

Factors Hindering Men's Capabilities to Actively Participate in the Early Social Development of Children: A Qualitative Approach

J. Mathwasa and C. Maphosa

University of Fort Hare, East London, Eastern Cape, RSA

KEYWORDS Constrictions. Emotional Stability. Father Involvement. Fatherhood. Morality. Interrelation. Individuality

ABSTRACT This study explored the factors hindering men's capabilities to actively participate in the early social development of children. A qualitative approach grounded in the interpretivist paradigm allowing investigation of participants in their natural setting was adopted. The sample comprised of ten purposively selected men who were engaged in a focus group discussion. All ethical measures were adhered to and consent forms were completed. Collected data was analysed in evocative themes. The findings revealed that migrant labour, poverty, fear of responsibility and lack of commitment were factors hindering men's capabilities to partake in the early social development of their children. The study concluded that social and emotional development is fundamental to the all-round development of children hence, the need for men's active participation. The study recommends tailor-made programs and policies that motivate men's capabilities to actively participate regardless their early socialisation, economic and marital status.

INTRODUCTION

Father participation initiatives have taken the centre stage in research and government agendas ever since the launch of a new era in the Early Childhood Development that was initiated by the Jomtien Declaration, the Dakar Framework of 1990 and all development clusters that followed. For some time, immemorial mothers have naturally been predisposed to nurturing children while fathers have taken a passive stance even though the development theory sustains the positive influence fathers on the overall development of children (Marsiglio and Hendricks 2012). Psychologists affirm that babies who have secure attachments to both biological parents have better probabilities of developing into joyful, successful, and well-adjusted children, thus leading to productive adulthood (Bosmans and Kerns 2015; Brown et al. 2012). Furthermore, when fathers devote quality time to their babies, they become acquainted with their needs and communicate with them effectively. This familiarity permits fathers to re-

spond sympathetically; therefore, they can ascertain when their baby needs to be fed and when the need is just to change the scenery. Being an actively participant father denotes being occupied in virtually all facets of the child's lifetime (Marsiglio et al. 2000), starting from direct contact (play) and being responsible for childcare to being physically present to the child (Palkovitz 2002).

Evidence from extensive research indicates that the presence of fathers in the lives of their children is key to well-adjusted adolescents (Cabrera and Tamis-LeMonda 2013; Shwalb et al. 2013). It has been established that fathers may be away from their children due to career demands, divorce, and non-marriage to the child's mother or death. When a father is away due to career or employment demands, it is a temporary loss to children and fewer negative effects are experienced (McLanahan et al. 2013). However, to other children, father-absence has caused many social ills and psychological damage due to situations such as divorce or death which are more permanent (Makusha and Richter 2015). The other situation in this phenomenon is where the father is absent due to lackadaisical attitude or neglect yet they may be physically present (Spruijt et al. 2001). The mismatch in the importance of men and their absence in children's ear-

Address for correspondence:

Dr. J. Mathwasa

Telephone: +27(04)653 0013/ +2778 379 6056

E-mail: jmathwasa@ufh.ac.za

ly life have motivated the researchers to dig deeper on the factors that hinder the capabilities of men to partake in the emotional stability of young children.

Social Development in Children

Parents perceive child's development to mean language, literacy and numeracy acquisition as well as, visible physical growth. Although not much attention has been paid to it, a child's social development is a critical portion of the growth mystery. Moreover, it is essential to all learning because it enhances the ability to interrelate with other children and adults. Gresham and Elliott (2009) define social development as communally acceptable acquired behaviours that permit a child to interrelate effectively with others, avoiding or escaping from negative social connections with others. Similarly, Yates et al. (2008: 2) describe early social and emotional development as the emergent capability of young children (in the age range 0-5) to "formulate close and secure adult and peer relations; experience, control, and express feelings in socially and traditionally suitable ways; and explore the setting and entirely learn in family, community, and culture contexts". Accordingly, Goleman (2006) also suggests that, through social and emotional development, children learn to form strong connections that guide them into adulthood confirming that humans are wired for emotional attachment. Social and emotional development is critical in ECD as it sets the foundation for children's development throughout learning, adolescence and into adulthood (Denham and Brown 2010). Children are also empowered to be self-confident, empathic, intellectually inquisitive, trusting, and capable of communicating logically and skillfully as well as, relating well to others (Thompson 2001).

