

Recognizing Spousal and Childcare Roles of Married Men Employees: A Perception on Paternity Leave

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Abstract

Men play a crucial role in their families. Their responsibilities, particularly in providing spousal and childcare support, are vital during the paternity leave period. This study examines the roles, perceptions, and challenges of working fathers at Central Luzon State University (CLSU) in relation to paternity leave. Using purposive sampling, eighty-two (82) married father-employees participated in the survey. Results showed that most respondents were aged 31–40, had two children (primarily aged 1–10), were non-teaching staff with permanent employment status, and earned a monthly income of ₱10,000–30,000. Most of the respondents perceived paternity leave as “Not Enough” in terms of both its length (WM = 2.09) and its availability exclusively to married males (WM = 2.44). They strongly agreed on the significance of fulfilling spousal roles during the prenatal (GWM = 3.81), parturition (GWM = 3.84), and postnatal (GWM = 3.81) periods, as well as on childcare responsibilities (GWM = 3.78). The main challenges identified were financial roles (WM = 2.80) and sleep deprivation (WM = 2.84). These findings suggest that policymakers should revisit the current provisions of paternity leave to better support fathers in balancing their spousal and childcare roles.

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Introduction

Background Information

The family is commonly regarded as the primary and essential educational entity. An individual's familial background provides valuable insights into their character and identity. They will likely adopt identical principles and behaviors in their personal life and households. It is fallacious to assert that one parent is more significant than the other. However, during the prenatal period, the mother has a crucial role in the lives of her children, yet as time passes, the responsibilities of both parents gradually become more balanced. The distinctiveness of both roles lies in the fact that a father, despite his utmost effort, cannot fulfill the duties that a mother must do and vice versa (Gežová, 2015).

Galal *et al.* (2017) assert that mothers have an impact on the overall well-being of their families because of their traditional roles, particularly in the procurement and preparation of food. They provide sufficient nutrition, diagnose and treat illnesses, and teach and supervise hygienic behaviors, especially for the health of young children. In addition, a mother fulfills multiple roles simultaneously within the family, including spouse, companion, organizer, administrator, leader, re-creator, disburser, economist, parent, disciplinarian, educator, health administrator, and artist. Women play a crucial role by actively contributing alongside men to enhance the socioeconomic growth of society (Kalaivani, 2019).

On the other hand, Evans and Fogarty (2005) have categorized fathers' five roles, which they refer to as the "Five Ps": (1) Participator/Problem-solver: taking care of them or engaging in leisure activities and play; (2) Playmate: a significant achievement in child's social and emotional development; (3) Principled Guide: guidance between a father and child entails a continuous process of fostering healthy communication due to active listening; (4) Provider: fathers are responsible for providing financial resources; and (5) Preparer: they also contribute to the well-being of their children through their caregiving role. Unfortunately, men are frequently misled into thinking that their sole responsibility for their families is to provide financial resources and material assistance. However, fathers who are involved in greater household engagement foster engagement and gender equality in the next generations: their children will value gender-equal conduct (Behson & Robbins, 2016).

A man also has a vital role as a husband. Ramandati and Sari (2021) state that in the prenatal, childbirth, and postnatal stages, a woman's fundamental need is the attention of her husband. The presence of a husband during childbirth is strongly recommended as it can offer his wife support, safety, comfort, and patience, as well as a smooth and normal process throughout pregnancy, delivery, and the postpartum period.

To fulfill these roles, working mothers and fathers can utilize various government and employer-provided leaves to engage with their families. These include maternity leave for mothers, paternity leave for fathers, and options such as vacation leave or service incentive leave.

Research Problems

The struggle to achieve gender equality is a continuous one. In fact, the Global Gender Gap Report in 2024 reports that global gender equality is at 68.6%. Specifically, the Philippines is ranked 25th in the world, with 77.9% gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2024). It is still far from closing the gender inequality gap. In terms of family responsibility, household chores and taking care of children are among the main distinctions between a father and a mother (Håkansson, 2008). This is due to the masculine norm discouraging men from performing household chores and the notion that those who are naturally more suited to oversee children are women. It is from these gendered assumptions that women are subordinated. Women are under social pressure to give up their employment since they are perceived as "expert" caregivers, whereas men are perceived as less skilled parents who can compete freely in the workforce (Parmeter, 2015).

This problem is evident in the Philippines, where Salcedo (2013) notes that the Philippine society has embraced the norm that infant care is exclusively the responsibility of mothers. Filipinos have been accustomed to the norm that the father is the "*haligi ng tahanan*" or "pillar" and the mother is the "*ilaw ng tahanan*" or "light of the home." It means that fathers are economic providers while mothers are nurturers. In instances where mothers are working, they are unable to perform childcare responsibilities, so they seek support from female relatives (mothers, aunts, sisters, cousins, or older daughters) or hire babysitters rather than from their husbands. If they do not wish to be labeled as "negligent mothers" or "*pabayang ina*," they should refrain from working. As a result, employers hold them in less importance. This perspective originates from the traditional Filipino family structure, where women are highly regarded for their care and affection. On the other hand, Filipino men continue to face the stigma of being labeled as "under the *saya*," which refers to a husband who does home duties, as this role is still seen as disgraceful for many Filipino men with masculine ideologies.

Due to the significant disparity, equitable distribution of household responsibilities and employment is the best method to address it and achieve gender equality. One method to start is to make sure that from the moment an infant is born, both parents share equal responsibility for the well-being of their child. It is through maternity and paternity leave. So, not only should mothers be offered leave, but fathers should also be offered leave. It should be a human right for men to take paternity leave (Håkansson, 2008). In line with this, the analysis of Earle *et al.* (2023) revealed that globally, nations having paid leave for fathers grew from 13% to 56% between 1995 and 2022, while paid leave for mothers went from 89% to 96%. There are now far fewer gender differences in the availability of compensated leave. However, there is still a gender gap in paid leave availability: Fathers have less than 14 days in 145 different nations, and no nation offers mothers less than 14 days of paid leave.

