Paternal adaptation in first-time fathers: a phenomenological study

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ABSTRACT
Objective: This study aimed to explore men’s experiences of paternal adaptation during their first year of transition to parenthood.
Background: Stepping into fatherhood is one of the most important events that may occur in a man’s life and can lead to fundamental changes in their identity and lifestyle. However, to our knowledge, no studies have been conducted on men’s experiences of paternal adaptation in an Iranian context.
Methods: In this phenomenological study, 15 Iranian men who had the experience of parenting for the first time were recruited using the purposeful sampling method. In-depth semi-structured interviews guided by a questionnaire were used to collect data. The data were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis.
Results: The data analysis resulted in the development of 26 themes, 8 subordinate themes and 3 superordinate themes. The superordinate themes included ‘steps toward adaptation’, ‘obstacles to the path of adaptation’ and ‘stabilisation in the paternal position’.
Conclusion: Perceived self-efficacy and satisfaction in fatherhood means an adaptation to the paternal role. Factors influencing paternal adaptation can be classified into the domains of ‘facilitating factors’ and ‘inhibiting factors’.

Introduction
In recent decades, researchers have become more interested in studying fatherhood, and several studies have been conducted in this area (Barenski, 2010; Bradley, Boath, & Mackenzie, 2004; Carneiro et al., 2012). Despite numerous studies, no comprehensive and complete theory has been provided in relation to fatherhood (Rouch, 2009). Doherty believes that such a failure is due to the social nature of fatherhood and its changes based on political, economic and social conditions (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998).
Along with researchers in other countries, the attention of Iranian researchers’ has turned to the role of men in family health, and some studies have been performed on the role of men in reproductive health (Mortazavi & Keramat, 2012; Simbar, Nahidi, Ramezani-Tehrani, & Akbarzadeh, 2011; Vakilian & Keramat, 2012). The results of these studies revealed that men tend to have enough information about the problems of women during pregnancy and being there for their wives while receiving prenatal care (Mortazavi & Keramat, 2012). Occupational difficulties, cultural factors (Simbar et al., 2011) and lack of knowledge (Mortazavi & Keramat, 2012) were the main barriers to men’s participation in the family. However, no study was found which investigated the experiences of men regarding paternal adaptation, the process of becoming a father and the needs and challenges of fathers in Iran.

Adaptation is defined as coordination between individual needs and external demands (Walker & Alvin, 1994), and paternal adaptation involves the adjustment of men to the paternal role, and the related responsibilities and challenges (Ricci & Kyle, 2009). From the social perspective, childbirth and having an infant at home is the starting point of becoming a father. Fathers face numerous challenges, such as the inability to participate in home responsibilities, not having enough time to communicate with their child, changes in lifestyle and marital communication, lack of freedom to enjoy their personal life, lack of skills in child care and the need to learn more about the characteristics of an infant (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009), as well as requiring compliance with their child throughout life (Alessia & Roufeil, 2012).

The present study tried to explain the concept of paternal adaptation and factors affecting it through a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to understand the needs and experiences of first-time fathers during their first year of fatherhood, to generate knowledge through conceptualisation of individuals’ experiences (Husserl, 1962).

Methods

Setting

This study was conducted in Qom, which is the eighth largest city in Iran and the capital of Qom Province. People of different ethnicities and socioeconomic classes live in this city.

Participants

The participants were 15 Iranian men experiencing fatherhood for the first time. The inclusion criteria for participants were as follows: Iranian nationality, fluency in Farsi language, aged 20 years and older for the couple, having a healthy singleton infant of 1–12 months of age, and willingness to participate in the study. All fathers were healthy and lived with their healthy wives.

Design and data collection

In this study, a qualitative method with interpretative phenomenological approach was used. The sampling was performed using a purposeful method and continued until data saturation (Streubert & Carpenter, 2007) from February 2013 to February 2014. Fathers who
met the study’s inclusion criteria were invited to participate. The interviews were conducted by a member of the research team (NE) in a private room in the healthcare centre, midwifery clinic, father’s home, work place, or other places based on the father’s choice.