Longstanding research has established how early attachment relationships shape the child's social and emotional development (Ladd 2005). In their work Bowlby (1953) and Ainsworth et al. (1978) accentuate the importance of early emotional attachment in the social development of the child. It is against this revelation that researchers have turned their focus on the effects of parental bond and attachment particularly, the father. According to Mackey (2001) the bond between a father and his child is an inimitable attachment and bond in a child's life that shapes

childhood development, influences morals and predicts both optimistic and undesirable psychosomatic welfare. The father-child connection affords the child with a masculine role model who offers guidance, discipline and partakes in their economic and corporeal welfare (Ackerman et al. 2002; Flouri and Buchanan 2003; Mackey 2001). Conversely, children who fail to build social skills appropriately, or have dysfunctional skills in the early developmental stage later show problematic behaviours. The extant literature further advances that these children tend to experience future social maladaptation, school instability, and poor academic achievement (Arnold et al. 2012; Veenstra et al. 2008). Meanwhile, a child who is exposed to neglect, violence or any form of abuse tends to produce a high level of stress hormone called cortisol which helps the child to cope with threatening situations. Repeated exposure to such harmful situations may cause poor development and permanent negative damage to the brain.

Man's Mandate towards Their Children

Looking back at creation, God used the term "man" referring to "mankind" which includes men and women who are also known as "humans". A man is described using terms such as male and manhood that denote gender and sex among the humans while masculinity is assumed to be what men should be (Connell and Messerschmitt 2005). Ideally, the man was designed to be strong and hard working to provide and protect women and children. Manhood is a status given to a man who becomes a father and becomes a protector and provider to his family (Clare 2000; Marsiglio and Pleck 2005). Traditionally, a man becomes the role model and contributes to the development and general welfare of his offspring (Lopez and Corona 2012). A man gains the status of a father by his part in the reproduction of a baby, and this father role is influenced by traditional, historical and socio-economic circumstances (Ball and Wahedi 2010). Research has established the influences between a father and the development of his children (Pougnnet et al. 2011) as sociable and supportive; has a heartfelt and close connection with his child (Goldman 2005), and is also sensitive, friendly, nurturing, loving, and above all, inspirational and enriching.

Furthermore, fathers are considered as being active participants when they have secured robust attachment with their children whereby they perform a critical role in guaranteeing positive outcomes and better social and cognitive development. Studies show that like mothers, fathers are skilled and proficient in nurturing and providing financial sustenance to their children (Lamb 2010) and their active involvement positively contributes to several psycho-social and progressive outcomes in children (Lamb 2010; Pleck 2010; Holcomb et al. 2015; Linn et al. 2015). Due to the man's role in bringing the child to existence, he becomes accountable for the welfare, education and the general nurture of the child.

Researchers have continually found that there is a progressive relationship between the father's level of participation and the academic success of children during their school-age years (Devaney and Kearns 2010; Daly 2013). Consequently, a higher level of father involvement is interrelated with children's achievement of upper grades, doing homework promptly, exhibiting good behaviour and having positive attitudes towards school work. Furthermore, where father involvement is high, children have higher chances of graduating to post-secondary education (Goldman 2005; Harris 2015). Hence, the activities that parents perform at home with children tend to significantly influence their intellectual and social development more than any other material provision (Melhuish et al. 2004). Higher father involvement in nurturing their children from an infant phase is associated with higher Intelligence Quotients (IQs) and better cognitive capacities in school (Rosenberg and Wilcox 2006). Motivating wide-ranging home-school corporations becomes imperative; compelling schools to design and cultivate activities that involve families, communities and schools to collectively congregate with the child in mind.

Hindrances to Men's Active Participation

Factors preventing men's active participation in the social development of children have continued to be inadequately stable over periods; now there is a clearer understanding of explicit factors that impede or enable father's immersion in the early social development of their children. Men face these hindrances at different levels with varying magnitude. Policies formu-

lated by governments tend to implicitly or aggressively daunt fathers' active participation through social welfares and lack of paternal leave (Alio et al. 2011; Feeley et al. 2013). Besides hostile policies, the desire to fulfil the provider role has separated men from their families as they must take up employment in towns or other countries (O'Brien and Moss 2010). The apartheid policies in South Africa caused migration labour structures where for most of the year men worked away from home, mostly in mines where female visitors were forbidden and men had limited time-off to visit their families (Preston-Whyte 1978). In such instances, the woman gave birth in the absence of the father leading to an estranged relationship between the father and the child.

