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RENEGOTIATING ROLES AS FATHERS AND WORKERS: EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANT AND REFUGEE MEN IN AUSTRALIA

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Abstract

Migrants represent a significant and growing proportion of Australia's population. While there has been a surge of academic literature about the experiences of migrant women, and families more generally, less attention has been given to migrant men and their roles as fathers. As fathers have a significant impact upon their children and families' wellbeing, it is important to understand the factors influencing their wellbeing and caregiving practices within their family units. To better understand the factors contributing to migrant men's fathering experiences and wellbeing, the authors undertook semi-structured, in-depth interviews and one focus group discussion with 10 migrant and refugee fathers living in Darwin, Australia. We define migrant fathers as those who were born outside of Australia and had children. This exploratory study aims to explore the challenges the fathers faced securing stable employment, providing caregiving, and renegotiating their identities as fathers and workers in a new country and culture. The findings demonstrate that demographic characteristics (such as education and language), structural constraints (such as access to childcare and flexible work), and cultural expectations (such as being the breadwinner and provider) defined the way many of the fathers experienced and rationalised their role as workers and fathers. These findings confirm the importance of employment in promoting and sustaining migrant and refugee men's wellbeing as they resettle with their families. We offer a preliminary sketch for policy makers and service providers to support migrant and refugee men's roles and identities as fathers and workers in Australia.

Keywords: migrant and refugee men, fathering, flexible work, childcare, masculinities, work casualisation, migrant men's wellbeing

BACKGROUND

Migrants represent a significant and growing proportion of Australia's population.¹ In migration studies, it has been recognised that men have tended to be at the periphery of policy interventions and

research that has tended to focus on migration stories of women. In recent decades, there has been a surge of attention about the experiences and impact of global migration for women.²⁻⁴ It is only within the last decade that migration studies have

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adopted a gender lens to examine the experiences and impacts of migration for migrant and refugee men.⁴ We defined migrant fathers as those who were born outside of Australia and had children.* We chose not to place limits on the timeframe of the men's arrival in Australia, the circumstances of their migration (i.e. forced or voluntary migration), or age of their children to allow us to explore wellbeing and fathering experiences for different cohorts of migrant fathers with children of different ages.

Literature identifies complexities in the way that gender and culture intersect to shape new masculinities and gendered identities within specific national contexts.^{3,5,6} This is important because men's newly formed identities and masculinities contribute to their health and wellbeing as well as that of their children and families. In Australia, and internationally, paid employment is overwhelmingly identified as central to men's identity formation when they migrate.^{3,5,7,8} A limited number of qualitative studies with immigrant men in Australia^{6–8} found that fathers' strong patriarchal role as providers was shared across immigrants to Australia from different countries (Western and non-Western). These are important findings in the context of migrant fathers' wellbeing and the provision of programs and services as they illustrate the links between fathers' role as caregivers and their mental health and wellbeing.⁹

Recent global developments to promote men's involvement in caregiving illustrate the benefit of engagement with children for men's own health and wellbeing, as well as for their children and families. For example, MenCare, an initiative in Latin America, aims to improve gender equality and the mental health and wellbeing of mothers, fathers, and children. Evaluations of the initiatives found that fathers involved in caregiving reported

better mental and physical health.⁹ Other research has found that fathers who took longer periods of paternity leave following the birth or adoption of their child benefitted from better mental health and life satisfaction.¹⁰ From these small bodies of research, we can identify an important gap in policy and research about how migrant fathers' mental health and wellbeing can be better supported and promoted.

In Australia there has been an increasing focus on men's health and wellbeing as evidenced by the National Men's Health Strategy 2020–2030¹¹ and a recent review of the literature on men's and boys' barriers to health system access funded by the Australian Government of Health.¹² The Strategy provides a framework for action that recognises the need to intervene across the life course (i.e. fatherhood) and identifies fathers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as a priority population. There is therefore an opportunity to contribute to the evidence base about the experiences and needs of migrant and refugee fathers and to identify appropriate services and supports for them.

