429
	<b>*Number of Children</b>	<b>2.457</b>	<b>1.113</b>	<b>.572</b>	<b>2.208</b>	<b>.030</b>
	Gender of Child/Children?	-1.483	1.006	-.367	-1.474	.145

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction With Father Involvement (SWOFI) \*  $p \leq .05$

None of the subsequent regression analyses revealed any significant results regarding the relationships between the demographic variables and the subjects' *GI* nor the *CGI* measures.

*Analysis for the Perception of Paternal/Fathering Roles & Parenting Domains (PPRPD) Score*

A series of one-way ANOVAs were carried out to explore the effect of demographic variables on subjects' views of paternal/fathering roles and parenting domains. The results revealed significant main effects for subjects age ; subjects in the 18-24 years age group believed that *showing his child love and affection* is the most important role for a father (M=1.70, SD=0.99, F=7.16, P<0.001). In terms of the impact of education on subjects' attitudes, it was found that among the participants who had some college training the *giving his child moral and ethical guidance* role was the most important one for fathers (M=3.07, SD=1.77, F=2.64, P < 0.05) The role *taking time to play with his child* approach a significant level (M=3.0, SD=1.67, F=2.69, P < 0.053). There was a significant relationship between subjects' area of study (i.e., type of degree) and their views

about the important role for fathers; Subjects who majored in Social Sciences/Education believed that *directly caring for his child* (e.g., *feeding, dressing...*) is the most important role for fathers to assume (M=3.4, SD= 2.51 , F=3.00,  $P < 0.05$ ). There were no significant effects for marital status, number of children, and child’s gender.

As previously noted, the statements in this list signify two sets of parental roles and functions in raising children: 1) traditional roles/on-gender roles: (b) *offer financial care/bread winner*;(f) *offer safety & protection*; (h) *disciplining*; (d) *offer moral guidance*; and 2) egalitarian or non-traditional/nurturing roles: (a) *take time to play*; (c) *show love & affection*; (e) *offer direct care*; and (g) *teach, help child learn*. Table 11 represents the means and standard deviations of participants’ perceptions about the most important role(s) for fathers to assume with their children. Table 12 shows the frequencies and percentages of those who ranked each role from 1 to 3 on a Likert scale of 1-8, with responses ranging from the Most Important=1, to Least Important=8.

**Table 11.** *Perception of Paternal Roles & Parenting Domains (PPRPD) score. Participants’ Perceptions of The Most Important role(s) for Fathers to Assume with Their Children*

Parenting Roles/ Tasks	N	Mean	SD
Showing his child love and affection	79	2.67	2.08
Making sure his child is safe and protected	79	3.06	1.73
Giving his child moral and ethical guidance	79	3.46	1.82
Taking care of his child /children financially	79	4.44	2.07
Disciplining his child appropriately	79	5.11	2.00
Helping his child learn by encouraging his or her curiosity	79	5.19	1.83
Directly caring for his child (e.g., feeding, dressing)	79	6.42	2.15
Taking time to play with his child	79	5.43	1.79

Responses Ranging from the Most Important Role=1 and Least Important Role=8

**Table 12.** *Perception of Paternal Roles & Parenting Domains (PPRPD) score Participants’ Perceptions of The Most Important role(s) for Fathers to Assume with Their Children: Frequencies Percentages of Those Who Ranked Each Role from 1 to 3*

Parenting Roles/Tasks	n	%
<u>The Top 3 Most Important Roles for Fathers</u>		
1-Showing his child love and affection	59	74.0%
2-Making sure his child is safe and protected	50	63.3%
3-Giving his child moral and ethical guidance	41	51.9%
<hr/>		
4-Taking care of his child /children financially	22	40.0%
5-Disciplining his child appropriately	20	25.3%
<hr/>		
<u>The 3 Least Important Roles for Fathers</u>		
6-Taking time to play with his child	15	19.0%
7-Helping his child learn by encouraging his or her curiosity	13	16.8%
8-Directly caring for his child (e.g., feeding, dressing)	9	11.3%

N= 79 Responses Ranging from the Most Important Role=1 and Least Important Role=8

## Discussion and Conclusions

Overall the results of the ROFQ revealed that the Qatari females in our sample held positive perceptions of father's competence and their significant roles in their children's development. Also, a majority (77.0%) of the sample expressed satisfaction about their father's involvement in their lives during childhood; it appears that subjects' reflective perceptions of their own childhood experiences with their fathers was a positive influence on their views about the importance of fathers in children's care and development.