Maternal prejudices have been known to hinder men in becoming actively involved with their children due to estranged relationships or lack of payment of '*inhlawulo*' (bride price) (Summers 2011; Maxwell et al. 2012; Ferrell 2013; Panter-Brick et al. 2014). Some men are hindered from actively participating in their children's social development due to negative stereotypes, traditional beliefs and cultural tendencies that nurturing children is a woman's duty. Despite their importance in children's lives, some men detest being fathers hence are never present for the birth of their own children (Morrell and Richter 2006). Crime leading to parental incarceration interrupts family relations, resulting in poverty, poor academic attainment, belligerence, despair, delinquency, and substance abuse. Circumstances such as death or divorce permanently hinder men from active participation leading to children's emotional depression (Makusha and Richter 2015).

The realization of men's influence on their children's attitudes, behaviour and academic achievement has led the researchers to focus their attention and interest on fatherhood initiatives in early childhood programs (Melhuish et al. 2004; Ortiz 2004; Rosenberg and Wilcox 2006; Lamb 2010). Of concern is that the number of men negating to accomplish their monetary, honorable, or societal obligation to their children is on the increase. Policymakers and the public have prioritized men's role as economic breadwinners causing men to insufficiently partake in the education of their children (Greene 2003; O'Brien and Moss 2010). Some studies have exposed occurrences where some men are not keen to spend money on their children (Ingoldsby

and Shaw 2002; Richter et al. 2012). Regrettably, good as they may be, the existing welfare reforms such as Child Grants have caused escalated family poverty creating high public dependency thereby unwittingly promoting father absence. Fathers have negated their responsibility towards their offspring hiding behind unemployment. Likewise, Singh et al. (2004) affirm black men's lack of enthusiasm to be involved because fatherhood is linked to the ability to afford the material requirements of the child. Chideya and Williams (2013) found that fathers considered roles such as babysitting, feeding, changing nappies and waking up during the night to attend to the needs of their children to be traditionally and culturally ascribed to mothers. This finding is aligned to social role theory of gender where Eagly (1987) believed that most behavioural variances which are attributed to males and females were the consequence of cultural stereotypes regarding gender on how males and females believed and acted resulting in social roles being instilled in young people.

The social, economic, and/or cultural barriers put father absence in the limelight as the prime cause for their absence in children's lives. However, Votruba-Drzal (2006) found that reduced father/child attachments at an early age caused lack of commitment to conventional activities which leads adolescents resorting to drug abuse. Sadly, men have failed to teach, support, nurture and guide their children. Additionally, some children do not know their fathers. It should be appreciated that black men are mostly unschooled and the illiteracy rate is high due to the apartheid education system. Legotlo's (2014) opinion was that illiterate men are hesitant to partake in school functions because they feel inferior to the highly educated, well-informed and economically better-off teachers. The background laid above exposes the absence of clear cut policy frameworks on the family issues and men's mandate in South Africa. This scenario calls for academics, civil society, concerned citizens and policymakers to urgently address this critical shortcoming and redress the damaging effects of the apartheid policies on the family which have been dividing South Africa (Department of Social Development 2011).

Research Questions

Two research questions were posed to enable focused investigation of the phenomenon under study:

- ♦ What are the factors hindering men's capabilities to actively participate in the early social development of children?
- ♦ What interventions can be implemented to change men's mindset from absentee fatherhood to involved fatherhood?

Research Objectives

- ♦ To investigate the factors hindering men's capabilities to actively participate in the early social development of children.
- ♦ To establish interventions can be implemented to improve men's capabilities to actively participate in the early social development of children.

Theoretical Framework

This paper espoused the social role on gender by Eagly (1987) and the attachment theory developed by Bowlby (1979) which were interchangeably referred to throughout the discourse. Citing Eagly (1987), Moss (2015) asserts that the innate bodily differences between menfolk and womenfolk are the consequence of labour division in the society where men assume responsibilities outside the home while women are anticipated to be in charge for the home and children. These historical divisions in labour are based on the innate differences had developed specific gender roles for men and women expected in most cultures and societies. It has become an accepted norm that women serve as children's primary caregivers while men are breadwinners for their families. These societal expectations and gender stereotypes have taken men away from their children while women remain attached to their children as they continue with their chores which include child nurturing.

