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Korean Fatherhood in Policy and Practice

Yeon-Jin Kim

LUND DISSERTATIONS IN SOCIAL WORK

Korean Fatherhood in Policy and Practice

Korean Fatherhood in Policy and Practice

Yeon-Jin Kim

LUND UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Korean fathers gained their first entitlement to take one-year paid parental leave in 2001. The policy has since continuously advanced, but as of 2020, fathers' take-up rates remain low at 3.4%. This dissertation raises the question of why Korean fathers do not take parental leave, and what the nature of the underlying sociocultural contexts is that precipitates this discrepancy. To seek answers to this question, the dissertation examines tensions between the de jure entitlement and the de facto entitlement of fatherhood via four different contexts: policymaking, relational ethics, workplace norms, and paternal identities.

Applying these four contexts, four sub-studies address the following research questions: (1) How have Korean parental leave policies evolved since 1995 and what were the motives and challenges that emerged in the course of their development? (2) How have relational ethics and workplace norms influenced individual fathers' decisions and sense of entitlement for taking time off for childcare? (3) How do Korean fathers perceive good fathering and how do they negotiate and practise fathering ideals in everyday life?

The analysis draws on two types of empirical data: semi-structured interviews and public documents. The interview data contain four different sets of interviews with six policy actors, 47 fathers, and 15 of their female partners. Official policy documents contain various sources, such as newspaper articles, Acts, Bills, Master Plans, press kits, campaign posters, and parliamentary meeting minutes demonstrating policy changes from 1990 to 2021.

The findings show that Korean parental leave policies have evolved in a way of emphasising the value of gender equality and men's roles in childcare as a practical tool for increasing fertility rates. In everyday life, couples, influenced by Confucian relational ethics, considered fathers as last-resort caregivers within families and as forefront workers in workplaces; they showed reluctance to renege such social expectations despite the detriment to women's careers. Furthermore, Korean workplaces featured presence-oriented, hierarchical, and work-prioritised norms and practices. These features (in)directly lowered fathers' sense of entitlement to take time off for childcare. Indeed, those pursuing to be an involved father, tended to struggle with gaps between fathering ideals and practices. With lack of time, information, network, and role models, fathers tried to make the most of the time given to them by engaging in playful activities with their children, with the belief in fathers' distinctive role in childcare.

Based on these findings, this dissertation contributes to theoretical discussions in the policy-practice literature by bridging the two perspectives. It suggests a distinction within the policy context: policymaking context and policy context for practice. The latter matters because the de jure entitlement granted by policies does not necessarily transition to the corresponding sense of entitlement in practice. To explore this gap, this dissertation explores the policy context for practice (as opposed to theory) by proposing the concept of fatherhood practices (people's routine behaviours). Fatherhood practices highlight people's everyday aspects that consist of doings, sayings, and reasonings, which shape and construct the meaning of fatherhood. The integration of the policy contexts and fatherhood practices particularly reveals the nuanced differences between voluntary opt-out and resigned acceptance of policy use behaviours.

In conclusion, this dissertation argues that policymaking contexts of Korean parental leave policies have been insufficient for promoting sociocultural grounds that directly encourage fathers to feel equally entitled as a parent as mothers; Korean fatherhood is undergoing piecemeal transitions, which can be interpreted as conditional, exclusive, and silent.

Key words: fatherhood, fatherhood policies, fatherhood practices, policy and practice, South Korea

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Yeon-Jin Kim

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Lund, October 2022

Yeon-Jin Kim

Abstract

Korean fathers gained their first entitlement to take one-year paid parental leave in 2001. The policy has since continuously advanced, but as of 2020, fathers' take-up rates remain low at 3.4%. This dissertation raises the question of why Korean fathers do not take parental leave, and what the nature of the underlying sociocultural contexts is that precipitates this discrepancy. To seek answers to this question, the dissertation examines tensions between the de jure entitlement and the de facto entitlement of fatherhood via four different contexts: policymaking, relational ethics, workplace norms, and paternal identities.

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entitlement to take time off for childcare. Indeed, those pursuing to be an involved father, tended to struggle with gaps between fathering ideals and practices. With lack of time, information, network, and role models, fathers tried to make the most of the time given to them by engaging in playful activities with their children, with the belief in fathers' distinctive role in childcare.

Based on these findings, this dissertation contributes to theoretical discussions in the policy-practice literature by bridging the two perspectives. It suggests a distinction within the policy context: policymaking context and policy context for practice. The latter matters because the de jure entitlement granted by policies does not necessarily transition to the corresponding sense of entitlement in practice. To explore this gap, this dissertation explores the policy context for *practice* (as opposed to theory) by proposing the concept of fatherhood *practices* (people's routine behaviours). Fatherhood practices highlight people's everyday aspects that consist of doings, sayings, and reasonings, which shape and construct the meaning of fatherhood. The integration of the policy contexts and fatherhood practices particularly reveals the nuanced differences between voluntary opt-out and resigned acceptance of policy use behaviours.

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List of Original Papers

Paper I	Kim, Y-J., & Lundqvist, Å. The development of parental leave policies in South Korea, 1995–2021: The localisation of translated policy ideas. *Submitted to a peer-reviewed journal.*
Paper II	Kim, Y.-J., & Kim, S. (2020). Relational ethics as a cultural constraint on fathers' parental leave in a Confucian welfare state, South Korea. *Social Policy & Administration*, 54(5), 684–698.
Paper III	Kim, Y-J. (2022). Workplace matters: negotiating a sense of entitlement towards taking time off for childcare among Korean fathers working in Sweden, *Families, Relationships and Societies*, *11*(3), 428-446.
Paper IV	Kim, Y.-J. Mastering Fatherhood: fathers' communities and the search for new role models in contemporary South Korea. *Ready for submission.*

1 Introduction

On September 3, 2006, one hundred fathers in the capital of Seoul, South Korea went on procreation strike until the end of the year. They demanded a mandatory one-month quota of parental leave for fathers—termed the “Daddy’s Quota”—with compensation equal to their regular salary (Lee, 2006). Perhaps surprisingly, the strike took place in South Korea, a country that had already, in 2001, earmarked a year’s paid leave for new fathers (Hong & Lee, 2014), the longest period of paid leave offered to fathers among the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (OECD, 2022a).

This strike itself is not the central subject of this thesis, but it certainly raises relevant questions—why did South Korean fathers not feel entitled to exert their legal right to take parental leave, and what was the nature of the underlying sociocultural contexts that precipitated this discrepancy between the policy and its practice? The dissertation seeks answers to these questions through an analysis of Korean policy development, relational ethics, workplace norms, and paternal identities.

1.1 The localisation of universal policy ideas

The one-year earmarked parental leave for fathers in Korea should be considered within the context of the widespread trend of adopting parental leave schemes across nations. There has been a shared expectation that developing leave schemes for fathers would be a stepping-stone for their greater involvement in childcare (Karu & Tremblay, 2018; O’Brien, 2013). In contemporary Korea, both mothers and fathers who have employment insurance are each entitled to paid parental leave for a year with benefits amounting to 80% of their monthly regular salary as of 2022 (see Chapter 2 for more information). The gender-neutral paid leave scheme has been in place since 2001, and the government has been progressively developing this scheme, influenced by international family policy debates.

Indeed, the movement towards getting a father to hold diapers instead of solely toys is international. Parental leave for both fathers and mothers was first introduced in the Nordic countries during the 1970s (Leira, 2006). Sweden initiated this trend by pursuing dual emancipation from the traditional gender roles not only for women but also for men, which was central to Swedish politics as early as in the late 1960s (Lundqvist, 2012). In the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, fathers' entitlement to time off began to be introduced also across Southern European countries like Spain (Romero-Balsas et al., 2013), Eastern European countries like Poland (Suwada, 2017) and Estonia (Karu & Pall, 2009) and East Asian countries like Japan (Nakazato, 2018). As of 2013, most OECD countries have enacted parental leave policies for both mothers and fathers (Huerta et al., 2013).

The worldwide spread of parental leave policies for both parents indicates that nations with different sociocultural contexts seek policy ideas across jurisdictions and end up applying similar methods to encourage fathers' involvement in childcare. Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) defined such a phenomenon as a policy transfer, "a process by which knowledge of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, and ideas in one political system is used in the development of similar features in another" (p. 5). In Korea, adopting policy ideas from abroad has indeed been a key strategy to accelerate growth and establish social policy programmes within a short period of time (Kwon, 2009; Hort & Kuhnle, 2000). Parental leave for both mothers and fathers is one of those policies, but its ideas have been externally adopted rather than internally evolved.

However, not all countries have effectively achieved motivating fathers to take leave as mothers do. The strike of 100 Korean fathers illustrates the uncoupling of policy and practice, a phenomenon that is being displayed across nations. Karu and Tremblay (2018) analysed fathers' parental leave rights in 29 nations and tried to identify the facilitating characteristics for fathers' taking time off. They discovered a trend of certain policy principles being adopted by other nations from Nordic countries. However, while Iceland, Norway and Sweden show a relatively high usage rate, adopters like Canada (Quebec specifically) and Japan do not. For instance, 45% of parental leave beneficiaries were men in Sweden (in 2014) while only 23% in Quebec were men (in 2012). Lacking a link between similar policy schemes and the actual outcome across countries, Karu and Tremblay concluded that policy schemes alone cannot facilitate fathers' take-up of parental leave. Hence, Karu and Tremblay's findings importantly suggest that

research on fathers' parental leave calls attention to this illuminating question: what does the adopters' story tell us?

This dissertation does not promote a binary interpretation of the policy outcome as failure or success measured simply by how equally parental leave is shared between men and women. Rather, it attempts to address "why some unexpected outcomes occur and why some reforms are more difficult to achieve than others" (Chappell & Waylen, 2013, p. 600). This question was also raised by scholars who attempted to examine a gendered world via norms and practices.

However, answering such questions may prove difficult without investigating the localisation of policy development processes. As Choi and Kim (2009) point out, cross-national adoption of policy ideas tends to occur without "look[ing] at 'context-equivalent' cases" (p. 338). Furthermore, if policy transfer takes place prior to sufficient formative discussion or without social consensus from the public, the greater societal structure in which the policy is to be enacted will lack a cohesive foundation. This would only exacerbate the existing discrepancies between evolving policies and the reality of citizens.

This dissertation therefore promotes a context-sensitive and process-oriented approach to understanding policy development, including the overall understanding of dominant political arguments, policy reform narratives and institutional preconditions surrounding the localised outcomes of Korean parental leave policy. Key aspects to consider in parental leave policy changes include their motives, processes, consequent challenges, and external influences (Paper I). This context-sensitive and process-oriented approach is expected to provide a foundation in comprehending the nature of potential discrepancies between policy and practice (Papers II and III).

1.2 Policy reforms outpacing the realities of contemporary Korean fatherhood

The motives behind the 100 Fathers' strike might be better understood in the light of another piece of information: in 2006, the year the strike occurred, only 2% of parental leave-takers in Korea were men. This paltry portion indicates that Korean fathers involved in the strike fought back against the social reality of being unable to realise their given entitlement to take time off for childcare. Evidence shows that while Korean fathers increasingly prefer engaging more actively in

childcare, in the 2000s their lives were centred around work and continue to remain so to date. For instance, the OECD Family Database (2016) on time allocation between men and women suggests an absence of fathers at home. From 2009 to 2010, Korean fathers spent 48 minutes on family care a day, second only to Japan for the least amount of family care (30 minutes). As of 2019, men spent 56 minutes on family care and housework a day, which is not so different from ten years prior and still significantly shorter compared to their female counterparts (193 minutes) (Statistics Korea, 2020). As of 2020, the share of dual-income households still remained below 50% (Statistics Korea, 2022), which indicates that the majority of households live by a single-earner's income, mostly the man's.

Of course, the enactment of policy reforms does not always mirror the dominant realities of a given society. This is because policy is likely to be value-laden, including moral and political ideals that the society strives for (Stone, 2012). When anticipating the effectiveness of new policies, policy schemes are assumed to guide human actions through "the meaning of frame" (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 947). Policy frames outlined by the government or policy elites directly and indirectly distinguish between right and wrong and indicate to contemporaries what kinds of behaviour are rational and irrational. Equally, when adopting a policy idea from another country, a government imports not only the policy specifics but also the normative assumptions embedded in them. For example, parental leave policies carry normative assumptions that parents should contribute equally to childcare. Fathering programmes convey the message that authoritarian, distant and indifferent fathers are no longer welcome.

Accordingly, the meaning of frame embedded in fatherhood policy is closely interconnected to pre-existing social norms and conditions surrounding fathers' rights and obligations in relation to family, work, gender, etc. A successful implementation of parental leave policies, for instance, will depend not only on the generosity of the benefits but also on how society values caregiving at home based on gender equality and whether work organisations can accommodate fathers taking a more active role in caregiving. Additionally, fathering programmes or fathers' self-help communities are no exception. Those programmes usually aim to make changes in participants' fathering behaviours and attitudes. The popularity of programmes and self-help communities hinges hugely on shared expectations of adequate parental roles and socially accepted masculinities (see Sicouri et al., 2018).

Therefore, it is vital to understand how and where those policies intersect with other sociocultural contexts. In this sense, discussions among scholars who were

inspired by New Institutionalism provide a useful lens to discern these intersections. In policy research particularly, we encounter two sets of institutions. The first are formal institutions that, according to Lauth (2015, pp. 57–58), are officially codified in written documents, such as constitutions, laws, regulations and contracts. The other consists of informal institutions that are characterised as having implicit rules that motivate actors to behave in certain patterns that are socially accepted and recognised—most commonly norms, conventions, ideologies and ideas. North (1990) considers such informal institutions to be part of culture: "They come from socially transmitted information and are a part of the heritage that we call culture" (p. 37).

However, a problem can arise when the policy development outpaces the transition of informal and sociocultural conditioning. Those who do not fit or cannot adjust to the velocity of changes are often dismissed as stragglers, and those who adapt to this change more quickly than their cohort are dismissed as being overly progressive. Particularly, the conflict between a social message and an individual's internalised beliefs becomes more evident when a specific institutional scheme is internationalised and policy transfer takes place between countries, at odds with people's attitudes in an importing country.

In this dissertation, I therefore bring attention to the competing as well as complementary dynamics at the intersections of policy and sociocultural conditions regarding fatherhood. Since 2006, fatherhood policy in Korea has increasingly gained prominence. Three assorted so-called "Master Plans" enacted by the government, such as Healthy Homes (2006-2025), Low Birth Rates in an Aging Society (2006–2025) and Gender Equality Policies (2015–2022), have continuously advanced fatherhood policy in three key domains—paid leave, fathering programmes and fathers' self-help communities. As of 2022, Korean fathers are entitled to 10 days of fully paid paternity leave and one year of earmarked parental leave with benefits amounting to 80% of their monthly salary.[1] Additionally, if both parents use parental leave sequentially and equally for the same child, both parents receive 100% of monthly salary for up to three months (see Table 2.2, p. 33). Fathering programmes and fathers' self-help communities are provided nationwide throughout 207 local Family Centers.

However, Korea has been historically influenced by Confucian teachings that consider individuals specifically within social relationships rather than as

[1] Cf. As of 2022, Korean mothers are entitled to 90 days of maternity leave with benefits equivalent to their regular salary and one year of earmarked parental leave with benefits amounting to 80% of their regular salary.

independent, irreducible beings. These teachings define one's role ethics by age and gender according to one's status within a couple or family unit, with emphasis on the importance of conforming to the expected roles (Nuyen, 2009; Wang & Liu, 2010). Many scholars point out the legacy of Confucian tradition in Korea as a cause of women's weak social position (see Sung, 2003). Less discussed is how it has influenced Korean men as fathers. Additionally, Korea has been known as a work-centred society. According to the OECD (2022b), the average number of hours worked per year in Korea was 1,908 hours in 2020, the third-highest among the 38 OECD members. In the workplace, the model of the ideal worker is still based on the assumption that the employee is unencumbered by children. Given that Korean men have invariably occupied the same position as the primary economic provider inside the family unit and the dominant gender in the workforce, such workplace norms and expected roles of men inevitably shape the level of active involvement in childcare.

This dissertation therefore delves into detailed dynamics of fatherhood policy in the form of childcare leave and fathers' self-help communities and their intersection with three pre-existing social conditionings such as relational ethics (Paper II), workplace norms (Paper III) and paternal identities (Paper IV). Understanding the quality of dynamics at those junctions is expected to provide an in-depth insight into where and how individual fathers are positioned in Korean society.

1.3 Silent fathers, and why

Another interesting point about the fathers' strike is the fact that any similar form of such a strike never happened again. What does this silence imply? Does it mean that the fathers have finally found ways to meet their needs? Or, rather, does it imply fathers are developing an assigned acceptance of their status as a result of the tension between their internalised obligations and attributed deservingness based on entitlements and resources granted by the Korean government?

Understanding how policy reforms intersect with pre-existing sociocultural conditions necessitates an in-depth review of how individual fathers react at those intersections and what sorts of challenges they face in daily life. Fatherhood, as Dermott (2016, p. 1) argued, is the institutional product of a society, which includes "the rights, duties, responsibilities, and statuses associated with being a father". Those normative elements comprising fatherhood—having permeated

our daily lives—are often implicitly embedded into the very fabric of society and they likely serve as, in Duncan and Edward's term (1997), "gendered moral rationalities" (pp. 29–30). They shape common notions of what constitutes a good father, what fathering practice should or should not be, as well as what behaviours are acceptable as a father in relation to his own family, community, workplace, and society.

However, policy that is part of a formal institution is sometimes introduced and implemented regardless of the informal contexts that surround it, with the assumption that, if a policy is enacted, citizens will make use of it rationally. This is not always the case. As emphasised earlier, citizens' decisions and behaviours are also influenced by norms, contexts, and rules (Wildavsky, 1987). A formal rule can encounter numerous informal rules that are competing and complementary within as well as between each other, and it is likely to engender ambivalence among fathers. For instance, before a father decides to take leave for childcare, he can face various implicit rules that both help and hinder his decision depending on his work and family environment. When a father chooses to take leave, he receives positive feedback for the virtue of being an involved parent; conversely, he may also get negative feedback based on running counter to the concept of an ideal worker. Equally, when a father seeks support to improve his fathering skills through fathering programmes and/or self-help communities, he can receive mixed messages about desirable fathering from his community and approved masculinities from his male friends, two concepts that might contradict each other.

Accordingly, from individual fathers' points of view, choosing to exercise their rights to legally entitled parental leave policies does not always entail a simple binary decision. The same lack of clarity applies to fathers' personal conceivability of comfortable participation in fathering communities. Making such choices can be more about negotiating the benefits with the potential gains and losses coupled with their individual circumstances, especially when the decisions are against dominant norms and principles that they have internalised, whether voluntarily or not.

Accordingly, in this dissertation I call attention to fathers' reactions to such ambivalent situations and the nuanced nature of their decisions and behaviours regarding realising their wished-for fatherhood (Papers II and IV).

1.4 Positioning the research

Before presenting the overarching research aim and specific research questions, I would like to elaborate on the position of this research. The thesis comprises policy-oriented research (Becker, 2004) and, more specifically, social policy context-oriented research. Social policy initially developed "as an academic complement to social work" (Spicker, 2014, p. 11). It is often identified as applied social science and provides descriptions, analysis, and evaluations in relation to policies. Not all research on policy has the same focal point. The classic distinction in types of policy analysis is between research *of* policy and research *for* policy (Gordon et al., 1977). Gordon et al. (1977) explained that these distinctions exist along a continuum of different focuses depending on the purpose, ranging from gathering information for policy to providing analysis of the policy process and content.

However, this distinction has a limitation in that it does not take policy context into account. Walt and Gilson (1994) suggested another useful model to distinguish policy analysis. This model, which was later termed the "policy analysis triangle", contains three elements of policy research: content, process, and context. In their model, the policy context implies macro and micro surroundings within which policies are promoted by virtue of social actors. By suggesting the context as a separate element of policy analysis, the authors stress that policy processes are "contingent on developing and implementing change and the context within which policy is developed" (p. 354).

Given Walt and Gilson's (1994) mode of categorisation, my approach within this thesis centres around policy context. Further, my research distinguishes between two types of policy context: the policymaking context and the policy context for practice. Whereas the policymaking context refers to the context in which policy develops and evolves, the policy context for practice describes how policy is practised at the level of individual citizens. These types of policy context are explained in greater detail in the Theoretical Framework chapter on Policy and Practice.

Furthermore, my research interest in this thesis extends to the intersection between the policy context and Korean fatherhood practices. This thesis is not about fatherhood itself; rather, I examine the fatherhood phenomenon through its interconnection with relevant policies and corresponding practices. Although my research primarily describes stories by fathers who identify as middle-class, fatherhood itself has been extensively discussed and researched in social work in

relation to child welfare (Nygren et al., 2019) and parental supports and responsibilities (Alstam, 2016; Wissö & Plantin, 2015). The current research is expected to contribute to these discussions by highlighting the importance of social recognition in fathers' roles as equal parents. My research position is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

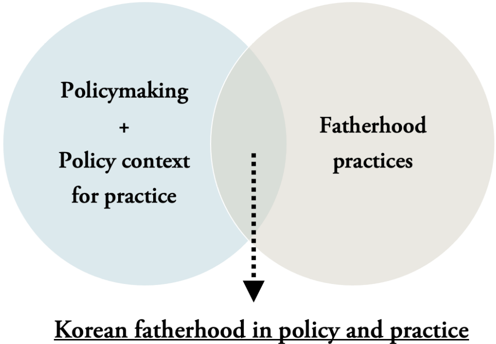


Figure 1.1
Research position

1.5 Research aim and questions

This dissertation aims to provide an analysis of how Korean fatherhood has been shaped by parental leave policies, sociocultural norms and predominant practices within the family, workplaces and fathers' communities. It pays special attention to intersections between fatherhood policies and practices, by conducting four empirical studies on: (1) the policymaking context of parental leave policies that includes discussions of policy translation, reform narratives and institutional legacies (Paper I) and (2) policy contexts for practice, such as relational ethics (Paper II), workplace norms (Paper III) and paternal identities (Paper IV). See Table 1.1 below for the overview of four empirical studies.

The following research questions guide the analysis:

1. How have Korean parental leave policies evolved since 1995 and what were the motives and challenges that emerged in the course of their development? (Paper I)

2. How have relational ethics and workplace norms influenced individual fathers' decisions and sense of entitlement for taking time off for childcare? (Papers II and III)

3. How do Korean fathers perceive good fathering and how do they negotiate and practise fathering ideals in everyday life? (Paper IV)

Table 1.1 Overview of four empirical studies

Paper Title	Research Aim(s)	Research Question(s)	Research Subject
Paper Ⅰ The development of parental leave policies in South Korea, 1995–2021: The localisation of translated policy ideas	This study aims to explore how policy translation, narrative reform stories and institutional legacies have shaped South Korean parental leave policies between 1995 and 2021.	1. What policy ideas were translated and implemented between 1995 and 2021 and what were the main political arguments and reform narratives behind these decisions? 2. What institutional preconditions have shaped both the perceived and practical feasibility of the parental leave system?	Four policy actors and official documents from a variety of sources, spanning newspaper articles, Bills, Acts, Mater Plans, state-commissioned reports, and parliamentary meeting minutes
Paper Ⅱ Relational ethics as a cultural constraint on fathers' parental leave in a Confucian welfare state, South Korea	This study aims to reveal how relational norms, historically embedded in South Korea, penetrated both work organisations and family units and shape a father's desire to take parental leave.	1. How do Confucian ethics influence relational dynamics in families and workplaces? 2. How do these ethics impede fathers from taking parental leave, implicitly and explicitly?	Two groups of Korean dual-income heterosexual couples were interviewed: one where the male partner took parental leave and the other where the male partner did not
Paper Ⅲ Workplace matters: Negotiating a sense of entitlement towards taking time off for childcare among Korean fathers working in Sweden	This study aims to show how work norms of companies, as informal institutions, influence fathers as economic providers to negotiate their sense of entitlement towards taking time off for childcare.	1. How do Korean fathers working in Sweden perceive and exert entitlement towards taking time off for childcare? 2. How do these fathers' work experiences shape their sense of entitlement?	Two groups of Korean fathers were interviewed: those from Swedish companies in Sweden and the others from Korean-owned companies with a branch operating in Sweden
Paper Ⅳ Mastering fatherhood: Fathers' communities and the search for new role models in contemporary South Korea	This study aims to tease out the challenges the fathers face in manifesting their caring identities in daily life and the nature and dynamics of the drives that nevertheless make the fathers continue to build a legacy of caring fathering.	1. What motivated fathers to take part in the community? 2. How do they define a good father? 3. How do they perceive their fathering experiences before and after joining the fathers' group?	16 Korean fathers with experiences of acting as a mentor and/or mentee in the "100 Fathers' Group", and two policy administrators in central and municipal government

2 Setting the scene

> The miracle on the Han River (Koen et al., 2021)
> The 10th-largest economy in the world (IMF, 2021)
> The most innovative country (Bloomberg Innovation Index 2021, 2021)
> The highest rate of educated young people (OECD, 2022c)
> The highest suicide rate (OECD, 2022d)
> The lowest fertility rate (OECD, 2022e)

Notions and labels of contemporary Korea are often both extreme and competing. Indeed, Korea has undergone a series of political and economic upheavals, starting from being colonised (1910–1945), to the Korean War (1950–1953), the military coup and dictatorship (1961–1987), the June Democracy Movement (1987), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout (1997) and more, all in the span of one century. Even now, Korea has the fastest-ageing population in the world (Korea Economic Research Institute [KERI], 2021). This means that three generations within a family would have experienced the industrialisation, democratisation, globalisation and (post)modernisation of Korea. Thus, their experiences are likely to differ due to the high velocity at which these social changes have occurred. Chang (2010, p. 444) explains such rapid changes in contemporary Korean society as a result of *compressed modernity*:

> Compressed modernity is a civilizational condition in which economic, political, social and/or cultural changes occur in an extremely condensed manner with regard to both time and space, and in which the dynamic coexistence of mutually disparate historical and social elements leads to the construction and reconstruction of a highly complex and fluid social system.