In-depth interviews were performed using a semi-structured questionnaire. A demographic questionnaire was also used for data collection. The interview guide was developed using the review of related literature and counselling with Iranian experts. It was revised following three pilot interviews. The guide questions were: ‘What problems do you face as a father?’; ‘What solutions do you use to handle it?’; ‘What helps you to cope more easily with your fatherhood?’; and ‘Explain your experiences of fatherhood’. Further probing questions were used following the fathers’ answers. The interviewer tried to identify and understand the type and quality of the men’s lived experience by observing the non-verbal reactions of fathers when they expressed their experience of fathering. Secondary interviews were also conducted (if needed) to confirm the data and bridge any possible gap in data. The duration of the interviews was between 20 and 80 min. All interviews were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim and analysed consecutively by the main scholar.

**Data analysis**

The qualitative data of this study were analysed by the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) method that is described by Smith, Flowers and Larking (2009). In accordance with the IPA process, first, each transcript was read a few times to enable the researcher to become adequately familiar with the participants’ views. The analysis began with a single case and proceeded through the following stages. Second, emerging themes were identified. In the third stage, themes were listed and the researcher attempted to identify links between themes and to reorder them in a more theoretical way. In the fourth stage, themes were named appropriately. Themes generated from the analysis of the first interview guide the analysis of the next interview (Smith et al., 2009). MAXQDA version 10 software was used for data management.

**Trustworthiness and rigors**

Credibility of data was achieved by using maximum diversity in sampling (age, education, urban and rural fathers). Confirmability was assessed by returning the coded transcripts to a few participants to be validated. Reliability was confirmed by assessment and recoding of parts of transcripts by two co-workers. Transferability of data was achieved by detailed description of the procedures of the study. Documents were also provided for audit by experts. The researchers regularly discussed the procedure of data analysis and themes generation to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of data.

**Ethical consideration**

The approval of the Ethical Committee of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences (SBMUZ.REC.1394.76, 24 January 2013) was obtained for the study. Ethics were considered during the study by describing the aims and details on the procedure of the study for participants and taking informed consent from them for audio-taping the interviews.
beforehand. The participants’ dignity, privacy and freedom of actions was respected throughout the interviews.

**Results**

The findings of this study were based on the interviews conducted with 15 men who were experiencing fatherhood for the first time. The details of demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

The data analysis led to the extraction of 26 codes, 8 subordinate themes and 3 superordinate themes. A summary of themes extracted during the data analysis are shown in Table 2.

The superordinate themes included: ‘Steps toward adaptation,’ ‘Obstacles to the path of adaptation’ and ‘Stabilisation in the paternal position.’ They are explained using some direct quotations from the participants as follows.

**Steps toward adaptation**

According to the participants, readiness to become a parent, making efforts to manage the new situation, reducing psychological pressure, and gradual maturation over time influenced the men’s adaptation to the paternal role.

**Readiness to become a parent**

Readiness to become a father reflects attitudes and behaviours that ensure the availability of necessary conditions for childbirth, gaining knowledge and skills to play the role of a father, planning for childbearing, and having a positive attitude towards fatherhood. Over half of the participants believed that prior to pregnancy a man needed to assess his readiness for becoming a father. They believed that gaining knowledge about the parental role would help them to become prepared for new conditions and cope more easily with the expected role and assigned responsibilities.

> When I wanted to have a child, long before, I went to books, the Internet, and I started asking questions. I searched a lot to find out about having a baby ... earlier ... I saw something in myself ... as people say, I asked myself to see whether I can provide for and support another person. (Participant No. 5)

**Making efforts to manage the new situation**

The participants used different strategies to manage new situations and changes in life caused by childbirth. For instance, they tried to solve problems, and to manage their relationships with their wives, coordinated their job tasks with their new paternal duties, and sought support from family members and friends.

> Well, you should try to manage the situation ... as far as possible, I tried to put my life together; I tried to take the control of my life, not let it fall apart. (Participant No. 5)

**Reducing the psychological pressure**

Half of the participants declared that the couples’ intimate relationship and refraining from strife and conflict created a tranquil home environment. In such an environment, the parents could further focus on their parental duties.
Table 1. Participants’ demographic characteristics ($n = 15$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Economic status</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Child sex</th>
<th>Child age (months)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Sweeper</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>Azerbaijani</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Cloth production</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Islamic clergy</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Religious training</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Building painter</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Azerbaijani</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Islamic clergy</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Religious training</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Public Relations Officer</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>Gilaki</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Green space worker</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Fifth grade</td>
<td>Azerbaijani</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Building technician</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Hospital services</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Spring maker</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If I don’t have a problem ... for instance, with my wife, I will be inclined to become a father ... if I have a problem with her [my wife], my desire for going on with fatherhood vanishes. (Participant No. 13)

When the fathers faced life’s difficulties and felt incapable of overcoming problems, trusting in God brought them inner peace and increased their confidence to solve problems. Finally, a positive attitude towards and hope for the future encouraged the fathers to make more effort and endure hardships.

