

Academic Fathers in the UAE: How Their Work-Life Balance Impacts Family Life

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Abstract

In this research study, we explored forty academic fathers' experiences of working in UAE higher education through in-depth individual interviews. Through our phenomenological qualitative research design, we looked at factors such as fathers' perceptions of their work-life balance, the levels of support they receive from their HR teams, and how this impacted on their professional lives as fathers-academics. Key to the study purpose was to find out what training gaps existed for policy makers within academia in taking care of their parent faculty, and the possible implications of this for family life, early childhood development and family education. The findings showed that many fathers attributed what they perceived to be the 'family-friendly' environment of the UAE workplace to be optimal over their home countries. Key to their well-being was having the flexibility to attend key events in their child's life. The fathers also found that colleagues showing interest in their children's lives was hugely positively affective. Most of the fathers in the study tended to have paid domestic help (a commonality in the Gulf) at home, which also contributed to their work-life balance. We discuss the likely implications of this to family life, the well-being of their children and make recommendations for policy-makers and higher education administrators.

Keywords: academia; fathers; children; work-life balance; UAE