Developing countries are included in those countries that grant fathers not more than two weeks of paid paternity leave, such as one (1) day in Angola; two (2) days in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, and Indonesia; three (3) days in Albania, Algeria, Bolivia, Panama, Tanzania, and Djibouti; four (4) days in Uganda; five (5) days in Armenia, Fiji, Nicaragua, and Timor-Leste; 10 days in Cameroon, Gabon, Gambia, and Peru; and 14 days in Chad, Colombia, Kenya, South Sudan, and Venezuela. On the other hand, such countries have longer paid maternity leave than paid paternity leave: 60 days in Uganda; 84 days in Angola, the Dominican Republic,

and Timor-Leste; 84–98 days in Nicaragua; 84–100 days in Tanzania; 90 days in Bolivia, Indonesia, and South Sudan; 98 days in Algeria, Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Panama, Gabon, Fiji, and Peru; 126 days in Colombia; 140 days in Armenia; 182 days in Venezuela; 365 days in Albania; 3 months in Kenya; and 6 months in Gambia (Vacation Tracker, 2025; Vacation Tracker, 2024; Herbert Smith Freehills, 2024; Eurofast, 2024; Neeeyamo, 2023; Pires, 2019; Global Expansion, 2023; & Personnel Management Office, 2021).

The Philippines, as a developing country, is also one of them. On June 11, 1996, the Paternity Leave Act of 1996 or Republic Act No. 8187 was passed, allowing married male employees 7-day paternity leave alongside complete compensation for four (4) deliveries to provide assistance to their wives during period of healing immediately after childbirth and/or in nursing their newborn child (Philippine Commission on Women, 1996). Meanwhile, on March 11, 2019, the Extended Maternity Leave or Republic Act No. 11210 was passed, allowing female employees maternity leave for 105 days alongside complete compensation, which can be extended to 30 days without compensation. It can also be extended for 15 days with full pay for solo parents (Philippine Commission on Women, 2019). Despite these provisions, the seven-day paternity leave remains inadequate for fathers to fully perform their responsibilities to their spouse and child. To address this, Quezon City Rep. Marvin Rillo filed a House Bill No. 4430 in February 2023, seeking to amend the Paternity Leave Law of 1996 by extending fully paid paternity leave from seven days to 30 days, regardless of employment status (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2023). To date, there has not been any progress on this bill.

The study of Macaranas & Perez (2023) is the only study in the Philippines that assesses the current paternity leave. Their analysis reveals that fathers are not satisfied with both the length and flexibility of paternity leave, but these represent only two features of the policy. Thus, this research addresses this gap by covering all the features of paternity leave, such as length, frequency, availability for married males only, taking care of a newborn child, and support for the recovery of the wife. It also recognizes the fathers' spousal and childcare roles during paternity leave and identifies the challenges being faced by the working fathers—areas that remain underexplored in Philippine literature.

Paternity leave covers a set of broader features; studying other features can help to assess the sufficiency of the leave. At the same time, understanding the perception of working fathers on their spousal and childcare roles contributes to a more holistic evaluation of how paternity

leave can be amended. Identifying the challenges of working fathers provides an understanding of their well-being. With the perception of the target respondents, which can be affected by their lived experiences and moral compass, these objectives will be answered.

Objectives

This study primarily examines whether the current paternity leave is sufficient for working fathers to fulfill their spousal and childcare roles. It also seeks to determine the challenges they encounter. Specifically, the study addresses the following objectives:

1. To identify the socio-demographic profile of the working fathers in terms of age, number of children, age of children, occupation, employment status, and monthly income.
2. To assess the perception of the working fathers on the features of paternity leave, such as length, frequency, availability for married males only, taking care of a newly-born child, and support for the recovery of the wife.
3. To examine the perception of working fathers on spousal and childcare roles during paternity leave.
 - 3.1. Spousal Roles in terms of:
 - a. Prenatal Period
 - b. Parturition
 - c. Postnatal Period
 - 3.2. Childcare Roles
4. To identify the challenges being faced by the working fathers.

Purpose or Impact of the Study

This study contributes to eliminating the gender disparity between men and women in terms of granting parental leave: maternity and paternity leave. If paternity leave is expanded, this can minimize societal gender norms, as fathers can have more extended periods to nurture their children during paternity leave. This is in line with the study of Farre *et al.* (2025), which argues that family policies, including maternity and paternity leave, influences gender norms and gender equality in the succeeding generation. However, gender norms are widely acknowledged by some scholars as an obstacle to gender equality, which makes family policies ineffective. Thus, the study of González and Zoabi (2021) indicates that there is a need to expand paternity leave since it has the potential to be an effective strategy for achieving gender equality. As a result, paternity leave can help challenge traditional gender norms that restrict women's opportunities and broaden the definition of "acceptable" behavior for men. It may also communicate that the government supports and normalizes

men's participation in parental leave. Men can enter the household sphere more freely; they are no longer expected to be detached parents, and both sexes may function in a society less restricted by gender (Parmeter, 2015). Furthermore, if both parents spent the same amount of time, women and men would be viewed more equally in society (Håkansson, 2008). Hence, the House Bill proposal on paternity leave should be considered by the government to achieve gender equality in terms of childcare responsibilities.