Previous studies have reported that the adult-children's perceptions and self-report of paternal and maternal involvement is a good predictor of their psychological and developmental outcomes (Finley, Mira, & Schwartz, 2008; Hawkins, Amanto, & King, 2006). Likewise, the results of our study revealed significant positive associations between subjects' attitudes about fathers' roles and their satisfactions with their fathers' involvements. Additionally, our findings yielded a significant positive relationship with the "number of children" variable; this suggests participants with more children reported higher level of satisfaction with their own fathers' involvements in their lives when they were a child.

As noted before, it has been known that maternal perception and view about adequacy of fathering behaviors (Allen & Hawkins, 1999) and maternal attitude about fathers' competency (Gaertner, Spinrad, Eisenberg, & Greving, 2007) are significant factors in determining fathers' level of participation in child caregiving. Especially, maternal attitude has been linked to maternal gatekeeping behaviors which may promote or hinder father's involvement with his children (Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf & Sokolowski, 2008).

However, despite our participants' positive views about their own fathers and their overall favorable attitude about the importance fathers in children's development, they scored high in the gender ideology measure representing a more non-egalitarian attitude about parenting roles. Their high gender ideology scores implies that majority of the Qatari females in our study (69.6%) displayed a traditional gendered-specific roles for parents (e.g., believed that young children suffer if their mother works outside the home, and disagreed with the idea of mothers working full-time or part-time when children are young (i.e., under the age of 5).

The Qatari females in our sample had high scores on the gender ideology measure which indicate more traditional attitude and stronger commitment to traditional gendered family roles. However, as expected, there was a moderate negative relationship between the subjects' perception of fathers' roles and their traditional gender ideology views. Other studies have found that both maternal and paternal traditional gender values and ideologies may have a negative impact on fathers' involvement in housework as well as childcare activities (Bulanda, 2004; Paquette, Bolte, Tucotte, Dubeau, & Bouchard, 2000).

Examination of our data indicated that the two demographic variables of age and number of children were associated with the subjects' perceptions of fathers' roles. In our sample there was a negative relationship between subjects' age and perceptions about fathers; older subjects held a less supportive view about

fathers' roles than female subjects in the 18-24 years old group. Yet, an opposite pattern emerged among females with children in our sample; they were confident about the significant role of fathers in care and development of young children. However, in the context of their views about the most important roles for fathers, it appears that they endorse a more traditional form of paternal participation in parenting children versus a contemporary and egalitarian practice. Even though many studies (Fagan & Barnett, 2003) have reported the adverse effect of mothers' traditional beliefs about parenting roles and father involvement, Bulanda (2004) and discovered that it is the father's gender ideology that matters the most. Our findings support the proposed position about existence of variety in fathering roles due to influences of culture-specific variables (Shwalb, Shwalb, & Lamb, 2013). Also, present study's findings are consistent with Ahmed (2013) view that despite economic and social changes in most Arab societies, Arabs' perspectives of parenting roles remains traditional and stereotypical because of the deep and pronounce commitment to traditional gender-roles in Arab cultures and family structure. Moreover, our results are attuned with the results from Al Ghanim (2013) Qatari family survey which participants revealed a very stereotypical and traditional view' about gender-appropriate household responsibilities for parents.

Finally, while the majority of participants, especially the youngest age group, in our sample believed that *showing his child love and affection* is the most important role for fathers, other attributes associated with an egalitarian parenting approach (i.e., *Taking time to play with his child; Helping his child learn by encouraging his or her curiosity; Directly caring for his child such as feeding, dressing*) were ranked the least three important roles by the Qatari women. This suggests that despite recent socio-cultural, educational, and economic changes in Qatar and women's direct and indirect exposure to the western family values and changes in gender roles, it appears that the Qatari women in our study are highly committed to their own Arabic-Islamic traditional gender-appropriate paternal roles in a family. This is congruent with the results of our subjects' traditional gender ideology status. Moreover, this endorsement of traditional fathering behaviors and roles in our sample is consistent with findings from other studies in the western cultures (Finley & Schwartz, 2004; Finley, et al., 2008). These and other studies reported that in general "expressive and nurturing" domains of parenting behaviors are not attributed to fathers by majority of males and females, even in studies that were conducted in western societies. In our sample only the subjects who majored in Social Sciences/Education believed that *directly caring for his child (e.g., feeding, dressing...)* is the most important role for fathers to assume. This denotes the impact of proper education in shaping subjects' attitudes of appropriate fathering functions. Also, it implies that exposure to empirical information and accurate content-specific education (i.e., Social Sciences/Education, Child Development) may facilitate individuals' transition from a traditional parenting role to a more egalitarian gender neutral parenting perspective. This has implications for parent-education and fatherhood support programs.

### *Future Research*

Future research is projected to examine perceptions and beliefs of a group of Qatari males regarding father's role in caring for children and their contributions to children's development. Once completed, we would do a comparison between Qatari females and Qatari males. A cross cultural comparison would be the final step in the process.

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