This paper presents findings from a small-scale exploratory qualitative study with 10 migrant and refugee fathers living in Darwin, Australia. It explores the experiences of migrant and refugee men as they renegotiate their identities as fathers and workers in their new country. Drawing upon the men's voices, we aim to understand how employment, cultural expectations, and gender intersect and shape the men's caregiving practices, and sense of identity as they resettle in Australia. The findings confirm the importance of supporting employment pathways, education, and training opportunities to promote migrant and refugee fathers' wellbeing and, by extension, their family's wellbeing and successful resettlement outcomes. This small-scale study contributes to a small, but emerging, body of literature exploring the employment and fathering challenges facing migrant and refugee men, and helps us to understand how services can better support this cohort as workers and as parents.

*We use the term "migrant" in a broad sense to refer to people who were born outside Australia and moved transnationally under various degrees of choice. Therefore, our usage of the term migrant is inclusive of refugees, asylum seekers, and other forced migrants.

METHODS

Recruitment and sample

The study was approved by the Northern Territory Health and Menzies School of Health Research Ethics Committee and the design ensured that the researchers engaged and recruited participants in a highly ethical and culturally appropriate manner. Letters of support were obtained from four settlement support organisations and community groups. Collaborating with these gatekeepers was integral to the study's design as it drew upon preestablished relationships of trust and rapport with fathers from migrant and refugee backgrounds to spread awareness about the study. The service providers utilised their networks to raise awareness about the study both verbally and through various online platforms, such as distributing study information flyers via online newsletters. All participants lived in the Darwin area and were recruited through a range of settlement support organisations and community groups. In addition to the primary data collection methods of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with migrant and refugee fathers, the men also completed a short demographic survey. The interviews, focus groups, and surveys were conducted in English and professional interpreters assisted to clarify meaning as needed.

A summary of the participants' demographic characteristics is included in the table below:

In the Australian context, "permanent" employment refers to ongoing employment on either a full-time or part-time basis, whereas "casual" employment is a broad term that is used to describe a range of employment situations with no guarantee to ongoing work or a minimum or maximum number of hours per week. Permanent employees are entitled to various entitlements including, but not limited to, paid annual leave, paid sick leave, paid long service leave, and notice of termination. Casuals generally do not receive entitlements such as paid annual and sick leave. Permanent employment is generally considered more secure, whereas casual employment is considered more precarious.

Data collection and analysis

The interviews and focus groups were undertaken by the main researchers (Rung and Adamson) and three other researchers. The main researchers attended all the interviews and the focus group discussions, which took place between April and July 2021. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to guide the interviews and focus group discussions. The main topics covered were as follows: background and family history; settlement in Australia, including experiences as a

TABLE 1. Summary of the participants' demographic characteristics

Participant number	Country of birth	Age range	Visa on arrival	Year of arrival	Employment status and type
1	India	25–34	Skilled	2015	Casual
2	India	35–44	Skilled	2009	Self-employed
3	India	60+	Skilled	1990	Permanent
4	India	35–44	Student	2004	Permanent
5	Fiji	35–44	Student	1999	Permanent
6	Fiji	25–44	Skilled	2019	Casual
7	China	35–44	Skilled	2019	Looking for work
8	Australia	45–59	N/A– citizen	2016	Studying
9	Congo	45–59	Humanitarian	2019	Looking for work
10	Congo	45–59	Humanitarian	2013	Studying

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father; employment, and looking for work; family and caregiving; access to and use of programs and services. All participants provided written consent to voice record the interviews and focus group discussions and to use the data for research purposes. The voice files were professionally transcribed and uploaded into NVivo, a program that is commonly used in qualitative analysis.

A reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) approach¹³ was used to develop an indicative coding framework and code the transcripts. RTA is about “the researcher’s reflective and thoughtful engagement with the data and their reflexive and thoughtful engagement with the analytic process” (p. 594).¹³ Coming from a constructivist qualitative research tradition, the RTA approach fully appreciates and even expects that researchers have an active role in knowledge production and that no two people will interpret coding criteria in the same way. Therefore, the reflexive approach to thematic analysis does not attempt to provide accounts of “accurate” or “reliable” coding or pursue consensus among multiple coders.

