How fathers use social media to make sense of and reframe the meaning of fatherhood

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ABSTRACT[1]

As the norms around fatherhood change, fathers are expected to be more involved in the traditionally feminine caretaking tasks at home. Social media can provide an important source of support and information for fathers. However, most of the online parenting sources and communities are designed with mothers in mind. Therefore, it is important to understand how fathers are using different social media sites to make sense of their social roles as parents. I have studied this area throughout the past four years. In this document, I have included a brief biography and a short summary of my prior work, as well as a parenting scenario.

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KEYWORDS

Parenting; Fatherhood; Role Change; Social Media

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Tawfiq Ammari is a PhD candidate at the University of Michigan School of Information. His research lies at the intersection of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), Social Computing, and Science, Technology, and Society (STS). His work contributes to three main scholarly domains: (1) coping with role change using social media, especially when social norms around the specific role (e.g., fatherhood) are changing; (2) anonymous/pseudonymous social media sites providing a space for debating potentially stigmatizing issues; and (3) social media providing a medium to advocate for social and policy change.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS WORK

Traditionally, mothers held the role of the primary caretaker at home. Fathers, on the other hand, were expected to be the primary providers for the family (e.g., [6]). However, socioeconomic changes in the US over the past four decades have seen more mothers entering the labor market. I employ multiple research methods in my work including qualitative analysis, quantitative analysis, computational techniques, and log analysis. When analyzing how mothers and fathers are interacting on a social media site like Reddit, I use computational techniques like topic modeling and word embeddings to analyze large social media datasets (e.g., [5]). I use qualitative methods to analyze interviews with parents to capture complex, socially constructed concepts relating to parenting and online self-disclosure (e.g., [1–4]).

BRIEF SCENARIO

John is a new father. As an expecting father, he attended a number of pregnancy and birthing classes with his wife at their local hospital. He only had a few days of paternity leave, and his wife has been more involved in caring for their child. After a few months, John starts to feel disconnected from the child. He does not want to discuss the situation with his wife, and is shy about sharing his feelings with medical professionals. He does not know where he can find support and seek advice without being judged.

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