Compressed modernity has marked Korean society at various levels of social institutions and personal lives. The results are manifested through a coexistence

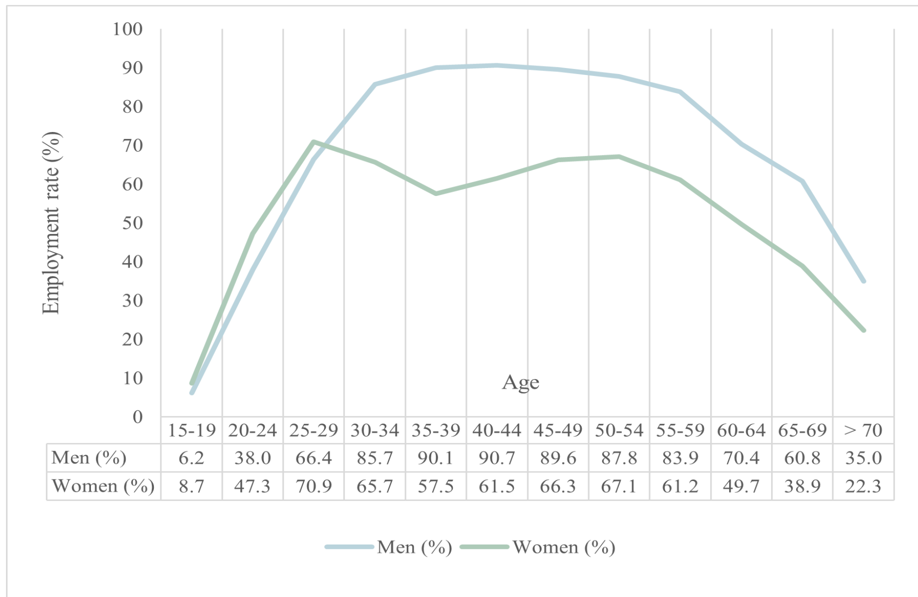
of competing and paradoxical phenomena and values across generations and within families. This is partly because Korean society incorporated so-called "Western values" and institutions in the process of modernisation, rather than building up from its own experiences and culture (Chang, 2022). According to Chang (2022, p. 19), these manifestations can be found almost everywhere, such as in global society, societal units such as civil society and nation, urban/rural localities, secondary organisations, personhood—and, most importantly in this thesis, in the family.

In this chapter, I will set the scene for the thesis, first by providing a brief picture of working and raising children in contemporary Korea, drawing from three paradoxical phenomena: (1) highly educated women as stay-at-home mothers, (2) astonishing economic growth but low labour productivity and a dichotomised labour market, and (3) advancing childcare policies but plummeting fertility rates. Secondly, I will lay out an overview of Korean fatherhood policies regarding social needs, structure, and practice. Lastly, an overview of how ideal images of Korean fatherhood have changed over time will be presented.

2.1 Three paradoxes

2.1.1 Highly educated women as stay-at-home mother

In Korea, as of July 2022, the labour force participation rate of the 15–64-year age group was 71.3% (about 26 million women and men). This rate remains due to the lower participation of women in the labour market. Indeed, while 79.7% of men (about 15 million) are active in the labour market, the corresponding proportion of women is 62.6% (about 11 million) (Statistics Korea, 2022a). The difference in labour market participation rate between men and women becomes most pronounced after the age of 30. In the 20–29-year age group, the rate is 64.2% for men (about 2 million) and 67.6% for women (about 2.1 million); however, in the 30–39-year age group, while men's rate soars to 91.8% (about 3.3 million), women's rate remains at 67.1% (about 2.2 million). It is not surprising, therefore, that in 2021 the majority (approximately 90%) of people in their 30s and 40s who were economically inactive for more than one year (about 1.9 million) were women (the Korea Enterprise Federation [KEF], 2022). Most women (4.5 out of 8.5 million) chose housework and childcare as a reason for remaining outside of the labour market (Statistics Korea, 2022b).



	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	> 70
Men (%)	6.2	38.0	66.4	85.7	90.1	90.7	89.6	87.8	83.9	70.4	60.8	35.0
Women (%)	8.7	47.3	70.9	65.7	57.5	61.5	66.3	67.1	61.2	49.7	38.9	22.3

Figure 2.1 Employment rate by gender and age group. *Source:* Statistics Korea (2022c).

Korean employment rate patterns indicate a similar scenario. While in 2021, among people between 25 and 29, women's employment rate (70.9%) was higher than men's (66.4%), these figures dropped to 57.5% of women between the ages of 35 and 39, while the complementary statistic for men soared to 92.4% (see Figure 2.1) (Statistics Korea, 2022c). The M-curve of women's employment rate around the ages of 35–39, as seen in Figure 2.1, is indicative of the fact that Korean women tend to exit the labour market when faced with events in their personal lives, such as marriage, childbirth or childcare, and then re-enter as their children grow up. According to the Gender Equality Survey (MOGEF, 2016), 38% of female participants have quit their jobs for family care, while only 1.6% of their male counterparts have done so. Table 2.1, which displays data from the Local Area Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics Korea, shows detailed reasons for women exiting the labour market between 2016 and 2019. One-third of women tend to quit their job as a result of marriage. This figure has decreased over time, but the duty of childcare has increased, reaching 38.2% in 2019.

Table 2.1
Reasons for women's career interruption between 2016 and 2019.

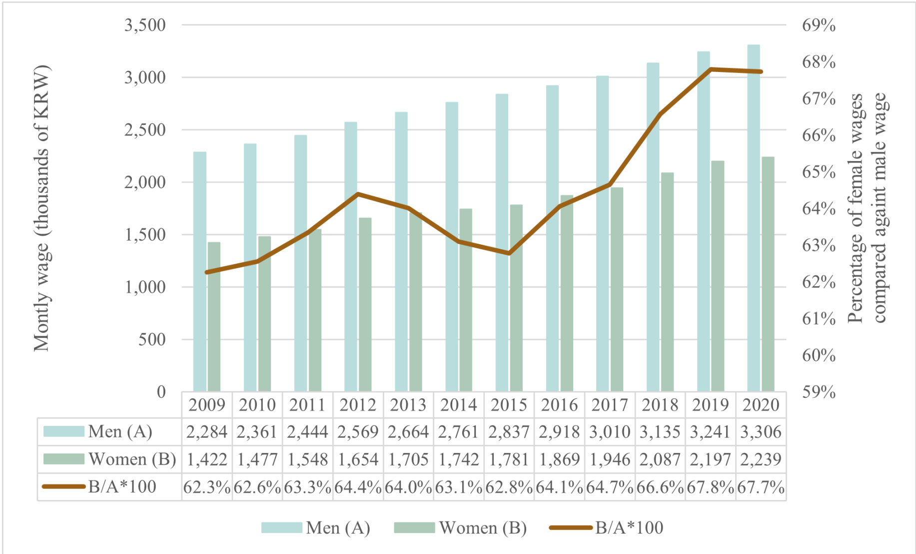
Year	Total	Marriage		Pregnancy /birth		Childcare		Children's education		Family care	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2016	1,924	668	34.7	505	26.2	578	30.0	81	4.2	93	4.8
2017	1,831	633	34.6	454	24.8	586	32.0	77	4.2	82	4.5
2018	1,847	634	34.3	445	24.1	619	33.5	71	3.8	78	4.2
2019	1,699	522	30.7	384	22.6	649	38.2	69	4.1	75	4.4

Source: Statistics Korea (2019). 2019 *일·가정 양립 지표* [2019 Work-Family Balance Indicator], p. 10.

As evidenced by these factors, Korea still features a male-breadwinner model; as of 2020, dual-income couples made up only 45.4% of all married couples in Korea (Statistics Korea, 2022). According to Statistics Korea (2021), the number of married women aged 15–54 living with children is about 2.6 million and their employment rate is 56.2%. About 53.7% of married women are employed in the business, personal, public service sector and about 20.6% of those are hired in the wholesale and retail trade sector. When it comes to occupations, 39.9% work as professionals and associate professionals, 28.8% as clerical support workers, and 11.5% as service and sales workers. About 58.1% of mothers with one child are employed, and the rates decrease to 54.8% and 52.5% for mothers with two and three children respectively. Regarding children's age, about 47.5% of mothers with children under the age of 6 are employed and the rates rise to 58.5% and 65.3% for those with children aged 7–12 and 13–17 respectively.

However, mothers' low participation in the labour market does not mean that they possess a lower capacity than their male counterparts. Similarly to other industrialised countries, Korea has also been experiencing a significant increase in women's overall educational level. According to the OECD (2021a), the tertiary educational attainment of Korean women aged 25–34 and 35–44 in 2020 is actually the highest among the OECD countries and their partners at 76% and 66.1% respectively. However, when it comes to the employment rate of women with tertiary education, Korea's position drops to one of the lowest for ages 25–34 at 70.9% and *the* lowest for ages 35–44 at 61.5%. More interestingly, Korea had a tendency to exhibit a paradoxical relationship between educational level and employment rate compared to other countries, such that the gap in employment rate between men and women was greatest among college graduates (Jung, 2015, p. 86).

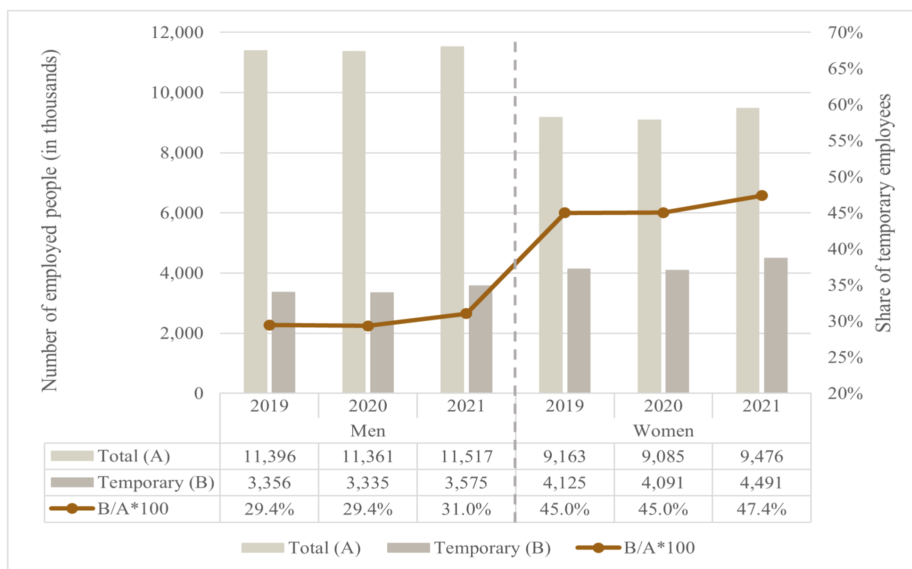
Researchers have found that a possible cause of Korean women becoming stay-at-home mothers while men invariably remain in the labour market has its roots in the gender pay gap and women's high ratio in non-regular employment (see Choi, 2020; Lee et al., 2016).



	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Men (A)	2,284	2,361	2,444	2,569	2,664	2,761	2,837	2,918	3,010	3,135	3,241	3,306
Women (B)	1,422	1,477	1,548	1,654	1,705	1,742	1,781	1,869	1,946	2,087	2,197	2,239
B/A*100	62.3%	62.6%	63.3%	64.4%	64.0%	63.1%	62.8%	64.1%	64.7%	66.6%	67.8%	67.7%

Figure 2.2 Gender wage gap between 2009 and 2020. *Source:* MOGEF (2020).

As seen in Figure 2.2, on average, in 2020 Korean women earned only 67.7% of what men earned (MOGEF, 2020). As of August 2021, 56% of all non-regular workers were women and, as shown in Figure 2.3, 47.4% of female workers have temporary employment as against 31% of their male counterparts (Statistics Korea, 2021).



	Men 2019	Men 2020	Men 2021	Women 2019	Women 2020	Women 2021
Total (A)	11,396	11,361	11,517	9,163	9,085	9,476
Temporary (B)	3,356	3,335	3,575	4,125	4,091	4,491
B/A*100	29.4%	29.4%	31.0%	45.0%	45.0%	47.4%

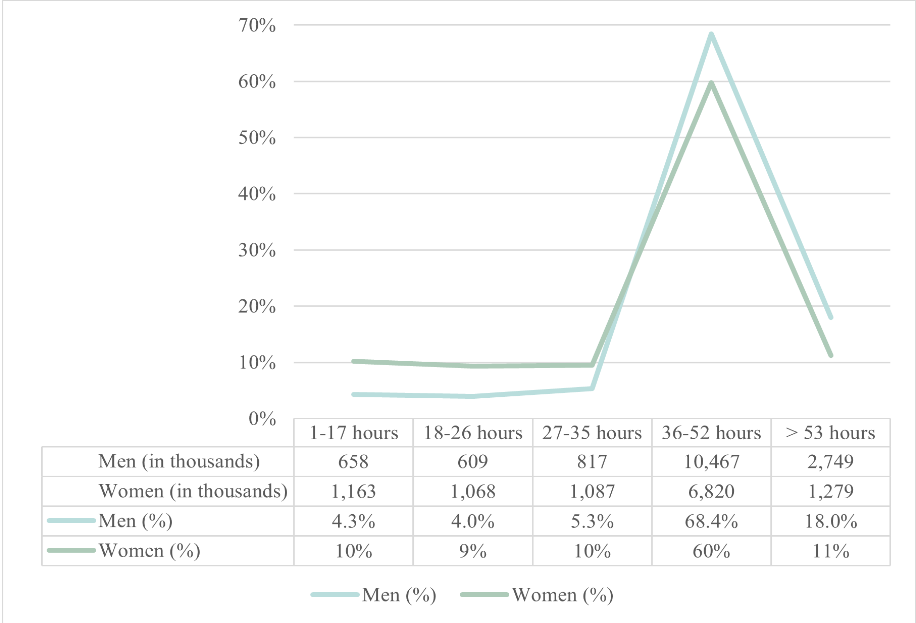
Figure 2.3 Temporary employment by gender between 2019 and 2021. *Source:* Statistics Korea (2021).

Myriad strands of research, utilising the term "motherhood penalty" or applying theories such as statistical discrimination (Phelps, 1972) or specialisation (Becker, 1991), have stressed that the tendencies and/or assumptions of women's higher commitment to family work relates to their lower earnings and employment status in the labour market. These factors operate in an intersectional manner, with all feeding into one another, ultimately contributing to a marginalised positioning of women in the labour market that likely continues to discourage their engagement and perpetuate the male breadwinner model. In summary, Korean women still hold a marginalised status in the labour market when compared to their male counterparts. This is likely to reproduce a vicious cycle between men losing out on childcare while women remain at a disadvantage in the labour market.

2.1.2 Astonishing economic growth but low labour productivity and dichotomised labour market

Korean economic growth was ultimately beneficial in terms of elevating the general quality of life. However, it came at the expense of Korean citizens' highly work-oriented life. This also led to profound divides between regular and non-regular workers as well as large and small–to-medium enterprises (SMEs).

The Korean government introduced a 40-hour workweek system in 2004 for companies with more than 1,000 workers, then gradually expanded the system to all employees by 2011. However, as previously mentioned, “the average annual hours actually worked per worker” in Korea is still one of the highest among the 38 OECD members as of 2020, along with countries whose standard weekly working time is 48 hours, such as Mexico, Costa Rica and Columbia (OECD, 2022). As seen in Figure 2.4, the prevalence of long working hours in Korea is also marked by distribution patterns of weekly working time that are nearly identical across genders. In this respect, Korea goes against the pattern of working-hour distribution, affirming conventional gendered differences, with female employees normally outnumbering their male counterparts at lower working hours and vice versa at greater working hours (Won, 2012).



	1-17 hours	18-26 hours	27-35 hours	36-52 hours	> 53 hours
Men (in thousands)	658	609	817	10,467	2,749
Women (in thousands)	1,163	1,068	1,087	6,820	1,279
Men (%)	4.3%	4.0%	5.3%	68.4%	18.0%
Women (%)	10%	9%	10%	60%	11%

Figure 2.4 Distribution of hours worked per week across genders. *Source*: Statistics Korea (2020).

The high prevalence of long working hours affects the work-family balance of the entire population, but, most importantly in this thesis, it greatly influences the extent of fathers’ engagement in childcare. Many researchers have specified long working hours as the biggest barrier for fathers to engaging more in childcare. Working hours are negatively correlated to parenting time; previous empirical studies found that fathers who work longer hours tend to participate less in

childcare duties (Koslowski & Smith, 2011; Tanaka & Waldfogel, 2007). Korean fathers are no exception; Do (2013) pointed out that Korean fathers lack the absolute amount of time necessary to spend on childcare because of the Korean work culture that involves long working hours and frequent after-work social obligations (see also Paper II in this thesis). Men are evidently more likely to have a work-centric life than women are. Figure 2.4 also serves as evidence that more men work longer hours than women, with the ratio of men working over 36 hours per week (79%) being higher than that of women (59%). More specifically, fathers tend to work more hours than mothers do (see Figure 2.5). Even among dual-income households, in 2019 men with children aged below 6 worked about 11 hours longer than women in the same demographic. Although the average hours worked by parents have decreased over time, the differences between fathers and mothers in hours worked remain large.

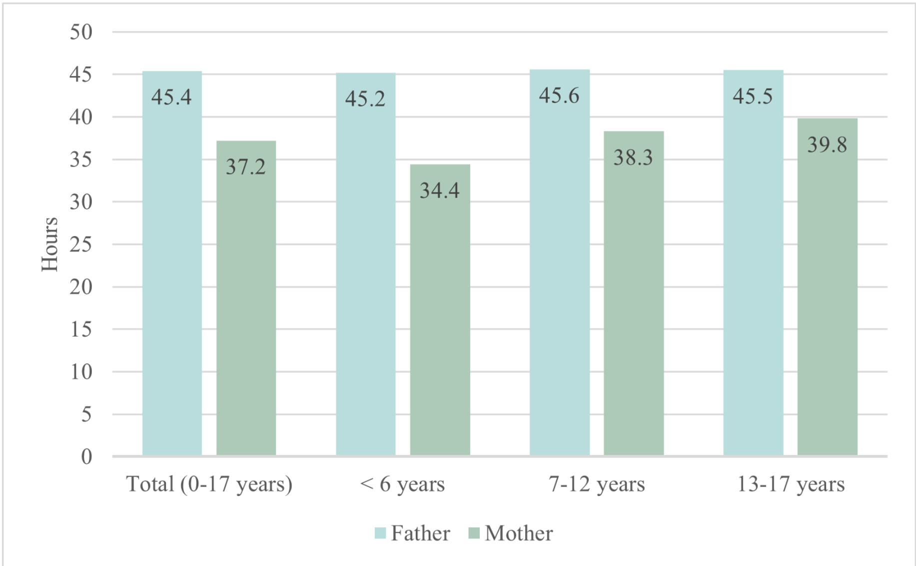


Figure 2.5 Dual-income couples' weekly working hours and children's age. *Source:* Do (2013).

In addition to long working hours, labour market dualism has deeply entrenched itself in Korean society, consequentially extending its influence in parents' lives. This dualism is defined as a divide between "'regular workers' who benefit from job stability, seniority-based earnings progression and access to social protection coverage, and non-regular workers with fixed-term contracts, limited earnings growth and restricted access to social protection" (OECD, 2019, p. 11). As of 2021, regular and non-regular workers respectively account for 61.6% and 38.4%

of the total wage-earners (Statistics Korea, 2021). The upward mobility between the two types of employment is very low (OECD, 2019). This duality rapidly exacerbated during the Kim administration as one of four major reforms after the Asian financial crisis of 1997, and as a response to one of the IMF's bailout conditions. The reform allowed companies more flexibility, making it easier to lay-off workers and legalising the use of temporary workers (Kim, 2016).

Such dualism thus not only engenders stratified employment status in the labour market, but also parents' unequal access to, for instance, paid childcare leave such as maternity and paternity leave, parental leave and flexible work arrangements (FWAs). This is because paid leave eligibility requires a membership through employment insurance; as of 2021, only 52.6% of non-regular workers are registered for employment insurance (Statistics Korea, 2021). Parents' accessibility to social benefits for paid leave is highly contingent on their employment status rather than parenthood itself. This point will be further detailed in the following section when explaining the eligibility of each policy.

Lastly, the Korean economy is deeply polarised according to the size of enterprise to which workers belong, in turn generating huge impacts on employees' financial well-being and the possibilities of taking parental leave. As of 2020, SMEs (whose total assets amount to about USD 373 million) comprise 99.9% of all enterprises and represent 81.3% of all employment (Ministry of SMEs and Startups [MSS], 2022). However, the majority of sales revenue (52.8%) is generated by large companies which represent only 0.1% of enterprises and 18.7% of employment. This means that the entire Korean economy is significantly dependent on large companies' profitability. Gaps in working conditions between large companies and SMEs are vast. For instance, the average salary of employees in SMEs with 4–499 employees accounts for only 59.4% of that in large companies with 500 or more employees. The polarisation is so stark that the average salary of high-school graduates in large companies is even higher than that of college graduates in SMEs (MSS, 2022). Large companies also offer better environments for parent employees to take childcare leave. This will be further explained in connection with the third and final paradox of advancing childcare policies.

2.1.3 Advancing childcare policies but plummeting fertility rates

The third paradox is that, while strides have been made in childcare policy, fertility rates are on the decline. As of 2021, fertility rates in Korea hit a record low at 0.81 births per woman (Statistics Korea, 2022d). This is not necessarily an

indication of a lack of implementation of childcare and work-family policies. For instance, the Korean government introduced maternity leave in 1953; parental leave for women in 1987 and for men in 1995; paternity leave, flexible work arrangements (FWAs), and family care leave in 2008; a universal childcare service and child homecare allowance in 2013; a bonus incentive scheme for the second leave-taker (called "Daddy's Month") in 2014; universal child benefit in 2019; infant allowance and "3+3 parental leave" in 2022, etc.

More specifically, as of 2022, all *employed* women are eligible for maternity leave for 90 days (or 120 days for multiple births) (www.ei.go.kr). They receive 100% of ordinary earnings paid by their employers for the first 60 days and employment insurance for the subsequent 30 days (Kim & Shin, 2021). However, to receive the latter benefits, the employees need to be insured for 180 days prior to the end of maternity leave (www.ei.go.kr). If the employees are working in SMEs, the employment insurance fund also pays for the first 60 days, up to KRW 2 million (USD 1,660), and the companies fill the gap between the ordinary earnings and the cap. For those who are outside the employment insurance system, the government pays KRW 1.5 million (USD 1,245) for 90 days (Kim & Shin, 2021). According to Kim and Shin (2021), while the total number of births was 303,100 in 2019, the number of employees who took maternity leave was 73,306, a mere 24%. This low rate of women taking advantage of their maternity leave benefits reflects the first paradox relating to women's low economic participation in Korea; for instance, in 2020, only 44% of women were employed when giving birth (Statistics Korea, 2021).

When a child is born, employed men can take 10 days of paternity leave (www.ei.go.kr). The fathers receive 100% of their ordinary earnings. The benefits are fully paid by the employers; but if the employees work for SMEs, the employment insurance fund instead pays for five days up to KRW 0.38 million (USD 315.40) (Kim & Shin, 2021). Unfortunately, no official statistics are available, but complementary data will be discussed in the next section on Father-targeted Policies and Practices.

After maternity and paternity leave, each parent can take paid parental leave for a year (thus, two years in total for a child). Both parents can take parental leave at the same time, but a year of leave is a non-transferable entitlement between couples, so, if one does not use it fully, the rest is waived (Kim & Shin, 2021). Similarly to the other leave policies, those who are registered for employment insurance are also granted eligibility for parental leave (for 180 days prior to taking parental leave). Employed and insured parents are given time to initiate parental

leave until a child turns 9 years or advances to the third grade in primary school (www.moel.go.kr). Parental leave can be taken in two separate periods (Kim & Shin, 2021). According to a press release from Statistics Korea (2021b), among parents of new-borns who were eligible for parental leave in 2020, 63.9% of mothers and 3.4% of fathers took parental leave (see Table 2.4, p. 47). In line with the second paradox, the feasibility of fathers taking parental leave differs greatly by their company's size. Of the 3.4% of fathers who took parental leave, 68.6% were working for large companies with more than 300 employees, while only 15.5% worked for smaller companies with less than 50 employees (Statistics Korea, 2021b).

The benefits system of parental leave is rather complex. As shown in Paper I of this thesis, since the 2010s, parental leave schemes have been in flux. In 2022, the Korean government introduced the 3+3 parental leave, which can be seen as a revised version of Daddy's Month, a bonus incentive scheme for the second leave-taker. Previously, in 2014, the second leave-taker received 100% of ordinary earnings for the first month with an upper limit of KRW 1.5 million (USD 1,245). In 2016, the length of time for bonus incentives was extended to three months with the same ceiling. Despite the modest upper limit, the extension of the length of time for bonus incentives still functioned as intended, to a certain degree, since the ordinary benefit was lower than that. For instance, from 2011 to 2016, the first leave-taker received only 40% of ordinary earnings with a cap of KRW 1 million (USD 830) (the benefit increased afterwards in 2017 and 2019; see Table 2.2 below). As of 2022, the government introduced the 3+3 parental leave system as a way of incentivising both parents (www.moel.go.kr). Table 2.2 shows the changes in the benefits system implemented by the Daddy's Month policy and the recent reform of 3+3 Parental Leave.

Table 2.2
The benefit system of parental leave from 2013 to 2022.

Year	Policy	The first leave-taker	The second leave-taker
- 2013	Prior to Daddy's Month	1–12 months: 40% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1m/0.5m)	
2014	Daddy's Month (1 month)	1–12 months: 40% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1 m/0.5m)	1 month: 100% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1.5m) 11 months: 40% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1 m/0.5m)
2016	Daddy's Month (3 month)	1–12 months: 40% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1m/0.5m)	3 months: 100% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1.5 m) 9 months: 40% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1 m/0.5 m)
2017		3 months: 80% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1.5m/0.7m) 9 months: 40% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1m/0.5m)	3 months: 100% of ordinary earnings (KRW 2m) 9 months: 40% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1m/0.5m)
2019		3 months: 80% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1.5m/0.7m) 9 months: 50% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1.2m/0.7m)	3 months: 100% of ordinary earnings (KRW 2.5m) 9 months: 50% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1.2 m/0.7m)
2022	3+3 parental leave	1–12 months: 80% of ordinary earnings (KRW 1.5m/0.7m) If both parents take parental leave simultaneously or in sequence within one year after birth, for the first three months, the ceiling of the benefit increases as follows: - 1 month: 100% of ordinary earnings (KRW 2m) - 2 months: 100% of ordinary earnings (KRW 2m for the first month and KRW 2.5m for the second month) - 3 months: 100% of ordinary earnings (KRW 2m for the first month, KRW 2.5m for the second month and KRW 3m for the third month) If either parent takes only one month of parental leave, then the benefit increase for both parents is capped at the one-month level. For either parent, after the first three months of parental leave, the bonus incentives no longer apply.	

Notes: Conversion rate at March 1, 2022: KRW (₩) 1 = USD ($) 0.00083:
₩0.5m: $415. ₩0.7m: $581. ₩1m: $830. ₩1.2m: $996. ₩1.5m: $1,245. ₩2m: $1,660. ₩2.5m: $2,075.

In Korea, parental leave cannot be taken part-time, but the government instead introduced FWAs to enable parents to combine work and childcare for young children. FWAs can also be used for one year until a child turns 9 years old or advances to the third grade in primary school (www.ei.go.kr). They were initially unpaid upon their introduction in 2008. Since 2011, they have enabled parents to work for 15–35 hours per week in place of a 40-hour workweek. As of 2022, the first five of those reduced hours are compensated fully or to the sum of KRW 2 million (USD 1,660), and up to 25 further hours are compensated at 80% or to the sum of KRW 1.5 million (USD 1,245) (www.moel.go.kr). Similarly to other childcare leave, parents who were covered under their employment insurance for at least six months are eligible for FWAs (www.ei.go.kr). Since FWAs can also be split once, employed and insured parents are entitled to utilise

parental leave and their FWA alternately and/or in sequence, and in principle they are entitled to take a year of parental leave, followed by a year of their FWA. However, the number of parents who use FWAs is much smaller than those who take parental leave; for instance, in 2020, 16,495 mothers and 2,123 fathers used FWAs while 84,617 mothers and 27,423 fathers utilised parental leave (Korea Institute of Child Care and Education [KICCE], 2021).