In regular meetings the researchers discussed key themes that emerged from the data, sense-checked ideas, and explored multiple assumptions or interpretations of the data. Drawing upon RTA methods allowed the researchers to engage with the data reflexively, critically, and collaboratively to achieve richer interpretations of meaning. This was accomplished through an iterative process of data analysis that involved re-defining some of the codes and re-coding the interviews where necessary.

Analytical approach

To understand how the men’s migration and resettlement experiences influenced their wellbeing and identities across the life course, we draw upon a temporalities of migration lens.^{14–16} Paying attention to the variable and often protracted role that time and temporality plays in people’s migration and resettlement trajectories highlights that migration (and associated challenges) is often experienced as a non-linear process that can stretch across many

years and even decades. Utilising a temporalities approach is a useful analytic tool for calling attention to the long lasting and complex implications for migrant and refugee men at different stages of their lives. The extended nature of their migration and resettlement journeys had ongoing implications for the men’s capacity to find paid employment, contribute to caregiving within their families and achieve a sense of wellbeing.

FINDINGS

This article draws upon the data collected from 10 fathers who immigrated to Australia from the following six countries: India (4); Fiji (2); Congo (2); China (1); and Australia/Greece (1). The three participants from the Congo immigrated to Australia on humanitarian visas. The remaining seven participants from India, Fiji, China, and Australia/Greece immigrated to Australia on work or student visas or, in the case of the Greek participant born with citizenship status in Australia, on an Australian passport. The 10 fathers we spoke with ranged in age from mid-thirties to late seventies.

Drawing upon the men’s voices, the sections that follow unpack the complex interrelationships between the men’s migration experiences, education levels, English language, and work backgrounds, in the context of precarious and casualised work conditions that have emerged in Australia over the previous two decades.^{17–20} Our analysis found three overarching themes that align with the temporalities approach, reflecting the fathers’ distinctive yet nonlinear trajectories of resettlement in Australia. First, the men talked about themselves as financial and figurative providers, which was an identity embedded from their home countries. Second, they talked about the practical challenges of finding and securing work in the context of increasing workplace casualisation and increased care responsibilities within the family unit. Lastly, they explained how they renegotiated their identities to adapt to expectations as fathers and workers in Australia.

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Fathers as financial and figurative providers

All the men in the study strongly identified as being responsible for providing for their families in both a financial and figurative sense. As the men hailed from six different countries, their accounts support literature that suggests that there are certain cross-cultural expectations placed upon fathers with respect to being the breadwinner and figurative provider.⁶

Indian and Fijian Indian participants who immigrated on skilled or student visas and worked in Australia expressed the importance they placed on securing paid employment. For example three of the participants expressed that

Job is always priority for us. Other things comes last. First thing is career.

Father in our home country means responsibility. They [are the] leaders of the house.

They're basically providers of the needs and wants of the families.

A Chinese father whose wife migrated to Australia on a Business visa noted that, "in China fathers need to work, and they only spend a little bit of time with kids, not too much." A Greek/Australian father who migrated to Australia as an adult expressed that fathers should financially provide and be moral examples for their children.

My first goal was to work and have payment and raise my children. So I tried to provide them of good ethics...To give examples. To be honest, to be fair, to be good to others, not to cheat, to respect.

Fathers from the Congo who arrived in Australia on humanitarian visas and either were unemployed or studying also emphasised that fathers in their countries were responsible for providing financially and figuratively.

The father has the main responsibility for finding children's school fees and taking care of the health of the family.

There are cultural difference...most of the duties of taking care of the family are the father, and most of the responsibility for taking care of the children at home is the mother. Usually it's the father going to work.

Numerous fathers in the study reflected on cultural norms around fathering in their home country. As one father from Fiji stated:

They (fathers) make decisions. They earn money for the families, and everything needs to be talked with fathers because they are the one who makes final decision in back home.

