

WHEN FATHERHOOD, MASCULINITIES, AND STRUCTURAL FACTORS COLLIDE: FATHERHOOD AND ITS COMPLEXITIES

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Abstract

This research intends to explore the complex dynamics between fatherhood and masculinities, and how these dynamics are shaped by different structural factors, which hinder the enactment of involved fatherhood in two generations of Bangladeshi fathers. It accumulates the voices and experiences of older and younger fathers living in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The findings demonstrate how the construction of fatherhood is influenced by Connell's (1987) "hegemonic masculinity" ideology, where specific male identities – protectors and providers – are valued, at the cost of not performing involved or compassionate fatherhood. In addition, this study illustrates how the social expectations create pressure for men to fit in the prescribed categories; although, an attention is given towards the fluidity of hegemonic masculinity, and the challenges it faces from both generations' fathers with the changing norms, and due to the practice of alternative masculinities – mostly by the young fathers. This research follows qualitative research methodology employing in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to have a deeper insight of what happens when structural factors, masculinity and fatherhood collide. The study concludes that both generations fathers are opening towards involved fatherhood, yet traditional fatherhood still dominates the domestic spheres.

Keywords: Involved fatherhood, Fathering practices, Providing care, Masculinities, Structural factors

Introduction

Family, being the social unit, constructs the gender roles, which traditionally assign men to be the provider and protector of the family, excluding them from

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the caregiving roles within the family. However, in recent decades, due to the transformations of gender roles – women becoming breadwinners, entering the labour market, trend of gender-neutral family relationships – have brought changing dynamics of care responsibilities, where fathers are more than providers (Miguel, Gandasegui, & Gorfinkiel, 2019). Miguel et al. (2019) also mention that in this new dimension of fatherhood, fathers are emotionally involved with children through nurturing, care, and love, although these men cannot defy certain traditional masculine values and attitudes. Needless to say, the demand of performing the traditional roles of providers, protectors, supporters of family, and newly added role of emotionally nurturer at the same time, keeping the sense of masculine identity is challenging for men (Lewington, Lee, & Sebar, 2021). This initiates a conflict between becoming a masculine man, and a compassionate or involved father, which brings the attention towards the complex layered of structural factors that define hegemonic masculinity. This study intends to explore the structural issues that influence the men's commitment towards new dimension of fatherhood, visibly due to the characterization of how hegemonic masculinity works in Bangladeshi society.

In Bangladesh, family is the strongest institution, where parents and children live depending on each other, but elders, and especially male members occupy the dominant position culturally (Ball & Wahedi, 2010). Traditionally, women rely on men financially, and the public life – participation in employment, decision making roles, and politics – is yet restricted for the women, assigning women with care-giving roles. Men are still the primary bread-winners as they occupy 85.3 percent income-generating activity rate; in contrast, women share 74.4 percent unpaid family labour (Alim, 2009). Alim (2009) also finds that 85 percent men are employed in non-agricultural activity in comparison to 15 percent women, which indicates a poor labour force participation of women. Therefore, the traditional role of men as providers keeps unchanged as women either earn less or are without any income. In the transitioning from a husband to fatherhood, the cultural norms do not allow fathers to be involved with children, as care is known as a feminine trait. Fathers are regarded as the “distant authoritative figures and breadwinners”, who are responsible for providing for the children, and make decisions about “children's health care, education, and social life” (Ball & Wahedi, 2010, p. 367). Consequently, Hamadani and Tofail (2014) find in their study that fathers from low-income families do not spend time with their children, and get involved through playing, chatting, storytelling, hugging or cuddling; whereas fathers from the middle-income families interact more with children and are aware of the emotional

needs of the children. It means that the pattern of fatherhood varies according to class, income, or other benefits a father holds. Moreover, the socio-cultural norms that underpin men's control over women and children, also put a pressure on men to sustain that dominant role by keeping the distant fatherhood identity, developed by masculine sense of self. However, in recent years, there have been changes in fatherhood in terms of involvement, responsibility, and compassionate thinking (Ball & Wahedi, 2010; Sabur, 2019), the reality is more complex with nuanced construction of masculinity and social expectations regarding fatherhood.