As of 2022, unlike paid leave and FWAs, which require employment insurance, all parents are entitled to either the universal childcare service (for children aged 0–5 years) or a cash allowance comprised of both infant allowance (for children aged 0–23 months) and child homecare allowance (for children aged 24–86 months). For children aged 0–5 years, a day care service is provided from 9am to 4pm. Parents can drop off their children from 7:30am and pick them up by 5pm. Day care centres run an extended service from 4pm to 7:30pm but, for children aged 0–2, parents need to prove that they are employed, artists, students, single parents, or that their family is low-income, and so on (www.mohw.go.kr). Day care centres also offer several extended services that cover from 7:30pm to 12am and 12am to 7:30am (MOHW, 2022).

Korean parents demonstrate a tendency to actively use childcare services starting from their children's earliest years. According to the OECD Family Database (2021b), Korea's enrolment rate in early childhood education and care services for children aged 0–2 years in 2018 was 62.6%, coming in second to the Netherlands' at 65.6% (in 2019); for children aged 3–5, the enrolment rate was 94.5%. If parents take care of children on their own instead of using childcare service facilities, they are entitled to infant allowance of KRW 300,000 (USD 249) until a child turns 24 months old (www.mohw.go.kr), and child homecare allowance of KRW 100,000 (USD 83) for children aged between 24–86 months (MOHW, 2022). In 2020, when the infant allowance was yet to be introduced and the child homecare allowance was granted to children aged 0–86 months, 34% of all children aged 0–2 (about 1.26 million) and 10% of all children aged 3–5 (about 1.3 million) received the child homecare allowance instead of utilising childcare services (KICCE, 2021).

In summary, the Korean government has made remarkable expansions in their childcare policies, but those changes have had little success in raising fertility rates. This may be because "countering the forces making for ultra-low fertility requires the adjustments of entrenched cultural, institutional and familial arrangements that are not easy to achieve" (Jones, 2019, p. 141). As both domestic and international researchers as well as scholars point out, work-family/childcare policies in Korea have progressed, but other broader issues, such as the limited

coverage of employment insurance, the high cost and amount of energy and time in raising children, housing problems with costs and supply and, more importantly to this thesis, slow changes in gender relations and norms as well as hegemonic corporate culture need to be addressed (Jones, 2019). In particular, in order to make changes in gender relations, men's behavioural changes must also be accompanied by corresponding changes in male attitudes towards gender roles.

2.2 The landscape of fatherhood policies

2.2.1 The burgeoning perceived need for father-targeted support

The development of father-targeted policies began to gain momentum in 2006 with the introduction of two Master Plans covering the Framework Acts on Healthy Families and Low Birth Rate in an Aging Society. The two plans signified the government's attempts to address the questions of what a family is and how the government should support it. These introspective questions were prompted by the perceived crisis surrounding changing family structures, marked by declining fertility rates, escalating divorce rates, and a spate of news reports on financially motivated family unit murder-suicides (Yoon, 2004).

According to Yoon (2004, p. 281), before the Korean government introduced the Framework Act on Healthy Families, there were indeed two different perspectives on the changes to the family structure. On the one hand, the family changes were deemed a crisis in family functionality, which implies that rectifying it was the primary responsibility of the individual or family and the government's input was limited to just enlightening and educating the citizens about how to form a "healthy" family. On the other hand, the family changes were regarded as a process of diversification in family functions and arrangement. The two different views failed to reconcile, and the Framework Act on Healthy Families was enacted in 2003, adopting the former stance and leaving the question of what a healthy family is unanswered.

Prior to discussions on what constitutes a healthy family, Korean society broadly conceived of fathers as responsible for serving to implement and restore traditional "family values". According to Jang (2014), fathers portrayed on TV since 2000 demonstrate the qualities of a good father: rejecting status as an authoritarian figure, engaging in housework and childcare and exerting themselves in order to

rebuild a once-estranged relationship with another family member. Fathers, that is, are portrayed as key agents who "restore the family who are in crisis due to the severance of communication and emotional ties" (Jang, 2014, p. 93). Similarly, the policy visions promoted in the two Master Plans tend to situate fathers as a solution to the so-called "family crisis" and a national crisis of plummeting fertility rates, by calling them into the family sphere to take on more domestic responsibilities. These changes in men's behaviour are expected to make the ongoing social transition to a dual-earner/carer family society smoother (see the 1st Master Plan for Healthy Homes, p. 8), enhance the functionality of family community and increase fertility rates by healing from the patriarchal family culture (see the 2nd Master Plan for Healthy Homes, pp. 7, 34). As an example, Table 2.3 shows the details of father-targeted support policies promoted by the Master Plans for Healthy Homes. The motives behind the development of the policies over two decades manifest the fact that the necessity of formal support for fathers has centred around preserving conventional family values and increasing fertility rates.

Table 2.3

Father-targeted support policy in the Master Plan for Healthy Homes from 2006–2025.

	Vision	Objective	Purpose	Plan
The 1st Master Plan (2006–2010)	Society where all families are equal and happy	Support for work-family balance	To lay the legal and institutional foundations for men's family life	- Introduction of unpaid paternity leave - Review of the introduction of the Daddy's Quota system
			To encourage/boost men's participation in family life	- Introduction of educational programme for fathers - Expansion of Parents' Night (which means that parents' meetings at school will be held in the evening so that fathers can participate after work)
The 2nd Master Plan (2011–2015)	A happy family that we create together, a healthy society that grows together	Spread of family values (support for men's family life participation)	To increase the use of leave policies for men's family life participation	Extension of paternity leave to five days and introducing payment for the first three days out of five
			To reinforce education of men's role within the family	- Introduction of educational activities and content related to men's roles in the family through school education - Development and expansion of father's academic education model - Reinforcement of publicity of educational programmes for fathers at the Healthy Family Support Centers
			To create a culture to promote men's participation in family life	- Use of various media (e.g. TV shows, movies, video competitions, public campaign, etc.) to encourage men's participation in family life - Further expansion of the Fathering Class, Parents' Night, etc.
The 3rd Master Plan (2016–2020)	A society where all families are happy together (revised in 2018 to "Realisation of equal families and sustainable society")	Families' balance between work, rest and family life	To encourage men's use of paternity and parental leave	- Increase in the cap of Daddy's Quota monthly benefits (from KRW 2 million to 2.5 million [USD 1,660 to 2,075]) - Extension of paternity leave to 10 days - Introduction of the possibility for both parents to simultaneously take parental leave
		Creating conditions for equal family life	To spread a culture of equal distribution of housework	- Create an online platform that serves as an archive of fathering-related information and events

The 4th Master Plan (2021–2025)	A society where all families and all the family members are respected	Creating cooperative environments for everyone to be able to work and provide care	To guarantee the right for both men and women to be able to provide care while engaging in paid work	- Expand the eligibility of parental leave benefits - Increase the benefit of parental leave up to 80% of regular salary (with a cap of KRW 1.5 million [USD 1,245]) - Enhance the benefit of parental leave up to KRW 3 million (USD 2,490) per month up to 3 months for each parent when both parents use parental leave equally for a child aged under 12 months
			To establish a gender-equal caregiving	- Develop and provide novice father software app Support Fathering Class - Provide education and counselling support for men who provide care for spouses or parents - Foster support communities for male caregivers

Later in 2015, the Framework Act on Women's Development was revised to the Framework Act on Gender Equality, and as a result the Master Plan for Gender Equality Policies was additionally implemented. This revised Act stipulates the importance for men to share equally all social responsibilities and rights with women in order to achieve a gender-equal society and that the government and employers should protect fathers' rights as well as mothers'. The corresponding Master Plan accordingly called for changes in policy approaches from being female-specific to gender-inclusive and to emphasise clearly that men's lives are also affected by gender equality and "men can be also disadvantaged by sex segregation and gendered stereotypes" (the 1st Master Plan for Gender Equality Policies, p. 21).

However, it is doubtful that the implemented policies actually address the underpinning of the problems—which are the profoundly biased assumptions about gender roles in Korean society. More specifically, some programmes include descriptions of gendered differences in approaches to parenting that likely reinforce existing stereotypes surrounding mothering and fathering. In their investigation of nationwide father-inclusive parenting programmes provided by the central government, Choi and Kim (2020) found that a fathering programme manual distributed in 2018 by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) includes reductive statements such as "paternal love is relatively conditional compared to maternal love, which is why it tends to be more easily withdrawn" (MOGEF, 2018a, p. 14). This is especially problematic since this manual was written by the central government for wider distribution to the Family Centers and other regional facilities across municipalities, with the intention that it would become the foundational material of their parenting programmes. Another guidebook published by MOGEF, *Notebook for a Novice Father*, also includes advice that reproduces rather than challenges preconceptions around gender stereotypes. For instance, it gives the advice that, "Childcare needs to be shared", providing this example: "My wife took full responsibility on weekdays and I took care of my child as much as possible at weekends. I took a rest at work. It was much easier to go to work [than caring for children]" (MOGEF, 2018b, p. 20). It also recommends that fathers give their wives a coupon as a present, saying, "Surprise her by booking a nail care service for her rough hands due to childcare and housework" (MOGEF 2018b, p. 44).

In conclusion, since the 2000s there has been a burgeoning interest in fathers' roles and potential thereof in terms of restoring "family values", increasing fertility rates and promoting gender equalities. Relevant policies specifically targeting

fathers have gained momentum. However, the increasing need for fatherhood support seems to have limitations in that it has built upon a lack of social consensus on principles regarding what a healthy and gender-equal family is and the corresponding father's role within that structure. This limitation may also be interconnected with meagre practices of fatherhood policies addressed in the following section.

2.2.2 Father-targeted policies and practices

Fuelled by an increased need in government support for paternal childcare, father-targeted policies have been developed by way of three main types of support systems: childcare paid leave, activity-based and knowledge-based fathering programmes, and self-help communities (see Figure 2.6). The three elements of support (time and money, knowledge and community) are institutionalised at different magnitudes and levels, but in this section I will focus on an overview of each type of support in parallel instead of delving into an in-depth comparison.

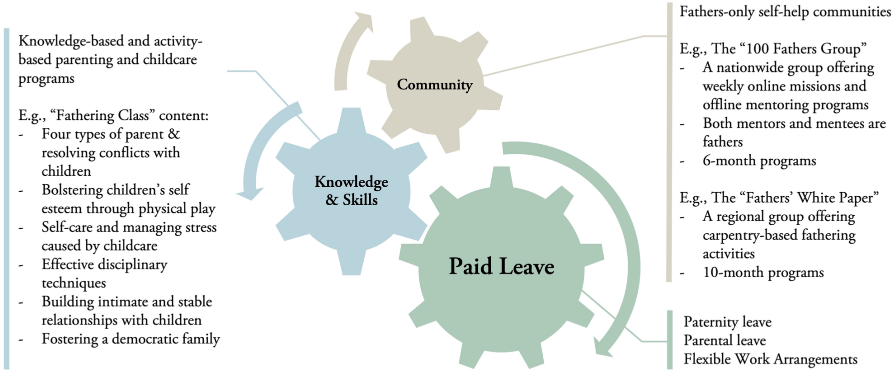
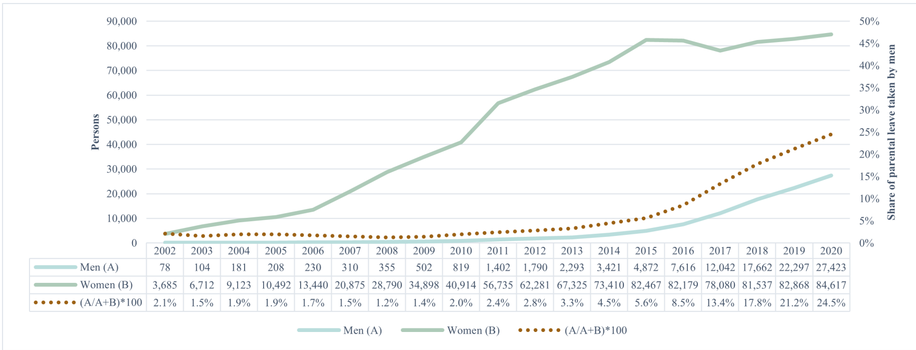


Figure 2.6 Three elements of Korean paternal childcare support policy. *Source*: Author.

When it comes to time support, Korean fathers in 2022 are largely entitled to 10-day paid paternity leave, 1-year paid parental leave, and 1-year paid FWAs. As the basic structure of these policies has already been described, I will provide more detailed information on how these policies are used by Korean fathers in practice.



	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Men (A)	78	104	181	208	230	310	355	502	819	1,402	1,790	2,293	3,421	4,872	7,616	12,042	17,662	22,297	27,423
Women (B)	3,685	6,712	9,123	10,492	13,440	20,875	28,790	34,898	40,914	56,735	62,281	67,325	73,410	82,467	82,179	78,080	81,537	82,868	84,617
(A/A+B)*100	2.1%	1.5%	1.9%	1.9%	1.7%	1.5%	1.2%	1.4%	2.0%	2.4%	2.8%	3.3%	4.5%	5.6%	8.5%	13.4%	17.8%	21.2%	24.5%

Figure 2.7 Take-up of parental leave by men and women between 2002 and 2020. *Source*: Statistics Korea (2021a).

As Figure 2.7 indicates, since paid parental leave was introduced in 2001, its take-up among men increased very slowly until the mid-2010s, with only 6% of men taking this leave in 2015, some 14 years after its establishment. During the latter half of the 2010s, however, the usage rate among men has increased more rapidly, as can be seen from the increasingly steep trend line. This shift correlates with the introduction of Daddy's Month in 2014 and a sequent increase in the overall benefits afterwards. As of 2020, approximately 24% of those who took parental leave were fathers (Statistics Korea, 2021a).

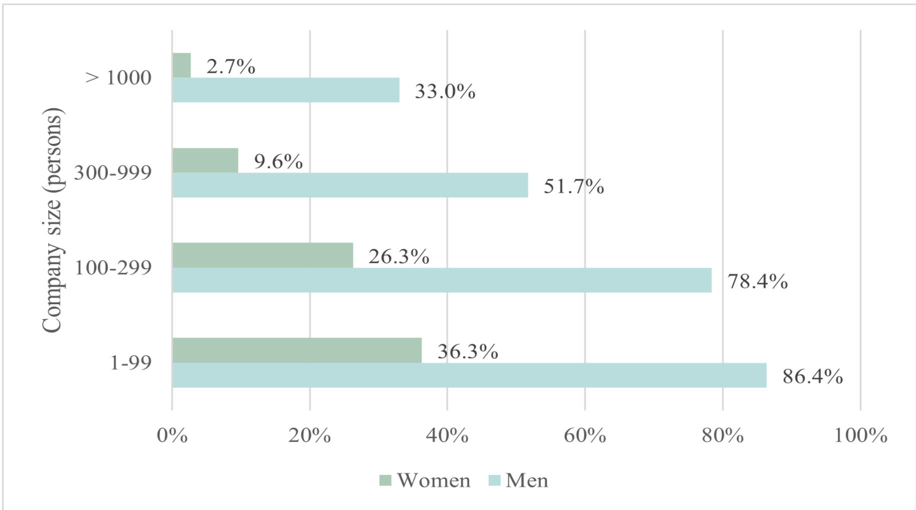


Figure 2.8 Share of parental leave-takers who did not return to work afterwards by company size across genders. *Source*: Statistics Research Institute (SRI) (2018).

Notably, this seemingly successful outcome is by no means the full picture. As mentioned above, in 2020, 96.6% of eligible fathers did not take parental leave (See Table 2.4). The majority of the men who took leave work for companies with more than 300 employees. According to Yoon (2022), as of 2021, the rate of increased leave in the number of men who took paid leave was highest among companies with over 1,000 employees (40.1%) while the SMEs remained at between 5.8% and 18.8%. Furthermore, as seen in Figure 2.8, the majority of male employees who took parental leave while working for small companies quit their jobs during or after this period of leave. This suggests that they tend to use parental leave as either a preparatory or transitional period to either seek or change jobs (Statistics Research Institute [SRI], 2018).

Table2.4

Take-up rates of parental leave among eligible parents

Year		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Take-up rates (A/B*100)		19.3	20.8	21.7	23	24.2
	Fathers	0.9	1.7	2.3	2.9	3.4
	Mothers	59.2	60.6	61.2	62.8	63.9
Number of leave-taker (A)		77,089	73,962	75,227	76,136	73,105
	Fathers	2,375	4,126	5,278	6,340	6,812
	Mothers	74,714	69,836	69,949	69,796	66,293
Number of eligible parents (B)		398,966	356,402	346,914	331,409	302,490
	Fathers	227,663	241,208	232,690	220,350	198,748
	Mothers	126,303	115,194	114,224	111,059	103,742

Source: Statistics Korea (2021b).

The polarised use of parental leave by company size and the high rate of no return after leave among small companies indicate that Korean fathers' entitlement to take leave has yet to become entrenched within Korean companies. This holds true according to *A Study on the Status of Work-Life Reconciliation in 2020* (Ministry of Employment and Labor [MOEL], 2021). In this study, 5,200 human resources managers of companies with five or more employees participated. Of those, about 91% were from companies with less than 300 employees. Although paid leave such as paternity leave, parental leave, and FWAs is a statutory right, only 45.8%, 47.3%, and 53.1% respectively of the managers answered affirmatively that "employees can freely make use of it if they need". Reasons most commonly chosen for low use of policies were "workplace culture/atmosphere" for parental leave (49.6%) and FWAs (55%) and "weighing down colleague'[s'] workload" for paternity leave (64%). Although this survey does not exclusively represent male employees' status, as evidenced in Papers II

and III of this thesis, these results indicate unfavourable environments for men to take childcare leave despite their statutory entitlements.

Secondly, fathering programmes, encompassing both activity-based and knowledge-based formats, are another form of support provided by the Korean government. The programmes have noticeably increased in frequency and quality since around 2006, when the government implemented two Master Plans covering the Framework Acts on Healthy Families and on Low Birth Rates in an Ageing Society. A recent series of studies has brought the necessity of fathering programmes to the forefront, through their discussions of Korean fathers struggling to build intimate relationships with their children due to lack of knowledge and skills (Kim, 2017). According to Choi and Kim (2020), the primary actors involved in developing such programmes are three central governments—the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF), the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) and the Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL). These bodies supply manuals on conducting fathering programmes and online platforms that educators and parents can freely access and reference. Hands-on fathering programmes structured around these resources are primarily delivered through local community centres. Their focuses range from informative methods of communication and play for different child age groups that parents can apply practically to strategies for allowing parents to explore their own emotions, strengths, and weaknesses (see Figure 2.6 for an example of the "Fathering Class", a programme developed by MOGEF).

However, such support remains limited in that the programmes consist mainly of one-off nature lectures, which likely have a restricted impact on fathers' actual evolution of fathering practices (Choi & Kim, 2020). For instance, when Lee (2018) examined 776 father-inclusive programmes provided in 2017 by the Family Centers across municipalities, she found that the majority of programmes were one-off events, held in lecture format. This trend of one-off, unidirectional teaching is especially the case in programmes held for fathers of children aged 0–5 years in Seoul (Kim, 2020). The limited impact of these educational programmes is also reflected in Lee (2017)'s survey, which found that only 10% of 1,500 fathers of children aged 0–8 years had taken fathering programmes, half of whom had taken only one.

Thirdly, the notion of community support, often through self-help groups for fathers, is a relatively new one, with most community-based projects having started in the 2010s. This form of support benefits from centring upon the participants' needs, in contrast to lecture-oriented fathering programmes, which

are structured around educators or facilitators (Kim et al., 2017). The potential benefits of paternal peer group support are also found in research conducted in Western countries, including that by Henry et al. (2020), who have undertook an integrative review of fatherhood intervention studies and found fatherhood intervention was most effective when it was provided within a fathers-only group.

The "100 Fathers' Group", a self-help community that is examined as part of this dissertation, is representative of this type of support. It was established in 2011 with only 100 fathers, who had been recruited from across the country; since 2019, the project has increased its influence by recruiting a new cohort of 100 fathers from each of the 17 metropolitan governments per year. The primary purpose of the project is to provide an environment where fathers learn and inspire one another. Accordingly, all involved in the programme are fathers, acting as either mentors or mentees, who are specifically required to have children between the ages of 2 and 6 and expected to complete weekly missions assigned by their mentors over the course of six months (see Paper IV for more detailed information). While the 100 Fathers' Group is facilitated on a national level by MOHW, multiple smaller self-help groups have been established in local Family Centers. The "Fathers' White Paper", for instance, is a Seoul-based group of 10 fathers of pre-schoolers or elementary-age children, as of 2021. The fathers gather once every month over the course of 10 months, to share their experiences and the challenges of fathering, while doing carpentry.

2.3 Ideal images of Korean fatherhood

Through the earlier reference to the concept of compressed modernity, I highlighted that Korea has been experiencing extremely rapid social changes, such that three generations within a family would have experienced every critical event that shaped contemporary Korean society, from colonisation, to the Korean War, industrialisation, democratisation, globalisation, and (post)modernisation. This rapid social change has affected not only women's economic status, labour market structure and social policy advancement, but also ideal images of Korean fatherhood. This means that fathers across three generations have each had different upbringings as well as childhood memories, experiences and ideals affecting what it means to be a father.

Traditionally, for centuries, Korean fatherhood based its ideal on Confucian precepts (Yeung, 2013), a philosophy that had been dominant in East Asian

countries since, for instance, the 14th century in Korea. The archetypal parental roles pursued in Confucianism are summarised in the word: 엄부자모 (嚴父慈母), which means “strict/stern father and kind/compassionate mother”. Fathers were required to show their sternness because one of their central roles was to educate children, especially sons (Kim & Baek, 2000). Following the patriarchal family system, male family members were essential since family succession was patrilineal; hence the father’s role as an educator of sons was important to maintain the legacy of family. The father was also considered to be the respected head of family, but not as a breadwinner. According to Kim (2008), economic competence was, rather, emphasised among women, especially for those married to a spouse who worked for the government and whose main job was to read and discipline themselves.

However, the importance of the father’s role as educator waned throughout Korean society’s rapid industrialisation during the 1960s, while it recovered from the instability caused by the Korean War. During this period, the image of the “breadwinner father” emerged as the ideal paradigm of fatherhood (Lim, 2006). Kim (2007, p. 73), who studied a history of employed women’s work and family life experiences from the 1960s through the 2000s, pointed out that the term “equal sharing of house chores” was not commonly used by working women before the mid-1970s. Fathers believed their role as the breadwinner earned them authority at home as well as in their communities (Kwon & Roy, 2007); consequently, a strong commitment to work was perhaps the most important criterion for being an ideal father (Yoon, 2020). However, there was a paradox: although the male breadwinner model became deeply entrenched across Korean society, it was feasible for only a minority of fathers: those who worked in large companies and earned a high income. Many of these fathers worked in the heavy-chemical industry, which received enormous government support throughout the period of industrialisation (Ma et al., 2017). Those who did not work in thriving industries with well-paying jobs—the majority of Korean men—often tried to live up to this model, which, however, remained unattainable for them.

Since the 1990s, there has been a wider range of research on Korean fatherhood. One group of studies emphasised that Korean fathers’ concept of the ideal father as breadwinner had not changed (Kang, 2011; Shin, 2014); the other group noted a shift in the concept of ideal fatherhood, with the notion of a “friend-like father” rather than an authoritarian one (with which the current generation had grown up) gaining prominence (Kim & Lee, 2014; Sung, 2018). The shift is mirrored in Chung and Kim’s study (1996, pp. 86–94), which analysed poems written about fathers by children aged 8 and 11: the children portrayed their fathers not

only as "diligent", "nocturnal", "toiling and moiling", but also as "sweet" and "loving" and as someone who plays with them when he has time. In the poems, the children described their fathers as "the respected head of the family", showing their pride and appreciation for their fathers' hard work. Similarly to previous decades, fathers were able to maintain their authority at home as long as they provided for the family, a cultural norm that held until the Asian financial crisis upended Korean society in the late 1990s.

In 1997, the Korean government, facing national bankruptcy, secured a bailout from the International Monetary Fund. This was the beginning of a rough period for the Korean economy: the unemployment rate soared from 2.1% (October 1997) to 8.7% (February 1999). Additionally, due to the then-underdeveloped social security system, only 7% of unemployed workers were covered by unemployment insurance (Park, 2000). Moreover, more workers were forced into irregular jobs with poor social safety nets (Cho & Keum, 2009). Naturally, the economic recession and weakening job stability influenced Korean fathers' position in their families, with the male breadwinner model starting to decline in prominence (Kang, 2011). The number of women who sought a job rose right after the crisis, particularly among married women in their 30–40s. This trend continued; by 2005, even women in their 50s and 60s were finding jobs at a considerably increased rate compared to before the crisis (Lee, 2006). The number of dual-income families doubled in 2005, accounting for about 40% of all families, compared to just 17.4% in 1993 (Shin, 2014). Scholars termed this shift alternately as the "failure", the "collapse" or the "crisis" of the male breadwinner model (e.g. Lee, 2006). Men were facing a harsh reality: they had grown up receiving their families' complete support for the former paternal model, and were instilled with the expectation that they would become competent heads of their families; however, they ended up drifting between jobs that did not offer the right amount of employment security to provide for their families (Kim, 2013). Unsurprisingly, Korean men's frustration was particularly severe: in 1998, the increase in the number of men who committed suicide was nearly double (48%) that of women (Moon & Chung, 2018).

After the crisis, social expectations regarding fathers' involvement in childcare have continued to rise. As men are increasingly requested to change their behaviours and perceptions, what is often ignored is that the father's expected role is not shifting but expanding. Working hard and providing for the family is no longer enough to be a good father (Cho, 2008); fathers are now called upon to be an adequate provider, attentive spouse and friendly father (Kim et al., 2008).

However, this does not mean that contemporary Korean fathers have changed their priorities in pursuing fatherhood. Kim (2007) pointed out that although their female counterparts have become more educated and pursued positions in more lucrative and prestigious paid work, fathers have not correspondingly increased their presence in home life. This aligns with the result of the Korean Time Use Survey conducted by Statistics Korea: according to MOGEF (2015), the time men spent in caring for their family each day was 9 minutes in 1999 and 12 in 2014, while for women it was 49 and 41 respectively; each day men spent 23 minutes on housework in 1999 and 35 minutes in 2014, while women spent 189 and 147 minutes, respectively. Therefore, it is not strange that guides to fatherhood written in the late 2000s and beginning of the 2010s advised fathers to focus more on how to increase the quality of time with their children rather than the quantity of time (Cho, 2012). To sum up, it appears that since the 2000s fathers have faced more pressure from society to increase their involvement in childcare, but corresponding transitions in practice have remained inconspicuous.