Materials and Methods

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted at Central Luzon State University (CLSU), a renowned public university in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. CLSU was chosen as the study site primarily because of its accessibility and relevance to the researchers, who are students of the university. As of April 2024, there were a total of 380 married men employees at CLSU, according to the CLSU-Human Resource Management Office. This increased number of the study's target respondents highlights the importance of understanding the perception of university employees on paternity leave, as their views on parental policies are vital in developing an inclusive and progressive workplace. Thus, studying these specific employees of CLSU provides valuable data on how institutional policies align with the dynamic needs of the increasing workforce.

Sampling Design

Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was employed in identifying the respondents of this study. This method, also known as Judgmental Sampling, involves selecting units based on the same characteristics necessary in a sample (Nikolopoulou, 2023). The target population of this study was fathers employed at CLSU. However, the university only had available data on the CLSU married men employees, consisting of 380. Using purposive sampling, CLSU married men employees who are fathers were deliberately selected as respondents because paternity leave in the Philippines is granted only to married men employees. They are considered the most appropriate group to provide relevant data, particularly in determining fathers' childcare roles during paternity leave. Given the unavailability of complete data on the broader target population, non-probability sampling was deemed the most suitable method for this study.

Instrumentation

Quantitative research was employed in this study, using descriptive research to analyze the data gathered.

Descriptive research offers a precise description of a situation or population (McCombes, 2023). To execute this method, the researchers took the following steps in data collection: (1) The first step was gathering literature related to this study. (2) Secondly, the questionnaire was created based on the literature and validated by three experts, including a graduate with a doctoral degree, a researcher, and a human resource practitioner. (3) Thirdly, the pilot test was conducted for reliability testing. After successfully completing this process, the researchers distributed the survey questionnaire to the respondents. The instrument had four categories. The first part gathered the respondents' socio-demographic profile, including name, age, number of children, age of children, occupation, employment status, and monthly income. The second part obtained data on the respondents' perceptions on the features of paternity leave. The third part focused on the fathers' spousal and childcare roles during the paternity leave. Finally, the fourth part collected information on the challenges faced by the respondents.

Further, the researchers hired a statistician to conduct a reliability test for the questionnaire. Using the Cronbach Alpha, it resulted that all sections in the questionnaire passed the reliability test values ranging from 0.78 to 0.929, which fall under the internal consistency of acceptable, good, and excellent. This test indicated the reliability and suitability of determining the challenges of working fathers and assessing the perception of the respondents on paternity leave, spousal, and childcare roles.

Data Collection Methods

The researchers collected data by personally approaching individuals from various university offices and departments. The researchers explained the study's purpose, addressed questions, and secured informed consent, highlighting confidentiality and the right to withdraw. This face-to-face approach fostered trust and improved participation and response accuracy. The gathered data were carefully computed and tabulated by a statistician to be interpreted, understood, and communicated.

Data Analysis

The study employed frequency distribution, percentage, and mean as analytical tools. Frequency distribution was used to determine the number of respondents falling within each socio-demographic category, such as age, number of children, occupation, employment status, and monthly income. Percentage was then applied to show the proportion of respondents in relation to the total sample, making comparisons across

categories more meaningful. Together, frequency and percentage were used to address the first objective, which involved describing the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. Meanwhile, the mean was used to analyze the succeeding objectives: assessing respondents' perceptions of paternity leave, recognizing their spousal and childcare roles, and identifying the challenges they encountered as working fathers.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Age

Age	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
30 and below	5	6.1
31–40	29	35.4
41–50	24	29.3
51–60	17	20.7
61 and above	7	8.5
Total	82	100.0

Table 1 presents the ages of the respondents. Out of 82 respondents, the majority were 31–40 years old, while those aged 30 and below comprised the smallest group.

Based on the findings of Hadjicharalambous (2020), parental age has a significant impact on how parents perceive the psychological development of their children. Parents who are 30–40 years old are more likely to be responsible for meeting and satisfying the needs of their children. In contrast, younger couples with low income face numerous challenges, while adults who become parents at an early stage experience higher levels of relationship stress.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Number of Children

Number of Children	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
2	31	37.8
1	24	29.3
3	22	26.8
4	3	3.7
5	2	2.4
Total	82	100.0

Table 2 presents the number of children of the respondents. Among the 82 respondents, the majority had two children, while five reported having the fewest children. Desai (2010) states that parents' primary obligation is to finance their children; however, having more children diminishes the funds allocated per child for necessities, medical attention, and educational pursuits.

Therefore, financial challenges were more prevalent in large families compared to smaller ones. Given that most respondents have two children, they are less likely to experience financial pressure than those with more children

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Children's Ages

Age of Children	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year old	8	4.6
1–10	58	33.4
11–20	50	28.7
21–30	42	24.1
31 and above	16	9.2
Total	174	100.0

Table 3 presents the ages of the respondents' children. The 82 respondents had a total of 174 children. The majority were between 1 and 10 years old (58 children), while the youngest children were less than 1 year old (8 children). Adekunle and Abidogun (2022) argue that in a home setting, parents' primary responsibilities are to discipline and set rules that prepare children for adulthood. Peers are another significant socialization factor during adolescence, although research has shown that parents have the most impact on behavior. However, the parent-child relationship often becomes more challenging during adolescence, making it essential to sustain effective parenting practices, as this stage continues to shape children's maturity.

As the majority ranges from 1 to 10 years old, securing a close and stable relationship with them is essential in order to maintain a continuous and effective parenting style as they get older, helping them achieve positive behavior.

Table 4. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Type of Occupation

Type of Occupation	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Non-Teaching Staff	65	79.3
Teaching Staff	71	20.7
Total	82	100.0

Table 4 presents the occupation of the respondents. Out of 82 respondents, the majority were non-teaching staff (65), while only 17 were teaching staff.

