



Paternity Leave and Its Impact on Gender Roles in the Jordanian Family in the Capital of Amman



This paper is part of "We Lead" project implemented by Liwan Youth Space in partnership with Arab Network for Civil Education ANHRE. The We Lead project aims to enhance skills and social role of youth in society, amplify their voices to demand their rights and prepare them to advocate for issues related to reproductive health and social roles. This research paper was conducted in the governorate of Amman and is titled "Paternity Leave and Its Impact on Gender Roles within the Jordanian Family in the Greater Amman Area".

The paper reflects the views of the researchers and does not necessarily represent the position of the funding or implementing organization.

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Methodology

This paper followed a scientific methodology that involved both primary and secondary data as outlined below:

Secondary Data:

- Reviewing relevant statistics and figures related to paternity leave in Jordan.
- Reviewing concepts and terminology related to paternity leave and gender roles.
- Reviewing previous studies and research.
- Team meetings to discuss the steps in preparing the paper and draft a research plan.
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Primary Data:

- An electronic survey to analyze the current state of paternity leave and its importance in achieving balanced gender roles. A total of 112 surveys were distributed in Greater Amman.
- Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, including the Jordanian Women's Solidarity Institute and the Ministry of Labor.
- **Focus group discussions with men and women from the local community, including:**
 - A focus group with 12 women in Greater Amman.
 - A focus group with 7 men in the Al-Nasr Camp.
 - Semi-structured interviews with 4 women in Greater Amman.

Introduction

Parental leave, including paternity leave, is defined by the European Commission's 1983 explanatory note and the International Labor Organization's guidelines as leave granted to both parents after the birth of their child. Its purpose is to enable working parents to care for their newborn while ensuring job security, social benefits, and compensation. Paternity leave is distinct from maternity leave, being shorter in duration and typically offered to fathers during or after the mother's maternity leave.⁷

In Jordan, according to the Labor Law of 1996 (specifically Article 66, Clause C), "a father is entitled to three days of paid paternity leave following the birth of his child." In contrast, mothers are entitled to 90 days of paid maternity leave in the public sector and 70 days in the private sector.⁸

Cultural traditions and social norms play a significant role in shaping gender roles. The implementation of policies such as paternity leave can have a substantial positive impact on families and society as a whole, by promoting equal sharing of family responsibilities between fathers and mothers, which supports gender equality both at home and in the workforce.⁹

The importance of paternity leave has been highlighted in reports by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which indicates that an increase in paternity leave days could positively contribute to the child's early development. Studies have shown that fathers who take paternity leave tend to be more involved in their children's lives and contribute more to domestic chores, leading to more balanced and cooperative family relationships.

In Jordan, enhancing paternity leave policies can play a significant role in changing societal perceptions of gender roles and bring about positive shifts in family dynamics.¹¹

Introduction

Globally, Sweden is considered one of the leaders in parental leave policies, offering 480 days of paid parental leave that can be shared between parents. This leave is flexible, and parents can take part-time or full-time leave depending on their needs, ensuring a suitable living standard for the family during this period. Sweden's policy encourages fathers to take parental leave, which contributes to breaking traditional gender norms and fostering gender equality.¹²

7- Motherhood and Fatherhood at Work, Law and Practice Worldwide, International Labour Organization, 2014.

8- Jordanian Labor Law No. 8 of 1996 and its Amendments - Article 66, Clause (C).

9-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Parental Leave Systems 2021.

10-United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) - Reports and Studies on the Impact of Father Involvement in Early Childcare and the Importance of Paternity Leave, 2019.

11-United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) - Gender Equality and Parental Leave Policies: Toward a More Balanced Future, 2020.

12-Parental Leave, Swedish Information Center, 2024.

Terminology



Paternity Leave:

It is a leave granted to a man (father) upon the birth of his wife's child, lasting for three days with pay, excluding public holidays and official leaves.¹³

Gender Concept: Gender refers to the set of relationships, roles, responsibilities, and social values defined by society, whether through its formal or informal institutions, for both men and women. These relationships and roles differ from one culture to another and evolve over time according to social and spatial contexts. While cultures tend to preserve certain traditions, they also develop and innovate new traditions due to ongoing social interaction. Therefore, it can be said that the cultures of society are not static but dynamic, allowing for the emergence of new traditions and norms over time.¹⁴

In another definition within the National Strategy for Women in Jordan for 2020-2025, gender refers to the social characteristics attributed to men and women, which are determined based on multiple factors such as age, religion, nationality, race, social status, and culture. These characteristics vary across communities and cultures and influence the construction of roles, responsibilities, and relationships among individuals within any community or culture.¹⁵

Gender Roles: These are the roles defined by society and prevailing culture for both men and women based on the values and perceptions of society regarding their nature, abilities, and what is deemed appropriate for them according to societal expectations. These roles change according to social, economic, cultural, and political transformations.¹⁶

13-World Parents' Day: The Promise of a Happy Upbringing, Higher Population Council, 2024.