The identity of a man comes before the identity of a father, in a process that roles are constructed in a set of social conditions, values or norms, mostly based on hegemonic masculinity (Magaraggia, 2013), which creates a pattern of practice to continue men's dominance over women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). To perform masculinity, a male must act according to the social expectations of being a 'male', and follow the collective ideals of masculinity, where aggression, autonomy and control over others - especially women and children - come into play (Macht, 2020). Macht (2020) refers to Jansz (2000) to explain how the cultural model of masculinity puts pressure on men for 'doing masculinity'. The masculine identity does not grow in vacuum; but through the social interaction that define how a man's role and how a 'real' man should be – "autonomous, achieving, aggressive", and emotionally detached or being able to suppress emotions, exactly opposite to femininity (Jansz, 2000, p. 169). These expectations endorse pressure on men to fit in the 'hegemonic' identity, which men challenge by distancing selves emotionally or keeping the angry or dominant persona, to keep the spotlight of power and exert control within familial relationships (Jansz, 2000). No wonder, this masculine-role anxiety keeps men away from care-giving roles or being an involved father. Moreover, the nature of work and struggles to maintain the work schedule draw a line between becoming involved fathers and balancing work (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Macht, 2020; Trivedi & Bose, 2020). Thus, due to men's identity of economic contributors, becoming an involved father becomes less important even for a willing father.

However, the recent studies show that men are showing more interest in new fatherhood, which is more involved, more caring and caters participation or engagement with the children (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Johansson, 2011; Macht, 2020; Miguel et al., 2019; Sabur, 2019; Sikorska, 2016; Trivedi & Bose, 2020). The redefinition of involved fatherhood values emotions and nurturing nature – opposite to hegemonic masculinity – within a changing society, yet the structural factors are still present causing identity complex for fathers. Therefore,

this paper aims to explore how social factors shape the complexity around masculinity, and how that influences the construction and experiences related to fatherhood in Bangladesh.

Intersecting fatherhood with masculinity – a theoretical encounter

The theory of masculinities, specially ‘hegemonic masculinity by Connell (1987) by Connell is used as an analytical framework. According to Connell (2005, p. 71), masculinity is not a natural character type, not a behavioural average or a norm, but “masculinity is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practice through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture”. The starting point of theorizing masculinities is the recognition of diversity and multiplicity of masculinities and femininities that has a power dimension. Connell (1987, p. 184) defines hegemony as “a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces”, where “other patterns and groups are subordinated rather than eliminated”. When it comes to hegemonic masculinity, it is “the configuration of gender practice... which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 2005, p. 77). It is an ideal form of masculinity, which not only induces dominant patterns of practice, but also legitimises the subordination of women. What is important to know is that how social practices institutionalise the dominance across different societies, and why men correspond to the social expectations and power structures.

The power display contemplates how a man should be in public, expecting them to portray dominant, aggressive behaviours, roles that produced by socialization (Connell, 1987). Through the socialization process, the social structures influence the everyday living, learning, and gender practices, with expectations that individuals will perform the gender roles influenced by social norms (Miguel et al., 2019). The practice of hegemonic masculinity is sanctioned and validated by culture, institutions like family, media, legal bodies and persuasion, treating it as the most ‘honoured and desired’ way of being a man (Connell, 2005). However, hegemonic masculinity is not endorsed by all men, nor is a static construction of ideals. It is changeable with time and be challenged according to different social settings (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), such as men’s dominance being threatened in capitalist gender-neutral society. Therefore, masculine identity is fluid and has potential to change, especially when hegemonic masculinity exists in tension with other masculinities. ‘Subordinate masculinity’ identifies the internal gender hierarchy of one group over other; whereas, under ‘complicit masculinity’,

men take the benefits of patriarchy, while not intending to oppress women, neither they want to actively endorse or confront the cultural ideals guided by hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). However, all other forms of masculinities contribute to the construction of hegemonic masculinity model, which Demetriou (2001) thinks Connell downplayed or disregarded in her works. Demetriou (2001) also criticises Connell for not distinguishing between ‘external’ (institutionalization of men’s power over women) and ‘internal’ hegemony (social power of one group of men over other men). Both external and internal hegemony influence how a man performs gender role and pattern within a given context, exactly to be opposite of femininity, imposing a pressure to fit the image of ‘real’ men.