Shah (2021) notes that the type of work a father does influences both his social standing and his income, which in turn affects parenting approaches. Fathers with higher levels of occupation are generally in a better

position to provide security and adequate resources for their children, as they are more capable of managing financial challenges.

The 17 respondents who were teaching were most likely to have a higher income than the non-teaching staff. Their income as parents can affect how they fulfill their familial responsibilities.

Table 5. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Employment Status

Employment Status	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Contractual	9	11.0
Permanent	71	86.6
Temporary/Probationary	2	2.4
Total	82	100.0

Table 5 presents the employment status of the respondents. Of the 82 respondents, the majority (71) were permanent employees, while only 2 were temporary/probationary employees, representing the smallest group. In relation to this, Kraaykamp (2012) argues that permanent and temporary working men exhibited substantial distinctions. Permanent working men were the least likely to believe in equal family responsibilities. In contrast, men who worked temporarily believed significantly more in equal family responsibilities, especially compared to non-working men.

As shown in the table, the majority of respondents were permanent employees, suggesting they may not share the same views on equal family responsibilities as their contractual and temporary/probationary counterparts. Their perceptions and engagement with family responsibilities indicate that they prioritize their work over balancing it with household duties.

Table 6. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Monthly Income

Monthly Income	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
₱10,000-₱30,000	47	57.4
₱31,000-₱60,000	28	34.1
₱61,000-₱90,000	3	3.6
₱91,000 and above	4	4.9
Total	82	100.0

Table 6 presents the monthly income of the respondents. Of the 82 respondents, the majority (47) had a ₱10,000-₱30,000 monthly income. Meanwhile, only 3 respondents had a monthly income of ₱61,000-₱90,000.

According to the analysis of Mayer (2002), parents' income has a significant impact on improving mental and emotional health, good behavior, academic achievement, level of education, future earnings, and the social status of children. Lv (2017) also states that parents with lower salaries struggle to provide financially for their families.

Based on the results, the majority of respondents had a ₱10,000-₱30,000 monthly income. Thus, many of them might be struggling to secure financial stability.

Table 7. Perception of Fathers on the Features of Paternity Leave

Features of Paternity Leave	Mean	VI
2.1. Length - Seven (7) days of paternity leave are used to take care of my wife and newborn baby.	2.09	NE
2.2. Frequency - Paternity leave grants pay for fathers for the first four children from their legitimate spouse if they are cohabiting.	2.90	E
2.3. Availability for Married Males Only - Paternity leave is solely available for married male employees. So, unmarried fathers, single fathers, and stepfathers are excluded.	2.44	NE
2.4. Taking Care of the Newly-born Child - Paternity leave is used to care for the newly-born baby.	2.96	E
2.5. Support for the Recovery of the Wife - Paternity leave is used to support the recovery of the wife.	3.12	E
General Weighted Mean	2.70	E

Legend:

1.00-1.74 - Extremely Not Enough (ENE)

2.5-3.24 - Enough (E)

1.75-2.49 - Not Enough (NE)

3.25-4.00 - Extremely Enough (EE)

Table 7 shows that the respondents perceived the overall features of paternity leave as "Enough", with a weighted mean of 2.70. This is because the respondents perceived three out of the five features of paternity leave, such as Frequency, Taking Care of the Newly-born Child, and Support for the Recovery of the Wife, as "Enough", with a weighted mean of 2.90, 2.96, and 3.12, respectively. However, they perceived the Length as "Not Enough", with a weighted mean of 2.09, and Availability for Married Males Only as "Not Enough", with a weighted mean of 2.44.

In terms of length, the study of Macaranas & Perez (2023) is related to the result, which reveals that Filipino fathers are not satisfied with the length of paternity leave. The studies of Li and Yeung (2022), Knoester *et al.* (2019), Knoester and Li (2022), Petts and Knoester (2018), and Able (2017) contend that extended paternity leave, specifically two weeks or longer, is beneficial in improving father-child and husband-wife relationships. This is because a man's involvement in his family is increased with the help of paternity leave. There is growing evidence that men and women share equal childcare responsibilities, and the wife is more likely to be guided in the postnatal period since the husband assists in the postpartum and breastfeeding periods. Respondents were not satisfied with the seven-day paternity leave, as this is insufficient to support their wives in the prenatal, parturition, and postnatal period.

Expanding the leave can also contribute to their childcare involvement, allowing them to be more connected to their families.

In terms of frequency, the findings of Macaranas & Perez (2023) are contradictory, as they argue that Filipino fathers are not satisfied with the flexibility of paternity leave in terms of when and how frequently they can avail of it. However, in this study, it was revealed that respondents were satisfied with the frequency of leave, which can be used up to four times, because most of them were content with having at least four children or even fewer.

In terms of availability for married males only, Macaranas & Perez (2023) suggest that paternity leave must be available to all fathers, including unmarried fathers, single fathers, and stepfathers. This is related to the result of this study, which discovered that the availability of paternity leave for only married males is not enough. This is because unmarried fathers, single fathers, and stepfathers shall also be granted paternity leave to contribute to the improvement of father–child and husband–wife relationships.

In terms of taking care of the newly-born child, Paternity Leave in the Philippines is used to nurse a newborn baby, as indicated in Section 3 of the law (Philippine Commission on Women, 1996). Having a father in the initial stage of a child's life is important as Rahadian *et al.* (2020) note that receiving support from a father after childbirth not only helps reduce the occurrence of postpartum depression in the mother but also promotes the exclusive breastfeeding of the infants. However, being present for the newborn baby is not enough because, according to Chaq (2024), fathers have a crucial involvement in influencing the emotional and character improvement of children between 0 and 6 years old.