Becoming a father or a mother is really very hard … it is very difficult. ... but difficulties will end eventually with God’s help and good things remain. (Participant No. 5)

**Table 2. A summary of themes extracted during qualitative analysis.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superordinate themes</th>
<th>Subordinate themes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steps toward adaptation</td>
<td>Readiness to become a parent</td>
<td>Ensuring the preparation of conditions for child birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making efforts to manage the new situation</td>
<td>Gaining knowledge and skills to play the father’s role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Planning for childbearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have a positive attitude toward fatherhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trying to solve problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Defining marital relationships based on the new situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinating job tasks with new paternal duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seeking support from family members and friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reducing the psychological pressure</td>
<td>Creating comfort and peace in the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Accepting of the realities of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Putting trust in God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Having hope for the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reducing worries over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enhancement of the paternal sense as the child grows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gradual increase of parental skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gradual maturation over the time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstacles to the path of adaptation</td>
<td>Failure to provide appropriate conditions for participation in paternal tasks</td>
<td>A lack of support or meddling in parents’ affairs by relatives and friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uncertainties with regard to childbearing and their role in child rearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adherence to gender stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A lack of sufficient knowledge and skills about parental roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gaining no reward for their paternal attempts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Child sickness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Errors and mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unplanned events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stabilisation in the paternal position</td>
<td>Achieving parental self-efficacy</td>
<td>Ability to manage conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achieving parental satisfaction</td>
<td>Ability to play the paternal role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assume sweet hardships of fatherhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Having an interest in bringing up another child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gradual maturation over time

Time was mentioned as an important factor influencing the men’s adaptation to the paternal role. They pointed out that as their children grew up, the sense of fatherhood was reinforced. One possible reason was the children's increased capacity for communication with the father and their reaction to his affection and attention. As time went by, the fathers learned how to communicate with their children and were eagerly taking part in activities related to their children's entertainments.

Now, I can change her [child] clothes; at the beginning, I rarely did it; I was scared of hurting her. It is getting better little by little, step by step. (Participant No. 6)
Obstacles to the path of adaptation

From the fathers’ perspectives, failure to provide appropriate conditions for participation in the paternal tasks and unplanned events were mentioned as some barriers to adaptation to the paternal role.

Failure to provide appropriate conditions for participation in the paternal tasks

A lack of support or meddling in parents’ affairs by relatives and friends, fathers’ uncertainties with regard to childbearing and their role in child rearing, adherence to gender stereotypes, a lack of sufficient knowledge and skills about parental roles, and gaining no reward for their paternal attempts were the obstacles to paternal adaptation. It is noted that meddling in the parents’ affairs in terms of excessive involvement and support by relatives and friends hindered the fathers in having the opportunity to participate in parental affairs.

When my wife and I wanted to go on vacation, they [relatives] prevented us ... Just intending to help us, they don’t want to interfere, ... They said that we should stay at home, because they wanted to help us with the parental tasks. (Participant No. 1)

Although the roles and contributions of the fathers in child rearing were not specified, the fathers enjoyed being involved in the process of child care based on their own patience or their wives’ demands.

I like caring for the baby. I sometimes help with baby care and for instance, take care of him when my wife is not at home; however, if he makes too much noise, I get annoyed. (Participant No. 15)

The fathers gave the priority to their workplace duties. They believed that child rearing was a feminine task, and the role of fathers started when the child got older. Such beliefs could be interpreted as some sort of excuse to evade their parental responsibilities.

I think my priority is to do my job. … the work conditions are such that the men are so busy and have no time to take care of the baby. (Participant No. 2)

Another barrier to the paternal adaptation was a lack of knowledge of fatherhood’s problems. In a trial-and-error method, the fathers spent a lot of time and energy to achieve the desired results.