In the 2010s, cultural calls for fathers to change their behaviour increased further. This is reflected in the emerging popularity of coined phrases such as "Superman Daddy", "Scandi-Daddy" and "Latte Pappa". The latter two sobriquets take fathers from Nordic welfare states as models, signifying those who freely take parental leave and actively engage in hands-on childcare. Public broadcasters also joined this tide: for instance, *The Return of Superman* (2013–), a TV reality show that depicts how celebrity fathers look after their children for two days without their partners' help, has been so popular that the series has continued to air for eight years now (Lee, 2020). The social awareness of the significance of paternal involvement in childcare has noticeably increased to the extent that the "father effect" is widely discussed outside academia. Public organisations, such as municipalities, schools, and family counselling centres, have increasingly started introducing parenting classes for fathers (Na, 2015; Kim et al., 2017). Parental leave benefits, particularly for fathers during their first three months of leave, have also been increased in order to motivate more fathers to get involved in early childcare.

Of course, such transitions have been accompanied by concerns and criticism about the bounded nature of men's recently changed attitudes and behaviours. Sung (2018), for instance, pointed out that men's efforts to share the labour of childcare more equally might result from external societal forces rather than internal drive. Kim and Lee (2014) concluded that the ideal of fatherhood pursued by highly educated Korean fathers in their 30s is a transformed version

of the traditional Confucian conception of fatherhood. However, recent research has also simultaneously acknowledged that fathers have stepped beyond the old traditions. For instance, in 2017, after conducting a large data analysis of social media, the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) stated that the frequency of keywords related to paternal childcare had doubled within two years, particularly those involving hands-on childcare activities such as "meals", "nap", "pram", "powdered formula", etc. According to the same analysis, fathers seem to struggle more than mothers because of their lack of knowledge: the most frequently used word by mothers in their posts was "laborious"; for fathers, it was "don't know" and "difficult" (MOHW, 2017). This reflects how today's Korean fathers are under pressure to perform but lack the confidence and knowledge to do so well.

3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Policy context as the de jure entitlement and the de facto entitlement

The fundamental goal of enacting social policies is to promote citizens' well-being and the welfare of a society (Becker & Bryman, 2004). Fatherhood policies are an example of this. Gender-neutral parental leave policies in particular have been internationally promoted as a method of increasing women's labour market participation, achieving shared parenting at home, supporting children's well-being and development, and so forth.

The effects of fatherhood policies are expected through the stipulation of the lawful entitlement for (eligible) parents to use the policies. Although it often remains implicit, the expectations are based on institutionalist assumptions that institutions as sets of rules can drive and motivate human behaviours and decisions in their social life (Lowndes, 2010; Waylen, 2014). This is particularly due to the fact that social policy often concerns the value of actions (Spicker, 2014, p. 183) by being not only descriptive but also, explicitly or tacitly, prescriptive. For instance, the stipulation of parental leave policies regarding benefits, periods and eligibility in a law and enforcement ordinance tends to describe general conditions providing individuals with an alternative for childcare. However, as demonstrated by multiple empirical studies, introducing parental leave policies implicitly prescribes and endorses new norms, such as those regarding gender equality and the assumed notion of being a good father (see the Literature Review, Chapter 4).

The problem is that such institutionalist approaches towards the impact of social policy on citizens' behaviours often base their expectation on a hasty assumption that equates entitlement in principle (de jure) to entitlement in practice (de facto). However, from individual citizens' perspective, the de jure entitlement needs to be distinguished from the de facto entitlement. This distinction may be

particularly important among specific populations with competing cultural norms, such as Korean fathers, as investigated in this thesis.

Hence, this thesis ultimately focuses on the tension between the de jure entitlement and the de facto entitlement of fatherhood policies. As a lens through which to understand this tension, I analyse the contexts in which policymaking and policy practices occur. Although the notion of policy context has been widely used in various strands of policy research, it has not always been unitarily defined. In this thesis, I define policy context as (1) sociopolitical arguments and their underlying assumptions that have emerged during the localising process of a policy idea being initiated and developed into a specific policy design; (2) as pre-existing sociocultural conditions that individual citizens are likely to intersect with in their daily life when they deploy a certain policy. I refer to the former as the *policymaking context* and the latter as the *policy context for practice*.

3.1.1 Policymaking context

The policymaking context concerns itself with how the de jure entitlement of fatherhood policies has been developed with consideration of accessibility and practicability of the policy for individual citizens. The initial policy ideas are often learned (Rose, 1993), transferred (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000) or translated (Prince, 2010) from other countries. Some scholars argue that cultural proximity (e.g. Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000) or cultural compatibility (e.g. Castles, 1993; Evans, 2009) is important for public acceptance of the policy. However, as revealed in Paper I of this thesis, some policies are introduced through a top-down approach merely to meet international standards, regardless of whether they are acceptable or not. In this case, the discrepancy between the de jure entitlement and the de facto entitlement is likely to occur.

In this thesis, the policymaking context of Korean fatherhood has been examined through three specific lenses: policy translation, reform narratives and institutional legacies (see Paper I). Each lens provides insights into how the policy ideas of parental leave for fathers in Korea were externally initiated; how the adopted idea has been translated/localised to undergird the rationale of sequent reforms of parental leave policies; and how the recent reforms are currently bounded by the pre-existing institutional and sociocultural contexts.

Research on the policymaking context is important because it provides evidence to debunk the rationalistic assumption on decision-making in the policy process. The rationalistic assumption contends that "[t]he 'intended' policy itself will be

determined through rational decision making, a process with a logical sequence, from problem awareness, to goal setting, to the formulation of clear objectives, to the selection from alternative strategies of the best means to accomplish the objectives, and finally, to the evaluation of outcomes" (Becker et al., 2012, p. 32; originally referred from Smith & May, 1980). Instead, the research on the policymaking context contributes to a more open interpretation regarding ambiguous relationships between "ends and means, values and decisions, and facts and values" (Smith & May, 1997, p. 165), which in fact inevitably accompany the practical process of policymaking.

In particular, established values as a result of policymaking decisions play an indirect but critical role in forming a normative benchmark against which individuals' behaviours and decisions are justified. For example, in Paper I, such values included promoting gender equality, overcoming the national crisis related to the dramatic decrease in fertility rates, and balancing work-family life. The empirical studies within this thesis do not directly demonstrate in what kinds of ways, and how much, the normative discourse embedded in fatherhood policies has actually shaped individual fathers' (or mothers', in Paper II) behaviours and decisions towards the use of policy. However, the values promoted in the policymaking context serve as a counter-mirror that manifests the distance between the promoted values and the bare realities that individual fathers face. These realities indicate fathers' personal capabilities and, most importantly, sociocultural conditions surrounding individual fathers.

3.1.2 Policy context for practice

The policy context for practice—that is, pre-existing sociocultural conditions that individuals are likely to intersect with in their daily life when they deploy a certain policy—concerns itself with the foundations where the de jure entitlement of fatherhood policies converts into the de facto entitlement. In contrast to the policymaking context, it directly relates to individuals' social realities, and their lived experiences are part and parcel of understanding how policies actually promote citizens' entitlement in daily life.

The policy contexts for practice examined throughout this thesis are trifold: relational, organisational and personal. The evidence that shows the general importance of these contexts will be further discussed in the Fatherhood and Practices section. Each empirical study of this thesis examined and discussed three contexts with more specific focus: for the relational context, Confucian ethics are

considered in Paper II; for the organisational context, work norms and practices are explored in Paper III; and for the personal context, identity construction and fathering ideals are analysed in Paper IV. Evidently, such contexts need to be closely considered along with fatherhood practices, which will be defined and explained further in the next section.

Examining different policy contexts for practice is important because it provides a perspective to view segments of fatherhood practices in relation to fatherhood policies. Social policies usually focus on people or social units that policies aim to provide solutions for (Spicker, 2014). However, it does not necessarily mean that policy in and of itself can incorporate all associated contexts that are likely to muddle ideal logistics from policymaking to policy practice.

This propensity bespeaks the core limitation of policy-oriented rights: the de jure entitlement is in fact a *bloc* entitlement. "Bloc" is a term used by Rae et al. (1981, pp. 20–44) when they suggested the notion of *bloc equality* versus *segmental equality* to answer the question of "equality for whom?" This contrasting notion between bloc and segment illuminates that social conditions are individualised, such that equality earned as a group does not guarantee equality applying to each person.

The statutory entitlement has a similar nature. Korean parental leave policies, for instance, draw lines between blocs such as parent/non-parent, mother/father and eligible/non-eligible beneficiary; they do not consider segments of sociocultural conditions that individual parents would hold beyond these bloc eligibilities.

Therefore, the innate nature of fatherhood policies as bloc entitlements is likely to fail to address such individualities of sociocultural conditions and contexts and engender mismatches between the de jure entitlement and fathers' sense of entitlement. Fatherhood is one of the quintessential phenomena that embody how personal expectations or obligations as a parent shape one's identities and behaviours. Understanding the most basic element of fatherhood may therefore start from considering the other perspective, the de facto entitlement, by discussing relevant contexts where fathers' expected obligations manifest and sometimes collide with other social expectations.

3.2 Theorising fatherhood practices

"Fatherhood practices" is a concept combining the words "fatherhood" and "practices" which makes up the second half of the overarching framework of this thesis. I define fatherhood practices as individuals' doings, sayings, and reasonings that collectively shape a set of tacit knowledge of being a father in a certain nexus of time, space and in relation to others. To map out the definition, I will first clarify the meaning of "fatherhood", in particular compared to the concept of "fathering", as well as the meaning of "practices" by contrast to the term "practice" which was used earlier. Secondly, I will discuss the features of the practice-oriented approaches and highlight their importance to understand fatherhood practices. Thirdly, I will briefly review the concept of gender and family practices within R.W. Connell and David Morgan's works. Lastly, I will elaborate on the definition of fatherhood practices and their contributions as one of the two overarching theoretical frameworks of this thesis.

3.2.1 Fathering and fatherhood

In an influential work regarding fatherhood, *Making Men into Fathers*, Hobson and Morgan (2002) provided useful definitions and descriptions to distinguish between the father, fathering and fatherhood. "Father", whether biological or not, is a term given to a particular male individual with child(ren) through civil laws. "Fathering", as a parallel term to "mothering" and "parenting", implies fathers' *doings* in connection with childcare. Fatherhood is about a *status* of being a father, which relates to "the rights, duties, responsibilities, and statutes that are attached to fathers, as well as the discursive terrain around good and bad fathers"—or, put simply, "the cultural coding of men as father" (Hobson & Morgan, 2002, pp. 10–11). The authors' definition reflects the fact that fatherhood is a socially constructed product, which is likely to change over time and space.

More specifically, fathering implies a set of direct and indirect acts that a father carries out in relation to their child(ren). Primarily, the term "fathering" has been used to imply home-centred or caregiving activities conducted by a father. Such activities range from feeding, changing diapers, overseeing bath-time, to playing cards or football, helping their children with homework, etc. However, I agree that, as Hobson and Morgan (2002, p. 11) mentioned, fathering also needs to include indirect activities such as putting in a request for parental leave and, more extensively, as Christiansen and Palkovitz (2001) suggested, financial provision.

In summary, I consider the concept of fathering to incorporate caring activities and any types of finance-related behaviours to maintain their livelihood for bringing up a child.

So how is fathering connected to the broader concept of fatherhood? First and foremost, fathering without the social recognition of fatherhood can become invisible, leading men's caretaking to be undervalued in a given society. For instance, Hansen (2004), a sociologist who conducted research on the network of care in California in the United States, called men "essential cogs in the caregiving systems" (p. 183). However, before reaching this conclusion, she had initially dismissed the considerable contributions of men in childcare and only recognised it after conducting further studies. Her reflections show that, even if fathering has existed all along, without appreciation of fatherhood within the fabric of society any type of fathering is more likely to become invisible, and ultimately makes it harder for fathers to practise beyond the scope of what is recognised.

Within this social recognition, fathering should be considered as one major aspect of the larger jigsaw of fatherhood. There are at least two elements to consider within the jigsaw. First, the concept of fatherhood can evolve in theory regardless of the practical nature of fathering. This has been a dominant critique of many reports that highlight fathers' limited hours and low involvement in hands-on childcare in the past decades despite a significant change in mothers' status in the labour market and the rise of new fatherhood images (Hochschild & Machung, 2012; LaRossa, 1988; Pleck, 1985). Second, while understanding the concept of fathering involves only fathers (and their children), that of fatherhood requires any sort of involvement from a whole set of actors surrounding fathers, ranging from their partners most closely, to parents, friends, community members, neighbours, workmates, bosses, policy decision-makers, etc. This second point—that is, fatherhood being considered as a collectively constructed social product—serves as a kernel of my view on fatherhood and will be more explicated in connection with a theory of practices.

3.2.2 A theory of practices and its implications for understanding fatherhood

Practices, as presented in the second framework, Fatherhood Practices, need to be distinguished from practice, as presented in the first framework, Policy Context for Practice. Andreas Reckwitz (2002) provides a useful clarification of these terms:

> Practice (Praxis) in the singular represents merely an emphatic term to describe the whole of human action (in contrast to 'theory' and mere thinking). 'Practices'… is something else. A 'practice' (Praktik) is a routinized type of behavior which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge (p. 249).

More specifically, by terms such as "policy practice" or "policy context for practice" that are used in the first framework, I signify *praxis* as opposed to theory or principle. In the second framework, Fatherhood Practices, I signify *praktiken* as a set of interconnected acts of members in a society which consequently compose or are composed of shared understandings of fatherhood. Thus, the concept of practices does not simply refer to fathering in this research; rather, fatherhood practices subsume a set of fathering actions. As Schatzki et al. (2001, p. 56) put it, "the actions that compose a practice are either bodily doings and sayings or actions that these doings and sayings constitute".

The history of practice-oriented approaches started in the 1970s and the approaches, which are now known as Practice Theory, have increasingly been applied to understand various social phenomena, such as climate change (Shove & Walker, 2014), consumption (Welch & Warde, 2015), education (Kemmis et al., 2014), organisation (Blue & Spurling, 2016), care (Gherardi & Rodeschini, 2016), masculinities (Connell, 1987) and family relations (Morgan, 1996, 2011), etc.

Practice-oriented approaches were first developed by Pierre Bourdieu in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977). To escape realists' understanding of social structure, he suggested a shift of our focus from the *opus operatum* (results of practices) to the *modus operandi* (mode of practices). Later, Giddens, developing the theory of structuration, also contributed to discussions concerning the nature of practice. Such practice-oriented approaches have been revisited by Theodore Schatzki (1996) in *Social Practices,* where he outlined Practice Theory. Reckwitz (2007, p. 1) concisely explains that practice theory is "a group of approaches in late twentieth-century social and cultural theory which highlights the routinised and performative character of action, its dependence on tacit knowledge and implicit understanding".

Despite diverse applications across academic disciplines, practice-oriented approaches share the commonality of foregrounding analysis of everyday aspects that are composed of agents' practical doings and sayings (Reckwitz, 2007). This further implies that these approaches would disapprove of intellectualists and perspectives that regard human action as rational and purposeful, such as rational choice theory and methodological individualism (Reckwitz, 2007). Similarly, they are sceptical towards macro perspectives of social structure, such as system theory, (post-)structuralism, and methodological holism, which tend to underrate the power of agency and equate culture to discourses dispensing with the influence of materiality. Instead, they attempt to bridge the dualist approaches of structure and agency. As Schatzki et al. (2001, p. 11) explain, practice theorists do so by shedding light on the field of practices:

> [P]ractice accounts are joined in the belief that such phenomena as knowledge, meaning, human activity, science, power, language, social institutions, and historical transformation occur within and are aspects or components of the field of practices. The field of practices is the total nexus of interconnected human practices.

More specifically, there are largely five reasons why I found the practice-oriented approaches fruitful to adopt to study Korean fatherhood in this thesis. This will be explained based on the common traits of Practice Theory, as discussed by Schatzki (2016) and Nicolini (2012), Schatzki et al. (2001) and Hui et al. (2017). Hereinafter, the terms "Practice Theory" and "practice-oriented approaches" are used interchangeably.

Firstly, practice-oriented approaches pay attention to the interconnections and interdependencies of the practice complex, rather than an individual practice per se or the constitution thereof (Blue & Spurling, 2016). I view fathering as an individual practice that is closely connected to other related practices carried out in different settings such as policymaking, family, work and community. This interconnectedness of practices serves as a basis for this thesis, comprising four distinct empirical studies on Korean fatherhood, ranging from policymaking to fathering. Hui et al. (2017) called the wider constellation that the links of practices form a "nexus of practices". The nexus of fatherhood practices cannot be analysed and explained without breaking the connections down into multiple forms of practices; thus, the practice-oriented perspective provides a useful tool for teasing out the nexus of fatherhood practices by interlinking multiple research questions. The questions, for instance, are how the development process of parental leave

policies (Paper I) are connected to fathers' sense of entitlement towards the policy use (Papers II and III); how couples' practices within the family sphere (Paper II) are connected to that of fathers within the work sphere (Paper III); and how fathers' identity practices (Paper IV) are connected to fathers' practices at work (Papers II and III), etc.

Secondly, and dialectically related to the first point, practice-oriented approaches can contribute to illuminating large-scale phenomena that transpire through individual practices. Schatzki (2016, p. 4) argued that social life is constituted not only of small phenomena occurring through "small nexuses of action" in immediate and/or observable settings, but also of larger phenomena transpiring through "larger than small nexuses of action" in indirect and/or far-flung settings (e.g. boxing practices as small nexuses of action and sport leagues as larger nexuses of action). Similarly, contemporary fatherhood can be regarded as constituting larger-scale phenomena that are composed of more than a small nexus of fathering practices at home, such as the action of searching on the Internet with the keyword "Daddy's play" to find ideas for playful activities (as presented in Paper IV). This action strongly correlates with other actions that compose the larger nexuses of practices, such as the type of website the father mainly explores (e.g. fathers' blogs or general parenting websites), what the father does with the idea found online (e.g. just exploring, or actually making time to apply it); whether he shares his experience with others, especially other fathers; whether he uses the idea when his partner is around or away, etc. Obviously, it is impossible to grasp what contemporary fatherhood is without understanding such small and large sets of practices.

Thirdly, building on the second point, Practice Theory sheds light on the impact of people's actions towards one another. Schatzki (2016, pp. 12–16) suggested a concept of a *chain of actions* occurring in the *plenum of practices*, by using a metaphor of cooking practices in a kitchen. Even though he did not describe it extensively, it can be a useful example to conceptualise the links between people's actions towards each other. For example, a chef's ability to do their work depends on her/his assistants' preparatory work of trimming the ingredients; if an assistant is absent due to illness, this preparatory work needs to be taken over by a higher level of assistant or the chef themselves. Similarly, fatherhood practices, as discussed previously regarding the relationship between fathering and fatherhood, are constituted not only of fathers' actions but also the dynamics of others' direct and indirect actions. For instance, as presented in Paper II, a father did not take parental leave for his first child because of his mother's opposition. Instead, she

volunteered to babysit the child and, as a result, he maintained his role as the economic provider of the family. As a more indirect case, a father interviewed in Paper III got used to taking time off for his children without reluctance after learning that his boss also freely did so, even though he had a stay-at-home wife. Unlike the example of cooking practices in the kitchen that have the common goal of serving food to customers, the chains of actions among fathers and the people surrounding them are not necessarily directed towards influencing fatherhood. However, each person's actions and reactions create a link and contribute to shaping the contemporary fatherhood phenomenon.

Fourthly, practice-oriented approaches acknowledge that social change, regardless of its direction, transpires through practices and feedback loops thereof (Nicolini, 2017; Schatzki, 2016; Shove et al., 2012). Change in fatherhood is no exception: it occurs as a result of changes in practices and/or the chain of actions in relation to fathering and other connected areas. For instance, if one claims that society has become more gender-equal on the basis of an increased number of fathers taking parental leave, this statement might be true. However, I would argue that this is an oversimplified claim that obscures the complicated dynamics of practices that need to take place to encourage more fathers to take parental leave in the first place.

Considering evidence from four distinct empirical studies in this thesis, several subtle and interlinked practices are required to make the environment more conducive for fathers to take parental leave. First, policy-makers need to advance leave schemes and shape reform narratives that actually help promote fathers' social status as co-parents who are equally important to children's well-being and development (Paper I). Second, fathers need to overcome intergenerational differences in the understanding of fathers' expected roles. Specifically, men need to persuade their own mothers (i.e. their children's grandmothers) who oppose their taking parental leave, and/or these grandmothers need to accept that contemporary fatherhood comprises more than being a competent breadwinner (Paper II). Third, fathers need to learn and repeatedly experience that it is okay to be away from work for some weeks; this flexible environment would require practices of work allocations at the organisational level and approval of others such as workmates, managers and bosses (Papers II and III). Fourth, fathers need to build or accept an identity as caregivers, and in this process they would interact with other fathers who provide inspiration, encouragement and sometimes a sense of rivalry (Paper IV). Although it is impossible to exhaustively map out the feedback loops among these practices, breaking down the components of social

change as sets of actions contributes to illuminating the role of agency and agents (Nicolini, 2012 as well as preventing researchers and policy decision-makers from assuming a linear and oversimplified relation between policy and social change.

Last, but not least, Practice Theory emphasises the importance of mind and discourse within social studies (Schatzki et al., 2001, 2016). For instance, Schatzki et al. (2001) argued that one's mental phenomena such as desire, expectation and beliefs are manifested in behaviours, and that practices are organised through the mind. They regarded the mind as reflective of practical states of one's life, rather than as a mere abstract and underlying apparatus. In their words, "[s]uch states are how things stand or are going for that person in his or her involvement in the world" (Schatzki et al., 2001, p. 57). When it comes to understanding fatherhood, this argument seems plausible given that many studies on fatherhood, including Paper III in this thesis, have highlighted the social expectations and obligations internalised by fathers as key drivers of their behaviours.

More importantly, such mental phenomena are inevitably influenced by social discourse. Schatzki (2016, p. 129) regarded discursive components, such as sayings and texts, as both concrete forms of practices and as informers of actions that compose practice. This perspective is echoed in the current research. For instance, the results of Paper I suggest how reform narratives based on the government's sayings and texts have shaped Korean fatherhood in the process of parental leave policy development. More generally, viewing discourse as informing people's behaviours aligns with one focus of this research on uncovering interviewees' motives for their decisions and behaviours regarding the use of father-targeted policies and programmes. According to Lyotard (1988), knowing and reasoning are part of a regime of language use. Thus, through interviewing methods, investigating how people reason regarding specific behaviours can serve as a useful approach to access their tacit knowledge and resultant motives behind those behaviours. As Schatzki (2016, p. 129) upheld, examining discursive aspects expressed and embedded in people's behaviours will be "fundamental to a proper understanding of practices"—in this thesis, fatherhood practices in particular.

3.2.3 Gender and family practices

In the research fields most adjacent to fatherhood, i.e. gender and family studies, there have already been calls to employ a practice-based perspective. For instance, Raewyn Connell in gender studies and David Morgan in family studies argued

for adopting practice-based theory to their fields of research. Connell (1987, p. 91), in *Gender and Power*, emphasised the necessity of incorporating practice theory to overcome the risks that the analysis of gender relations collapses towards two ends of the spectrum, either voluntarism on one side or biological determinism on the other:

> An adequate theory of gender requires a theory of social structure much stronger than the implicit voluntarism of role theory. But it also needs a concept of structure that can recognize the complexities bulldozed by categoricalism, and give some grip on the historical dynamic of gender (p. 91).

Connell found this alternative in the work of theorists such as Sartre, Bourdieu and Giddens, whose focus was on drawing an interconnection between structure and agency. Using the term "configurations of practice", she explained that "[a]ctions are configured in larger units, and when we speak of masculinity and femininity we are naming configurations of gender practice" (Connell, 2005, p. 72). To avoid assuming a single structure of gender relations, she further suggested it should be broken down into at least a three-fold model: production relations (as in the gender division of labour and the economic consequences thereof), power relations (as in men's domination and women's subordination) and cathexis (as in gendered sexual desires) (Connell, 1987, 2005). In an effort to bridge the two perspectives of structure and agency and call attention to the process of configuring practice, she coined the term *hegemonic masculinity*. She stresses that hegemonic masculinity is "not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships" (Connell, 2005, p. 81). Similarly, within discussions around fatherhood, terms like "involved fatherhood" or "caring fatherhood" are positioned as today's "hegemonic fatherhood". This implies that the notions widely used to represent contemporary fatherhood also need to be considered as a product of configurations of practices, rather than as an abstract and hypothetical social structure.

David Morgan, an influential scholar in family studies, also shed light on practice-oriented perspectives within the concept of family, originally in his book *Family Connections* (1996) and more recently in *Rethinking Family Practices* (2011). In the latter, he provided a more systematic review of what family practices imply, by showing "how 'family' [is] implicated in a whole range of other social institutions and sets of practices" (Morgan, 2011, p. 2), and, in another, by questioning the very use of the term "The Family", which tends to oversimplify

varying configurations within the family and dismiss its fluidity. Indeed, he asserted that "there is no such thing as 'The Family'" (Morgan, 2011, p. 3).

Morgan also addressed the interdependence between discourse and practices, arguing that "a full account of family practices must also include references to these more discursive considerations" (Morgan, 2011, p. 69). However, this does not always imply a match between family practices and discourses. Similarly to the discourse surrounding fatherhood, family discourse is also likely to feature some kind of normativity, which results in gaps between "the families we live by" and "the families we live with" (Gillis, 1997). Nonetheless, considering the discourse part of family practices is still crucial, because "discourses are not produced in a vacuum. Discourses themselves draw upon practices" (Morgan, 2011, p. 69). For example, as Morgan further specified, "the desire to be a 'proper' mother or a 'new' father will enter into these daily practices, even where there may be some degree of distancing from these public identities" (2011, p. 69).

In summary, both Connell's and Morgan's practice-oriented perspectives provide useful insights into the notion of fatherhood practices. Their approaches manifest that gender and family, which are arguably even larger notions than father(hood), comprise sets of configured actions that are complex and fluid rather than singular and fixed. Therefore, to understand contemporary fatherhood as a social phenomenon, it will require research based on an adequate lens that breaks down its configurations of practices, delves into the process thereof, and distinguishes between the fatherhood we live by and the fatherhood we live with.

3.2.4 Fatherhood practices and their intersection with policy context

Thus far, I have presented my views on the relation between fathering and fatherhood practices, as well as the implications of fatherhood practices, drawing on practice theory and gender and family studies. In brief, fatherhood practices indicate individuals' doings, sayings, and reasonings that collectively form, reinforce and/or change a shared set of tacit knowledge of being a father in a certain nexus of time, space, and relation to others. My primary aims for suggesting this definition to research Korean fatherhood are (1) to argue that fatherhood is not a social phenomenon that contemporary fathers singlehandedly create and/or change and (2) to exhibit the necessity of delving into the configurations of practices and their process, as well as discerning the normativity and practicality of fatherhood practices.