Rocha (2020) claims that fathers can use paternity leave to enhance their participation in childcare throughout the child's life. This enhances the childcare aptitude of fathers, which improves their self-assurance in their capacity to care for children, thus cultivating a positive cycle that encourages men's participation in caregiving tasks. Therefore, there is a need to expand the paternity leave; it shall also be used intermittently, from the day the child is born until the child reaches the age of 6, which can positively impact their emotional and character development.

In terms of support for the recovery of the wife, Macaranas & Perez (2023) claim that Filipino fathers spend the majority of their parental leave at home attending to their wives' or partners' needs, along with caring for their

children and performing housework. According to this study's findings, paternity leave was enough to be used in the recovery of the wife. Although paternity leave can be used intermittently, from the prenatal period up to the postnatal period, the respondents were no longer requesting to amend this aspect, such as using the paternity leave to support their wives in other aspects of pregnancy.

The importance of a husband's role in caring for his wife is highlighted in Raman's analysis (2019), which reveals that while paternity leave is emphasized in childcare, it also provides significant advantages for mothers. This study emphasizes that husbands take on the role of assistants by helping with household chores, thereby challenging the practice of categorizing men and women based on societal expectations. Additionally, Tladi (2017) and Rahadian *et al.* (2020) argue that the significance of husbands not only in the delivery of the child but also in the postpartum period is significant because of the practical and emotional support they provide to their companions throughout this period, preventing the mother from experiencing postpartum blues and ensuring that the infants are exclusively breastfed.

Table 8. Perceived Spousal Roles of Husbands during Prenatal Period

Perceived Spousal Roles during the Prenatal Period	Mean	VI
3.1.1 Every husband has to support the needs of his spouse (e.g., pregnancy cravings, check-ups, and vitamins).	3.88	SA
3.1.2 The involvement of a husband during pregnancy also helps his spouse reduce maternal stress and encourages positive maternal behaviors.	3.87	SA
3.1.3 A husband should oversee the physical, mental, and emotional health of his wife.	3.78	SA
3.1.4 A pregnant wife should be accompanied by her husband when attending doctor checkups.	3.78	SA
3.1.5 A husband should prepare birthing plans and parenting styles together with his spouse.	3.76	SA
3.1.6 A husband should allocate his time at home after work to take care of his wife.	3.74	SA
3.1.7 A husband should show respect and appreciation to his wife.	3.87	SA
General Weighted Mean	3.81	SA

Legend:

1.00-1.74 - Strongly Disagree (SD)

2.5-3.24 - Agree (A)

1.75-2.49 - Disagree (D)

3.25-4.00 - Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 8 shows that the respondents “Strongly Agreed” with the husband's spousal roles during the prenatal period, as reflected in the general weighted mean of 3.81. This suggests that they highly recognize the significant role of the husband in providing support throughout pregnancy. Among the listed roles, “3.1.1. Every husband has to support the needs of his spouse (e.g.,

pregnancy cravings, check-ups, and vitamins)” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.88, indicating strong agreement on the importance of this responsibility. Meanwhile, “3.1.6. A husband should allocate his time at home after work to take care of his wife” received the lowest weighted mean of 3.74, although it still falls under the “Strongly Agree” category

Overall, married men employees reported that their involvement contributes to reducing maternal stress. According to Alio *et al.* (2013), the primary benefits of paternal engagement during pregnancy include lowering maternal stress and encouraging positive maternal behaviors, which ultimately safeguard the well-being of both mother and child (Firouzan *et al.*, 2018). Consistent with these findings, the respondents strongly agreed that their roles include providing financial support and accompanying the wives during the prenatal period, as well as covering expenses for specific care and paraclinical procedures. Beyond financial obligations, the husband's responsibilities extend to ensuring their spouses' physical, mental, and emotional well-being by attending to nutrition, showing compassion, and providing overall support throughout the pregnancy. In addition, active participation in prenatal classes, prenatal checkups, delivery, and postpartum care was highlighted as vital forms of spousal involvement (Firouzan *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, the respondents acknowledged the importance of a husband allocating time at home after work to take care of his wife. Dehshiri *et al.* (2023) emphasize that such involvement not only strengthens marital intimacy but also reduces the likelihood of postpartum blues when husbands are actively engaged during the prenatal period. In addition, the respondents affirm that a husband should consistently show respect and appreciation to his wife, as this helps preserve her self-worth and empowers her in fulfilling her role as a mother (Firouzan *et al.*, 2018). Recognizing the importance of a husband's presence and involvement during the prenatal period is pivotal in supporting the emotional and psychological stability of the wife, ensuring her health and the unborn child's safety.

Table 9. Perceived Spousal Roles of Husbands during the Parturition Period

Perceived Spousal Roles during the Parturition Period	Mean	VI
3.2.1 A husband should be present during labor as it promotes maternal comfort.	3.79	SA
3.2.2 A husband should take care of his spouse during the preparation for the baby's arrival.	3.72	SA
3.2.3 A husband should make sure that his spouse and child are safe during the pregnancy journey.	3.90	SA
3.2.4 A husband should provide emotional support to his spouse during the baby's delivery.	3.87	SA
General Weighted Mean	3.84	SA

Legend:

1.00-1.74 - Strongly Disagree (SD)
1.75-2.49 - Disagree (D)

2.5-3.24 - Agree (A)
3.25-4.00 - Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 9 shows that the respondents “Strongly Agree” on the husband's spousal roles during the parturition, as reflected in the general weighted mean of 3.84. This suggests that they highly acknowledge the importance of the husband's role in the parturition. Among the listed roles, “3.2.3. A husband should make sure that his spouse and child are safe during the pregnancy journey” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.90, indicating strong agreement in this responsibility. Meanwhile, the role “3.2.2. A husband should take care of his spouse during the preparation for the baby's arrival” received the lowest weighted mean of 3.72, although the respondents also strongly agreed in this responsibility.