The Bowlby's (1979) attachment theory emphasizes the importance of the initial bond that the baby cements with his/her caregivers as a permanent psychological connectedness between human beings with an incredible impression that continues through lifespan. It can be argued that while the infant is kept closely attached to the mother by childbirth, the father can achieve this bond by being present from conception throughout the child nurturing. Extensive research has incessantly recognized that the eminence of a child's attachment bond with his or her primary caregiver is the key influential

factor of socio-emotional development (Ainsworth 1979; Bowlby 2007; Cassidy and Shaver 2008; Sroufe et al. 2005). Attachment is an emotion that creates a bond grounded on some perceived principles; therefore, it becomes crucial for the father to be connected to their child. Bruce (2013) articulates that it is a robust affectionate bond that the child tends to have with a special person making them comfortable in their nearness leading them to experience inclination. When attachment is compromised, the child feels rejected, worthless, deserted, and unlovable and that he/she is bad. Furthermore, the child feels that the caregiver is oblivious, hurtful, unreliable and unresponsive to his/her needs (Attachment Treatment and Training Institute 2004). Whatever factors may cause fathers to be estranged from their children, the ripple effects manifest through behaviour problems that are experienced in adolescence (DeKlyen and Speltz 2001). Common delinquency that children and adolescents with attachment dilemmas have is the reduced capacity to self-pacify; hence they simply develop attachment strategies of seeking coziness and proximity. The theories were chosen for interaction and their strength in explaining how the culturally assigned gender roles, stereotypes and the failed attachment contribute to creating factors hindering men's capabilities to actively participate in the early social development of children.

Strategies to Strengthen Fathers' Active Participation in Children's Social Development

It has been established that South Africa is a country with the highest rate of father absenteeism in the world (Richter et al. 2012). Furthermore, only one-third of children attending preschool in South Africa reside with both biological parents under the same dwellings meaning that two-thirds of the children live with single parents, grandparents, or live in foster homes or child-headed households (Statistics South Africa 2011). This melancholy scenario motivated the researchers to explore the factors that caused fathers to be passive players in the social growth of their children since strong father participation in the early childhood was known for sealing the gap between academic accomplishment and failure in later life years (Karoly et al. 2005; Barnett and Belfield 2006).

Adema et al. (2011) were of the impression that parental leave is one of the rare policy plans that can have direct influence on the behaviour of parents. As of 2001 in Canada, parental leave law became a strategy that gave fathers better viewpoint to impact the wide-ranging development of their children simultaneously promoting gender equality (Statistics Canada 2015). Initiatives such as Parents Fair Share and Parents for Fragile Families are programs that have been introduced and funded by the Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage policies in USA. Similarly, programs such as Supporting Father Involvement and Supporting Healthy Marriage improved family relations as they addressed key risk factors that could negatively influence children's social development and family units (Knox et al. 2011). Likewise, in Australia, fragmentary policy directives were introduced on father-inclusive approaches with the provision of a booklet entitled *Fathers Matter* by Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Equally, resources such as *Raising Children's Network* by Fletcher (2008) and *Nurturing the Pilbara* by Ngala (n.d.) have realised positive results in various facets of acceptance, engagement or influence (Government of Western Australia 2012).

METHODOLOGY

In this discourse, qualitative approach which is essentially an interpretive inquiry procedure that is grounded on a naturalistic approach was adopted. It allowed the researchers to develop a compound and comprehensive depiction, analyzing words, reports and detailed opinions of informers and conducting the study in the natural setting (Creswell and Poth 2017; Denzin and Lincoln 2005). This approach allowed the researchers to observe participants' behaviour and record what the six purposively selected participants responded to the semi-structured interviews as they revealed their lived experiences. The responses were captured on a tape recorder to curtail misinterpretation of participants' experiences. Data analysis revealed emerging themes and sub-themes from the critical daily life events and experiences described by participants (Leedy and Ormrod 2005).

Ethical Considerations

During this study, matters such as maintaining privacy, anonymity and confidentiality,

avoiding harm, betrayal and deception were the participants' rights that were observed including the right to withdraw from participation at any stage of the research process (Graham et al. 2007). Ethical Clearance Certificate REC-270710-028-RA Level 1, Reference Number MAT001 was obtained from the University of Fort Hare's Ethics Committee. Entrance to the research sites and participants was gained through gatekeepers using clearance letters from University Ethics Committee and East London Education District Office. The researchers guaranteed that participants' right to privacy, confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation were observed, and assured them of "no come backs". Thereafter, having ensured that they understood their mandate in the process, the participants signed the informed consent (Bryman 2012). Issues of anonymity and confidentiality were addressed using pseudonyms and avoiding statements linking to an individual to diminish harm.