The last point (i.e. discrepancies in normative and practical aspects of fatherhood practices) in particular is expected to emerge more vividly when fatherhood practices intersect with policymaking contexts where the de jure entitlement is formed. Of key interest at this intersection is the nature of social policies as being prescriptive about the value of actions. On one hand, some of the policies implicitly or explicitly indicate exemplary aspects of social behaviours of a said group of citizens. Examples of fatherhood policies such as parental leave policies and the 100 Fathers' Group are representative of how policies institutionally promote fathers' behavioural changes that align with the most dominant fatherhood discourse today, such as new, involved, and intimate fatherhood (for a further explanation of these notions, see Chapter 4 in this thesis).

On the other hand, the value promoted by policies includes social rights, which are essential elements of an individual's life in the welfare states, financially and ideationally. The importance of this aspect has also been demonstrated in fatherhood research, which found that fathers tended to feel more entitled to take parental leave when the law earmarked their share in it (e.g. Brandth & Kvande, 2019). The two essences of fatherhood policies are significant in this thesis because they serve as part of a tacit and normative knowledge of being a father that is authorised and most widely shared across the country.

Furthermore, analysing fatherhood practices at the intersection with the policy context for practice is likely to help break down the entwined links of fatherhood practices into feasible units of analysis. As Connell (2005, p. 72) stated, "however we slice the social world, [and] whatever unit of analysis we choose", there will be a multitude of configurations of fatherhood practices to be studied. Therefore, in this thesis, policy contexts for practice focus the research onto specific fields/spaces of fatherhood practices in relation to policies.

Finally, the intersection manifests how individual practices are all interconnected and collectively form Korean fatherhood across time, space and in relation to others. Accordingly, I expect that this intersection will illuminate the limited nature of social policies as *bloc* entitlement. Obviously, it is impossible for policies to consider every possible combination of contexts within which individual fathers' practices are influenced. However, it is important to consider these limitations, particularly to prevent (1) policy advancement that does not reflect the bare realities that individual citizens face in daily life and (2) linear expectations and/or simplified assumptions of policymakers that policies alone are able to change human behaviour.

4 Literature review

4.1 Fatherhood and policymaking: establishing the de jure entitlement

With a widespread call for parents' equal engagement in unpaid as well as paid work, many researchers and scholars across nations have attempted to uncover and explicate societal drives for behavioural changes in men, fathers in particular. Much of the attention has been paid to the effect of social policy. Nordic countries, such as Norway, Iceland, and Sweden, in particular have received global recognition as forerunners in the establishment of an innovative policy enactment which aims to promote gender-equal parenthood, and thereby leading to fathers' increased engagement in childcare. Much research has focused on the father-targeted family leave system: paternity leave and parental leave earmarked for fathers. This is because paternity and/or parental leave is a relatively radical form of government intervention in the private sphere, which is designed to provide fathers with opportunities to engage in both intensive and hands-on childcare.

A strand of research has focused on testing for the long-term effects of fathers' leave-taking on men's active engagement in family work (Almqvist & Duvander, 2014; Bünning, 2015; Haas & Hwang, 2008; Patnaik, 2019; Tanaka and Waldfogel, 2007) and on children's well-being and development (Cools et al., 2015; Huerta et al., 2013). Although the findings of the effects are not as consistent as those pertaining to fathers' increased involvement in childcare, some studies suggest that fathers' leave-taking is also likely to relate to women's labour market outcomes, such as a reduction in the wage gap in Denmark (Andersen, 2018), Sweden (Johansson, 2010) and Quebec (Patnaik, 2019).

Another strand of research has focused on the role of policy design. Policy design is proven to play a key role. Together with other institutional contexts, it tends to shape citizens' preferences as to ways to utilise parental leave policies (Valarino et al., 2018). When it comes to the practicality of the scheme, based on cross-national comparison, Karu and Tremblay (2018) found that fathers take more

parental leave when it is well-compensated for income loss and non-transferable to their female partners. The effectiveness of a high compensation seems to hold true in the Korean case, which had a low take-up of leave and saw a conspicuous increase following raising the level of benefits, particularly for the second leave-taker, during 2014 (Heo, 2021).

Regarding non-transferable leave, its effectiveness for fathers is unproven in Korea, where, unlike the countries mentioned above, one year of paid parental leave has been earmarked for fathers as soon as they gain entitlement to take it. However, several studies conducted in the context of Nordic countries, Germany and, more recently, Quebec in Canada, have confirmed that an addition of the quota scheme on parental leave has a strong impact on the increase of the fathers' take-up. For instance, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Germany saw a significant increase in fathers' take-up of leave after introducing or advancing quotas (Cools et al., 2015; Duvander & Johansson, 2012; Miettinen et al., 2021; Reimer et al., 2021), while Denmark saw an immediate decrease in fathers' take-up after abolishing the quota (Rostgaard & Lausten, 2015). In Quebec, the number of fathers taking parental leave increased by 2.5% after the introduction of the Daddy Quota, and Patnaik (2019) found that the increase was indeed a result of fathers responding to its framing being "daddies only", rather than couples' needs to maximise leave for a more efficient use of resources. Norwegian fathers exhibited similar reactions to the quota scheme. Brandth and Kvande (2019) found that Norwegian fathers tend to view utilising the fathers' quota as a norm, and even feel pressured to make use of it. On the other hand, they tend to have a much lower sense of entitlement with regards to the rest of the leave, considering it rather to be the mother's entitlement.

The inclusiveness of policy design is also a key factor that affects fathers' take-up by, arguably, resulting in different deservingness among fathers in access to leave policies. As Kumlin (2002) argued, the public's attitudes towards welfare state benefits and services are partially shaped by "personal welfare state experience". Thus, policies that are highly inclusive may lead to a collective experience as well as a sentiment that all parents deserve to take parental leave.

According to Dobrotić and Blum (2020)'s analysis, childcare leave-related benefits, such as maternity, paternity, and parental leave, are connected to parents' labour market positions largely across four types: the universal parenthood model, selective parenthood model, universal adult-worker model, and selective adult-worker model. The most inclusive type is the universal parenthood model, which implies all parents have access to parental leave entitlement based on citizenship,

as can be seen in Austria. On the other hand, the most restrictive type is the selective adult-worker model, which applies to countries that have adopted an employment-based principle with more strict eligibility criteria, such as in Belgium. According to Marynissen et al. (2019), the Belgian parental leave system features "laissez-faire leave setup with low flat-rate replacement benefits, limited flexibility, eligibility criteria connected to previous labour force participation, and the lack of specific policy measures to encourage fathers' participation in leave-taking" (p. 2).

Similarly, Korean parental leave would also fall into the selective adult-worker model, because those registered in the employment insurance system are eligible only for parental leave. Hitherto, little research has specifically examined how such exclusive leave policy designs prevent people from viewing parental leave as a right that can be taken for granted. However, given that policy inclusiveness may shape citizens' attitudes towards welfare policy preferences (Svallfors, 2012), the exclusive designs are likely to undermine the collective agreement that all parents, including fathers, are entitled to take well-compensated parental leave for childcare. The impact of exclusive policy design on fathers is partly explored in Paper I of this thesis, which shows that Korean parents outside the system have a sense of deprivation because they remain excluded from the benefits from the outset.

What has often been overlooked in previous studies is an external influence in political decisions for policy design and explanations addressing these underlying contexts over the long haul. Only recently, a handful of research, acknowledging the spread of similar fathers' quota schemes to other countries outside Scandinavia, has begun to look into different policymaking contexts of the trend. For instance, Windwehr et al. (2022) investigated different driving forces and processes of the introduction of the fathers' quota in Germany, Japan, and Slovenia. They found that, for Germany and Japan, low birth rates were a common driving force for the introduction of fathers' quotas, but the prevalence of traditional gender roles served as a constraining factor. This result strongly resonates with that of Paper I. However, it differs in that its focus was more on distinguishing different types of policy transfer among these countries. Further analysis covering the entire process of the policy development within a nation will likely reveal deeper contexts which may have driven different feasibilities of fatherhood policies across nations beyond policy design itself.

In conclusion, a successful implementation of fatherhood policies depends not only upon the generosity of the policy benefits, but also on how society generally

values gender-equal caregiving at home and in the labour market. This thesis will thus extend the focus of analysis to external as well as internal influences affecting policymaking decisions surrounding fatherhood policies. The findings are expected to provide evidence which reveals the limited nature of the de jure entitlement of Korean fatherhood policies and the wider sociocultural contexts accounting for fathers' low take-up of parental leave.

4.2 Fatherhood and practice: sprouting gaps between the de jure and de facto entitlements of fatherhood

So, where, why, and how did fathers' de jure entitlement get decoupled from the de facto entitlement? This can be investigated from a myriad of purviews, but in this section I will lay out previous discussions with a specific focus on fathers' daily practices at the intersections of identity, relation and work. In other words, this section does not discuss the de facto entitlement itself, but the conditions and contexts that are likely to affect the discrepancies between de jure and de facto entitlements.

4.2.1 Indentity

Fatherhood practices are initially related to how men identify their roles as fathers and how they practise this identity in daily life. As explained earlier, contemporary Korean fathers identify a good father as one who is emotionally supportive and close like a friend, and, successfully or not, they aspire to become such a father (Kim & Yang, 2014). These archetypes of contemporary fatherhood—nurturing, affectionate, affable, and friend-like fathers—are often encapsulated in terms such as "new fatherhood" (Lupton & Barclay, 1997), "involved fatherhood" (Pleck, 1997) or "intimate fatherhood" (Dermott, 2008).

Lupton and Barclay (1997, p. 1) explain that "new" fathers are modern men who "express their nurturing feelings" as opposed to older generations, and "take an equal role in parenting with their female partners". The concept of involved fatherhood captures an even greater level of activeness and alertness in fathering. For instance, Pleck (1997), drawing on Lamb's (1987) work, described three components of positively involved fatherhood: high engagement,

accessibility/availability, and responsibility. Finally, intimate fatherhood, a concept suggested by Dermott (2008), inspired by Giddens' (1992) idea of intimacy, sheds greater light on the emotional aspects of postmodern fatherhood, such as "emotions, the expression of affection, and the exclusivity of the reciprocal father-child dyad" (p. 143).

Despite subtle differences in their interpretation, these concepts seem to regard essential components of contemporary fatherhood identities as being liberated from gendered boundaries in childcare responsibilities, responsiveness to children's emotional needs and building intimate relationships by being present and involved in fatherhood. In this sense, paternal qualities pursued by contemporary fatherhood are far from being distanced, uninvolved, authoritarian, and irresponsible.

However, these caring qualities are quite new to today's Korean fathers, since their own fathers were often away at work and/or strict and emotionally distant. Some studies have found that young Korean fathers are thus developing their paternal identity through books, TV dramas, fathering entertainment programmes, and online (Jeoung & Bae, 2022; Kim & Kim, 2020). Nevertheless, many Korean fathers report that this journey has been rife with struggles, as the expectation that they need to be a competent provider still remains, and they spend most of the time away from the house working.

As confirmed by a number of studies conducted internationally, Korean fathers' level of involvement in childcare is also arguably connected with their socioeconomic status. In the Korean literature on fatherhood, debates based on the concept of class itself are rare. However, some studies have suggested that low-income and/or less-educated fathers tend to participate less actively in childcare compared to other groups of fathers (Ko & Kim, 2016; Kim & Ko, 2014; Lee et al., 2016). Fathers' take-up of parental leave often serves as a proxy for fathers' involvement. However, this field of research in Korea is profoundly underdeveloped; few studies have confirmed the relationship between fathers' socioeconomic status and their take-up of paid leave. A recent report from the National Assembly Research Service (NARS) found that more fathers from higher-income groups (earning over KRW 2.1 million [USD 1,743] per month) take parental leave, while fewer fathers from lower-income groups do so (Heo, 2021). Overall, fathers with lower incomes and those who are less-educated tend to show a lower involvement in childcare, a tendency which was also indicated in the results of studies conducted among Swedish fathers (Sundström & Duvander, 2002).

At the centre of contemporary fatherhood identities also lies the endorsement of caring masculinities (Scheibling, 2020), a notion which represents a masculinity that distances itself from the values of traditional manhood such as domination and aggression and embraces the values of care and emotions (Elliott, 2016). Previously, Lupton and Barclay (1997) identified that, even in the masculinity-oriented discussions that lasted into the late 1990s, the concepts of father or fatherhood were largely ignored, and were instead often discussed in the context of the breadwinner rather than a carer, such as in Connell's *Gender and Power* (1987) and *Masculinities* (1995) and Morgan's *Discovering Men* (1992). In recent years, more studies have integrated discussions of masculinities with that of fatherhood, often applying the notion of caring masculinities (Hunter et al., 2017; Scheibling, 2020).

However, developing caring masculinities within fathers does not mean displacing their traditional or hegemonic masculinities (Doucet, 2006; Miller, 2011). Several studies shed light on how men frame their care activities as a masculine act or "masculine care" (Brandth & Kvande, 1998). For instance, fathers differentiated and gave higher status to their care-work in comparison to mothers (Brandth & Kvande, 1998), interpreted caregiving as "hard work" (Brandth & Kvande, 2018) and identified a lack of knowledge about caregiving as "unmasculine" (Beglaubter, 2021). These findings are interesting because they suggest a counter-intuitive relation between masculinities and involved fatherhood, which was found by earlier research suggesting that masculine men are less likely to engage in childcare (e.g. Petts et al., 2018). These findings thus provoke a subsequent question: how do these hybrid identities serve to encourage fathers to get involved in hands-on childcare?

Beyond their impact on individuals, masculinities often serve to create group norms. However, how these hybrid masculinities work within fathers' groups has yet to be sufficiently discussed. Hanlon (2012, p. 90), studying 31 men about how they define masculinity in connection with care, argued that "competitive and hierarchical relations [of dominant masculinities defined by the men] remove caring from men's lives". However, Hanlon's conclusion does not explain the persistence and ever-growing popularity of fathers' communities in Korea. These communities are full of men, but they gather with the purpose of sharing their concerns, knowledge, and interests in childrearing. Thus, further research on fathers' communities will not only provide insights into how the hybrid masculinities serve to encourage fathers' engagement in childcare, but also manifest the status quo of contemporary involved fatherhood.

4.2.2 Relation

Fatherhood practices deeply relate to gender relations that are shaped by predominant gender norms and relational ethics in a given society. Much evidence has indicated that the availability of fatherhood policies per se does not necessarily create or increase fathers' volition to take on full-time childcare responsibilities. For instance, previous research exploring why fathers do not take parental leave has sought an explanation from tracing gender ideology (Almqvist, 2008; Kaufman & Almqvist, 2017; Streckenback et al., 2022; Paper II). These discussions address norms and attitudes that shape fathers' or couples' decision-making on shared parental leave, patterns of division of labour and childcare responsibilities, etc.

Several studies have particularly focused on the association between fathers' take-up of paternity and/or parental leave and their and/or their partners' traditional and/or egalitarian attitudes (Cannito, 2020; Duvander, 2014; Streckenback et al., 2022). These studies found that the less traditional or essentialist attitudes men and/or their female partner have, the more likely the men are to take parental leave. Beyond the paid leave context, many studies have also found that fathers with egalitarian attitudes are more likely to be involved in childcare in general (Evertsson, 2014).

Despite the significance of gender ideologies, the availability of fatherhood policies has been proven to be effectual because it opens a window of possibility for fathers to make use of the support when necessary. For instance, most of the Korean studies conducted on fathers' experiences of taking parental leave note that the main drive behind fathers' decisions on leave-taking was that they were left in "circumstances with no other options" (e.g. Hong & Lee, 2014; Kim, 2015). While hesitating to send young children to childcare service centres, the circumstances included having a sick wife (physically or mentally), the end of their wife's paid leave, their wife's desire to work, no support available from grandparents or other relatives, and so forth. Notably, these results highlight the fact that Korean fathers would not have taken parental leave had the situation been different. The kernel of these situations is the existence of an alternative caregiver, which means that a father's childcare responsibilities are "outsourced" to female family members, mainly partners and occasionally grandmothers.

Recent studies have considered how negotiations take place between a couple regarding shared parental leave (O'Brien & Twamley, 2017; Schmidt et al., 2015; Twamley, 2021). The findings commonly manifest female partners' careful or

passive positions in the decision-making process. For instance, in Twamley's (2021) UK-based study, although higher income was often considered a key factor in men's lower take-up of parental leave, when the female partner earned more than her male partner the material resources were not central to the discussion. Rather, the female partner deemed her partner taking leave as a "bonus" for herself and her family. Such heteronormative attitudes among women were also found in Paper II of this thesis, as women tended to take more parental leave, thought of quitting their jobs and actively opposed their husbands' suggestions to take parental leave instead of them. Such results in turn call attention to the fact that, to increase fathers' take-up of paternity and parental leave, it is important for women as well as men to embrace egalitarian attitudes (e.g. Cannito, 2020) and hold expectation for shared parental leave from the start (e.g. Almqvist & Duvander, 2014).

Furthermore, fathers negotiate not only with their partners but also with their own mothers and mothers-in-law (see Paper II). Relatively little research has addressed the impact of grandparenting on fathers' involvement in childcare. However, its impact on Korean fatherhood is arguably considerable. Grandparents, usually mothers/mothers-in-law, seem to influence fatherhood practices largely in two ways: disapproval and/or take-over. Jeoung and Bae (2022), for instance, showed a take-over case in which the wife took parental leave without additional help, whereas, when her husband took parental leave, his mother visited their home every day and helped him with housework as well as childcare. The disapproval as well as take-over elements also manifest in Paper II of this thesis among cases where grandmothers overruled fathers' decisions to take parental leave and instead volunteered to babysit their grandchildren.

In conclusion, while numerous studies have explored the role of gender ideology in fatherhood practices, still little is known about how gender ideology and gender norms influence the behaviours of Korean fathers. This is particularly pertinent as unique or additional gender norms may present themselves in this cultural context, compared to the Western context, such as the role of the grandparents. This thesis therefore contributes to, and broadens the scope of, the ongoing discussion of gender relations and fatherhood practices by including interpersonal relationships and embracing the legacy of East Asian philosophical principles and Confucian relational ethics.

4.2.3 Work

Finally, fatherhood practices are significantly shaped by prevailing work practices and norms surrounding both parents. A great many studies from various countries have explored the impact of work conditions, organisations, and ideal worker norms on fathers' work-life balance, involvement in childcare, and take-up of paternity and parental leave policies. Varied and extensive discussions are ongoing in this field. I will focus mainly on recent findings in relation to the impact of structural and normative conditions of work organisations on involved fatherhood, including the use of parental leave policies and fathers' behaviours within these contexts.

Differing practical characteristics of work conditions and organisations have been proven to influence the likelihood of fathers' take-up of childcare leave policies. While, as discussed earlier, relevant research from the Korean context is limited to company size and industry, a number of international studies address the impact of multiple characteristics on fathers' take-up of childcare leave, including public/private sector, types of work, job security, gender ratio of employees, etc. For instance, fathers in Sweden are more likely to take parental leave when they have white-collar, rather than blue-collar, jobs (Haas & Hwang, 2009); in Germany when they have a permanent, rather than a temporary, working contract (Geisler & Kreyenfeld, 2011); in Sweden when they work in the public, rather than the private, sector (Bygren & Duvander, 2006); and in Finland when they work in female-dominated, rather than male-dominated, workplaces (Lammi-Taskula, 2007).

More implicitly, ideal worker norms have permeated into everyday working life and affect fatherhood practices (Holter, 2007). Paper III of this thesis reviews the relevant literature of two prevalent normativities in the workplace: "job first" and "minimising disruption". These two principles represent the minds of ideal workers. Those who internalise the legitimacy of these principles are likely to take very short leave (Romero-Balsas et al., 2013). Those who run against these principles are likely to be considered less committed, or feminine (Rudman & Mescher, 2013). It is therefore commonplace for men to be afraid of repercussions from taking any parental leave at all or for "too long" (Fox et al., 2009).

More recently, some studies have attempted to classify different fathers' behaviours that align or go against such norms and expectations. According to Tanquerel and Grau-Grau (2020), fathers' behaviours at work can be classified into three groups: conformers, borderers and deviants of the hegemonic gender

order. Conformers are work- and career-oriented fathers who rarely discuss their families at work and embrace traditional ideal worker norms. This group of fathers is likely to perpetuate an environment where employees believe that taking time off is not permitted, regardless of the employer's views (see also Kvande, 2005; Lammi-Taskula, 2007). At the other extreme, deviants are fathers who explicitly value childcare and confront ideal worker codes, for instance by cancelling a meeting at the last minute to care for a sick child or finishing work early to spend time with their children.

Arguably the fastest-growing group in Korea is the borderers. They generally hold family-centred and egalitarian attitudes, but do not openly express disconformity from the traditional norms. Rather, they dissimulate it and/or prefer to solve family problems after work (Tanquerel & Grau-Grau, 2020). Therefore, while viewing care responsibilities as important, the way borderers practise fatherhood is often compromised and invisible. For instance, Jeoung and Bae (2022) found that a Korean father working in an SME as a blue-collar worker took parental leave on the employer's condition that the worker resign after taking the leave. This negotiation is, obviously, illegal in Korea, but it takes place particularly for those working in SMEs (see also Kim & Kwon, 2015). What is worth noting is that this employer's trick is framed as "helping" working fathers to take parental leave.

One may argue that such ideal worker norms affect not only fatherhood but also motherhood or parenthood in general. However, as Holter (2007, p. 441) argued, "Gender has appeared as an organizational issue but only as far as women are concerned". Men still tend to come second to women when it comes to family or childcare policies; indeed, many negotiations and compromises take place among working fathers. Tanquerel and Grau-Grau (2020) criticise the borderers for being complicit in maintaining the status quo of the traditional ideal worker norm. However, as Atkinson (2022, p. 847) argues, fathers in the borders between conformers, and deviants "have the potential to step out of the organizational shadows, if only they felt more confident to pursue visible strategies".

In order to unlock the potential of parental leave policies, it is important to consider what practices at work will help fathers feel entitled to make use of childcare leave policies in the first place. As discussed in Paper III of this thesis, such considerations include not only the required environments but also a deeper understanding about oft-unseen drives behind fathers' decisions—whether the decision was made based on a zero or a compromised or resigned sense of entitlement.

In conclusion, previous research has provided useful insights into how organisation-related conditions, environments and norms constitute pieces of a puzzle of fathers' different behaviours at work in response to their care responsibilities. This thesis adds to these discussions by seeking empirical evidence for further inquiries, such as how these organisational norms and practices can encourage and discourage fathers' sense of entitlement to take time off for their children from the outset, and how much of an influence these factors can have on fathers even beyond the national policy structure.

5 Methodology

This dissertation includes four empirical studies, which all adopt a qualitative methodology based on the analysis of in-depth semi-structured interviews and/or official documents. In this chapter, I begin by explaining my positionality within this research and the rationale behind choosing a qualitative methodology. This is followed by an overview of the empirical data, the details of sampling strategies and units of analysis across the four research papers, and a chronology of the research process, which includes stories omitted from each research paper due to academic formality and word-count limits. Lastly, I share my reflections on the limitations and contributions of the empirical data, followed by an ethical consideration.

5.1 Researcher's positionality and research methodology

In my view, ongoing discussions to capture and define the transition of fatherhood practices and their relations with social bases primarily concern themselves with the continuous process of fatherhood construction. This view was highly influenced by social constructivist perspectives in that the knowledge and understanding of the realities we hold are socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Such social constructivist views have greatly influenced fatherhood research. Earlier scholars have emphasised that "fatherhood is an ongoing project of action that involves the creation and reformulation of roles through observation, communication, and negotiation" in connection with others (Daly, 1995, p. 38). They shed light on how fatherhood is shaped in relation to masculinities (White, 1994), role models (Daly, 1995), mothers (Brandth & Kvande, 1998), public discourse (Gregory & Milner, 2011), and so on. My research positionally resonates with that of these scholars, and my empirical

findings are expected to contribute to producing knowledge that supports a way of understanding fatherhood phenomena in Korea.

Throughout conducting four empirical studies, I coherently adopted a qualitative research methodology. The decision was made in consideration of my overall research interest, which was to construe how Korean fatherhood has been shaped by policy development and adjacent sociocultural contexts surrounding fathers themselves and their families. For that purpose, it was essential to explore not only how fatherhood policies have been developed over time, but also how individual fathers (and their partners) perceive their experiences regarding fathering and fatherhood in daily life. A qualitative research method was accordingly most suitable to apply for this dissertation largely for two aspects. First, a key object of conducting qualitative research lies in capturing nuanced and in-depth perspectives of a study's participants and exploring relevant meanings attached to and/or occurring in their everyday lives (Yin, 2016). Second, qualitative research provides an explanation of a phenomenon embracing its relevant "contextual conditions—that is, the social, institutional, cultural, and environmental conditions—within which people's lives take place" (Yin, 2016, p. 9). This context-inclusive approach is one of the strengths that qualitative research possesses to understand everyday life, compared to others such as experiments and survey research where those contexts are often "controlled-out" when conducting analysis (Yin, 2016).

5.2 Research methods and data

This dissertation utilised two types of primary and secondary data: interviews and public documents. The empirical data contains four different sets of interviews and official documents from various sources, such as newspaper articles, Bills, parliamentary meeting minutes, etc. Table 5.1 displays an overview of the empirical data and methods, followed by detailed descriptions of the sampling strategies adopted in each set of data.

Table 5.1
Overview of the empirical data

<table>
<tr><th>Method</th><th colspan="2">Data information</th><th>Paper No.</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Interviewing</td><td>Policy actors</td><td>- Professor, a policy advisor for the government
- Researcher, a policy advisor for the government
- Policy administrator at the national level
- Policy executor at the municipal level</td><td>I</td></tr>
<tr><td>Individual fathers and their female partners</td><td>Two groups of Korean dual-income couples:
- Eight couples where the husband took parental leave
- Seven couples where the husband did not take parental leave</td><td>II</td></tr>
<tr><td>Individual fathers</td><td>Two groups of Korean fathers working in Sweden:
- Nine fathers from Swedish companies
- Seven from Korean-owned companies with branches in Sweden</td><td>III</td></tr>
<tr><td>Individual fathers and policy administrators</td><td>- 16 Korean fathers with experiences of acting as a mentor and/or mentee in the 100 Fathers' Group, which is a self-help community organised by the Korean government
- Two policy administrators in central government and municipal government</td><td>IV</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="8">Document analysis</td><td>Parliamentary meeting minutes</td><td>- The General Assembly plenary (Feb 20, 1990 – May 13, 2021)
- The Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy (Aug 19, 2005–Feb 9, 2017)
- Special Committee on Budget & Accounts (June 18, 1990 – Nov 2, 2020)
- Gender Equality and Family Committee (June 25, 1994 – Mar 18, 2021)
- Environment & Labor Committee (Sep 14, 1992 – May 6, 2021)
- Health & Welfare Committee (Sep 14, 1992 – Apr 26, 2021)</td><td>I</td></tr>
<tr><td>Newspapers</td><td>1,077 newspaper articles searched with the keywords "parental leave AND (father OR men OR quota)" from 19 metropolitan newspapers (Jan 1, 1990–Apr 24, 2020)</td><td>I</td></tr>
<tr><td>Bills</td><td>Act on Equal Employment and Support for Work-Family Balance Bills: No. 5223 (2006), 10550 (2011), 1324 (2012)</td><td>I</td></tr>
<tr><td>Acts</td><td>Sexual Equality Employment Act 1995, 2006; Employment Insurance Act 2001; Enforcement Decree of the Employment Insurance Act 2001, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020; Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2019, 2020</td><td>I</td></tr>
<tr><td>Master Plans</td><td>Three Master Plans for the Framework Acts on Low Birth Rate in an Aging Society (2006–2020)</td><td>I</td></tr>
<tr><td>State-commissioned report</td><td>Parental leave systems around the world and suggestions for the improvement of the Korean system (published by Korean Women's Development Institute in 1993)</td><td>I</td></tr>
<tr><td>Press kits</td><td>Press release by the Ministry of Health and Welfare regarding the 100 Fathers' Group from 2011 to 2021</td><td>IV</td></tr>
<tr><td>Posters</td><td>Recruitment posters of the 100 Fathers' Group from 2012 to 2021</td><td>IV</td></tr>
</table>

5.2.1 Document analysis

Document analysis is the primary research method in Paper I, a study that examined the development of Korean parental leave policies for the past three decades. Prior (2016) notes that the contents of document data in social research can be used as a "topic" that demonstrates how the "content comes into being" or as a "resource" that draws attention to "what is 'in' the documents" (pp. 171–172). In this dissertation, documents were used as a resource to access, as May (2001, p. 176) puts it, "the sedimentations of social practices", particularly in relation to policy changes and reform narratives that emerged therein. As seen in Table 5.1, the types of materials used in this study vary from newspaper articles to parliamentary meeting minutes. Throughout my research, my overall research interests lay in teasing out the developmental process of parental leave policies and the underlying motives and consequent challenges within the process. A more detailed description of how these documents were used in Paper I and the accompanying challenges will be presented in the section on the research process.