Married men employees acknowledged their essential roles during the parturition. This is in line with the findings of Alencar *et al.* (2021) concluding that a husband in the delivery room can comfort the wife by encouraging her as well as showing love and protection. In this context, men addressed concerns regarding potential issues during delivery and the fear of negative results for the infant, expressing a readiness to provide support. Adeniran *et al.* (2015) note that the emotional assistance of a husband is vital in anticipation of the infant's arrival. Having a companion throughout the labor and delivery offers the couple emotional benefits, as well as improving labor outcomes, extended birth intervals, and earlier breastfeeding. Similarly, Firouzan *et al.* (2018) argue that husbands should actively participate in their spouses' labor by offering emotional support along with massages to lessen pain. To improve labor outcomes and initial bonding with the newborn, a husband's presence during the parturition stage is essential for lowering maternal stress and offering emotional support.

Table 10. Perceived Spousal Roles of Husbands during the Postnatal Period

Perceived Spousal Roles of Husbands during the Postnatal Period	Mean	VI
3.3.1 A husband should pay the hospital bills after the delivery.	3.68	SA
3.3.2 Processing of documents, like a birth certificate, should be the husband's responsibility while his spouse is taking care of their newborn child.	3.70	SA
3.3.3 Every husband has to continuously support the financial needs of his wife.	3.82	SA
3.3.4 A husband's involvement in postnatal care can lessen the incidence of postpartum blues.	3.74	SA
3.3.5 A husband's involvement in postnatal care can help increase the couple's intimacy.	3.73	SA
3.3.6 A husband should provide emotional support to his spouse after the baby is delivered.	3.82	SA
3.3.7 Helping in washing milk bottles, feeding the baby with formulated milk, and holding the child shows the love and care of a husband for his spouse.	3.82	SA
3.3.8 Involvement of the husband in the household chores after his spouse gives birth to their baby shows support and respect.	3.80	SA
General Weighted Mean	3.81	SA

Legend:

1.00-1.74 - Strongly Disagree (SD)
1.75-2.49 - Disagree (D)

2.5-3.24 - Agree (A)
3.25-4.00 - Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 10 shows that the respondents “Strongly Agree” with the husband’s spousal roles during the postnatal period, as reflected in the general weighted mean of 3.81. This indicates that they highly recognize the husband has a crucial spousal role in the prenatal period. The spousal roles “3.3.3 Every husband has to continuously support the financial needs of his wife,” “3.3.6. A husband should provide emotional support to his spouse after the baby is delivered,” and “3.3.7. Helping in washing milk bottles, feeding the baby with formulated milk, and holding the child shows the love and care of a husband for his spouse” all gained the highest weighted mean of 3.82 (Strongly Agree). In contrast, “3.3.1 A husband should pay the hospital bills after the delivery” received the lowest weighted mean of 3.68 (Strongly Agree).

The respondents acknowledged that they should continuously contribute to the financial needs of their wives, as they play a significant financial support role to their spouses’ postnatal care (Wai *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, they emphasized the importance of securing a birth certificate for their children, as the Philippine Statistics Authority (n.d.) noted that parents, relatives, or guardians can apply for a birth certificate if a child is a minor. A birth certificate is necessary as it safeguards children from any kind of abuse. Without it, minors cannot verify their age, exposing them to recruitment into military forces or a higher danger of forced labor or forced early marriage. In addition, they are required to attend school, obtain standard vaccinations, and receive other healthcare services; however, without a valid birth certificate, these opportunities may be restricted. Consequently, it may result in poverty since future employment opportunities become limited (Selim, 2019).

Furthermore, their involvement in the postnatal period is beneficial in contributing to the well-being of their wives, childcare, and household roles. In comparison, the participants in the study by Firouzan *et al.* (2018) believed that a husband plays the role of expressing gratitude for his wife’s efforts both before and after the pregnancy, meeting her postpartum emotional needs, and handling her emotional issues appropriately. Also, their roles for their wife and infant involve postpartum care in the hospital, nursing practice, and postpartum home care. Ovum Woman and Child Specialty Hospital (n.d.) suggested that when a husband is on paternity leave, he can look after the infant and help the mother. He can assist with various tasks, such as changing the baby’s diaper, breastfeeding, preparing food, cleaning milk bottles, bathing the child, spending time with the child, or playing with him.

A husband’s active participation during the postnatal period—through emotional, material, and caregiving support—is essential for fostering his wife’s

recovery, ensuring the child’s well-being, and nurturing a loving and secure family environment.