RESULTS

Men's Fatherly Mandate to Children

Fathers were asked if they knew their mandate towards their children and these were their responses:

"A father is a provider. He is more like a Shepherd who looks after his flocks. He is the head of the family. I don't mean he makes decisions on his own but he is there to provide leadership. Whatever decision he makes he agrees with the mother of his children" (Moses).

"A father must be able to give financial support to his family and provide children with means for education. A father should send his children to church; he should be able to provide his family with entertainment such as sporting games and going to theatre" (Sizwe).

"A father for me is helpful, and willing to share, the one who can be helpful as well on their family. They must share things they have with other people and be helpful. Then when they help me I say thank you, and can say that one is a father" (Menzi).

Generally, interviewees knew men's mandate coming up with terms like understanding, loving, reliable and responsible describing fathers. However, Sive had revealed the different sides of fathers when he said: *"Fathers are different from each other, there are those who look after*

their families and there are those who don't. But they're all fathers."

Hindrances to Men's Participation

While acknowledging the mandate men have on their children, men in South Africa seem to negate their responsibilities with varied identified obstacles as confirmed by the interviewees:

Ben asserts that *"There are different kinds of fathering behaviour in South Africa; there are those fathers who take care of their children and are involved in their children's life. There are fathers who want to be involved but because of circumstances they are not, maybe because they are un-employed. And, lastly there are those fathers who just don't care. They don't worry about anything. Those are the differences I am referring to."*

Nkosikhona lamented that while *"I don't have a firm stand on this but I can say that there are some fathers who categorically misbehave, for example, fathers who rape babies and women and kill them. They are giving all fathers a bad name."*

On a lighter note, Sive observed that *"Fathers are very different from each other, for me it is very difficult to make a judgment. There are fathers who drink a lot and tend to abuse their children a lot then there are those who don't drink but spend most of their time with friends."*

From these interviews one detects the varied behaviours and characteristic displayed by men in South Africa such that one cannot have an umbrella term to describe them. Sive summarised well by bringing out the different types of fatherhood.

Labour Migration

Shane believes that while it is important for fathers to participate some do not because they work far from their homes like in mines or in big cities leaving their families in the village or they are unemployed. Concurring Musa states, *"Yes, men want to participate but in the township, most of our fathers had to move from their communities to others to seek employment opportunities. Some of these fathers are away for a long period, thus making it difficult for them to contribute or play a full role in their children's development."*

On the same issue Zenzele confirmed by saying *"I want to be there every day with my family but I was transferred, I work very far from home. I only come for one weekend a month."* Stemming from the interviews is the issue of labour migration where men have to seek employment far from their families.

Estranged Relationships

In his assertion, Ben opined *"I don't know why a father is not involved in his child's social development but it could be because he has a sour/bad relationship with the mother and that she doesn't allow any sort of a relationship between her child and the child's father out of spite."*

Zenzele also points out that *"Most of the single fathers have a tendency of refusing to take responsibilities for their babies claiming that the mother has other sexual partners which they are active with. In my opinion this is just an excuse."*

In his own admission Siphosaid *"Some of us were very young when we fathered children and married a different woman, you don't see that child because you no longer love the mother. My wife does not want me to contact her because she is jealous."*

Confirming this assertion Sam said, *"When you separate they don't allow you to see the child because they want money then you end up not loving the child anymore."*

In agreement, Tula and Sam thought that when fathers are frustrated, maybe due to broken relationships, they drink a lot of alcohol and use drugs then they become violent. Data revealed that due to estranged relationships fathers are hindered from active participation in the social development of their children

Substance and Alcohol Abuse

Shane went on to express that, *"In South Africa, most fathers are not behaving well because they drink and take drugs. They do this because of unemployment. Sometimes they even use their children's money to support their addiction."*

Similar sentiments were expressed by Dex who observed that *"In this area most fathers drink a lot and some of them use drugs. You see a man at the drinking spot early till late at*

night. When will that father spend time with his children? That is why we have many adolescents who use drugs."

The subject of excessive drinking was noted by Siphosaid who is a school principal who observed that *"most people around drink a lot and I have seen women who drink like the men, they don't come to the meetings and they do not help their children with school work. In most cases children do not have food at all."*

Data revealed that substance and alcohol abuse hindered fathers from taking up their responsibility in the social development of their children.