I just tried to rest and I could not help my wife. I was just lying down, but the baby’s crying did not let me sleep. (Participant No. 5)

Not receiving encouraging feedback from the child and wife with regard to the services delivered by the fathers created a confusing atmosphere about the accuracy of their performance. It sometimes reduced the fathers’ inclination to participate in household chores and child rearing activities.

Anyway, I have done all I can and tried to give my wife some psychological help and bring her peace. I don’t know if I have done it well or not (looking at his wife). (Participant No. 2)

Unplanned events

Unplanned events such as child illness and errors and mistakes made during child care caused disturbances in the process of adaptation to the paternal role. The child’s illness made the fathers feel that they had lost control over the situation. Fathers’ mistakes caused chaos and turmoil in their relationships with their wives and increased their feelings of inadequacy and incompetence.
Well, sometimes some illnesses occur, something bad happens. Perhaps those moments would be lost (the sense of control in the present conditions). (Participant No. 5)

**Stabilisation in the paternal position**

It was stated that the father would feel successful in coping with the fatherhood role if they could achieve self-efficacy as a father and become satisfied with their role performance.

**Achieving parental self-efficacy**

From the fathers’ perspectives, parental self-efficacy meant the successful management of the current conditions and the ability to overtake fatherhood roles and duties. Also, the ability to manage conditions implied the fathers’ ability to solve problems and cope with the new situation.

As I know, I have overcome this condition (child rearing needs); I can solve his problem; I do my best. (Participant No. 13)

**Achieving parental satisfaction**

Considering the fatherhood difficulties, being enjoyable and the desire to have another child were the signs of the men’s satisfaction with being a father. Childbirth meant major changes, new responsibilities and tireless efforts from the fathers’ perspectives. However, most fathers welcomed such difficulties and were quite satisfied and happy with having a child.

It’s hard, but it is all positive, man makes himself, I am saying that ... all the hardships lead to your growth and maturation. (Participant No. 5)

When the fathers felt successful in their paternal role and were satisfied with parenthood, they began to think of having another child. A number of parents said that they were ready for the next child.

Up to now, there has been no problem; I could supply her [child] needs. If it continues like this, I will consider having a second child. (Participant No. 13)

**Discussion**

This study aimed to explain paternal adaptation based on the men’s lived experiences of fatherhood, and was conducted in Iran for the first time. According to the findings of this study, adaptation to paternal role can be explained in three themes of ‘steps toward adaptation’, ‘obstacles on the path of adaptation’, and ‘stabilisation in the paternal position’.

Iranian men considered the readiness for becoming a father as: ensuring the provision of necessary conditions for the birth of a child, gaining knowledge and skills related to child rearing, having a plan for childbearing and having a positive attitude about fatherhood. Bradley et al. (2004) believe that a smooth transition to fatherhood is related with the men’s readiness to become a father. Other studies also emphasise the impact of childcare skills, occupational status, quality of life and a positive attitude towards fatherhood on men’s adaptation to the parental role (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009).

The finding showed that Iranian fathers used some strategies to manage the new situation such as trying to find solutions for existing problems, defining the marital relations based on the new situation, coordinating job tasks with their new paternal duties and seeking
support from family members and friends. With the addition of a baby to the family, fathers are forced to find a balance between paternal roles, new demands and economic pressures (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009). The fathers need to make some changes in their jobs and social communication following their physical and emotional involvement in rearing their child (Chin, Hall & Daiches, 2011). The result of this involvement is establishing the opportunity for active parental participation, interaction with their child and, thus, facilitating the adaptation to the paternal role (Chin et al., 2011). In Iran, there are no specific social services to support the fathers. However, most of the fathers pointed out the importance of family support for young parents and expressed that without the help of their family, they could not have coped with the current situation.

Creating comfort and peace in the family, accepting the realities of life, putting trust in God and having hope for the future were reported to reduce the burden of stresses on the fathers. According to Alessia and Roufeil (2012), the pattern of the couple relationship can influence the paternal adaptation (Alessia & Roufeil, 2012). In other studies, there is no referral to ‘trusting in God’ and ‘hope for the future’ as two important factors in reducing stress in new fathers.

According to Iranian fathers, time is an important factor in paternal adaptation. Over time, fathers’ concerns are reduced, their fathering feelings are strengthened and their skills and experience in playing a parental role are enhanced. In other studies, fathers have also stated that their self-confidence increases over time and they feel more competent (Kowlessar, 2012). As the child grows, the father’s relationship with the child will be enhanced and they will find new ways to communicate with their child (Graham, 2007).