5.2.2 Interviewing

Interviewing is the central research method in Papers Ⅱ, Ⅲ and Ⅳ, and a supplementary method to document analysis in Paper I. Interviews allow researchers to gain access to personal accounts which serve as a window to the feelings, perceptions, and experiences of the interviewees, which veil the nature of past and/or present social life and settings (Weiss, 1994). In social policy research, interviews also provide useful data for researchers to better understand the process of making, implementing, and practising a policy through "unwritten eyewitness accounts" of policy actors (Coffey, 2004, p. 120). Interviewing was, therefore, the most suitable research method for this dissertation as the crux of my research object centred around understanding two aspects: the institutional contexts of the development of Korean parental leave policy and the sociocultural contexts that shape Korean fathers' perceptions and experiences of taking time off for children and developing fathering skills.

With this research interest, I conducted semi-structured interviews with Korean couples living in Korea (Paper II), Korean fathers living in Sweden (Paper III), Korean fathers living in Korea (Paper IV) and policy actors, including policy advisors, policy executors and policy administrators at the level of both central and municipal government (Papers I and IV).

In interviewing policy actors for Paper I, I paid specific attention to the discussions, arguments, and conflicts among policy stakeholders around parental leave reforms that had not been clearly delineated in official documents such as Bills, Acts, Master Plans, etc. I created the interview questions accordingly, asking, for instance: "How did overcoming low fertility rates grow to take precedence over advancing gender equality within parental leave reforms?"; "Which countries provided modelled ideal parental leave policies?"; "How did companies react to measures implemented to promote family-friendly cultures in work organisations?"

Similarly, in interviewing policy actors for Paper IV, I sought to understand the detailed internal logistics of the 100 Fathers' Group programme, which were not described in the official press kit and posters. Accordingly, interview questions centred on decision-making processes among policy administrators and participating fathers, the roles of policy administrators both within central and municipal governments and the programme itself, the challenges associated with running the programme, the programme's key values and aims, etc.

When it came to interviewing individual fathers, although the specific interview questions were all at odds with one another by empirical research, my underlying interest has always been interviewees' motives for their decisions and behaviours regarding the use of father-targeted policies and programmes. Of particular interest to me is the relationship between these motives and the sociocultural contexts that shape their assumptions and perceptions about the fatherhood policy. Understanding individual fathers' motives and the context of their decisions regarding policy (dis)use expressed through their accounts was critical because I believe that that reveals the nature of strengths and/or weaknesses at the crossroads of policymaking and its practice in everyday life. The central topics of interviews and examples of specific interview questions used within each paper are detailed in Figure 5.1 (see Appendix for the complete interview guides).

Relational Ethics (Paper II)	Workplace Norms (Paper III)	Caring Masculinities & Codes of Good Fathering (Paper IV)
• Policy use experiences: parental leave • Examples of interview questions: - "Did you discuss whether to take parental leave with family members or colleagues?" - "What made you reluctant to take parental leave at that time?"	• Policy use experiences: paternity leave, parental leave, leave for care of a sick child • Examples of interview questions: - "Can you walk me through a time that you had to tell your manager that you needed to take time off?" - "Did your way of working and workload change when working in Sweden, compared to Korea?"	• Fathering programme use experiences: the "100 Fathers' Group" • Examples of interview questions: - "How do you define a good father? What have you done or seek to do to become one? - "What separates 'novice' fathers from 'master' fathers? - "How does this fathering group inspire you?

Figure 5.1 Interview topics and examples of questions for Papers II to IV.

5.2.3 Sampling strategies

Sampling approaches are perhaps the primary aspect distinguishing qualitative from quantitative methods. While quantitative research rests mainly on basing data on larger, randomly selected samples and has the objective of generalising results through statistical representation, qualitative research mostly employs smaller and purposefully selected samples with rich information for in-depth understanding of relevant issues (Yin, 2015, pp. 93–95; Patton, 2015, p. 401). In line with the large, existing body of qualitative work in this field, this dissertation also applied purposeful sampling strategies in order to seek information-rich contexts regarding different facets of Korean fatherhood.

There are different ways to categorise sampling strategies (see Yin, 2015, p. 53) but, when it comes to purposeful sampling, Patton (2015)'s eight categories provide a comprehensive overview of purposeful sampling. To apply Patton's categories in the four empirical studies undertaken, my sampling approaches fall under three different strategies: mixed, stratified, and nested sampling (Paper I), comparison-focused sampling (Papers II & III) and group characteristics sampling (Paper IV). Table 5.2 provides a brief explanation of each strategy's features. Evidently, the boundaries between these categories are not always clear-cut or mutually exclusive, but Patton's categories help in understanding the motives for my data collection strategies.

Table 5.2
Adopted sampling strategies by paper.

Catetory	Feature
Mixed, stratified and nested sampling	This sampling strategy is used when a study embraces multiple inquiry interests and applies triangulation. It includes two sub-options: combined/stratified purposeful sampling and mixed probability and purposeful sampling.
Comparison-focused sampling	This sampling strategy is used for comparison-focused research. Cases are selected to show similarities and differences in factors of interest. It includes six sub-options, such as selecting outliers, criterion-based cases and continuum or dosage-based cases, information-rich but not extreme cases, etc.
Group characteristics sampling	This sampling strategy is used when the research focus concentrates on group patterns by choosing a specific information-rich group. It includes eight sub-options, such as selecting heterogeneity- or homogeneity-focused cases, typical cases, complete target population, key informants, etc.

Source: This table is based on Patton (2015, pp. 404–410).

For Paper I, which is based on document analysis of parental leave policies and interviews with key policy actors, I used purposeful sampling strategies both for collecting documents and interviews. For the document analysis, as shown in Table 5.1, I used 328 parliamentary meeting minutes as a primary unit of analysis and 1,077 newspaper articles, Bills, Acts, Master Plans, and state- commissioned reports as a supplementary unit of analysis. In the process of data collection, I utilised a concept-based sampling strategy with policy names such as "parental leave" and "fathers' quota" to filter newspapers and meeting minutes. Additionally, I utilised an emergence-driven sampling strategy to find the complementary documents and interviews, which served as secondary but essential data that was informed by relevant policy facts, events and arguments that emerged while analysing meeting minutes but lacked in terms of details and/or motives behind them. Each type of document represents a different scope and level of information; each of the four policy actors interviewed had been involved in a different stage of policymaking or practice process. The various sources used altogether with mixed sampling strategies have contributed as a whole to develop, in Yin (2015, p. 87)'s term, "converging lines of inquiry" in Paper I.

Papers II and III drew on interview data from 15 couples (30 interviewees in total) and 16 individual fathers. Both employed comparison-based sampling with an opposite interest. While Paper II focused primarily on similarities between two groups of couples, Paper III concentrated more on the differences between two groups of individual fathers. As seen in Table 5.1, Paper II selected Korean dual-income couples; eight husbands of the couples had taken parental leave and the

other seven husbands did not or could not. Some might argue that sampling only the latter couples would suffice, but I included both cases as a unit of analysis since the interest of the study was to discover how relational ethics instilled into families and workplaces had influenced the fathers' final decision on taking parental leave. Both cases, revealing common experiences across the divergent decisions of the couples, served as stronger evidence of the prevailing impact of Confucian relational ethics.

Paper III, on the other hand, primarily shed light on differences in individual Korean fathers' experiences and perceptions surrounding taking time off for childcare and the influence of workplace norms. Unlike other empirical studies in this dissertation, the research setting for Paper III is Sweden. This research setting was purposely chosen given that Sweden is known as a forerunner in promoting gender-neutral childcare leave policies (Leira, 2006). Choosing an environment that had already established advanced policy conditions yielded *a critical case* (Patton, 2015) in that it manifested the influence of workplace norms on fathers' sense of entitlement beyond policies. In alignment with this purpose, I collected nine fathers from multinational Swedish companies in Sweden and seven from multinational Korean companies with branches in Sweden. Since all the Korean companies in Sweden belonged to electronics- or mobile phone-related industries, I purposely selected Swedish companies to match the industries of the Korean ones. When it came to selecting companies within the industry, I used a maximum variation sampling by recruiting employed fathers at various companies in order to identify common patterns within a group across different workplaces. I do not define this research as a comparative study, but such comparison-based sampling strategies provided information-rich contexts to illuminate the influence of workplace norms on fathers' sense of entitlement towards childcare leave policies.

For Paper IV, which focused on fathering ideals and fathering practices among Korean fathers, I utilised a group-characteristics sampling strategy by collecting interview data from two policy administrators and 16 participants within a specific programme, the 100 Fathers' Group. This community consists of two groups: experienced fathers who act as mentors and novice fathers of children aged 2–6 who are the mentees and joined the programme voluntarily to hone their fathering skills. Although the participants had differing sociodemographic characteristics, the mentee group provided *a typical case* in that it displayed common struggles and aspirations among contemporary middle-class Korean fathers in practising their fathering ideals in daily lives. The mentor group as well

as the policy administrators served as *key informants* who are defined by Patton (2015, p. 430) as those "who are especially knowledgeable about a topic and are willing to share their knowledge". Some of the mentors, in particular, had also been active in other fathers' communities for several years. They provided rich information regarding what Korean fathers struggle with and aspire towards today.

5.3 Research process

The data collection of this dissertation was not carried out in the same order that data is presented, with the data collection process starting with Paper II, before proceeding to Paper III, Paper Ⅰ, and then Paper Ⅳ in turn. This section summarises the research process in chronological order, starting with Paper II. The level of detail afforded to descriptions of research findings and data analysis differs between papers, according to those findings' impacts on subsequent papers in the study.

The interview data used in **Paper II** was collected in 2013, as part of my master's thesis. In 2013, fathers comprised only 3.3% of parental benefit beneficiaries (2,293 fathers) (see Figure 2.7). Since it was more common for fathers to take parental leave for non-childcare issues such as study or job-hunting, it was very hard to find the fathers who took parental leave solely for the purpose of childcare. The fathers on leave for childcare were considered rare and heroes to the extent that their stories would be told in the main newspapers. Such "genuine" cases were found mainly among public servants and employees in large companies, particularly those located in metropolitan areas. Through snowball sampling, online recruitment posts, and contacting newspaper journalists, I recruited 15 heterosexual couples (30 respondents in total) working in Seoul and the surrounding areas in various occupations and positions. As noted above, the interviewees consist of two groups: eight couples where the husband took parental leave and seven couples where the husband did not.

These interviews were initially conducted to ascertain whether men's experiences of taking parental leave influenced their perceptions of gender roles. During the interview process, however, common patterns emerged beyond this initial focus: interviewees' relational ethics, which are deeply interconnected with pre-existing gendered parenting roles, often functioned as deterrents against fathers taking

parental leave. Regardless of whether or not these fathers did take parental leave, all couples interviewed discussed their concerns around the extent to which rejecting relational ethics would impact their relationships with extended family, especially their parents, and their reputations with colleagues and bosses. Some wives chose to sacrifice their careers to minimise any interruption to their husbands' careers. Equally, some husbands reversed their decisions to take parental leave after their mothers or mothers-in-law volunteered to babysit their grandchildren and voiced strong opposition to their decisions to take parental leave. Workplaces considered it more natural for women to take parental leave, which led men who chose to take parental leave to apologise and excuse their behaviour to co-workers and supervisors. Those men who did take parental leave often carried a sense of guilt with them throughout this entire period, due to social preconceptions that their decision was selfish.

The relational ethics that influenced the decisions of interviewees are products of traditional Confucian tenets, despite scholars having more recently argued that these are dwindling in their influence on contemporary East Asian nations (e.g. Rozman, 2002). Some fathers even explicitly stated that Korea is still a Confucian society, when elaborating on their internal conflict. For those seven couples in which the husband did not take parental leave, a reluctance to renege on these Confucian relational ethics won out, especially in their considerations of workplace response to their decision. Put simply, for these couples, the influence of these ethics overruled their legal entitlement to such leave.

Equally, multiple fathers in these interviews drew comparisons with European nations, such as Denmark and Sweden, suggesting that taking parental leave would be much easier if they lived in those countries. Indeed, around 2013 when the interviews were conducted, the term "Latte Pappa", which conjured up images of Swedish fathers taking leisurely walks on parental leave, coffee in one hand and a stroller in the other, began to grow in visibility in Korean media. Irrespective of the extent to which this aspirational depiction of Swedish fathers influenced interviewees, they undoubtedly shared the opinion that fathers would feel more empowered to take parental leave in more father-friendly environments which encompassed advanced parental leave policies and more family-centred mindsets.

This overall resignation—as opposed to resentment—and the broadly held assumption that parental leave was more feasible in Nordic countries prompted a secondary set of questions: "To what extent does social conditioning overpower legislative rights with regards to fathers' desires to engage in hands-on childcare?" and "What institutional and cultural foundations must be introduced to make

Korean fathers feel more entitled to their right to take time off to support their children?" In particular, I was keen to further investigate the impact of workplace norms on fathers, given that they seemed to engender in fathers a strong sense of guilt about exercising their legitimate entitlement. The workplace seemed to function as the last and most problematic stage in the process of actualising parental rights among fathers. I committed to delving into the sorts of institutional and social conditioning that would actually empower fathers to take time off more freely for the sake of their children.

Such interests, combined with the above set of questions, led me to the second study (**Paper III**) in this dissertation, which deals with the influence of workplace norms on Korean fathers' sense of entitlement to take time off. This study was conducted in Sweden. Of course, such a research setting was not the only one considered feasible from the beginning. When initiating a pilot study in 2017, I also interviewed Korean fathers working in Korea for Korean companies and Swedish-owned companies, which were all large companies within the food-packaging and electronics industries. Swedish companies in Korea were expected to follow the rules as dictated by their headquarters in Sweden and attempt to adapt the Korean organisational culture to a more horizontal and egalitarian work environment. However, it turned out that the Korean work culture, which is excessively work-oriented, was still so strong that I could not identify notable differences in Korean employee practices in the Swedish-owned companies regarding time off. The following interview excerpt with a branch manager at a Swedish-owned company in Korea epitomises this phenomenon:

> Interviewee: Our company is quite Swedish-ised. Employees feel free to use their vacation.
>
> Interviewer: Oh, I see. Then did you also take a vacation this year?
>
> Interviewee: Well... as a matter of fact, I have not used any of my leave since last year. I have work to do.

The setting of this research in Korea may potentially breed an interesting study that examines the influence of work norms in fathers' rights to taking time off. However, this case had a limit in that it did not reveal the facilitating elements of generating a more optimal father-friendly environment, but only listed barriers that did not differ from the first study (Paper II). Accordingly, for the next study, I committed to focusing on studying Korean fathers' experiences in Sweden, a

society that has been considered a forerunner in promoting fathers' take-up of parental leave (Leira, 2006; Ma et al., 2020).

At the very early stages of collecting pilot data for Paper III, I visited five Korean companies in Sweden. Since I had no personal connections to employees of Korean companies in Sweden, I had to wait on site until I identified any Korean workers. At some companies, I was able to access and talk to Korean workers, while at others I received email addresses from the receptionist or HR manager through which to contact their Korean employees. In order to approach a greater variety of Koreans working in Sweden during the middle and final stages of the pilot study, I contacted the Korean embassy in Sweden, Business Sweden, KOTRA (Korean Trade-Investment Promotion Agency) in Sweden, The Korean-Swedish Association and assorted acquaintances to inquire if they had any relationships in Sweden. I also posted a help-wanted advertisement on websites frequented by Koreans interested in living in Sweden.

Throughout the pilot study, I was able to make contact with multiple Korean employees including not just fathers but also unmarried male and female workers as well as working mothers from both Swedish and Korean companies located in Sweden. Since I had little comprehension of Swedish corporate culture, the pilot study was undertaken with a focus on understanding how the formal and informal systems played a role in shaping an individual's working life and any prevailing attitudes so that I could comprehend the appropriateness of my research questions and aim.

From September 2018 to January 2019, I started collecting this paper's primary data. Initially, these efforts proved challenging, as the Korean community in Sweden is relatively small and not all fathers contacted were willing to participate in the study. This was especially true of fathers working within Korean companies, who were afraid that information divulged during the interview might be exposed to their seniors. Despite these difficulties, I continued to gather data until I reached the point at which each "category offers considerable depth and breadth of understanding about a phenomenon, and relationship to other categories" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 149). Ultimately, this led me to interview 16 Korean fathers who immigrated or were expatriated to Sweden and were working full-time in electronics-related industries: nine of them worked for Swedish companies; seven for Korean companies. All the interview data was analysed inductively using NVivo. A more detailed description of this data analysis process is presented in this study's original paper.

Data collection for **Paper I**, which is based on document analysis and elite interviews, was conducted between January 2018 and December 2021. Although, as previously mentioned, the primary research data was parliamentary meeting minutes, throughout my research I also reviewed various sources of official documents including newspapers, Bills, Acts, Master Plans, and reports published by national think-tanks. In the initial stages of this research, I reviewed 30 years of newspaper articles spanning from January 1990 to April 2020, using the keywords "parental leave AND (father OR men OR quota)". Given that newspapers are likely to deliver news selectively according to their political stances, I included all 19 metropolitan newspapers available in Korea's digital newspaper archive, Big Kinds (www.bigkinds.or.kr). In total, I read through 1,077 articles, from which I constructed a timeline of core events that occurred in relation to parental leave policy development.

I simultaneously reviewed previous studies on Korean parental leave policy development, at which point I focused my research span to more tightly investigate policy reform narratives within specific Acts, laws, Bills, state-commissioned reports, Master Plans crucial to events on my timeline and, most importantly, parliamentary meeting minutes. Those documents encompassed not only the facts surrounding changes to policy but also, perhaps more significantly, the arguments and narratives that were used by policy elites to rationalise and legitimate these changes. Inspired by Hard et al. (2018)'s research, in which they built a document archive to study education policy trajectories, I created a mind map that incorporated sequences of policy changes and the interrelationships between key actors and their arguments. Within this mind map, I sought to address the core questions of who, what and when as they pertained to government announcements of policy reforms, revisions to laws and Acts, presidential election pledges, the reactions of various non-governmental organisations to policy changes, etc.

A total of 328 parliamentary meeting minutes was selected from a total of thousands of meeting minutes from five key committees to become the primary data used in Paper Ⅰ. These meeting minutes were singled out through the application of the same keywords used to filter newspaper articles, "parental leave AND (father OR men OR quota)". These were then archived in NVivo to enable an in-depth analysis of emerging policy reform narratives derived from discussions between policy actors—including politicians, researchers, policy administrators and government ministers. I read through all 328 minutes and coded segments of lines and paragraphs, which served to indicate which themes occurred repeatedly

within political and economic arguments, assumptions and narratives surrounding parental leave policy. Given that these minutes also embody "a story of situations, process, and outcomes" of policy reforms (Bowen, 2009, p. 35), I treated them as interview data. However, the nature of meeting minutes, which often seek to cultivate discussion around specific items on an agenda rather than presenting a cohesive narrative, resulted in the context embedded in this data remaining often fragmentary and incomplete. Accordingly, I established a back-and-forth interplay with the data, as Bowen (2009) put it, drawing together not only the meeting minutes but also the timeline and mind map that I composed in order to grasp the chronological development of policy changes throughout these three decades. Indeed, this analytical process seemed at times like arranging myriad puzzle pieces.

Throughout this analysis, however, the rationale behind certain policy changes remained unclear or undisclosed. In such instances, in order to deepen my understanding, I conducted interviews with specific policy actors both in January 2018 and primarily after I had gained a comprehensive understanding of policy development chronology in May 2020. I recruited policy advisors and administrators who played a central role in policymaking or implementation for these interviews by leveraging my own network, calling, and visiting their offices, and sending interview requests via email. The interviews were conducted either in-person or via Zoom, depending on geographical proximity, and lasted between 40 and 100 minutes. Within these interviews, many highly personal or confidential stories were divulged. In these contexts, although broader interview data was transcribed, at the interviewees' request some of these narratives were not fully recorded.

The inspiration behind the final empirical study, **Paper IV,** came late within this research process, after much of the data-gathering and analysis for subsequent studies had been conducted. Within these earlier studies, although I had paid significant attention to the institutional and social conditions surrounding the fathers' decisions of whether or not to take parental leave, little focus had been given to the practical reality of Korean fatherhood. This led me to explore Korean fathering practices within this final paper. Although the Korean government tends to portray fathers' involvement in childcare as a solution to declining/dwindling fertility rates (Paper I), workplaces still treat fathers as workers unencumbered by children, and fathers themselves continue to identify as primary breadwinners within their families (Papers II and III). Even in light of these discoveries, the question of how fathers define good fathering and their own paternal role

remained unclear and unexplored, as well as the more practical questions of what fathering activities they undertake daily, and what kinds of support beyond parental leave they can receive from the government. Given that only a paltry number of fathers take parental leave, I decided to expand my research group to encompass another paternal resource provided by the government: self-help fathering communities, including the 100 Fathers' Group.

Over the last decade, the 100 Fathers' Group has functioned as a nationwide project initiated by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, serving fathers with children aged 2–6. The project runs for six months each year, with each new cohort consisting of both mentors and mentees, all of whom are fathers. This programme is structured to provide each mentee with weekly online missions assigned by mentors; the mentees then upload photos evidencing their completion of each mission at the end of each week. A more detailed description of this project and its structure can be found in the main body of Paper IV. The data collection was conducted from September to December 2021. I emailed the department that organises the community and provided basic information about myself and my research interest. Although initiating contact with the key policy administrator within the central government took several weeks, she offered substantial help after this initial hurdle. Through her support, I collected material that shed light on the intricate systems that underpin the project. Any gaps in my knowledge of such systems that remained after liaising with this policy administrator—such as how to recruit fathers, the mechanics of the rewards systems, internal concerns, etc.—were then filled through further interviews with her and a second policy administrator at the municipal level. Although I reached out to a third policy administrator in the municipality where the project was most successful, this interview request was rejected on the grounds of confidentiality.

I contacted individual fathers who were either mentors or mentees within the community through their own blogs and the website of the 100 Fathers' Group. Given that the programme itself encourages fathers to share photo evidence of completion of their missions, not only within the group but publicly, some fathers have taken to running their own personal blogs, in which they share more detailed information about their fathering activities. Although specific blog titles cannot be shared here, in order to preserve the anonymity of the fathers, many explicitly referenced "fathering" or "father" rather than "parenting" or "parent", indicating a specific pride in the writer's role as a "father". In order to facilitate semi-structured interviews, I reviewed each interviewee's blog posts before the interview and tailored questions accordingly. This enabled richer and more specific

interview content, by allowing me to bring up details from the interviewee's past experiences and views that might otherwise have remained either unacknowledged or forgotten. Although no material from these blogs is directly referenced within my paper, many of the relevant narratives or contexts gleaned from them have consequently been interwoven into responses during interviews. More detailed information on methodology can be found within the original paper.

5.4 Methodological limitations and implications

This dissertation, of course, comes with methodological limitations. The main one concerns the limited sociodemographic attributes of participants: the majority of fathers interviewed are highly educated white-collar, and all men are heterosexual and married. This prevented the study from being able to explore the broader context of fatherhood in Korea outside of this demographic.

To be more specific, firstly, most parents interviewed hold college degrees at the very least, with the exception of just two fathers (in Paper IV). Previous studies in different nations have commonly found that highly educated fathers are more likely to take parental leave (Sundström & Duvander, 2002; Geisler & Kreyenfeld, 2019). Given that few studies have been conducted and/or found a significant relationship between education level and likelihood of taking parental leave among Korean fathers (see Lee, 2022), this pattern cannot be confirmed. However, earlier evidence does indicate that highly educated Korean fathers tend to be more involved in childcare (Kim & Kim, 2013) and show greater parenting competence compared to those with only high school diplomas (Lee et al., 2016). Therefore, it is plausible that the predominance of highly educated fathers in this data overrepresents the baseline level of interest that Korean fathers have in childcare. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the majority of Koreans hold college degrees: the proportion of Korean high-schoolers who entered higher education sat at approximately 78.6% in the 2000s and remains high at 73.7% as of 2020 (Statistics Korea, 2021c).

Secondly, none of the fathers interviewed was a blue-collar worker. This especially concerns Paper II, which includes descriptions of Swedish workplace norms. The Korean fathers interviewed described Swedish managers as providing work environments conducive to taking time off for childcare and showing family-centred attitudes, but, according to Haas and Hwang (2019), in Sweden the nature of concerns about taking leave between managerial/white-collar and blue-

collar fathers appeared different. While managerial/white-collar fathers were worried about losing career opportunities, blue-collar fathers were concerned about job security, which directly relates to one's livelihood. However, the findings in Paper II covered only white-collar workplace norms in Sweden, which may have caused biased impressions about Swedish workplace norms. Unfortunately, the white-collar focus was inevitable, due to limitations in the sample size of Korean fathers working in Sweden. Typically, Korean fathers, working both in Korean companies based in Sweden and in Swedish companies, held white-collar jobs. Hence, my research focused mainly on the workplace norms among white-collar employees, rather than exploring distinctions between blue-collar and white-collar fathers.

Thirdly, all fathers in this dissertation are heterosexual married men and belong to two-parent households. This composition of participants is related to prevailing realities in Korean society. Marriage is still predominant as the primary foundation of a household: according to a *Survey of the Status of Families* conducted by MOGEF (2021), 2.8% of those who have a romantic partner reported that they are engaged in a common-law marriage, which means that the remaining 97.2% of those who are in a relationship with each other are explicitly married. Additionally, homosexual marriage is not legal in Korea. Furthermore, as of 2020, single-parent households account for 7.1% of total households (Statistics Korea, 2021d) and the majority of those (75%) are single-mother households (Statistics Korea, 2021e). My empirical studies did not rule out the possibility of recruiting members of the LGBTQ community or single fathers, but the likelihood of acknowledging the experience of such potential father figures was low unless research had been specifically concentrated on recruiting members of those groups.