References:

14-Women and Gender Programs in Jordan: A Map for the Work of Non-Governmental Development Organizations, National Commission for Women and the Gender Equality Initiatives Support Program, Canadian International Development Agency.

Gender Integration in Public Institutions, Dr. Khaled Suleiman, National Commission for Women.

Training Guide for Integrating Gender into Education and School Environment, Dr. Kifah Al-Akrush, Khatam Al-Maliki, Gender and Strategic Partnerships Department, Ministry of Education, Educational Training Center, Amman 2021.

15-National Strategy for Women in Jordan 2020-2025, National Commission for Women, under the direction of

16-the Prime Ministry and the Women Empowerment Ministerial Committee.

Legal Framework

The Jordanian Labor Law No. 8 of 1996 guarantees the rights of workers and employers and provides a solid legal framework to protect their rights and promote equality in job opportunities and benefits. This law includes several articles that ensure employees' basic rights, such as paternity leave. Article 66-c states, "The worker is entitled to three days of paid paternity leave," which emphasizes the employee's right to three days of paternity leave upon the birth of a child. This reflects the state's commitment to protecting the family and promoting family stability.

However, despite the importance of the father's role in supporting the wife and caring for the newborn during this period, Jordanian law does not grant fathers the same leave as maternity leave. Article 105 of the Civil Service System stipulates that the employee is entitled to three days of paternity leave with full salary and allowances, based on a medical report. This short period does not align with the increasing importance of the father's role in caring for the child and providing psychological and social support to the family in the early days after birth. This reflects consistency between the public and private sectors concerning protecting new fathers' rights and supporting their role in family caregiving. 19

Within the framework of national policies, the Jordan National Strategy for Human Resources Development 2016-2025 provides important guidelines to improve working conditions and enhance a balanced work environment. This strategy aims to promote gender equality in the workplace and provide a supportive environment for families through balanced leave policies that ensure family support and promote social stability.20



At the international level, Jordan is party to several agreements that promote workers' rights and support family policies. Jordan ratified International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 156, which aims to promote equality between workers with family responsibilities and their colleagues without such responsibilities, thereby enhancing social justice in the labor market. Jordan also ratified the Equal Remuneration Convention No. 100 (1951), which obliges countries to promote the principle of equal pay for equal work. Additionally, Jordan ratified Convention No. 111 (1958) on Discrimination, which prohibits discrimination in employment and occupation, stressing the right of all workers to equal treatment. In addition to these conventions, Jordan works closely with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to strengthen family and health policies, including improving maternal and child health and family planning.

Within the framework of national policies, the Jordan National Strategy for Human Resources Development 2016-2025 provides important guidelines to improve working conditions and enhance a balanced work environment. This strategy aims to promote gender equality in the workplace and provide a supportive environment for families through balanced leave policies that ensure family support and promote social stability. 24

From both an economic and social perspective, and in creating tools to change stereotypical gender roles and encourage women's economic participation, it is noteworthy that paid maternity leave in Jordan, according to Article 70 of the Labor Law, grants working women the right to 10 weeks of full-paid maternity leave, with no fewer than 6 weeks of leave after childbirth, and it is prohibited to employ her before the expiration of this period. While this period is considered shorter than the 14 weeks set by the ILO, the Jordanian law grants women additional rights, such as the right to paid breastfeeding leave for one hour daily during the first year after childbirth, and unpaid leave for up to one year for child-rearing in institutions employing 10 or more workers.t of the family.