Table 11. Perceived Childcare Roles of Fathers

Perceived Childcare Roles	Mean	VI
4.1 Every father has to provide essentials for his baby, such as clothing, burp cloths, pacifiers, bottles, breast pumps, vitamins, milk, diapers, checkups, and vaccines.	3.76	SA
4.2 A father’s involvement reduces maternal stress, which can reduce the chance of losing the baby during pregnancy.	3.79	SA
4.3 A father should assist his wife with prenatal check-ups to guarantee the baby’s health and safety.	3.79	SA
4.4 A father should be involved in prenatal education as it helps in preparation for childbirth, and the recognition, treatment, and avoidance of maternal-fetal complications.	3.74	SA
4.5 A father should develop a bond with his newborn child by taking care of the child.	3.87	SA
4.6 A father should be available to do hands-on things like feeding, bathing, taking the infant out, and changing diapers and clothes.	3.74	SA
4.7 A father should be involved in choosing a good pediatrician and making appointments for his newborn baby.	3.76	SA
General Weighted Mean	3.78	SA

Legend:

1.00-1.74 - Strongly Disagree (SD)

2.5-3.24 - Agree (A)

1.75-2.49 - Disagree (D)

3.25-4.00 - Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 11 shows that the respondents “Strongly Agree” with the father’s childcare roles, having a general weighted mean of 3.78. This indicates that they highly recognize the father’s vital role in childcare. Among the childcare roles, “4.5. A father should develop a bond with his newborn child by taking care of the child” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.87 (Strongly Agree). Meanwhile, the roles “4.4 A father should be involved in prenatal education as it helps in preparation for childbirth, and the recognition, treatment, and avoidance of maternal-fetal complications.” and “4.6 A father should be available to do hands-on things like feeding, bathing, taking the infant out, and changing diapers and clothes” received the lowest weighted mean of 3.74 (Strongly Agree).

Married men employees recognized their childcare roles because early engagement of a father with his child significantly influences the areas of cognition, socialization, and emotional development (Yeh *et al.*, 2019). Such roles involve financial aspects: Alio *et al.* (2013) state that fathers providing a child with financial assistance from birth is embodied in the concept of responsibility. Also, it was concluded that the presence of men is a protective element that lessens maternal stress for mothers and fosters positive maternal behaviors. Women who receive greater assistance from their spouses generally give birth to healthier children. Moreover, based on the investigation of Alencar *et*

al. (2021), male involvement in the prenatal period was characterized as assisting his wife with prenatal check-ups to guarantee the baby's health and safety. In addition, their participation during prenatal education helps in readiness for childbirth, and the recognition, treatment, and avoidance of mother-infant potential problems. Furthermore, tasks such as doing the newborn's laundry, feeding, bathing, and remembering when the baby needs to be fed are all types of caring for an infant. Other tasks include addressing a newborn's overnight cries, dressing the infant, changing the baby's diaper, and discussing the baby's health with the doctor. Engaging tasks come in second: picking out toys for the baby, playing with them, and bringing them on walks and drives (Yeh *et al.*, 2019).

Table 12. Challenges of Working Fathers

Challenges	Mean	VI
5.1 Financial Responsibilities - I feel pressured, stressed, and anxious about my financial responsibilities to my family.	2.80	A
5.2 Sleep deprivation - I struggle with a lack of sleep, which affects my performance at work and home.	2.84	A
5.3 Work-family Conflict - I find it hard to balance my work and time for my family.	2.45	D
5.4 Negative Changes in Spousal Relationships - I feel less intimacy, affection, and attention from my wife since her time is focused on our child/children.	2.21	D
5.5 Childcare Responsibilities - I am unable to perform other childcare responsibilities, such as taking care of my child, playing with him/her, and guiding and teaching him/he, because I am focused on my financial responsibilities.	2.12	D
General Weighted Mean	2.49	D

Legend:

1.00-1.74 - Strongly Disagree (SD)

2.5-3.24 - Agree (A)

1.75-2.49 - Disagree (D)

3.25-4.00 Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 12 shows that respondents "Disagree" with the overall Challenges of Working Fathers, having a general weighted mean of 2.49. This indicates that not every respondent experiences the five challenges of a working father, as revealed by the findings that working married fathers face two challenges out of the five, namely Financial Responsibilities with a weighted mean of 2.80 (Agree) and Sleep deprivation with a weighted mean of 2.84 (Agree). In contrast, Work-family Conflict, Negative Changes in Spousal Relationships, and Childcare Responsibilities were not experienced by the respondents, which garnered weighted means of 2.45, 2.21, and 2.12 (Disagree), respectively.

In terms of financial responsibilities, the findings are in line with the studies of Rilling and Hadley (2023), which revealed that 56% of fathers answered that they felt stressed, anxious, or pressured due to their financial

responsibilities. Many of them were prepared to make any sacrifice required because they believed that their first duty was to provide for their children. Additionally, some of them reported that the stress and pressure to provide for the family increased when they were the sole providers. Likewise, Dad University Magazine (2023) reports that numerous fathers experience significant pressure to provide sufficient financial support for their families because raising children means financial expenses.

The respondents in this study reported that they had financial responsibilities to their wives and children, especially during the pregnancy process. Having a family made them struggle financially. Beyond the pregnancy, financial responsibility increases, as long-term investment is needed to sustain the needs of the children, including education, clothing, food and other necessities.

In terms of sleep deprivation, the findings in this research are consistent with the literature. According to Deakin University (2020), the majority of fathers are characterized by doctors as having pathological sleep deprivation. Analysis of the average duration of bedtime compared to sleep duration has revealed that fathers have a clinical degree of insomnia. Rilling and Hadley (2023) claim that, despite allocating sufficient time for sleep, many men express dissatisfaction with their sleep, describing it as disturbed, inconsistent, and of poor quality. One of the mentioned reasons is their childcare responsibility, specifically with their newborn babies. Summer's Sleep Secrets (2023) contend that insufficient sleep can have a substantial effect on a parent's work performance.

In this study, the respondents were experiencing a lack of sleep, which was affecting their work and home life. Several factors contributed to this, including childcare responsibility, financial pressure, mental and emotional instability, and the environment.

In terms of work-family conflict, the study conducted by Rilling and Hadley (2023) differs from the results of this study. In their research, fathers were surveyed on their difficulties with balancing the demands of work and family duties. Most of the fathers responded positively. In contrast, some respondents in this study reported that, due to work demands, they were physically present but not fully mentally engaged with their children.