Establishing employment was a main priority for the fathers who explained how they experienced and managed work and family responsibilities in different ways. The main factors that shaped their experiences were education background, level of English language proficiency, visa status, and how long ago they had arrived in Australia.

Generally, highly educated men with stronger English-language skills who immigrated before the mid-2000s reported positive and relatively straightforward experiences finding suitable and secure employment in Australia. Men with these characteristics were better able to uphold and maintain their responsibilities as financial providers. A father from India who arrived in Australia on a student visa in the early 2000s recounted how finding a job was a "really easy" process for him:

I came here a student, but I find the jobs really easy actually... Maybe, [I was] very lucky to get a job straight away. Even though I was on a student visa, I came to Darwin, day one – day second, somebody offered me the job in the university itself, as an international student officer. 20 hours per week... And when I finished the accounting degree...I was in the last semester, and I got a job straight away... The job was really easy to get it. I did not find any problem in getting the job here.

Another father who arrived in Melbourne on a permanent skilled visa reflected the ease he experienced in finding a permanent job in Australia in the early 1990s.

I came with seven or eight years' experience in India, so I didn't find any problems to get a job. Also, my qualification was recognized by Engineers Australia, or Institute of Engineers. So, and those skills were in big demand when I arrived. So, within six or eight weeks I got the job, there's no issue there.

Those who migrated under conditions of force, had low English proficiency and, perhaps surprisingly, those who migrated under the skilled migration stream more recently, and by "recent" we mean within the past 15 years, encountered significant barriers to finding suitable and secure employment. Highly educated men, with stronger English-language skills who had arrived more recently, tended to work in professional, higher paid causal jobs in the private and government sectors or were self-employed. This group of men called attention to the fact that most advertised jobs are casual in nature, and they often lamented over this reality. For some fathers, the reliance on causal positions hindered their feeling of being able to provide for their family financially and induced stress. One father expressed that finding permanent work would be like "finding gold" and indicated that if he was to get a permanent job he would "spend the rest of his life here." Another father indicated, "I was worried... to find a permanent job, which is really, really difficult to find."

While rare and difficult to find, permanent jobs were viewed by the men as being highly desirable, especially among fathers with family providing responsibilities.

If you have a family, I think – I always want permanent job. More consistent because your expenses are always there.

Some fathers also reflected that the uncertainty of casual work negatively impacted their mental health and wellbeing.

But it's impacting people's health, mental health, everything. No doubt. I personally think a casual job is not very – long-term is not good job, you know? Everyone you see doing the casual job, always back of mind what's going to happen next month, what's going to happen next month... uncertainty. And... people that have it (casual work) and get infecting their health. Mental health, physical and everything.

In addition to the insecurity of working in casual jobs, skilled migrants who held regional or state sponsored visas encountered compounded levels of stress when they needed to work full-time for a certain period to satisfy their visa requirements, yet they could only secure more readily available casual work.

The nature of the casual jobs the men engaged in varied considerably with respect to their English language proficiency as well as their education and employment backgrounds. Humanitarian migrants with little (or no) access to formal education and/or low English proficiency tended to work in manual labor jobs such as washing cars, seasonal agricultural work, and meat processing at abattoirs. This group of men tended to encounter the most challenges finding work. A Congolese father highlighted the mismatch between Australia's computer-based approach for assisting refugees to find jobs when they have had little (or no) formal education or computer experience prior to arriving in Australia.

I think that in Australia it is hard to find a job. When you go to Centrelink they send you to find a job on a computer. When I was in high school, we didn't know the color of a computer. In Africa they finish school, but they don't know a computer, some of them never seen a computer... So if the (Australian) Government can tell us which area we can find a job. But to

send us to search for a job on a computer, that is a problem for us.