Therefore, the hegemonic masculinity is intrinsically connected to fatherhood, considering the existing tension between involved fathers and ‘masculine’ men. Structural constraints influence the social interactions, negotiate with different agents, and pursue the traditional gender roles which clearly distinguish between femininity and masculinity (Miguel et al., 2019). The feminine characteristics - care, love, and emotion – are associated with motherhood, which fathers find difficult to embrace due to hegemonic masculinity. Men are encouraged to avoid nurturing roles, as it contradicts with traditional form of fatherhood. In other words, there is no place for ‘emotional’ feminine traits within the domain of hegemonic masculinity, which hinders fathers’ participation in childcare. In addition, to comply with the hegemonic masculinity, not falling short of hegemonic ideals, or falling under the category of ‘subordinate masculinity’ (Randles, 2018), a father can avoid involved father’s roles. However, the emergence of new fatherhood or involved fatherhood in last few decades is a blow towards hegemonic masculinity, with the increase of father’s fondness and changing attitudes towards parenting, especially in young men (Lewington et al., 2021). Randles (2018) argue that fathering focused on dominance and breadwinning is outdated, rather men are encouraged to challenge stoicism, and focus on showing their feelings to develop empathic understanding. Moreover, with the changes in regard to social norms and behaviours, paternity leave for men is also garnering attention in the current world (Andreasson & Johansson, 2016). Therefore, this research attempts to understand the dynamics between fatherhood and masculinities in the context of Bangladesh, with a focus on answering what kind of fathering is propagated as essential part of hegemonic masculinity and why. In addition, the researchers intend to explore how the hegemonic masculinity shaped by Bangladeshi socio-cultural norms influences the experiences of fatherhood, and how the complexities are embedded between

involved fatherhood and hegemonic masculinity.

Objective and Methodology

The main study objective of this research article is to explore complex dynamics between fatherhood and masculinities, and how these dynamics along with different structural factors impede the enactment of involved fatherhood in two generations of Bangladeshi fathers. To conduct this research, researchers employed qualitative approach to get a deeper insight of the problem. As qualitative methodology attempts to understand, describe, or explain from within, researchers used qualitative research methods - in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) - to capture the extensive and complex meanings of fatherhood, and subjective experiences of fathers. The first author of this study carried out the fieldwork in Dhaka, with an intention to easily locate and access the potential participants. Considering the socio-cultural background of the researcher, it was relatively easy for her to access the men from similar urban background. Moreover, Dhaka as a city is the centre of industrialization, urbanization, and economic boom, which also motivated the researcher carrying out the fieldwork to document changes, complexities, and diversity in the construction of fatherhood.

During fieldwork, the researcher conducted two FGDs with different generations of fathers and interviewed 16 fathers - consisting of eight fathers from each generation – following in-depth qualitative interview method. She used purposive sampling method to access the participants mainly through her diverse social networks. She mainly took help from the family members, friends, and colleagues to reach out these men. In selecting the participants, the fathers with one or more children above 25 years were considered as old generation, whereas the fathers with one and more children less than 10 years were considered as new generation of fathers. The researcher also prepared a semi-structured interview guide including themes related to fatherhood and masculinities. However, she was open to the new ideas the participants spoke of or raised during the interviews. The researcher conducted FGDs prior to the in-depth interviews, simply because it helps to identify and clarify different aspects of the problem that can be raised afterwards (Silverman, 2011). After gathering the information, data transcription became the key job to start analysis. The researcher transcribed the data based on thematic coding, separating the themes - structural factors, construction of masculinities, involved or compassionate fatherhood, work-life balance – in accordance with the objective and theoretical approach of this paper. It helped to gather broadened idea on many issues such as gender roles, identities of providers or protectors, social expectations

regarding career and success, stoicism, hegemonic behaviours, multiple forms of masculinities, and struggles to balance work-life affecting involved fatherhood.

The researcher maintained ethical guidelines to conduct the interviews and FGDs. She interviewed the participants face to face, mostly at their suggested places to maintain the privacy and confidentiality. A promise of keeping confidentiality helped the fathers to talk freely about their everyday challenges. Moreover, the participants had the choice of not answering any questions if made them uncomfortable or could withdraw from the interview if they felt so. The researcher also recorded the interviews after receiving the participants' verbal permissions. To address the limitations of this research, both researchers acknowledge their inability to explore single-father or homosexual father's experiences regarding fatherhood and hegemonic masculinity dynamics. Moreover, in this paper, the researchers do not focus on how fatherhood is negotiated within families where the mothers are employed; rather, the experience of fatherhood is investigated among the fathers irrespective of their class, religion, income, or wives' employment. This is also a limitation of this research, which the researchers have deliberately ignored to only focus on what happens when fatherhood, structural factors, and masculinities collide.