One of the key best practices in recent years has been the increasing advocacy campaigns in Jordan for extending the duration of paternity leave to encourage greater partnership between men and women in child-rearing. Among these calls, recommendations have come from the ILO, which stated that the current paternity leave in Jordan, which is three days, is insufficient to enhance the father's role in child care alongside the mother. The goal of these calls is to achieve a better balance between work and family life, encouraging fathers to participate more actively in these responsibilities, which would support the overall developmen



17-Same Source

18-Jordanian Labor Law, Article 66 (C)

19-Civil Service System 2020 <https://www.moj.gov.jo>

20-National Strategy for Human Resources Development 2016-2025 <https://9hy.a00.myftpupload.com>

22-Convention No. 156: International Labour Organization Convention on Workers with Family Responsibilities, 1981

United Nations Human Rights Office / Human Rights Instruments, Equal Remuneration Convention No. 100

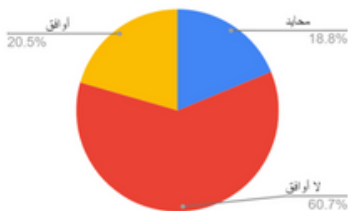
23-1United Nations Human Rights Office / Human Rights Instruments, Discrimination Convention No. 111

24-UNFPA Jordan / Reports from the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation - Jordan

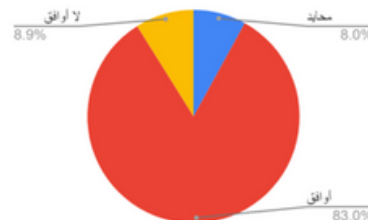
Results Analysis and Discussion

Quantitative Data Presentation:

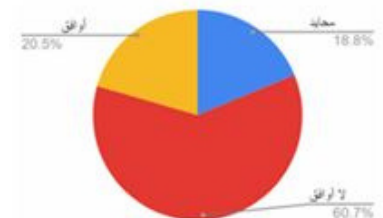
The study sample included individuals aged 18 and above, including married, soon-to-be-married, unmarried, separated, and widowed individuals in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Of the respondents, 64.4% were female and 35.7% were male, indicating that this issue concerns both genders. As for the age groups, the largest percentage of participants were between 18-25 years old (41.1%), which is the group closest to the stage of family formation. It is also important to note that 58.9% of the participants were single, while the remaining were married (30.4%) or separated or engaged. Based on statistical and written responses, the following conclusions were drawn:



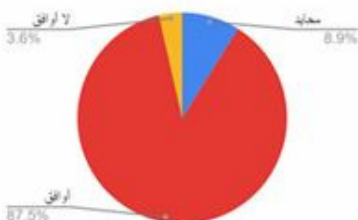
60.7% oppose the duration of paternity leave and believe it is insufficient.



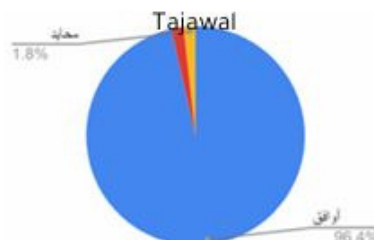
83.0% agree with extending paternity



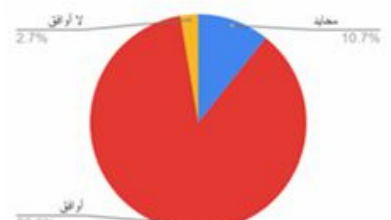
54.5% agree with the proposal to extend paternity leave to between 4 and 7 days.



86.6% agree that increasing paternity leave will have a positive impact and enhance the father's role in supporting both the mother and child.



96.4% agree on offering free workshops and courses about the importance of the father's role in childcare.



87.5% agree that paternity leave is a priority, not a luxury]

Qualitative Results:

Definition of Paternity Leave and Its Impact on the Family:

The interview and focus group results indicated that the concept of paternity leave is associated with a short period granted to fathers to support the mother after childbirth. Participants agreed that this leave strengthens family bonds and reduces the physical and psychological burdens on the mother, which has a positive impact on the mental health of both parents. This leave is seen as an opportunity to enhance the father's active participation in child-rearing, particularly during the critical first weeks after birth, helping to improve the mother's mental health and reduce postpartum depression.

Challenges Associated with Paternity Leave and Its Duration:

Despite acknowledging the health and psychological benefits of paternity leave, the three-day duration of this leave has drawn strong criticism from participants, who believe it is insufficient. Respondents expressed that the responsibilities of the father post-birth require a longer period that aligns with the family's needs, including caring for the child and assisting the mother in adapting to new changes. This was identified as one of the major obstacles to implementing a more effective concept of paternity leave in Jordanian society.

Paternity Leave and Its Impact on the Distribution of Social Roles:

The results showed that paternity leave contributes to promoting the principle of partnership between spouses. Many participants emphasized the importance of distributing roles between the father and mother in a balanced way, which enhances understanding and collaboration in raising children. This partnership helps reduce the burden on the mother and provides her with increased emotional and psychological support, as well as fostering a stronger family bond. Participants expressed a clear desire to expand this social role of the father to ensure a greater balance in gender roles.

