



Mitigating the Effects of Father Imprisonment on the Family: A Study of Social Work Intervention Strategies in Raymond Mhlaba Local Municipality in Eastern Cape

Akhona Tshaka¹, P.T. Tanga² and Akeem Adewale Oyelana³

*^{1,2}Department of Social Work and Social Development, University of Fort Hare,
Private Bag X1314, Alice 5700, Eastern Cape, South Africa*

*³Department of Public Administration, University of Fort Hare, Private Bag X1314,
Alice 5700, Eastern Cape, South Africa*

E-mail: ¹<201110882@ufh.ac.za>, ²<ptanga@ufh.ac.za>, ³<201100592@ufh.ac.za>

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ABSTRACT The South African population is highly populated by single mothered families. Fatherlessness has emerged as one of the greatest social problems, especially as children who grow up in families with absent-fathers suffer lasting damage. The aim of this study was to examine the effects of fathers' imprisonment on the functioning of the family and social work interventions to mitigate this effect. The study used a mixed method approach that involved the use of the quantitative and qualitative methodology. Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires and face-to-face in-depth interviews. This study employed three sampling strategies namely: multi-stage sampling and purposive sampling as well as snowball sampling. The sample was made up of 65 members of families whose father is in prison or had been to prison and 15 social work officials. The findings revealed that father's imprisonment has a negative effect that causes dysfunctional families. The effect is due to the loss of a father figure and a provider of the family. Inequality and stigmatization among family members were also found to cause dysfunctional families after the father's imprisonment. The findings from social work officials revealed that social service interventions to alleviate the family dysfunctions. However, the services provided by social workers are limited, there is also a lack of awareness regarding social work interventions for families with fathers in prison. The study concluded that resources are limited to enhance the provision of adequate and better psychosocial support for affected families in order to alleviate the undesirable effect of father's imprisonment. Therefore, the study recommended that the social welfare system should be strengthened by embarking on enlightenment programmes that create awareness about family-based interventions for dysfunction families with fathers in prison.