Iranian fathers suggested that unplanned conditions and events are considered as barriers to paternal adaptation. Meddling and inappropriate support by relatives were mentioned as obstacles that interfere with fulfilment of the paternal role. In Tanzania, despite the fact that the fathers have a great deal of trust in informal support, sometimes this support prevents the participation of fathers in taking care of the mother and child, and so causes continuation of the traditional role of fathers (Mbekenga, Lugina, Christensson, & Olsson, 2011).

Iranian fathers often believed that their jobs are their priority, and parenting is a feminine task. They thought that the training role of a father starts when the child gets older, and the father’s involvement leads to the woman’s laziness and impairs the child rearing process. In many societies, fathers often have a negative attitude towards emotional support and participation in child rearing because these tasks are historically assigned to women (Coakley, 2013), and they are introduced as breadwinners and owners of power in their family (Draper, 2003). On the other hand, there is no proper model for paternal participation and traditional models still play a major role in this area (Cooper, 2005).

Lack of skills in taking care of the child and failure to gain knowledge about fathering were an obstacle that Iranian fathers faced in adapting to the paternal role. Men enter an unknown world where they have no access to necessary sources of information about taking care of their child and wife (Graham, 2007). The newness of the experience of dealing with a baby leads to their fear of harming the baby (Barenski, 2010) and disruption in their relationship with the child (Kowlessar, 2012).

Not getting positive feedback from the child and wife can lead to confusion and reduce the incentive for Iranian men to take part in household chores and child rearing. Receiving positive feedback from the child enhances the intimacy between father and child and is a
sign to the father of his proper performance in providing his child’s needs, thereby strengthening the self-confidence of the father (Barenski, 2010).

Iranian fathers expressed that unplanned events such as child illness can disrupt their adaptation to the paternal role, as it increases the fathers’ concerns and prevents them from focusing on parenting. Although this issue has not been addressed in other studies, Graham suggests that the occurrence of medical problems for women during the childbirth can increase the father’s distance from the child in the first months after birth (Graham, 2007).

Parental self-efficacy and parental satisfaction are key concepts reported for paternal adaptation. Self-efficacy means fathers’ perception of their ability to manage the present situation and successfully fulfil the paternal role. Satisfaction from this paternal role is also a dimension of adjustment to the parental role. Bandura (1977) describes self-efficacy as the individual's perception of their ability to carry out a specific duty successfully. Parental satisfaction was defined as the fathers’ enjoyment of paternal responsibilities and the desire for having another child, which seems to be another specific characteristic of paternal adaptation in Iranian men. Parental satisfaction, which refers to the pleasure derived from parenting, is also related to long-term paternal performance (Lee and Brage, 1989). When a man is satisfied with fatherhood and its responsibilities, it means he is successful in coping with paternal roles. Kowlessar (2012) states that accepting the parental role is an important part of paternal adaptation (Kowlessar, 2012; Premberg, Taft, Hellström, & Berg, 2012) and depends on the fact that the father is experienced and accepts his arrival at a new stage of life with different challenges and rewards (Kowlessar, 2012). An adapted father feels satisfaction from his fatherhood. The sources of this satisfaction are mastering the management of the new condition and having faith and confidence in his ability to manage the current situation and its difficulties (Premberg et al., 2012). Other symptoms of adaptation to the paternal role are integration and accepting the child in one’s own life and sharing life's moments with him (Kowlessar, 2012).

According to the results of this study, when fathers achieve self-efficacy and satisfaction in fatherhood, adaptation to the paternal role occurs. The factors affecting paternal adaptation can be classified into two domains: facilitating factors and inhibiting factors. Some of these factors are at an individual level and others are at a social level. Individual factors are related to the attitude, knowledge and skills of the fathers, while social factors are associated with social norms and support. Some of these factors are reported in earlier research as the readiness to become a parent, trying to manage the new situation, and gradual maturation over time, whereas others are more unique, e.g. decreased psychological pressures, accepting the realities of life, trusting in God, hope for the future, and not getting positive feedback from their wife. These findings could help support the development of appropriate policies and educational interventions which aim to enhance the individual capabilities of fathers and provide essential support to help fathers adapt to their parental roles.

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