

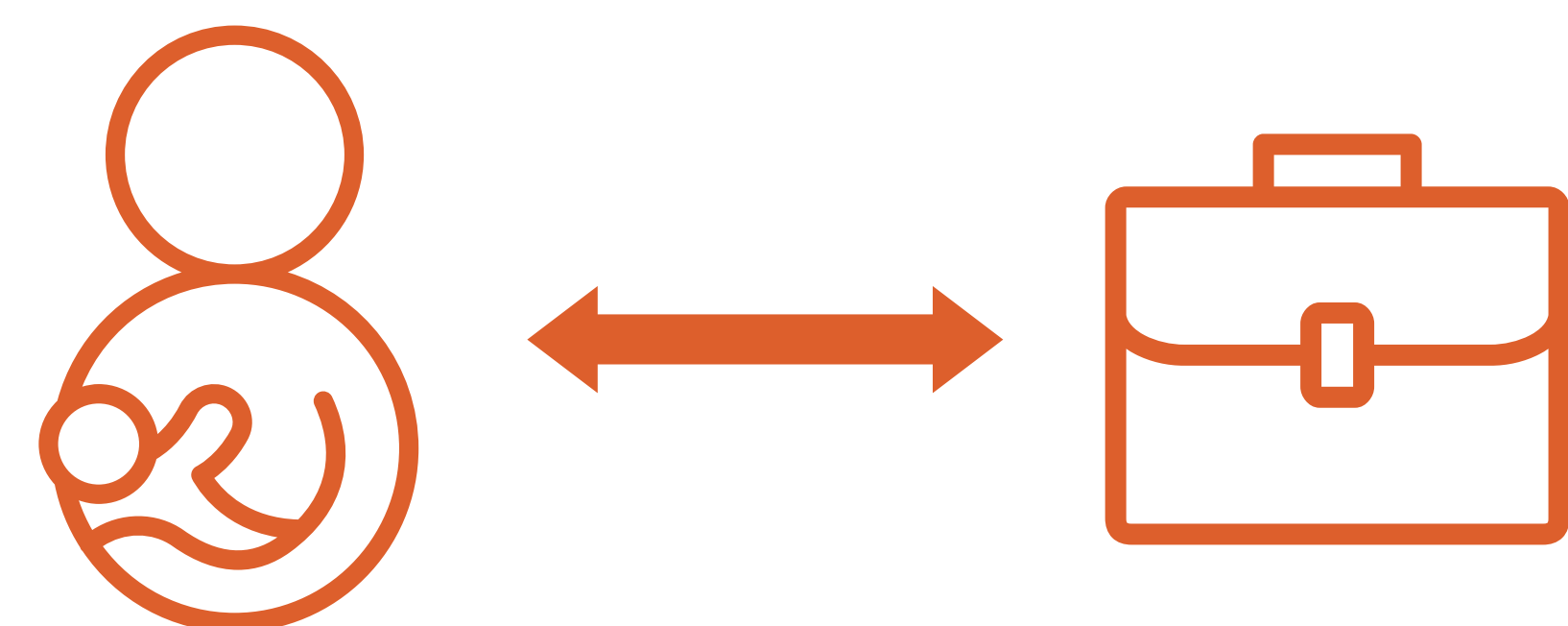
How do Parents Make Decisions on Pursuing Work and Childcare?

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Introduction

In 2021, Statistics Canada reported that the percentage of working mothers was 77% and 92% for working fathers. There was an increase in working parents over the years, especially for women.

With more parents working jobs while caring for their children, researchers have been interested in how they navigate these responsibilities and how they make decisions regarding their work and family.



Methods

This research draws on interview data from The Care Economies in Context study, led by Professor Ito Peng, Canada Research Chair in Global Social Policy and Director of the Centre for Global Social Policy in the Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto. The broader project seeks to map, measure and compare the ways that paid and unpaid childcare and elder care is provided in nine different countries; and to develop policy recommendations to develop equitable care infrastructure suitable for each context

For Canada, the research team conducted surveys (N=1000) and in-depth interview data (N= 101) The findings in this poster are based on the analysis of 10 in-depth childcare interviews that were transcribed and then coded using Nvivo. Nivivo was used to keep track of nodes and develop themes. The questions in the interviews asked about various topics including the impacts that care work had on parents' careers, the division of labour, childcare arrangements, and suggestions for policy changes.

Out Of the 10 respondents:

-5 were employed full-time, 3 were employed part-time, 1 not employed, 1 on parental leave from full-time job

-8 were female, 2 were male

-4 used paid childcare services, 6 did not

Acknowledgements

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Results

The findings were that parents made work and childcare arrangement decisions based on the extent of:



-Access to External Support (paid or unpaid)

Support from family and friends and child services like daycares and schools was shown to help parents better manage work along with parenting duties.

"We have my parents and her parents. Yeah, I don't think we'd be able to do it without them. I'd probably have to quit my job and do something else that kept me home all the time."
-CC6 (Father to 4 children currently on parental leave)

Many Interviewees who did not have family and friends relied on daycare services to be able to go to work but faced challenges in the system such as expensive costs and long waitlists. Daycare Costs were a common concern for parents deciding whether to get support. When there was nobody else to care for the children, it was primarily mothers who reduced work hours or stopped working to care for the children.

"And so I know a lot of people who actually - they are not able to pursue work because they can't afford childcare"
-CC4 (Full-time working father to a 2 year old)

-Workplace Accommodations

Job Flexibility is an important factor for parents, including flexible hours and parental leave. Often parents who were able to work from home and had more control over their hours believed it helped them manage both care and work. An issue that emerged from the interviews were concerns from fathers about working a lot and not being able to spend as much time with their children and mothers who felt that their career was negatively affected due to the care burdens.

"Yeah, with - with our daughter and stuff, like the hours just would have been crazy, the commute would've been crazy. So I spent several months looking for another job and quit that other job so that I can find more flexibility cause that for me right now is more important than more money is having a bit more flexibility."
-CC10 (Part-time mother to a 2 year old)



Discussion

The findings from the interviews are consistent with the current literature. The literature included findings such as:

-A survey of 2000 American mothers were more likely to remain employed or increase working hours when they had access to flexible work hours and paid sick leave

-A survey of 425 parents in Britain and 30 follow-up interviews showed that informal childcare helped parents to work more regularly. Support from grandparents were discussed in these interviews as well where a grandparent, typically already retired, would look after the kids until one parent comes home from work.

Why might there be Gender Differences?

-Organizations are gendered and concept of a universal worker represents a male.

-Gender stereotypes expect men to do paid work while encouraging women to engage in caretaking duties

-Care work has a larger impact on women than men as many women sacrifice their careers or pass on promotions

- Men who take parental leave are perceived to have more feminine and less masculine traits than men who opted out.

-This expectation for men to keep working at the expense of family time is rooted in patriarchal ideas. This ultimately can affect how parents make career and family decisions.



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