Being a man and a father in Bangladesh: Interaction between masculinities, structural factors, and fatherhood

This findings chapter represents the understandings and experiences of both young and old fathers focusing on involved versus traditional fatherhood, the social factors that put Bangladeshi men into a conditioned parenting, and the complexities associated with involved fatherhood under the umbrella of hegemonic masculinity.

What it is to be a man: accounts of older and younger fathers

Fathers, both from older and young generations inform that the identity of a Bangladeshi man is multiple and changeable. A man is identified with his careers and actions, where private life roles merely take a place, according to most of the participants. What is to be a man is mostly answered through a man's social career, social and political identities. To address the issue, a father of two adult children, an ex-tea estate manager mentions -

As a Bangladeshi man, it is important to have an established work identity. His career and success make him perfect – socially, financially, or politically. He must follow the social norms as being a citizen, and a

good citizen is always a man of principles and democratic in thought. In addition, a man must abide by the religious obligations and regulations, which help him control his life in a proper way.

This man, along with other older men have recognised work, religious and political identities as the core to Bangladeshi manhood, although they prioritise work as the sole or primary identity for a man. In contrast, some of them think being graceful, and elegant suffice women's identity; making a career or working outside is not that important. For men, it is always important to feed the social expectations not only for being successful in private life, but also to meet the demand in private sphere. Another older man sheds light on the reality of what society wants from a man – “if you ask a woman whom does you want to marry – a wealthy man or a man of health? Most Bangladeshi women will consider a man's earnings rather than his health. She will choose a wealthy man”. Consequently, younger fathers also identify a man's role as breadwinner, which is extremely similar to the older men's accounts. Younger men also stress on having a successful career as it is the most important identity of a man. The impetus to have a socially recognised identity is not only for self, but also for the family, to be exact. All of the younger men have agreed on a thought that their identities can uplift or downgrade the status of their families. Nonetheless, it puts men under pressure to attain a respectable job and ensure a good income for the sake of having social recognition, or to fit into the category of ‘successful’ men. A young man, who is also a software engineer working in a multinational company, has delineated this point quite efficiently -

Fathers, husbands, and sons must be careerist because they are the sole providers for the families. It is a man's jobs that decide what kinds of lifestyle a family can afford or maintain. Which is why, men want to become successful, no matter what they need to do to fit into that work identity.

Therefore, having a weak career is not a choice a man should make. In a social arrangement, men are identified in economic terms, or their economic contributions across the globe, in countries like Botswana, Ghana, Italy, Poland, Norway and Spain (Ampim, Haukenes, & Blystad, 2020; Magaraggia, 2013; Miguel et al., 2019; Sikorska, 2016; Trivedi & Bose, 2020). In bourgeois ideology, man's income signifies his personal existence and achievement. In addition, families in Bangladesh are mostly male centric, where in middle-class families, men are identified as achievers only when they have respectable and decent jobs, mentioned by younger fathers. Society does not approve or count every job as respectable;

thus, families only take pride in their family men, when they work as engineers, doctors, university professors, and employees in a multinational company or Journalists. Thus, career stability works both as economic and social capital. Thus, it is very natural for younger men, in the era of vast globalisation, to legitimise their masculinity through their bread earner identity.