The possible reason why respondents disagreed that work-family conflict was not a challenge to them is that, according to the Australian Institute of Family Studies (2019), fathers in this modern time are now actively engaging in childcare while they are still seen as having the

traditional responsibility of being economic providers. However, mental health issues and stress are experienced by fathers because their desire to divide family responsibilities may interfere with work demands and cultural expectations. Their mental health, together with relationship functioning and parenting skills, declined when fathers experienced extreme and continuous work-family conflict. Such issues may also impact the psychological state of their children. Likewise, Dinh *et al.* (2017) indicate that the psychological well-being of children declines when either their mother or father struggle more with work-family conflict, but improves when such conflict decreases. These findings provide evidence that work-family conflict contributes to social factors that determine mental health and can affect one generation and beyond.

In terms of negative changes in spousal relationships, the study by Rilling and Hadley (2023) differs from the results in this study. Most of the surveyed fathers reported that having children negatively impacted their relationships with their spouses. Most of them said that after childbirth, their partner would no longer provide them with the same level of affection and attention as before: Too little time to spend with their partner, specifically physical intimacy, was a common complaint among men. The respondents in this study revealed that their relationship with their spouse remained unchanged despite having to supervise their child/children. This result highlights the importance of balancing work and family responsibilities to ensure both professional life and family bonds are sustainable. There is a degree of resiliency and dedication in the marital bond. It illustrates how some couples, while devoting a significant amount of their time and energy to childcare, are still able to sustain an emotional bond and mutual support.

In terms of childcare responsibilities, the result of this challenge contradicts the studies of Han and Jun (2013) and Guo *et al.* (2024), which revealed that mothers were substantially more engaged in childcare responsibilities. Likewise, Han and Jun (2013) noted that fathers were more involved in economic provision. In other areas, such as establishing ethics and morality, taking obligations, professional advancement, providing protection, fostering independence, and discipline, there was no difference between fathers and mothers.

In this study, the respondents were not struggling with childcare responsibilities even though they were also focusing on financial responsibilities. This implies their responsiveness to the needs of their children. Their capacity to preserve this balance might be a result of good time management, putting family values first, or a

cooperative home environment that permits shared caregiving.

Conclusion

According to the findings, working fathers perceive the overall features of paternity leave as “Enough”; however, it suggests that there is a need to expand the Length and Availability of leave to all Working Fathers. In addition, the respondents “Strongly Agree” with the husband’s spousal roles in the prenatal period, parturition, postnatal period, and childcare responsibilities. This means that they highly recognize their spousal roles throughout the pregnancy process and their father’s childcare roles. On the other hand, the respondents report that they are facing financial responsibilities and sleep deprivation.

In line with the results, a paternity leave amendment is necessary. Given that respondents perceive men as having significant roles throughout the marital pregnancy and child development, the length and availability of paternity leave in the Philippines should be expanded to fulfill these roles. The findings of the study are beneficial to policymakers to review and make necessary amendments in paternity leave. This can gradually alter the traditional gender norms and promote gender equality between Filipino men and women, as the findings highlight how men perceive the importance of their spousal and childcare responsibilities. By considering how working fathers can utilize the expansion of paternity leave, it also benefits the family’s well-being, as fathers’ multidimensional involvement in spousal roles and childcare roles may contribute to healthier family dynamics, reduced maternal stress, and stronger parent-child bonds. This, in turn, could potentially lessen their financial pressure and sleep deprivation. Therefore, it enables mothers to equitably share caregiving duties, alleviate stress, and foster a more balanced allocation of household tasks with their spouses, especially in the postnatal period. Moreover, their financial responsibilities and sleep deprivation reflect that they are struggling as fathers and their interconnectedness; this result implies that financial responsibility causes sleep deprivation by inducing stress and anxiety that suppresses the ability to sleep.

The following are the limitations of this study which can be further explored by future researchers: (1) The data collection was only in Central Luzon State University (CLSU); (2) This study is limited to CLSU male teaching and non-teaching staff as respondents; (3) Additionally, this study was conducted by employing a non-probability sampling method, in which the computation of the sample size was not applicable.

The sample size in this study does not represent the target population of the researchers. Thus, future researchers may continue exploring paternity leave by conducting qualitative research on a wider population to assess a broader perception of fathers. Additionally, it is recommended to make a comparative study on the perception of paternity leave between fathers and mothers, as this can eliminate social desirability bias in the results of this study; and (4) Lastly, hypotheses are not tested as they are not applicable in this study. Future research may consider conducting hypothesis testing with other variables.

Ethical Statement

The authors secured ethical approval from the Central Luzon State University Ethical Committee. Participants were informed about the research study, and the data would be used solely for the research. Furthermore, participation was voluntary, as informed consent was also secured from the respondents before conducting the study. Strict confidentiality was applied throughout the study and the reporting of its findings.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to the conduct and publication of this research. All procedures followed were in accordance with institutional and ethical standards, and there were no financial or personal relationships that could have influenced the outcomes of this study.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

During the preparation of this work, the authors utilized Grammarly and QuillBot for grammar checks and word choice suggestions. In addition, Turnitin was also used to check the paper's plagiarism and AI percentage. Following the use of these tools, the authors conducted a review and made necessary modifications, assuming full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Data Availability

All data supporting the findings of this study are available within the paper.

Author Contributions

CEP, RJFA, RDD, ABTS, and RAMS: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review and Editing, Visualization, and Project administration; **CPGM:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Writing - Review and Editing, and Supervision.

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