Refugee and migrant men who had access to education and work experience in their home countries also ran into challenges finding employment in Australia. These men cited language barriers, skills that are not recognised in Australia, lack of local work experience, and lack of networks as being the main employment barriers for them. Some of the men reported experiencing job insecurities that were brought about by the COVID-19 recession. A skilled migrant from India who previously worked in a full-time, permanent position as a chef reported:

I lost my job during COVID time and since then... it's hard to find permanent job. Most of the casual work everyone wants you – they are taking advantage or wants you in the weekend when it's busy, and when it's wet season or quiet they will just kick you out. So I have to do like two, three jobs like casual works on the weekend and when they are not busy I have to find something else. So it's hard. Last six, seven months were hard.

Our interviews with the fathers suggest that a complex web of structural, cultural, personal, and historical factors affected the men's experiences finding employment and fulfilling what they regarded as their cultural duty to be the family's financial and figurative provider.

Those who arrived on humanitarian visas, had little formal education, and lacked strong English language skills were largely unable to find work or worked in highly precarious, casualised jobs. Fathers who immigrated to Australia earlier were more successful in meeting their role as financial providers. While those who immigrated on skilled and student visas longer ago (in the 1990s and early 2000s) had a considerably easier time finding permanent employment than those who arrived more recently via the skilled migration

stream. These findings suggest that migrant and refugee men who immigrated more recently may experience compounded disadvantages finding suitable and stable employment in the context of Australia's increasingly casualised workforce. For many skilled migrants and international student visa holders finding employment quickly is literally a matter of survival as they largely have no access to social safety nets^{21–23} and often lack family and other support networks in Australia.

Constraints to managing work and caregiving responsibilities

Fathers' experiences finding and securing employment were also impacted by their access to informal and formal supports. The majority of migrant and refugee men we spoke with emphasised that their lives in Australia were profoundly shaped by not having access to extended family networks and that this lack of family support created substantial economic, personal, and emotional hurdles for them and their partners.

Those who could afford it brought family members, often grandmothers, to live with them for a period of time after the birth of a child. One father who migrated from India in the 1990's reflected that after his wife took about six months of parental leave, they flew the grandmother to Australia for one year, which supported his wife's transition back into the workforce.

My wife took six months or more, I think more than six months off from work, and she didn't have permanent job [...] And once she finished, when mum came, she started looking for a job and she found one. She joined the work and after a couple of years we could get the childcare near our house, childcare centers. That was much easier.

This arrangement of having grandparents from overseas care for children is, however, not an option for many families. With increasingly stringent immigration policy changes that have taken place in Australia over the past 30 years,

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this option is becoming increasingly out of reach for many migrant and refugee families who would otherwise rely on care provided by grandparents or other family members to support parents' to return to work.²⁴

Within this context of limited family support, many migrant families have no choice but for fathers to be the sole earner, with wives staying at home to care for the children. One father contrasts this with his experience in his home country where

(in India) we have parents to look after kids and here we just have one thing to do normally work, work, and work. And because my wife is studying, she's housewife. I'm the only income. So my main motivation is just to earn money for the expenses.

Beyond the benefits of grandparents providing caregiving to their grandchildren allowing fathers and mothers to work and have leisure time, fathers also talked about the emotional support that grandparents, extended families, and communities provided for new parents navigating the challenges of raising kids.

Being a father is like we need support, which we don't get. If back home you get like support from your families, from your neighborhood, all that, raising kids from your relatives. But here we are on our own. We have to do everything by ourself.

Some fathers talked about using formal childcare services to fill this gap, to facilitate workforce participation and provide respite for their wives. Challenges associated with childcare expenses were mainly discussed among men who worked regularly, whether in permanent, casual, or self-employed roles, and who had younger children. Men who worked, particularly those who were the primary or sole breadwinners for the family, often reported experiencing a great deal of worry and stress over the high cost of childcare.

Interestingly, men who immigrated to Australia longer ago and found permanent, high-income jobs quite easily also shared in the feeling that childcare presented a substantial affordability challenge for them and for other migrants. One of the fathers described the stress he felt due his responsibility to cover childcare expenses and suggested that the government should offer more support and assistance to families.