Lack of Awareness and Knowledge About Paternity Leave:

The sessions revealed a lack of awareness among some families regarding the rights associated with paternity leave, indicating an informational gap that needs to be addressed. Participants suggested organizing awareness campaigns to increase understanding of the importance and benefits of paternity leave. Spreading awareness can help shift social expectations and promote the active role of fathers in the family. By clarifying the health and psychological benefits of paternity leave, more fathers could be encouraged to make effective use of this leave.

Social and Cultural Challenges to Father's Participation in Parenting:

Cultural and social traditions were identified as key barriers to fathers' participation in child-rearing. Some respondents pointed out that family traditions may limit the father's ability to play an active role in child care, especially in communities that uphold traditional roles, placing the man as the primary breadwinner and defining his role in a traditional manner. These cultural challenges require a change in the societal approach to the father's role within the family, necessitating enhanced awareness of role equality.

Paternity Leave and Its Impact on the Mother's Mental Health:

The interviews revealed that the father's presence during the post-birth period helps the mother adapt better to new responsibilities and alleviates psychological pressures. Father's involvement enhances the mother's sense of support and reduces the likelihood of postpartum depression. This effect reflects the importance of the psychological role of paternity leave, as the father becomes part of the emotional and physical support network for the mother.

Father and Mother Integration in Parenting:

The results showed an increasing awareness of the importance of integration between the father and mother in child-rearing. This growing awareness enhances family dynamics and leads to better understanding between the couple. Children also benefit from this balance, as they receive support from both parents. This integration contributes to creating a healthy and sustainable family environment, fostering the proper growth and development of children.

Recommendations and Alternatives:

Expanding Paternity Leave in Jordan:

Amending the legislation regarding paternity leave is a crucial step toward achieving a better balance in the distribution of roles between fathers and mothers in child-rearing. Currently, Jordanian law provides only three days of paternity leave, which is insufficient for a father to play an active role in caring for the newborn. To extend this period, proposals should be submitted to the legal committee in the House of Representatives to amend the law, ensuring that the duration of the leave is more aligned with family needs. In addition, supporting remote work can alleviate the burden on both parents. The solution lies in enhancing media campaigns and gaining community support through workshops and media campaigns that highlight the importance of fathers' involvement in child-rearing.

These campaigns can include engaging civil society institutions and organizations to push for legislative change by:

- Preparing proposals and legal studies that demonstrate the economic and social benefits of extending paternity leave.
- Launching support and advocacy campaigns in collaboration with women's rights organizations and civil society groups.
- Holding community dialogues with parliamentarians and decision-makers to amend the labor law.

Enhancing Community Awareness:

- To encourage fathers to take paternity leave, awareness of its importance must be promoted by organizing campaigns targeting families and businesses. These campaigns help raise awareness about the benefits of paternity leave and its impact on improving the mental health of both parents and strengthening family relationships. Such awareness helps break cultural norms that view the father's role as secondary in child-rearing. Through:
 - Organizing media and social media awareness campaigns targeting families and business owners about the importance of paternity leave.
 - Engaging local opinion leaders and public figures in promoting the concept of paternity leave.
 - Holding workshops within organizations to promote a culture of partnership between fathers and mothers in child-rearing.

Support from Government and Private Institutions:

Government and private institutions should support employee fathers through flexible work policies that help them balance work and family responsibilities. This support could include allowing flexible working hours or the possibility of remote work during the post-birth period. Encouraging such policies contributes to enhancing productivity among employees and increasing job satisfaction. Through:

- Developing flexible work policies that allow fathers to work from home during the first few days after birth.
- Encouraging institutions to adopt policies that support work-life balance, such as flexible working hours or additional leave.
- Offering incentives to companies that implement policies allowing longer paternity leave, such as tax breaks or government rewards.

Social and Cultural Change:

Changing the social and cultural patterns that limit the father's role in the family requires adopting a new community discourse that encourages fathers' participation in child-rearing. Jordanian society, like other societies, is influenced by traditional gender roles that prioritize the mother's role in child care. Therefore, it is essential to work on changing these patterns through awareness and community support. Through:

- Developing educational programs within schools and universities that promote critical thinking about gender roles and advocate for equality in child-rearing.
- Organizing community awareness campaigns that highlight the equal roles of fathers and mothers in child care.
- Encouraging influential religious and social figures to support the idea of fathers participating in child-rearing through religious sermons or public forums.

By implementing these solutions, tangible change can be achieved in Jordanian society, contributing to better gender role balance and encouraging greater participation of women in economic life.



Thank you



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