While these three aspects remain as limitations of this dissertation, class should also be considered as a unique aspect of this data. As mentioned earlier, participants represent middle-class fathers, which resulted in ruling out stories of fatherhood from other classes. Although fatherhood is arguably a universal phenomenon, class differences are likely to be present both in how fatherhood is understood and practised. For instance, Plantin (2007) found that among Swedish fathers, those from middle-class households tend to differ from those from working-class ones in relation to the meaning-making in fatherhood, which affected their use of parental leave.

Despite potential differences between classes, however, the focus on middle-class fathers has two key implications for Korean fatherhood research. First, as

Griswold (1993) argued, new fatherhood is largely a middle-class construct and that new fatherhood ideals are mainly pursued by middle-class fathers. Since this dissertation focuses on the use of fatherhood policies, which is often considered as a proxy of fathers' involvement, middle-class fathers serve as a representative demographic of policy users. Second, stories of middle-class fathers reinforce my argument throughout this dissertation that there are discrepancies between the de jure and de facto entitlement among Korean fathers. In other words, if this is occurring even among middle-class fathers, how would it manifest among fathers from a lower class? Considering the lack of research on class and fatherhood in the Korean context, this dissertation serves as a foundation on which future research can be built.

5.5 Ethical and methodological considerations

This dissertation includes four sets of interview data. Data collection included methods that were deemed not to be physically or psychologically harmful for the participants and the interviews did not handle sensitive personal data (i.e. racial or ethnic origin, religious beliefs, genetic or health-related data, sexual orientation, etc.). Before designing the interview guides and conducting the research, I was well-informed of ethical responsibilities and codes of conduct stipulated in the research ethics outlined by the Seoul National University (SNU) (for Paper II) and Swedish research ethics (for Papers I, III and IV). The data used in Paper II was collected during my master's studies at SNU.[2] While designing the research methods, I learned and followed comprehensive guidelines of research ethics established by SNU in 2010. The guidelines clearly stipulated general rules regarding data documentation, the researcher's integrity, misconduct, competing interests, and more direct rules regarding research participants, such as the importance of informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. Data for Papers I, III and IV was collected during my doctoral studies at Lund University. Prior to beginning the data collection, I participated in the faculty's PhD course in research ethics in the spring semester of 2017. The data has been collected and handled in accordance with the Swedish Research Council's ethical guidelines and principles.

[2] At that time (November 2012) SNU had not yet started requiring the Institutional Review Board (IRB)'s approval for research involving humans.

More specifically, prior to the interviews, I informed participants about the purpose of the study. To minimise misunderstanding about the purpose of the research and participants' concerns about the sensitivity of the interview questions, I also provided a brief overview of the interview guide to those who requested it. All interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and assured that the data would remain confidential and would be used only for academic purposes. Participation was voluntary, and interviews were recorded only after participants gave their consent to be recorded. When participants received personal calls during the interview, I paused the recording and resumed only when the phone call had ended. In addition, interviewees were instructed to say “off the record” when they did not want their statement to be used for the study. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, except for the parts that had been specifically designated by the interviewee as “off the record”. This phrase was not used by individual fathers and mothers, but it did appear in interviews with policy elites. The omitted content was mainly related to “behind the scenes” stories about political actions, which were beyond the scope of the research and did not affect the main analysis.

Beyond the issue of informed consent, I was also mindful of the potential invasion with regards to interviewees’ privacy. When interviewing couples separately, participants sometimes complain about their spouse and/or ask what has been said about them by their spouse. If the researcher fails to keep an appropriate distance from the subject, this can constitute an invasion of privacy on the part of the researcher, thereby invalidating the consent of the participant (De Melo-Martín & Ho, 2008). I did encounter such situations while conducting the interviews, particularly for Paper II. Although it was rare, some interviewees did insinuate their curiosity, sometimes even directly asking for information. In this case, I would politely respond by explaining that I was unable to disclose information from other interviewees due to research ethics, even from their own spouses. In order to avoid such situations and minimise my invasion of their privacy, I would frame the interview questions in a way that was more open-ended. For example, instead of saying “your wife said *X*; what do you think about that?”, I would take this person's statement, identify the core issue, and then present it in broader terms to the spouse.

Issues surrounding interviewees’ strong emotions are often discussed in terms of conducting research on sensitive topics (see Melville & Hincks, 2016), but abrupt and emotional reactions from interviewees, such as bursting into tears during the interview, happen not only in response to sensitive research questions. When

conducting interviews for Paper II, there were instances of emotional reactions, for example participants who struggled to adjust to parenthood or managing the pressure of making the best decisions for their children. Thus, there were brief moments of, as described by MacDonald and Greggans (2008, p. 3124), "competing for priority" on my part between the participant's welfare and my ambition as a researcher to capture all their words and gestures. Fortunately, these did not last long; participants did not ask to pause the recording and they stopped crying after a short while. However, they expressed embarrassment for crying in front of a "stranger". To prevent them from feeling further embarrassment and to help them feel safe, I tried to express my sympathy and understanding by reflecting back their experiences in my own words. Importantly, although some interviewees treated me like a counsellor whose job included offering advice and opinions, I refrained from sharing my personal thoughts, while still remaining responsive and non-judgemental.

Respecting confidentiality is another essential principle for conducting ethical research while retaining a participant's human dignity (Silverman, 2016). To protect confidentiality, researchers often anonymise and/or intentionally change parts of the identifying information (Given, 2008). For all papers, I therefore replaced interviewees' names with numerical and/or alphabetical identifiers to protect their identities. However, as Melville and Hincks (2016) emphasised, confidentiality is not always completely assured when it involves "participants from a closed community, [those who] share professional or personal networks, or when the sample population is small" (p. 8). This is because, although their identities likely remain unidentifiable from wider society, the internal members of the group may be able to recognise participating individuals by their quotes and/or other sociodemographic characteristics. I specifically considered these limitations of confidentiality while conducting research for Papers III and IV, studies which encompass interviews with people from relatively small communities.

In particular, as briefly mentioned in the Research Process section of Paper III, the Korean community in Sweden is comparably small (11,795 as of December 2021). In 2019, the number of men in their 30s and 40s amounted to only around 2,300 (SCB, 2022); the number of those working for Korean companies was even smaller. As such, some people whom I contacted for the interview declined to take part due to concerns about the information divulged during the interview being exposed to their Korean boss. Consequently, only those who were willing to publicly discuss their work environment engaged in the interviews. However,

since the community was small, it was also important to protect confidentiality during the interviews, as some of the participants worked for the same company. To achieve this goal, I ensured that anonymity was maintained throughout. Specifically, I applied the same strategy that was used to protect the privacy of couples for Paper II, but this time with the intention of keeping the previous interviewees' confidential information from the next ones. I was mindful not to disclose any insights or information I might have received from previous interviewees about, for instance, work culture or tacit expectations regarding parental leave.

Beyond the ethics of the interview procedure, I had a methodological consideration in regard to interviewing men about fatherhood as a female researcher. From a social constructionist perspective, interview data is a product of an interactional event, locally and collaboratively constructed by two individuals—interviewee and interviewer (Rapley, 2007). Therefore, researchers should carefully consider the underlying theoretical assumptions of the phenomenon studied (Flick, 2014). Since fatherhood is highly related to gendered as well as normative assumptions about men being parents, I needed to be particularly cautious when raising questions about their perceptions surrounding fatherhood and their roles in childcare. I was especially cautious during the interview process because of my positionality as a female researcher studying fatherhood, but also as a researcher based in Sweden, a society which is well-known in Korea for its gender-equal and family-friendly culture.

According to Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001), researchers need to be aware of how men represent themselves and how they signify their masculinity during interview by "doing gender", especially when the research topic is related to gender. That is not to say that every father behaves in the same way, but as Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) pointed out, there are chances that researchers would face "a particular cultural prescription for self-presentation when men feel compelled to abide by it" (p. 203). Especially in the case of Paper II, a study conducted in Sweden, I also found that, at times, Korean fathers showed hesitance to describe their roles at home while being interviewed.

The participants were aware that my research was partly related to gender equality, so they might have been less likely to feel comfortable showing patterned masculinity. When they were asked about their opinions on sharing housework at home, one of them broke the silence by saying, "Well, you know, since you are also a woman…" Some interviewees seemed cautious of their verbal expressions, trying to find "acceptable comments", as Matthews and Ross (2010, p. 231)

explained. Since my research questions for Paper III centred around their work experiences rather than their contributions at home, the impact of this hesitation on the results was limited. However, this provided strong evidence to prove the potential pitfalls of interviewing men as a female researcher in the field of gender relations.

6 Result

6.1 Paper I

The development of parental leave policies in South Korea, 1995–2021: The localisation of translated policy ideas

Yeonjin Kim and Åsa Lundqvist[3]

Paper I addresses the overarching question of my research: how have Korean parental leave policies evolved since their introduction in 1995, and what motives and challenges emerged throughout the course of their development? This research question was informed by the fact that the Korean parental leave policy was not an internal product that initially emerged from Korean policy elites; rather, it was an idea adopted following the Korean government's ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1984. In order to capture such external and internal influences on the development of Korean parental leave, Paper I attempts to theorise policy translation, reform narratives and institutional legacies as a way of exploring the localisation process of parental leave policies over three decades in Korea.

For the analysis, two types of data were used: (1) interviews with four key policy actors and (2) central official documents from multiple sources, primarily from parliamentary meeting minutes as well as from newspaper articles, Bills, Acts, Master Plans, and state-commissioned reports. The specific questions that guided the analysis were as follows:

[3] Yeon-Jin Kim contributed to the collection and analysis of data and the first drafting of the work. Åsa Lundqvist collaborated in designing the work, reviewing literature, and critically revising the work.

1. What policy ideas were translated and implemented between 1995 and 2021 and what were the main political arguments and reform narratives behind these decisions?

2. What institutional preconditions have shaped both the perceived and practical feasibility of the parental leave system?

The findings show that policy ideas of parental leave policies in Korea have long been inspired by the Nordic father quota system, especially that of Sweden. However, the current design of Korean parental leave policies differs from this system, potentially as a result of locally perceived social problems and institutional legacies.

More specifically, the main political arguments surrounding the advancement of parental leave policies revolved around four narratives: maternity protection (1995-2003), combating low fertility rates (2003-2008), (working mothers') work-family life reconciliation (2008-2013), and finally men's involvement (2013-2021).

Maternity protection had already been a predominant reform narrative in the 1980s. Under this goal, working mothers became eligible for one year's (unpaid) parental leave in 1987; working fathers gained the same right in 1995. The idea of introducing gender-neutral parental leave was first suggested by researchers from a national think tank in the early 1990s. Their argument resonated from global discussions, highlighting the importance of gender equality and the impact of parental leave policies on inequality within the family and in the labour market. The researchers criticised the current domestic understanding of maternity protection for centering childcare as women's distinct roles. However, when the reform was carried out in 1995, maternity protection narratives still played a key role, which was manifested in policy design and the arguments behind it. The beneficiaries of parental leave were expanded only to employed fathers who were married to working women who were unable to take parental leave. The fathers were expected to take parental leave *instead* of their female partner. In 2001, to strengthen maternity protection, the Korean government introduced a flat-sum benefit, maintaining the one-year quota for both mothers and fathers, inspired by Nordic countries, which at that time provided a 30-day earmarked parental leave entitlement for each parent.

Such narratives changed to combating fertility rates in the early 2000s after Korea's total fertility rate (TFR) was recorded as ultra-low after falling below 1.3 in 2002. A discourse of national crisis emerged; the Korean government

implemented a series of countermeasures. The structure of parental leave policies also continuously advanced. Promoting working mothers' work-family reconciliation emerged as the next reform narrative around 2008. However, at a closer look, this narrative was simply an extension of the previous one. Increasing fertility rates remained as the ultimate goal of the following reforms: the child's maximum age at which parents could take parental leave gradually increased from one to three in 2006, and again to six years in 2010; a fixed-rate benefit for both parents was introduced at 40% of their regular salary in 2011; and the three days of unpaid paternity leave introduced in 2008 were extended to five days in 2012, including full compensation for the first three days. The perceived sense of crisis due to rapidly dropping fertility rates gained such strong traction that politicians purposely employed the crisis discourse over gender equality to justify reforms to increase fathers' parental leave benefits and eluded resistance from groups of entrepreneurs.

Political arguments during this period manifest how transferred and translated policy ideas go through mutation when intersecting with different societal contexts. To seek solutions to the demographic crisis, the Korean government and policy experts continued exploring foreign policy ideas and cases. The Swedish model, in particular, captured their attention as the best example of a country that was successful in increasing fertility rates. Paradoxically, however, while gender equality has long served as a core value throughout Swedish family and labour market policy reforms, among Korean politicians and policy experts, such reforms were primarily emphasised as a practical tool for increasing fertility rates.

During the most recent decade (2013-2021), the reform narratives changed to more directly stress men's roles, incorporating gender equality principles. In 2014, inspired by the Swedish father quota (Daddy Month), the Korean government introduced Daddy's Month, a bonus incentive scheme for the second leave-taker. The second leave-takers, usually fathers, were first entitled to extra cash benefits for a month, which was then extended to three months in 2016. Despite criticisms of the Daddy's Month scheme for its gender discriminatory measure, the benefits kept increasing for the second leave-takers until 2020. Interestingly, before introducing Daddy's Month, feminist NGOs and a number of policymakers continuously argued for a mandatory father quota. This idea stemmed from misinterpretation of the Swedish Daddy Month, which is based on the same 'take-it or leave-it' principle that has been operating in Korea from the outset. Such discussions also represent how policy ideas from abroad can be muted in the process of localisation.

Despite the gradual advancement in policy design, institutional legacies have partially obstructed its perceived and practical feasibility, and Korean parental policies still have integral problems that remain unresolved. Despite a rapid advancement in policy schemes, a paltry number of fathers take parental leave. One of the underlying problems stems from the fact that the eligibility of parental leave benefits was initially designed in connection with employment insurance, which draws on a contribution-based system. Employment insurance has limited access for irregular workers, who make up more than a third of Korea's economically active population. Accordingly, a large number of fathers outside the system cannot even consider taking parental leave. In addition, even for those who are eligible and comparatively privileged, the perceived feasibility of taking parental leave policies remains low due to the prevalence of a work-oriented lifestyle and the government's business-friendly orientation. These long-standing legacies in the Korean labour market have consequently weakened the foundation for fathers to take parental leave.

6.2 Paper II

Relational ethics as a cultural constraint on fathers' parental leave in a Confucian welfare state, South Korea

Yeon-Jin Kim and Suyoung Kim[4]

Paper II addresses the second overarching research question for this dissertation: how have relational ethics and workplace norms influenced individual fathers' decisions and sense of entitlement for taking time off for childcare? While Paper I mapped the policymaking and developmental process of Korean parental leave policies over the course of three decades, Paper II aims to shed light on the policy at the level of practice, focusing on finding potential explanations for the low take-up of parental leave policies by fathers, despite their being given legitimate entitlement to do so. As a primary cause, this paper explores, through a lens of Confucian relational ethics, the influence of the norms of interpersonal relationships when it comes to fathers' take-up decisions. Various studies on

[4] Yeon-Jin Kim contributed to the collection and initial analysis of data and the first drafting of the work. Suyoung Kim collaborated in the design of the article, interpretation of data, and critical revision of the manuscript.

classical Confucianism explain that the essence of its ethical precepts lies in the ethical roles that actors play in social relationships. Confucian-based relational ethics, which define one's ideal role mainly in terms of seniority and gender as they relate to relationships, the family, community, and society, have been deeply embedded into Korean culture, and thus the legacy of Confucianism has persisted in producing discourse around what roles ought to be given to men and women in contemporary Korean society as a result of these supposed attributes.

My analysis was conducted using semi-structured interviews with two groups of Korean dual-income, heterosexual couples: one group comprised eight couples where the husband managed to take parental leave, and the other group comprised seven couples where the husband did not or could not take parental leave. The following two specific questions guided the analysis:

1. How do Confucian ethics influence relational dynamics in families and workplaces?

2. How do these ethics impede fathers from taking parental leave in both implicit and explicit ways?

The findings show that Korean fathers were considered as last-resort caregivers within families, and that their role was primarily to be forefront workers. These social positions of fathers seemed to be shaped by internalised fears of acting against relational norms which are related to Confucian role ethics. These include: 夫婦有別 (the existence of distinctive roles between husband and wife), 父子有親 (the closeness between parents and their children), 朋友有信 (mutual trust among friends), 長幼有序 (the hierarchical order between elders and younger generations) and 君臣有義 (the loyalty between rulers and their subjects).

These role ethics were instilled into the family and were used to justify traditional gendered hierarchies, often resulting in wives sacrificing their own career to minimise interruptions to that of the husbands. This is well-represented in a research case where both the wife and the husband within a couple worked for the same company. The wife took parental leave twice while the husband took none, despite the wife's competence, educational background, salary, position and career length matching that of her husband. She explained that she felt pressured into prioritising her husband's career over her own.

While it was certainly noticeable that some of the wives interviewed worked to oppose these traditional gendered dynamics, such actions remained rather passive. Perhaps most indicative of this was that, after the mother, the next option for childcare that all couples sought was not the father of the child but rather the

child's grandmother. In conjunction with this, some fathers faced strong opposition from their mothers when they wanted to take parental leave. The belief that men ought to act as the head of the family and provide financially for their families was so present that one husband's mother volunteered to babysit her grandchild in order to make her son revoke his decision to take parental leave. As a result, the father of the child did overturn his decision to take parental leave, so as not to feel guilty for being disrespectful to his mother. Avoiding any disadvantages to his career in order to provide for his family was his way of repaying his mother for the support he had received from her throughout his life.

Furthermore, these assumptions surrounding men's duty to work hard round the clock remain so strong that fathers often share that they feel uneasy about "losing face" by being seen in broad daylight carrying a baby rather than working. This anxiety was stronger among those who voluntarily opted out of responsibility for full-time childcare, and for those who took parental leave and actually experienced the judging looks on their neighbours' faces. These groups also cited feelings of relief when they returned to their work.

Such gendered roles within the family, and the concomitant internalised beliefs in these roles' corresponding role ethics, are inevitably closely related to processes of gendering that occur within the workplace. As much as fathers were considered to be the last-resort caregivers, complementary to this was the social expectation that they would serve as forefront workers in the workplace. While contemporary fathers tried more actively to engage in childcare, their efforts were often disdained in the workplace. When one of the fathers interviewed asked for permission to leave work early to care for a sick child, his boss got irritated and asked him what his wife was doing. As well as this, fathers often said that they knew how female colleagues who prioritised family over work were perceived in the workplace, especially those who would leave work early. Within several workplaces, such women are evaluated as self-serving, and this made fathers generally more cautious to speak out about their needs within the workplace.

Compounded with these practices of gendering in the workplace, the highly work-oriented culture in Korea has created a negative feedback loop that pushes female workers out of the labour market while anchoring fathers to their workplaces. Korean corporate culture is well-known for frequent overtime, numerous and difficult-to-avoid after-work events, and a reluctance or inability to make full use of statutory holidays. The persistent presenteeism in contemporary Korean companies appeared to be partially attributed to the relational ethics such as 朋友有信 (mutual trust among friends), 長幼有序 (hierarchical order between elders and

juniors) and 君臣有義 (loyalty between rulers and subjects). After-work get-togethers, let alone overtime, were deemed as an extension of work which served as a tacit indication to show one's team spirit and loyalty to workmates and superiors. Since those who often failed to follow suit, who were mainly working mothers, were labelled as selfish and irresponsible, the fathers interviewed were overly conscious of running counter to those Confucian relational ethics to survive in the workplace and chose rather to work late and rule themselves out of taking parental leave.

Furthermore, fathers who took parental leave felt guilty in exercising their legal rights. All interviewees reported difficulties in claiming their rights, especially when their higher-ups took none or very little parental leave. As a subordinate, taking longer leave than their bosses did felt disrespectful to them. Overall, relational ethics often prevailed over individual rights, resulting in silencing fathers from the start.

6.3 Paper III

Workplace matters: Negotiating a sense of entitlement towards taking time off for childcare among Korean fathers working in Sweden

Yeon-Jin Kim

Following on from Paper II, Paper III also addresses the second overarching research question: how have relational ethics and workplace norms influenced individual fathers' decisions and sense of entitlement for taking time off for childcare? Specifically, Paper III explores how workplace norms and obligations influence fathers' decisions to take time off for childcare through the theoretical lens of a sense of entitlement. In this paper, fathers' experiences surrounding childcare leave policies include not only parental leave but also paternity leave and sick child leave. This paper is further unique in that it explores Korean fathers' experiences in a Swedish setting. As stated in Chapter 5, examining Korean fathers' working experiences in Sweden served as a critical case with information-rich contexts that illuminate the central interest of this study: the influence of workplace norms beyond policies on fathers' sense of entitlement to take time off for childcare. I collected interview data from two groups of Korean fathers: a group of nine fathers working for Swedish multinational companies and a group

of seven fathers working for Korean multinational companies with branches in Sweden. The following two specific questions guided the analysis:

1. How do Korean fathers working in Sweden perceive and exert their entitlement towards taking time off for childcare?

2. How do these fathers' work experiences shape their sense of entitlement?

The findings show that Korean fathers at Swedish companies developed a stronger sense of entitlement for using childcare leave policies than those working for Korean companies. Notably, however, there were no marked differences in the actual use of childcare leave policies; the majority of fathers, regardless of the workplace, because of financial constraints showed hesitance towards fully using the policies. More specifically, the Korean fathers in this research had moved to Sweden at different times with discrete motives, but all appeared to have led work- and career-centred lives back in Korea. One of the decisive driving forces behind their decision to emigrate to Sweden was their aspiration for a better work-life balance. However, in exchange for moving to Sweden, most of the fathers became single-earners as their wives had to quit their own jobs in Korea and it could take years for some of them to find a job in Sweden. The fathers, accordingly, felt more obliged to work to maintain their livelihood after moving to Sweden, and this was reflected in their actual use of childcare leave policies. No fathers took parental leave for longer than three months and hardly ever took leave to care for a sick child, instead using their paid annual vacation allowance or flexitime to maintain their income.

However, stark differences emerged in their perceived feasibility of using the policies when needed, depending on their workplaces. Specifically, fathers at Swedish companies believed that they could demand leave when needed and even stated that taking time off for childcare needed no justification, and that the decision to take parental leave was as natural a process "as breathing". On the other hand, none of those working at Korean companies took no parental leave at all. Fathers' divergent attitudes were particularly evident when discussing their experience of taking a 10-day paternity leave. While the fathers at Swedish companies used it in its entirety, because they deemed it mandatory due to precedents set by Swedish colleagues, fathers at Korean companies were correctly informed that the suggested time period was optional and therefore took only a couple of days off before returning to work. These findings imply that, at certain times, fathers' sense of entitlement may be more dependent on the working environment and norms rather than on their legal right to take leave.

Three contrasting contexts surrounding workplace norms emerged as key influences on fathers' divergent sense of entitlement for taking childcare leave: having low versus high anxiety about not working, being identified as collaborators versus subordinates, and being considered as co-parents versus secondary caregivers.

Firstly, the fathers developed different perspectives on the potential ramifications of taking holidays for longer periods of time, such as a contiguous five weeks of paid vacation as granted by Swedish law. While Korean fathers at Swedish companies slowly learned that it was acceptable to be absent from work for weeks without anxieties about being negatively judged on their work commitment, those at Korean companies utilised only shorter, fragmented holidays to live up to the deeply rooted belief in the diligent and committed worker. Such prior experiences and perceptions about paid annual leave seemed to restrain fathers' imaginability to take longer leave for childcare.

Secondly, the fathers experienced different levels of pressure of workload and a sense of obligation towards impromptu work orders from their higher-ups. Specifically, while the fathers at Swedish companies enjoyed their work flexibility owing to an anticipatable timetable and a reasonable workload, those at Korean companies often received unexpected and urgent work tasks beyond their job descriptions and ended up working longer hours than their Swedish counterparts. Such different work practices seemed to result partially from different relationships between junior and senior staff. The fathers at Swedish companies, who maintained a horizontal relationship with their higher-ups, slowly started speaking up about their needs when prioritising personal issues. At the Korean companies, on the other hand, typical Korean work norms, or "Korean fashion", were persistent. In this culture, a hierarchical structure is promoted that expects an unconditional compliance by junior staff. Therefore, fathers in Korean companies tried to avoid unnecessary conflicts by remaining silent and, rather, resigned over their personal needs in general.

Thirdly, fathers experienced different boundaries of acceptable behaviours as a parent in the workplace. The fathers at Swedish companies gathered from their male co-workers and managers that, regardless of their partners' employment status, fathers' engagement in childcare was just as important as mothers'. Accordingly, they developed wider boundaries of acceptable behaviours at work regarding childcare issues, such as leaving halfway through a meeting, working from home while caring for children, bringing their children to work, informing their managers at short notice of necessary absences, and leaving work early to

engage in school events and extracurricular activities. In contrast, fathers working at Korean companies were encouraged to retain their traditional roles as secondary caregivers with their wives as stay-at-home mothers. Even though they were aware of the fact that in Sweden no one would stop them from engaging in active fatherhood, they restrained themselves and rarely left work for childcare needs, unless there was an emergency.

Overall, fathers' divergent perceptions about the feasibility of taking time off demonstrated that well-established policies alone cannot render a father-friendly environment in which fathers feel entitled to exert their rights. The workplace norms mattered.

6.4 Paper IV

Mastering fatherhood: Fathers' communities and the search for new role models in contemporary South Korea

Yeon-Jin Kim

Paper IV addresses the last research question of this thesis: how do Korean fathers perceive good fathering, and how do they negotiate practise fathering ideals on in everyday life? This paper specifically aims to explore what drives the gap between fathering ideals and practices, and how fathers nevertheless continue to build a legacy of caring fathering. Additionally, I considered that this identity work is not only an intrapersonal process but involves a generative aspect of aligning with others—most importantly in this thesis, other fathers. To that end, this paper investigated a Korean fathers' self-help community called the "100 Fathers' Group". This group is part of the Korean government's campaign programme, which began in 2011 under the slogan "Do Mothering". Fathers join this group either as mentors or mentees. As part of the programme plan, the mentors provide weekly missions and mentee fathers are required to post photos as proof of the completed missions. For the analysis, I used in-depth interviews from sixteen Korean fathers from both groups of mentors and mentees and two programme administrators. The following three questions guided the analysis:

1. What motivated fathers to take part in the community?

2. How did they define a good father?

3. How did they perceive their fathering practices before and after joining the fathers' group?

Findings show that, apart from being economically responsible, Korean fathers pursue present, gentle, attentive, patient, and affable fathering. However, fathers often struggle to meet these ideals in practice. In the present research, fathers described themselves as isolated in terms of information, network, and time. They showed commonality in that they had nowhere they could openly share and discuss fatherhood, or any role models to look up to. Most fathers had negative or absent memories of their own fathers. They rarely shared details about their children or childcare activities with their male friends. Although some fathers tried to do so, the conversations typically did not last long and quickly converted to other topics. Apart from no interest, these fathers received patronising comments such as "Do you have to do that much?", which made them gradually stop sharing their experiences as fathers. Some of them instead attempted to talk to their children's friends' mothers or their female colleagues. Although they did not receive condescending comments when discussing their children or childcare activities with them, they often heard comments such as "Your wife must be very happy", placing the emphasis on their role as a husband rather than as a caring father. At times, other mothers even avoided them because they perceived the fathers as having hidden intentions for the friendship. The fathers perceived such circumstances as isolated or, as one father put it, "an instigation that presents a destination [to be a good father] without providing methodology".