I'm not getting that much support from government. My wife is studying. I have to go to work. Income is low but if you send your child to childcare centers, the expenses are high, you get thousand-dollar bills which always worries me, stresses me.

Some fathers observed that the high cost of childcare made it more difficult for their partners to enter the workforce, which in turn contributed to the increased stress and responsibility for them to be the sole breadwinner in the family. The absence of affordable childcare imposed a barrier on migrant and refugee mothers' workforce participation. This situation placed more pressure and stress upon fathers to find secure employment.

In the context of limited availability family support, high childcare costs, and working long hours to financially provide for the family, some fathers expressed work-life conflict that impacted their physical and mental health. This is consistent with literature that finds long work hours²⁵ and being a migrant, particularly from a non-English speaking country, is associated with poorer mental health outcomes for fathers with young children in Australia.²⁶

Migrant fathers' access to work entitlements, such as paid leave, and the accessibility of flexible work arrangements affected their capacities to manage work and care responsibilities. This finding is consistent with other literature suggesting that workplaces play a critical role in supporting fathers to manage work and care responsibilities.²⁷ Men who worked in permanent positions more often

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reported that their workplaces afforded them flexibility, which assisted them to carry out their caring responsibilities within the family.

My workplace is always very flexible, having flexible arrangements if I need to go somewhere for doctors' appointment, need to take my child somewhere, it's very flexible.

One father explained how he had requested casual employment over a permanent position (which was offered to him) because he needed the higher pay rate casuals earn.

So when my child was born, I was not entitled to any leave or anything.

This perhaps points out that some fathers are not adequately informed about the impact of different work arrangements.

Flexibility and access to leave was identified as a gap by some fathers, with some wanting more gender-equal access to parental leave to alleviate some of the stress they experience.

I think more paid parental leaves, that might help, you know? That's definitely help. Just not only women, is including the father. Then people take and they're not as stressed out.

Many fathers felt pressured to work full-time and juggle multiple jobs, thus reducing the amount of time they could spend caring for their children and maintaining their own health and wellbeing. Highlighting the embedded gendered understanding of parenting in the context of underlying financial and cultural pressures, one father expressed

But again, you – as a migrant father, you have to go back to work. You don't have much choices. I would love to spend more time with my newborn. When my time is finishing on work, I'm looking on the clock [...] I always

wanted to spend more and more time. I was really, really emotionally attached. People say it was your first child, that's why – I don't know, but always want to spend time with my child.

Cultural tensions renegotiating their roles as fathers

Acknowledging differences among and within countries and cultures, most fathers expressed a preference as the patriarchal leader in their family. The fathers explained how they upheld these value systems within a new cultural setting, while also identifying areas of tension where structural and cultural norms imposed challenges to previous divisions (between men and women) and responsibilities (as fathers and family leaders). There was notable tension for some fathers as they tried to renegotiate their fathering identity within their family and the broader community.

Many fathers talked about new and different work and parenting challenges that emerged as they attempted to manage some of the tensions between their identity as a father from their home country and in Australia. For example, a Congolese father conceptualised his role as the teacher in the family, responsible for teaching values of respect to all members of the household. He extends his teacher role to his wife, indicating a strong sense of patriarchy within the family.

You are a father teaching your child, and maybe your wife as well. So there is teaching how to live in society. First is to respect everyone. Teaching your children or your wife how to respect people in society is very important.

Fathers also talked about the challenge of fathering through young adulthood in Australia. They felt conflicted between the cultural approach to fathering in their home country compared to Australia. One clear example particularly relevant

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for Congolese fathers was the name children use when talking to their father and other adults.

Part of the challenge for migrant parents from Africa to Australia...because here your daughter can call your name, but in Africa is not like that. Like my mom, I'm not allowed to say my mom's name...that's a big challenge.

Fathers identified how their children experienced two different cultures, and therefore two different sets of rules. They recognised the challenges in adapting to different values, as their teenagers start "copying the new culture" that is inconsistent with their own values. One father recognised the different cultural systems that children were experiencing day to day, and explained that he managed these different cultural value systems by accepting that his children live under different "ways" in and outside of the house.