Apart from the economic contributor's identity, both older and younger father have identified a few other qualities in defining the 'ideal' man. Older men put emphasis on a man's character, having a personality of impressive behaviour, having wisdom or knowledge, and proper education to fit in the 'ideal' category. A few older men also consider having broad mind or progressive thinking are the indicators of culturally and politically aware men, aka 'ideal' men. Moreover, some of them have claimed that a man should know how to balance between work and home. Alike older generation, younger men did not come up with different image of the 'ideal' man. Most of the younger men have identified almost similar characteristics that men should possess – being capable of giving family a decent life, facing the challenges, be knowledgeable, respectful towards cultural and religious norms, have ethics, religious and politically aware. It means that the society plays the role in structuring the norms, which men and fathers from different generations simply follow, in most cases without confronting. The expectations remain the same in a patriarchal society over the generations, so are the men who are trapped in hegemonic learning process. However, a few young men have better views about 'ideal' men, which is a result of changes experienced within the society in terms of gender equality and alternative masculinity. One young father depicts -

I consider an ideal man will be a human being first. He should know how to respect women around him. In our life, we get to spend most of our time dealing with women. So, respect towards women is important. I always give importance on acquiring human qualities like empathy, patience, care, and emotion. I do not think having a good career makes you a man. No matter which class a man belongs to, he makes a way for living.

Similarly, another young man also has focused on men's qualities of being able to respect own partners and attain human qualities over anything else. Consequently, these two men are more involved in their personal lives than others. Their strong attachment with their families and children has helped them to think otherwise, opposite to the culturally accepted idealization of man. Both men describe an 'ideal' man in terms alternative masculine qualities - which hegemonic masculinity negates – that value and respect expression of emotions, empathy, and love.

However, this is yet to become the practice of mass young men, as the practices are passed on from fathers to boys over generations, which makes most of the men reluctant to confront the cultural stereotypes assigned with hegemonic masculinity.

Accordingly, both older and younger generation of fathers only have talked about private aspect of masculinity in conceptualizing ‘ideal’ or ‘real’ man, focusing on how a man should be in his private realm – with families, and children as the protectors and providers. Involved fatherhood is missing in this process of understanding by most of the men from both generations. Most of these men have talked about the masculine values, which celebrate the qualities of ‘soft patriarchs’ in Bangladesh (Mansoor, 1999). Conversely, younger men find it difficult to ‘doing masculinity’, although they aspire to. Example of two men challenging stoicism and dominance of men over women, do not fit into the ideals of culturally accepted masculinities, and it is difficult for them accommodate their ideas in practice, as they become a subject of internal hegemony due to structural barriers. These men belong to the ‘subordinated’ masculinity, which most of the older and younger men defy as a self-image; thus, idealise hegemonic masculine traits as fathers.

Gendered construction of fatherhood and motherhood: what society expects

This study finds that contemporary cultural norms related to the construction of fatherhood and motherhood is gendered. Men are known as public beings, whereas women are the private ones, due to the specific division between gender and women’s reproductive roles. As a result, childcare discourse is developed on the origin of public – private dichotomy, reflecting on gendered position of mothers and fathers in a given family or society. In Bengali families, mothers are grounded with principles of domestic life, with a burden of ‘intensive mothering’ prioritising children over career or freedom (Bhaumik & Sahu, 2021), whereas men are conventionally granted in public world – a place separated from private sphere of domestic life. After the birth of a child, society expects mothers to take care of the children, as the gender roles assigned for women are emotional care-giving activities. In contrast, men are socialized to be in public sphere, accommodating characteristics of hegemonic masculinities, which come in conflict with good parenting (Dowd, 2000). A few young father participants have agreed that to be a compassionate father men must possess nurturing qualities such as love, warmth, support, emotion and care, which are difficult to employ in real life due to the rejection of these qualities as ‘feminine’ and ‘unmanly’. Therefore, it is understandable that social structures, patterns and practices put “men and fathers into different sets of circumstances that in turn affect the way they think, feel, and

act as fathers” (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000, p. 78). Undoubtedly, this can influence fathers’ willingness and desire to be involved with their children, in a traditional way.

Considering the viewpoints of the participants, clearly the identity of fatherhood is constructed in separation to motherhood in Bangladesh. The ideology and social norms associated with fatherhood and motherhood are gendered as it treats fathers and mother quite differently. Most of the participants think that they do not have any obligations to act out fatherhood as fathers. Although, there are no rules available for fatherhood, mothers automatically become the caregivers and do everything necessary for children to grow up. However, mothers also provide more options for fathers to choose what kind of father they want to be (Miller, 2010). In response, most of our participants found less nurturing aspect of fatherhood is the most viable option. It is probably because involvement and emotional engagements are downplayed within hegemonic masculinity. Under this form of masculinity, men must be the providers, if failed, are judged harshly for being incapable of meeting social standards, as mentioned by the participants.