These fathers, therefore, sought alternative communities where they could feel that they belonged and were able to share their fatherhood experiences. They searched online with keywords such as "Daddy's childcare" or "Daddy's play" out of the belief that there would exist a distinct form of childcare that can be provided by fathers. Finally, they settled on the 100 Fathers' Group. By joining this group, these fathers tended to gain impetus to pursue their ideals. Within the community, they became recognised solely by their qualities as fathers rather than other identities, which strengthened their belief that they could offer father-specific contributions to their children. Following the programme plan, fathers uploaded photos and stories of their assigned missions every week and appraised and commented on each other's posts. By doing so, they said they received emotional support such as solace, acknowledgment, empathy, encouragement, and inspiration. However, as implied in the keywords the fathers searched, fathers' engagement in childcare tended to come down to a form of physical play and eventful activities rather than all-encompassing spheres of childcare. Most fathers

believed that play was the best way to build an intimate relationship with their children within a short period of time, particularly as most fathers spent their time away from the house working. Some fathers preferred to find parenting information on fathers' blogs rather than mothers'. All fathers in the group gave greatest praise to posts that exemplified activities that were accessible, simple, and applicable to all fathers.

Despite the centrality of play, most fathers experienced a strong impetus to increase their engagement with childcare and build more intimate relationships. However, for a certain period of time, this change was not always driven to benefit their children. Instead, it was sometimes driven by competitiveness among fathers. All fathers said that, after joining this fathers' group, they realised they had not been the best fathers; as one father said, "A big fish in a small pond." Some fathers, therefore, put extra time and effort into completing weekly missions given by the programme, and even felt anxious when they could not come up with better ideas to inspire other fathers. Those who were so-called "master" fathers acted as role models and received respect from the "novice" fathers. Overall, fathers who participated in this research showed a strong disposition to align with caring identities, but, when looking at the elements that drove them to become more engaged, it was found that these fathers also reacted to traditional masculine identities (e.g. competitiveness).

7 Concluding discussion

In the Introduction to this thesis, I referred to a strike staged by Korean fathers back in 2006 and raised the question: why did Korean fathers not feel entitled to exercise their legal right to paternal/parental leave, and what was the nature of the underlying sociocultural contexts that precipitated discrepancies between the policy and its practice? In connection with this incipient inquiry and additional research questions that have guided the analyses of four empirical studies, the common thread throughout my dissertation on Korean fatherhood boils down to demonstrating tacit tensions at the intersections of two elements: policy and practice. In this final chapter, I shall now address this overarching question by interweaving key empirical findings and discussing the transition of Korean fatherhood.

7.1 The tension between policies and practices

Put simply, my ultimate argument for the tension between policy and practice is that Korean fatherhood policies have evolved in a decoupling way that does not directly promote sociocultural grounds for individual fathers to be able to develop and exercise their de facto entitlement.

This argument is first supported by findings of Paper I regarding parental leave policies. Paper I suggests that the decoupling course begins from the policymaking process itself that should indeed concern the accessibility and practicability of the policy for citizens. The processes seem not to fulfil these ends. Having undergone compressed modernity and globalisation, the government's main focus was on creating and shaping a policy structure based on that of other developed economies. The discrepancies between the de jure and de facto entitlements seem to have derived from the process whereby adopted policy ideas were translated into local contexts, drawing on reframed reform narratives and policy design bound by other institutional legacies.

The focal issue is that, in most Korean administrations, there has been a lack of consistent focus on and politically clear confrontation with underlying problems of gender inequality in society. This does not mean that there was no debate on gender equality at all. Rectifying gender inequality has been part and parcel of policy agenda for every administration since the late 1980s. The Korean government introduced gender-neutral parental leave in 1995 to align with contemporaneous global discussions driven by the feminist movement. Although corresponding policy changes were limited, the debates in the Korean government and among national think-tank researchers and multiple NGOs centred around the importance of gender equality and giving men an equal opportunity to take parental leave.

However, since the early 2000s, when the development of parental leave policies gained actual momentum, government narratives of sequent reforms instead turned to the matter of the demographic crisis, with the principle of gender equality relegated to being a practical tool for increasing fertility rates. Nordic countries, and Sweden in particular, served as a role model for family policy reforms, but scholars and policy elites paid most attention to their success with population control rather than their ultimate pursuit towards emancipation of men as well as women from traditional gender roles. These findings show how adopted policy ideas can be translated and adapted to local contexts without wholly accommodating embedded values of the original policy ideas.

For the purview of the Korean government, an all-out focus on birth-rate encouragement was perhaps necessary given its record-breaking fall in the fertility rate each year. However, the values that are promoted as a result of policymaking decisions matter because they form a normative benchmark against which individuals' behaviours are justified and encouraged. What needs to be noted here is that individual fathers do not risk taking time off and accepting the ensuing disadvantages in order to help the government by increasing the fertility rates. Instead, they do so out of their own interests and for the sake of their partner and children. The discourse of the national crisis did not necessarily relate to the direct promotion of social environments that made fathers feel entitled to take parental leave in practice.

Institutional legacies have served as another source of the current tension between the de jure and de facto entitlements. As addressed earlier, the employment insurance system together with the labour market dualism exclude many fathers, let alone mothers, from opportunities to consider taking parental leave. This selective policy design is likely to engender a sense of deprivation among ineligible

parents. Similarly, it does not support an environment with joint expectations that all employees with young children have a right to, and will, take leave for childcare under any circumstances. Most of the research participants in this thesis were middle-class parents, yet still struggled with the use of fatherhood policies. There is no doubt that parents with lower socioeconomic status have more difficulties in exerting their entitlement, an issue that is further magnified for parents outside of the social security system.

Lastly, the falling fertility rate in Korea itself suggests that current social institutions are still far from family-friendly, let alone father-friendly. On top of the dualised and dichotomised labour market structure, it is common for workers to have a poor work-life balance due to long working hours. The prevalence of work-oriented life among citizens is one of the residuals from the compressed modernity. It persists with customs of companies running with tight manpower and government's business-friendly orientations. Such work-centred ethos and married women's low labour market participation seem to anchor fathers to work, failing to appreciate their roles as equal caregivers to mothers.

Given that Korea underwent compressed modernity, current tensions between policy and practice arguably require more time. However, I would contend that time alone is unlikely to resolve the tensions unless it serves to form a public consensus on genuine, rather than practical, values of gender equality in paid and unpaid work and to establish the right incentives and foundations that coherently and cohesively promote this value throughout all social institutions. The status quo of forerunners in this matter bespeaks the reality. For instance, Sweden has the longest history of introducing fathers' rights to take parental leave but, as of 2021, women still take 70% of parental leave days (SCB, 2022). Although some cross-national studies have illuminated the relative achievement of these countries in comparison with other European countries, such as Belgium (Marynissen et al., 2019), Hungary (Hobson et al., 2014), Poland (Suwada, 2017), Germany (Auth & Martinek, 2017) and the UK (Karu & Tremblay, 2018), it is worth noting that the current achievements of these countries did not happen overnight and they still have a way to go.

In conclusion, the tension between the evolution of the de jure entitlement and the stalled improvement in the de facto entitlement in Korea is likely to inhibit fathers from taking parental leave, resulting in fathers' negative decisions or resigned acceptances. This is why men who aspire to be involved fathers remain in a quandary. These fathers' experiences and inner conflicts cannot be the same as for those who voluntarily opt out of shared childcare responsibilities. The

nature and contexts of the dilemma will manifest themselves in connection with the interconnectivity of fatherhood practices, which will be addressed in the following section.

Although the discussions within this dissertation centre around Korean fatherhood policies and practices, the implications of the findings extend beyond the current context. Specifically, this research can be applied to other domains where tensions between policy and practice are experienced. Given that policy ideas increasingly cross borders regardless of sociocultural proximity, it is crucial to continue work that aims to make the transition between policy and practise more effective and subsequently enhance the social well-being of citizens. Overall, this dissertation calls scholarly attention to studying policy and practice using an integrated approach.

7.2 The nexus of fatherhood practices

The tension between fatherhood policies and practices illuminates the complexity and interconnectivity of daily practices that constitute contemporary fatherhood in Korea. Drawing on practice-oriented perspectives, I will venture into the nexus of fatherhood practices by incorporating findings from this research. Rather than describing the individual studies, my aim is to provide a comprehensive account of the interdependence of multiple practices that collectively constitute Korean fatherhood.

Fathering practices at home in relation to children and partners have been found to make up a significant segment of fatherhood practices. Most fathers accepted or even embraced the role of today's father as more than an economic provider. However, in practice, they remained in their primary role as providers even after their children were born. Indeed, while their wives experienced multiple changes as a result of childbirth, including taking maternity and parental leave, starting to work part-time, returning to work, or quitting their job altogether to become stay-at-home mothers, the fathers' status often remained unchanged. Fathers generally left home early in the morning and returned late due to overtime or after-work activities, and the working hours varied most for fathers working in the private sector. Overall, while most fathers stayed home and spent time with their children at weekends, during the week the childcare fell onto others (usually mothers).

Fathers only started considering taking parental leave when there were no other alternatives available; otherwise, this was rarely discussed between the couple. The first option was the children's mother. Several fathers directly asked their wives to quit their jobs and some mothers accepted this without question. They did so because they embraced the values of being stay-at-home mothers, wanted to avoid “unnecessary” conflicts within the family, and, in some cases, feared being judged by their mother-in-law as a poor wife who stands in the way of her husband’s career advancement. Other mothers returned to work as planned after their share of maternity/parental leave, but often felt guilty about leaving their infant children in others’ hands and/or experienced self-doubt related to the long-term value of their careers compared to that of their husbands and took quitting work into consideration.

The second option that was endorsed by both parents was the children’s grandparents, in particular grandmothers. Indeed, grandparenting practices have been found to constitute a significant part of fatherhood practices. When grandparents, usually grandmothers, lived nearby and stayed in good health, parents sought help from them. If grandparents lived further away, some of the couples moved into their parents’ place and some sent their children to grandparents on weekdays and took them back at weekends. Fathers continued to focus on paid work and came home late, while their wife and grandparents took turns to take care of the children. Although some grandmothers continued to provide occasional childcare support only when needed, others took on the role of the secondary caregiver and even opposed fathers’ decisions to take parental leave. This is in part because parents often raise their sons primarily to be a competent and successful head of their own family, and this expectation remains even when their sons’ identity changes to include caregiving responsibilities. Out of guilt and to show respect, some fathers therefore complied with their parents’ opposition towards their taking leave.

Notably, the roles of grandfathers were not discussed at all separately from grandmothers’. It is not uncommon that people learn parenting skills from their own parents. However, fathers’ childhood memories of their own fathers did not play a significant role, as their fathers were often away, too strict, or inattentive. While some gained a better understanding of their fathers’ experiences after having children of their own and tried to reconcile with their fathers, most of the fathers still felt distanced from their own fathers and talked less to them than to their mothers.

Instead, fathers gained most of their knowledge about childcare online or from TV, books and parenting lectures. However, these sources rarely contain information specifically on fathering rather than parenting more broadly. This is in part because fathers' identities are not sufficiently acknowledged as equal parents. For instance, among most widely used parenting online communities, fathers are not welcomed. Similarly, among male friends, their concerns regarding children and childcare are not popular topics of conversation. Some of the fathers' increased involvement in childcare after joining the fathers' group reflects how lack of an appropriate network can negatively influence overall fatherhood practices.

Fatherhood practices are also highly interconnected with workplace practices. The importance of work norms and practices becomes more evident when looking at the differences between Korean fathers' work experiences in Swedish and Korean companies in Sweden.

In general, with regards to Korean fathers' low engagement in hands-on childcare during weekdays, the long working hours, impromptu work orders and heavy workloads played a significant role. The pattern of taking annual leave was also indirectly related to fatherhood practices, because it tended to restrain fathers' imaginability to take longer leave for childcare.

Such work-oriented practices affected both male and female employees. However, compared to women, men tended to be considered as forefront and unencumbered workers. This in part relates to the fact that fathers' concerns about children were not so visible in the workplace. Most fathers did not talk about their children and childcare at work, nor their needs for taking time off to take care of their (sick) children. This is mainly because the father had someone else whom they could rely on, usually the female partner and/or grandparents. Fathers rarely declined overtime requests and/or after-work activities, for the same reason. Although working couples negotiated their schedules to avoid missing after-work activities, it was mostly mothers who came home early to take care of the children. Some of them felt ambivalent about this because, although they wanted to support their husbands' career, it also mattered for them to be acknowledged as good workers in their company.

Fathers' behaviours and practices seemed to depend in part on whether or not they were acknowledged as parents in the workplace rather than only as subordinate employees. In this sense, the role of managers and bosses played a significant part in encouraging fathers' engagement in childcare. As demonstrated in the behaviours of fathers working in Swedish companies, when fathers received

no comments at all, or even positive comments, on their occasional family-oriented behaviours, they started adopting parental leave as their entitlement and their guilt simultaneously subsided. However, as illustrated among Korean fathers working in Korea or in Korean companies in Sweden, they developed a fear of prioritising family issues over work when they directly received negative feedback such as "What the hell is your wife doing?", or when they overheard other colleagues being criticised as selfish for taking time off when work was busy. They learned that it was advantageous for them not to bring up family issues at work. Their needs therefore became more invisible.

To conclude, I would argue that resolving the tension between policy and practice relies on a set of people's actions related to acknowledging fathers as equal caregivers; however, this is currently lacking within Korean fatherhood practices. The nexus of fatherhood practices is imbued with competing behaviours oscillating between different expectations, obligations and responsibilities as a man, parent, husband, son, colleague, and employee in connection with the community surrounding a father such as their wife, parents (and parents-in-law), friends, neighbours, other fathers, workmates and managers (and bosses).

7.3 The transition of Korean fatherhood

Based on the available evidence and findings from the research outlined in this thesis, one question remains: how is Korean fatherhood transitioning? The answer to this question differs depending on the perspective one takes. For instance, several reports released by the Korean government highlight an increase in the number of fathers taking parental leave (*Helping father, No! Co-parenting father, Yes!*, MOHW, 2017 and *Steady increase of fathers taking leave driven by the spread of co-parenting culture*, MOEL, 2022). However, as discussed throughout this thesis, an increase in fathers' take-up of parental leave does not necessarily include a wider range of fatherhood practices and childcare activities. I would argue that Korean fatherhood is undergoing piecemeal transitions, which can be characterised as conditional, exclusive, and silent.

First, conditional transitions suggest that, although more and more fathers actively take part in childcare, their fathering practices tend to be complementary to mothering rather than equal parenting. Little empirical research from Korea exists that shows what types of activities fathers carry out in daily life. However, Paper IV of this thesis demonstrated that working fathers' engagement tends to

be focused on physical play and eventful activities. The fathers explained that they take on these types of activities because their female partners find the activities physically challenging and/or due to their efficiency in making their children happy by investing a comparatively short amount of time. Additionally, this type of conditional engagement by fathers has been demonstrated in other studies. For instance, Cho (2017) found that fathers in dual-income couples tend to engage in childcare primarily while their female partners take on housework chores, and those who live on their wives' income tend to do childcare while their partners are at work. Relatedly, when it comes to parental leave, Jeoung and Bae (2022) found that fathers tend to slip back into their previous work-centred role after the parental leave.

Second, exclusive transitions manifest both in policy design and fathering practices. When it comes to policy, it cannot be emphasised enough that not all fathers are eligible to take paid leave for their children and, even among those who are eligible, only a paltry number of fathers do take parental leave. What needs to be similarly stressed is that those who are excluded from social benefits are not only the fathers themselves but also, most fundamentally, their children. Previously, O'Brien (2009, p. 190) noted that "[d]ifferential access to statutory leave raises the possibility of a new polarisation for infants: being born into either a parental-leave-rich or -poor household and, indeed, country". Given a series of studies that found positive effects of fathers' involvement in childcare on their children's well-being, development, and formation of gender role attitudes (Platt & Polavieja, 2016), this polarisation can have a significant impact on later life among the excluded fathers' children.

The second form of exclusive transition was highlighted in Paper IV of this thesis, in that fathers were excluded from online mothering communities, and vice versa. Although not previously introduced as it was beyond the scope of this thesis, one notable and ongoing debate regarding mothers as uninvited guests in the fathers' group should be noted. Several fathers reported that some posts seemed to be made by mothers instead of the fathers themselves. Those fathers argued that these posts were different in "quality", such that it made father participants dispirited and discouraged. The policy administrators were aware of this complaint, but they decided not to restrain mothers from posting because the first goal of the programme was for both parents to participate in childcare. However, it seems that, for some fathers, fathers-only environments were necessary for them to liberate their identities as parents. Relatedly, the majority of fathers in Paper IV showed a strong belief in the distinctiveness of fathering practices from that of

mothers'. Although this gender-difference-based belief among fathers is not novel in this field, it is worth noting that it was not found among a small number of fathers who had been actively involved in childcare for years. However, these fathers were in the minority.

Third, silent transition implies that fathers lack initiative to stand up for their needs in the workplace as well as in the public sphere. Silence does not necessarily imply invisibility, as fathers have become much more visible compared to a decade ago. This conclusion is supported by the empirical data analysed in this thesis, collected almost a decade apart, in 2013 and 2021. In 2013, when I collected the data for Paper II, it was still rare to see fathers walking on the street as a lone man with young children in daylight. Some fathers I interviewed even received stares and disapproval, particularly from elderly people, as they were perceived as incompetent heads of their household. Their wives sometimes purposely had to explain to their neighbours that their husbands were not unemployed. Obviously, the circumstances have rapidly changed; I no longer heard such stories when conducting interviews in 2021. Furthermore, books and TV programmes regarding fathering and fatherhood have conspicuously gained popularity.

However, this increased visibility does not necessarily translate to the endorsement of fatherhood in the workplace and wider society. In Paper IV, I introduced a case of a father who became a fatherhood activist. However, such examples are still rare. As illustrated in Papers II, III and IV, fathers do not voice their needs or concerns at work. Rather, their identities as fathers usually begin after they leave work. This silence is further extended to other spheres of fatherhood. For example, a recent study noted that fathers did not receive any notifications from day care centres, which were usually sent only to mothers (Jeoung & Bae, 2022). As with their cell phones, fathers generally experience silence both in the workplace and in the public sphere.

Previously, several Western scholars such as Esping-Andersen (2009) and Hochschild and Machung (2012) called such limited changes in men's behaviours as a "stalled revolution" or "incomplete revolution". Korean fathers' conditional, exclusive, and silent transitions resonate with these scholars' conclusions.

How can we give impetus to create more complete transitions that are unconditional, inclusive and vocal? As suggested in the previous section where I discussed the nexus of fatherhood practices, it may be challenging to achieve a consensus of shared childcare among all the actors within a society. However, without this consensus, fatherhood policy implementation will likely remain limited. This double-bind will remain unless strategic approaches are adopted that

aim to break the feedback loop between implicit norms and unquestioned practices of prioritising work over family, especially among men.

One such approach is to emphasise children's well-being. Indeed, several studies found that Nordic fathers take parental leave not for the purpose of gender equality but for the benefit of their children (Almqvist, 2008; Bergqvist & Saxonberg, 2017). Such child-oriented attitudes were also found among Korean fathers (see Papers II, III and IV; Jeoung & Bae, 2022). For instance, some fathers took parental leave despite running the risk of being fired (Paper II), quit their jobs and became stay-at-home fathers (Paper IV) or even moved to Sweden to attain a better work-family balance (Paper III). All these decisions were taken for the benefit of their children. However, child-oriented attitudes are most relevant at the individual level. The results of Paper III that addressed experiences of Korean fathers working in Sweden demonstrate that Korean workplaces do not embrace the child-centred ethos to the same extent that is commonly found in Swedish workplaces.

Given that the record-low fertility rates are considered a national crisis in Korea, establishing a child-oriented culture like that in the Nordic countries can perhaps serve as a fast track to reinforce parenthood rights. However, as mentioned earlier, the discourse of the national crisis generally takes place at the level of government, but may not be a priority for individuals in society. In reality, cafés and restaurants with a "No Kids Zone" policy are gaining popularity. According to a survey conducted by a national think-tank, fewer and fewer married women aged 15–49 agree that they "must have a child" and more and more agree that "it is better not to have children" (Lee et al., 2018). Among single men, a similar pattern emerged. For instance, while in 2015 17.5% of participants answered "it does not matter" to the question of how much one needs to have children, the ratio increased to 28.9% in 2018 (Lee et al., 2018). Thus, it is challenging to predict how this trend will affect the entire parenting and working culture in Korea in the long term. Additionally, as Hobson et al. (2014) noted, emphasising men's care-work only in terms of contributing to women's paid work or children's well-being can actually weaken fathers' sense of entitlement to take childcare leave.

An underpinning mechanism for promoting fathers' active engagement in childcare may well relate to gender-equal relations. As Hobson et al. (2014, p. 59) argued, "Gender equality discourses empower men to confront their bosses for care leave and women to ask their partners to do more". Gaining the entire society's endorsement of genuine dual emancipation of men and women will require time. It took decades for women to possess their current socioeconomic

status and we still have a way to go. It will perhaps take longer for men to get equally involved in shared childcare because, in the current labour market system, men staying at home likely leads to lower family income. The Nordic countries' experiences mirror the difficulties of this journey. For Korean society, the process can be even more time-consuming and complicated because, apart from gender relations, there exist unique relational ethics that still affect interpersonal practices among Korean people (Paper III). Also, as revealed in Paper I, most administrations have not declared outright their commitment towards gender equality; instead, they hesitate to put the gender agenda at the forefront. To make matters worse, the recently elected President of Korea has stated that "there is no structural gender inequality in Korea" (Park, 2022) and promised the abolition of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. Overall, Korean society does not yet have social consensus on principles regarding what gender equality should look like. This gap arguably highlights the fundamental steps required to create complete transitions of fatherhood.

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Appendix: semi-structured interview guides

Paper II

Relational ethics as a cultural constraint on fathers' parental leave in a Confucian welfare state, South Korea

Common Questions

1. Sociodemographic characteristics
   - Age
   - Education
   - Occupation and position
   - Monthly income
2. Family relations
   - Number of children
   - Age of children
3. Policy use experiences
   - Maternity/paternity leave (duration and benefits)
   - Parental leave (duration and benefits)
   - Other work-family balance policies

Group A with a male partner who took parental leave

4. Motives and processes of taking leave
   - What made you decide to take leave?

- Did you discuss whether to take parental leave with family members or colleagues?
- Can you walk me through the day when you told your manager that you wanted to take parental leave?

5. Daily routine while being on leave

- Can you walk me through how you usually spent your weekdays and weekends when you are/were on leave?
- How did you share housework and childcare before/during/after leave?

6. After leave

- Were there any difficulties you experienced after returning to work?
- Did you experience any changes in your relationship with your children and your partner?

7. Thoughts on other mothers and fathers who took parental leave

- Did your thought about them change?

Group B with a male partner who did not take parental leave

4. Motives

- Have you thought about taking parental leave?
- Have you talked about taking leave with your family members or others?
- What made you reluctant to take parental leave?

5. Daily routine

- Can you walk me through how you usually spend your weekdays and weekends?
- How do you share housework and childcare with your partner?

6. Thoughts on other mothers and fathers who took parental leave

- What do you think about fathers who take parental leave?
- Do you know someone who did it?

Paper III

Workplace matters: Negotiating a sense of entitlement towards taking time off for childcare among Korean fathers working in Sweden

1. Sociodemographic characteristics
   - Age
   - Education
   - Occupation and position
   - Income
2. Work- and family-related factors
   - Previous occupation, position, and employment
   - Length of employment with current company
   - Number and age of children
   - Length of residence in Sweden
   - Motives for emigration
3. Policy use experiences (motives, challenges, benefits)
   - Paternity leave
   - Parental leave
   - Care of a sick child
4. Work-family life experiences in Korea and in Sweden

(Did the following change when working in Sweden, compared to working in Korea?)

- Work hours, workload, and overtime
- Paid leave (vacation)
- Work flexibility (leave work early, arrive at work late due to childcare)
- Afterwork
- Work from home
- Performance evaluation

- Relationship with colleagues and managers/superiors/employers
- Family time

5. Thoughts on work
    - How did/does work flexibility affect your work-family life?
    - How did/does workload/overwork affect your work-family life?
    - What did/does work/promotion mean to you?
    - In your opinion, what makes an ideal employee?
    - In your opinion, what does your company think makes an ideal employee?
    - Did/do you worry about being fired?

6. Thoughts on roles as fathers
    - In your opinion, what makes an ideal father? How is this ideal different from your reality?
    - Do you think your role as father is recognised at work?
    - Do you identify yourself as the head of your family and/or primary breadwinner?
    - Have your thoughts about fatherhood changed after coming to Sweden?

Paper IV

Mastering Fatherhood: Fathers' communities and the search of new role models in contemporary South Korea

1. Sociodemographic characteristics and family relations
    - Age
    - Education
    - Occupation and position
    - Income
    - Number of children
    - Age of children

2. Policy use experiences

- Parental leave (duration and benefits)
- Other work-family balance policies, fathering programmes

3. Fathering programme use experiences

- When and how did you find the programme and what made you join?
- What do you think about the programme missions?
- Can you walk me through the first day you did a mission with your child(ren)?
- What are the challenges and benefits of joining this group programme?
- What separates "novice" fathers from "master" fathers?
- How does this fathering group inspire you?

4. Network

- Do you have other fathers' groups to join?
- Whom do you usually talk to about topics related to your children and childcare?
- When you meet your male friends, do you also talk about your children or concerns/interests as a father?

5. Daily routine

- Can you walk me through how you usually spend your weekdays and weekends?
- How do you share housework and childcare with your partner?

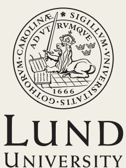
6. Thoughts on roles as fathers

- In your opinion, how do you define a good father? What have you done, what are you currently doing, and what do you seek to do to become a good father?
- Do you identify yourself as the head of your family and/or primary breadwinner?
- Do you think fathering differs from mothering?

Korean Fatherhood in Policy and Practice

It has been two decades since Korean fathers first gained the right to take paid parental leave. However, in 2020, only 3.4% of eligible fathers took time off. Why are they reluctant to exercise this right? This dissertation seeks answers to this question, examining four different contexts: policymaking, relational ethics, workplace norms, and paternity identities.

SOCIALHÖGSKOLAN



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