Two different cultures in the same house. When we are home in our house we use our culture, we say to the kids, we must follow these ways. First is respecting each other. If you see someone older than you, your mummy, your daddy. But when they go to school they put other things in their mind. So when they are still kids it's easy. But when they are going to finish year 12 all the things you told them from your country, "no," they follow Australia culture. And you are parents and in that case you can't control them. They are free in Australia.

Many fathers identified this as an area of conflict with their children as they entered teenage years. One father explained how in the Congo fathers remain in the fathering role well into their children's adult years, which differs from Australia where the children become independent when they turn 18. This cultural difference was also identified by fathers from other countries and regions.

You ask us about the difference between father back home and here. Here, the child is free when they are 18. But back home, according to our culture, you let your son free once they have a partner they can live with [...] That's the difference between here and there. And it's very difficult for a father with a child at 18 to say "you can do whatever you want."

The Congolese men often drew upon cultural concepts and animal imagery to emphasise that fathers must not leave their children and are responsible to provide for their family and teach their children.

We don't want to be "snake father" – a snake father is when you leave your children. You want to be a "chicken father" [...] A father doesn't leave their children to do things by themselves... Eagle is when you're teaching babies how to fly. You take your babies up high and let them fly. If one of the babies falls, the eagle will rescue them and bring them back up high again.

In addition to adapting to new roles within the household, some fathers also talked about different cultural expectations in the workforce. Fathers' countries of origin, cultural backgrounds, education levels, English levels, and migration status shaped their experiences adapting to work culture in Australia. One father who recently arrived from China as a dependent on his wife's skilled visa explained that it was a much more relaxed work culture in Australia. Although his limited English language proficiency acted as a barrier to securing immediate employment, he believed that once he did find employment, he and his wife (currently the breadwinner) would be able to evenly share care responsibilities – something he did not view as culturally available to him in China.

In Australia, I take more time with my kids. It's better life. If in China I take most of time

to work [...] I think it's better here. Fathers can take time with children. Pick up, drop off. Play with kids.

Some fathers acknowledged that the balance of roles and responsibilities for caring for children are shifting, in both their home country and Australia. An Indian father acknowledged that fathering roles change and adapt with changing economic conditions.

Usually, it's the father going to work, but now more the wife/mother has to go to work.

Another Indian father expressed some uneasiness with this shift toward more mothers participating in the workforce.

But now things changing so that's also now changing the parents – if father living with the kids, they need to know [how to care for them] but sometimes they're struggling. Here or back home too – they cannot cope with the old historical things to the new way of life.

Overall, the men's identities as fathers in Australia involved renegotiating the cultural expectations and norms attached to fathers and what is regarded as respectful family behavior in their home countries whilst acknowledging that their children are influenced by Australian culture. Balancing and coming to terms with “two different cultures in the same house” was not a seamless and easy process for them in their roles as fathers and workers, yet all the men we spoke with indicated a willingness to adjust their cultural expectations attached to fatherhood and working roles when necessary.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

The employment and wellbeing needs of migrant and refugee fathers must be viewed

through a gendered, cultural, and historical lens with attention given to the complex, non-linear, and long lasting challenges and adaptations involved in international migration and resettlement. Drawing upon a temporalities approach encourages the development of policies and services that consider men's diverse migration experiences, pathways, and individual circumstances in the context of structural factors affecting their lives across the life course. As migrant and refugee fathers' migration and resettlement trajectories often stretch across many years, even decades, policies should focus on addressing both the immediate and long-term barriers to finding suitable and secure employment and supporting men's capacity to provide caregiving to their children.