In addition, Bangladesh being a patriarchal country, and having a patrilineal decent and patrilocal residence, has a social arrangement which positions men over the women (Mansoor, 1999). Similarly, male children are considered as the “natural apprentice and successor or supporter of the parents in old age...A father believes that he will live through his son. All these notion works together to give a special value to the son” (Mansoor, 1999, p. 32). A father from older generation states supporting this ideology –

A family is like a ship and a man is the captain of that ship. It will be the sons who will row the ship of family name all the time. They will hold on and carry its weight no matter what. It is like there is no way out rather than being ambitious and achieve big in life.

Following the quote, to achieve big in life, a man carries the burden to becoming successful in public work from the childhood, which dismisses the importance of their roles in domestic world, or to be available for their own children’s emotional needs. Thus, the structure and expectations complicate the negotiations over masculinity.

In other words, when sons become sole inheritor of a family, the family responsibilities are passed on to them. It never occurs to anyone if a man wants to take the responsibilities or is forcing himself to fit in the ‘masculine’ image. A

young father, who struggled with performing society demonstrated rules, mentions:

I do not want to be the responsible man in the family. I do not want to fit in to the role society ascribed for me. I do not want to think about anything, but question is am I allowed doing that. Am I allowed to disgrace the social norms? No. Whenever, I feel like not taking the responsibility and financial burden of the family; I think of my daughter and parents. They all need financial assistance and deserve a comfortable life. Who said we do not want to do fun things with our children and laze around a bit? The truth is we cannot, we are not allowed to.

The hegemonic masculinity comes with a price of social expectations and norms to follow, to act as the providers and become successful. Not all men can fit into these beliefs easily, unless enjoy the higher position or dominance over women. Men become so entangled with the expectations that they cannot think or act otherwise. It means that socio-cultural orientations not only provide men a privilege position in the society, but also with complexities associated with masculinity. Especially, a young father, who interacts with masculinity, wants to break free, confront the stoicism, yet compromises with what society wants him to be.

Men, work, and family: an imbalanced relationship

Work plays as an important influencing factor to curve out what kind of father men want to be or decide to become. It is already mentioned in previous discussions that men find work to be integral part of their masculine identity. A man without a job is not even a 'man' in the context of Bangladesh as found from the findings. Most of the participants have identified career as the important part in a man's life. However, there is a difference visible between the older and younger fathers in terms of racing for the best jobs or being competitive for a better living. A young father, an engineer by profession describes -

The time and job context have been changed. More opportunities are coming up every day. One has to really work hard to avail these opportunities for their survivals. The standard of living is reaching the sky so quickly, and the job market is competitive. So, it's never easy, or nothing seems enough. Now, we cannot think and act like previous generations. We must make our ways, give our best, and grab each opportunity comes by.

Older generation fathers are little laid back compared to the younger fathers, as living standard was not that high during their youth, or the competition to become

successful was not that extreme. However, due to the globalised economy, and pressure of surviving the livelihood, as well as manhood, the labour force participation of men in Bangladesh has been increased. At the national level, men's labour force participation increased from 30.6 million in 1995-96 to 37.3 million in 2005-06 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Moreover, men spent 60 hours a week working in urban sectors 2008, which was only 19.5 in 2003 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Increased working hours not only prove how predominantly work has taken over men's lives, but also indicate to the growing competition to survive.

The existing workplace arrangements appear to create hurdles for to become involved fathers, as they struggle to maintain the balance between work and family. The longer working hours keep men away from home, from children. One young father in describing the issue touches upon the many aspects associated with career, emotion, and survival in job sector. He elaborates -

The career pattern for Bangladeshi men has changed and changing every day by becoming more competitive. In European countries one can stop working at 4/4.30pm. Probably they start packing their bags from 3.30pm, but if we do that in Bangladesh, it means that we are bad employees. The workplace culture in Bangladesh is not very family friendly. More hours one spends in the office, the more chances he has to climb the ladder of success. Social networking in workplace is quite important. This is an insane culture in private sectors. In my previous office I always used to stay extra two hours to prove that I was working hard. This is really challenging to balance work and family life. Honestly, the biggest constrain of being a man is to let go your emotional attachments. One is emotionally depriving his family and himself. If I want to survive in this world, I need to make practical choices, which easily cut down the emotional aspect of a man.

Following the above quote, it can be said that workplace is more like a place that hosts that unhealthy career race, to some extent. In addition, to prove that they are the good workers, men try to emotionally detach themselves from familial engagements, as it is assumed that "good workers historically have been those who have no family obligations to distract them" (Ranson, 2001, p. 7). Ranson (2001, p. 4) identifies that "most research on men's work continue to assume either that men have no family responsibilities or that these responsibilities will have no effect on the job". Moreover, corporate environment explicitly or subtly conveys the messages through their arrangements that a sheer part of men's commitments

should be to the company. Whereas, engaging with children and taking their responsibilities demand the commitments of men outside of work. The above quote clarifies that family is the emotional priority of men, for who they keep working hard, and eventually compromise the family time only to secure a better life the children. Some of the young fathers have informed that none of their workplaces have provisions for parental leave for fathers, except one who is working in a multinational NGO. Men working in that NGO can take seven days parental leave, which is not enough. Based on the findings, it is clear that workplace is inflexible to accommodate private aspect of masculinity, keeping the work pattern and working hours obstinate to accommodate any change. Primary care-giving and involved parenting are culturally considered as feminine duties, thus “the issue of work-family balance is more of a mother’s than a father’s responsibility” (Wall & Arnold, 2007, p. 518), which the Bangladeshi official structure also follows.

The work-home divide also has a beneficial side attached to it. Based on how successful a man is in his career, it is decided how much benefit and flexibility he can get from household work and childcare. Bread earner status signifies the establishment of their rules, independence, and freedom both inside and outside home. Absence from home frees them from domestic responsibility. Moreover, most of the younger fathers and some of the older fathers have blamed their jobs for not allowing them to get more involved in their children’s lives. Therefore, men adjust and reconstruct their private roles according to their public masculine roles. There is no man who has done the alternative among these fathers from both generations. In fact, if men try to accommodate alternative-fathering practices, their masculine identities might face serious socio-structural consequences, for not conforming to hegemonic masculine ideals.

Discussion and concluding remarks

This research investigates how the complex dynamics between fatherhood and masculinity, how the construction of fatherhood is influenced by the social structures, and if fatherhood corresponds to the hegemonic masculinity to restrain men from being involved fathers. Apparently, empirical accounts demonstrate the complex layered of fatherhood in Bangladeshi society, guided by the multiple, fluid and changing masculinity, as mentioned by Lupton and Barclay (1997), found in both generations of fathers. The structural factors are not static, yet the importance and presence of traditional social-cultural norms prevail in Bangladesh. Therefore, the possibility of exercising alternative masculinities is still in a very minimum level, mainly found among the young fathers.

In terms of the constructing identity, a father's identity comes after the identity of a man due to the social conditions and norms influenced by hegemonic masculinity according to the research findings, as mentioned by Magaraggia (2013) in her paper. These set of norms introduce men with identities – being a provider, protector, or supporter, found in both generations of fathers. Having a socially, financially, and principally stable job is the indicator of success according to the participants, who put emphasis on successful career as a pre-condition of being a 'man'. Under different circumstances and contexts, men are known as economic contributors, who are mainly responsible to provide for the families (Ampim et al., 2020; Magaraggia, 2013; Miguel et al., 2019; Sikorska, 2016; Trivedi & Bose, 2020). Similarly, the participants from both generations convey the message that they must perform the provider's role according to the social expectations. A few studies in Bangladesh also locate the similar findings that fathers are financially responsible for the children (Alim, 2009; Hamadani & Tofail, 2014), which can be linked to the patrilineal decent and patrilocal residence arrangements within the society. A child, especially male child is responsible to carry the torch of father's name forward, which somehow makes a father responsible to provide for the children. In addition, this role places men with social ascendancy, guaranteeing male dominance within the families (Connell, 1987).