Policy makers, service providers, and employers must recognise that migrants and refugees are highly diverse and a one-size-fits-all approach cannot meet their education and employment needs. Having a firm understanding that migrants and refugees are varied in their educational backgrounds, work experiences, and English language skills will enable the development of more tailored approaches to employment programs and pathways. The migrant and fathers in this study identified employment as a central concern and challenge for them. Employment conditions strongly influenced the men's capacities to engage with and provide care for their children and families and achieve a sense of wellbeing. As such, policy makers, employers, and education and training providers should play a critical role in creating opportunities for migrant and refugee men to access secure, preferably ongoing, employment and creating workplace cultures that normalise and encourage flexible work. These actions will support migrant and refugee fathers to successfully renegotiate their roles as workers and fathers in Australia.

As migrants are more likely to experience discrimination in finding work, and men in general often to experience exclusion from accessing workplace flexibility and encounter stigma in relation to taking time away from work,²⁸ it is

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critical that policy makers and employers work together to establish and normalise flexible work arrangements and equal access and uptake of paid parental leave entitlements for men and women. However, the need to increase men's access to flexible work arrangements points to a deeper, structural issue, namely, many migrant men work in heavily casualised jobs with little or no workplace entitlements or job security.

The structural barriers that make managing work and caregiving difficult for migrant and refugee men must be addressed. In the context of protracted migration and resettlement trajectories, men often encounter economic and structural processes that make it imperative for them to quickly find any job they can get, and this often involves taking on casual or cash-in-hand jobs. Developing policies and services that make childcare more affordable, supporting migrant fathers and mothers to enter the workforce, and making it more attainable for migrants to bring family members to Australia would go a long way toward supporting migrant and refugee men's employment, wellbeing, and fathering outcomes. Government and employers should have the goal of increasing the availability of permanent work, mainstreaming flexible work arrangements, equalising access to parental and carer's leave, and making childcare and family visas more affordable to support migrants and refugees to find and maintain suitable and secure employment.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown how migrant and refugee men's identities as fathers and workers are shaped by renegotiating their culturally defined roles as financial and figurative providers and decision-makers within their families. Within the context of needing to adapt to new cultural norms about family and work responsibilities in Australia the men also faced structural constraints posed by employment opportunities, workplace culture, lack of family networks, and access to affordable childcare. Navigating these complex and

compounded structural constraints created further challenges and barriers for migrant and refugee fathers to renegotiate their identities and roles at home and in the workplace. They often encountered intersectional employment barriers, which were often connected to their educational background, English language proficiency, lack of recognition of qualifications, lack of local work experience, limited networks and social supports, visa status, and historical time of arrival in Australia

Consistent with other literature on fathering, masculinities, and migration,^{3,5,7,8} most fathers in our study articulated defined roles and responsibilities as the provider and leader of their families. Yet, many of the men we interviewed reported high levels of stress associated with the pressing need for them to be the breadwinner in the context of expensive childcare costs and lack of family support networks in Australia. However, in most instances they were no longer the sole breadwinners and sometimes their wives took on the breadwinner role in Australia. Nevertheless, the men continued to strongly identify with being the provider, leader, and teacher of the family. Their sense of patriarchy was attributed to their cultural background, with most asserting that in their home countries the father is the breadwinner and decision-maker, while the mother stays at home and cares for the children.

The historical time of the men's migration played a significant role in their employment outcomes. This indicates that the casualisation of work that has taken place in Australia may present compounded employment disadvantages for migrant and refugee men, particularly for those who immigrated more recently. This finding is consistent with other research showing that the economic circumstances in Australia began to shift to more casualised and precarious employment conditions starting in the late 1990s and early 2000s.¹⁷⁻²⁰ Men from migrant and refugee backgrounds in Australia may be particularly vulnerable to precarious work due in part to widespread casualised employment trends in the country as well as more stringent and market-based immigration policy changes that have developed

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over the past few decades.^{21,29} Research is needed to develop more nuanced understandings about how migrant and refugee men's employment, fathering, wellbeing, and resettlement outcomes are shaped through their individual backgrounds and cultures in the context of immigration and employment policies and practices in their host societies. The findings from this small-scale exploratory study contribute toward building a growing body of evidence exploring the complex intersectional processes shaping migrant and refugee fathers' wellbeing and family caregiving practices across the life course.

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