Consequently, Connell (2005) argues that hegemonic masculinity is associated with most honoured ways of being a man. For young Bangladeshi men, the most honoured way to be a 'man' is taking up the career challenges and achieving a successful career competing with others. Men opt for 'doing masculinity' (Jansz, 2000) by being autonomous and achieving success according to social expectations. As a man's success can either upgrade or downgrade the status of the family, conversely, a family only takes pride in a man when he is successful. Paradoxically, most of the participants do not put value in women's career or does not mention the role of women as providers, which subtly indicates a hegemonic reflection of dominance over women as the male providers. This form of external hegemony is institutionalised through social structures (Demetriou, 2001). Therefore, to sustain that subtle dominance, and to fit in the 'successful' category, the participants tend to pursue a hegemonic male identity in the vast era of economic competition. To categorise 'ideal' men, both generation's fathers talk about having a personality of behaviour, knowledge, and education to be fully aware of surroundings. Moreover, young fathers stress on being able to provide a decent life to the parents, spouses, and children, or being capable of facing challenges, which indicates to the fathers' identities as not only providers, but also as protectors - a masculine characteristic

– to fit in the ‘ideal’ image of men. It is difficult for them to let go the most cherishing characteristic of manhood and invest more on something known to be ‘unmanly’ – nurturing of children - as per the social standards. Participants from both generations consider women as the primary caregivers; in a way, it helps men staying away from performing their nurturing roles within the domestic spheres. Although, the participant men are not denying being involved fathers, it is also true that they are not practising involvement with children or ‘feminine’ nurturing traits, which go against the idea of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). Thus, the complexity of fatherhood is essentially connected to the hegemonic masculinity, considering the existing tensions between becoming involved fathers and ‘masculine’ men.

Another complexity associated with hegemonic masculinity is the pressure to perform stoicism – being emotionally detached from the children. The hegemonic ideal of masculinity is operationalized in a much-gendered socio-cultural milieu, where the emotional aspects of fatherhood and private life are considered as entirely feminine. Care and emotionality are characterized as female qualities, which hegemonic version of masculinity negates. Therefore, nurturing, or compassionate model of fatherhood is always placed in opposition to traditional fatherhood, institutionalising the internal hegemony between masculinities. As a result, changing fatherhood becomes problematic due to the structural causes and construction of masculine identity. However, the younger generation fathers are in more perplexed situation for being stuck between complexities related to hegemonic masculinity and other forms of masculinity. Almost all of them are aware of the new culture of compassionate fatherhood; where expressing emotion and love is important but find it difficult to confront the traditional practices and even harder to adhere the alternative version of masculinities. Warin, Solomon, Lewis, and Langford (1999) point out this dilemma of fathers squeezed between their eagerness to become involved fathers, and the providing fathers. However, two young fathers are found performing alternative masculinities by becoming involved fathers, as well as showing respect to their partners. These men are going against the culturally accepted norms of ‘real’ men by not performing the hegemonic masculinity, but alternate form of masculinity. Similarly, older fathers also acknowledge that fatherhood culture is likely to change with time and generation; although, the changes are still at the surface level. It is quite evident from the fathers’ accounts that these changes depend on the structural situations, which is beyond the control of most fathers. This state is an example of complicit masculinity - men do not strongly practice the involved fatherhood, nor do they tend

to confront the traditional fatherhood. Somewhat, they blame the work patterns for creating the detachments with children, considering the Bangladeshi job sectors do not approve paternal leave for men in a large scale, nor the companies value men's emotional attachment towards their families. It creates hurdles to become involved fathers, or sometimes works as an excuse to stay away from 'feminine' duties.

To conclude, it can be said that multi-layered structural factors and arrangements such as norms or practices, the construction of dominant identities under the umbrella of hegemonic masculinity, and inflexible job sectors function together, impeding the fathers' commitment towards involved fathering. Perspectives on masculinities provide a conceptual tool to recognize ideas and values attached to fatherhood, and how men experience fatherhood differently throughout their trajectories of life. Understanding the dynamics of masculinity induced fatherhood, the conclusion can be drawn saying that there is no single model of fatherhood for men to follow. The process is constantly at the state of change having a loose end, especially due to the questions raised by young fathers against hegemonic construction of masculine roles. The practice of masculinity depends on multiple factors and is approached differently by each man. Not all young men want to fit in the traditional fatherhood category of only being providers; rather they want to experience their fatherhood by emotionally being with children. No wonder, over time, the existing tensions between ideals of masculinities and fatherhood may fade away, especially when gender equality within the family and society is ensured. We believe that future research on single parent or homosexual fathers, and how they respond to hegemonic masculinity, or perform their fatherhood, will bring a new perspective to understand how fluid and complex masculinity is.

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