Apathy

Equally sad with the status quo Amphiwe said, *"Many fathers in my own view are not like fathers who were there some time ago. Many do not care about their families, for instance even if they work and the wives are not working they do not support their families."* Confirming this assertion was Dex who said *"The way I see it most men have lost their humanity, they are selfish, and they father children, at the end of the day they shy away from their responsibility."*

In their defence Siphosaid, and Nkosisaid expressed that *"children have too many human rights on their side and that can be very frustrating to a father in terms of disciplining his children. Children do not treat us as equal to their mothers."*

Unemployment

Daniel mentioned that poverty was a social ill causing fathers to go mad *"You see them in the streets having loud conversation with themselves. This is all poverty."*

Tula also advanced that *"In my community many fathers are not working hence they do not live with their children. Even those who live with their children do not spend time with their children. Sive, a school teacher confirmed that "mothers complain that men don't care for their children. But there is one man I have seen taking his child to school every day, He does not drink."*

Impact of Absenteeism on the Social Development of the Child

The respondents were asked on the impact of every type of disconnection to the social development of the child. Although some men were

not aware of the effect of their absence from their children Siphso confessed that *"I know my child is not doing well at school because I am not there to encourage him."*

Expressing similar concern was Dex, *"I have seen that without a father some children turn to alcohol and drugs."*

"Children who do not have a father figure usually turn to older friend who negatively influence them to delinquent behaviours, that is why we have so much teenage pregnancies, school dropouts and high failure rate in schools" commented Sive who is a father and school teacher.

DISCUSSION

In this discourse, interviewed men acknowledged that the mandate fathers have towards their children was to be responsible providers and protectors (Clare 2000; Marsiglio and Pleck 2005), and at the same time, be role models that children could emulate (Lopez and Corona 2012). It also came out that not all men honoured their mandate as some of them were violent towards their families. The interviewed fathers revealed the state of fathering in South Africa which was marred with violence, abuse and killing of women and mostly girl children. This was confirmed by all forms of media reports in South Africa on the increased incidences of violence against women and children (Maritzburg 2017). The scenario is an indication that the fibre of fatherhood is weakened in South Africa. These findings affirm the statements that came from Singh et al. (2004) asserting that black men lacked enthusiasm in being involved with their children.

This study found that the desire to provide for the family has seen many fathers seek employment in far off places spending as little time with their children. Regrettably though, parenting cannot be delegated or suspended and the growth of children is irreversible. This confirms the presence of the hostile policies revealed by O'Brien and Moss (2010) which perpetuate father absence through labour migration. The society has prioritised men's role as economic breadwinners causing men to insufficiently participate in the social development of their children (Greene 2003). Consequently, the impact of migrant labour on the social development of children is on the periphery of research on labour migration focusing mostly on the immigrants while excluding their families.

The study found that apathy in men hindered them from actively participating in the social development of their children. Some men deliberately refused paternity to avoid responsibility affirming Votruba-Drzal's (2006) assertion on effects of reduced father/child attachments. It would seem like not much has changed in men attitude towards their responsibility since Morrell and Richter's (2006) study which revealed that some men detest being fathers hence are never present for the birth of their own children. While Stevenson and rnic (2013) emphasised that father-child relation had unique influences on the development of children's social competence, Bennet and Palaiologou (2013) highlighted peer rejection in the intermediate phase of childhood as strongly connected with poor school achievement, anti-social behaviour such as criminality and delinquency in adolescence. In this study children are deprived of attachment due to enduring parental rejection (Bowlby 1973).

This study found that some fathers neglect their children due to alcohol and substance abuse. This kind of addiction may lead to violence. According to UNICEF (2014) information on the reality of violence against children was not conclusive of the magnitude of the problem because of the high violence in the broader setting of South Africa (Edberg et al. 2017). In their study, Edberg et al. (2017) found that children are violated in the safe haven of their home signaling lack of attachment and social development from the immediate care givers responsible for protecting the children.

Unemployment or poverty was found to hinder men's capability in actively participating in the social development of their children. Poverty keeps fathers away from their children confirming the notion that a man becomes the role model when he contributes to the welfare of his children (Lopez and Corona 2012) and this father role is influenced by socio-economic circumstances (Ball and Wahedi 2010). Fathers negate their status in the family not knowing that children value their presence more than presents.

Coming out of the study were men who were not men enough who made babies then denied paternity to avert responsibility. The study found that estranged relationships mired men's capabilities to actively partake in the social development of their children. However, this study could not establish why fathers negate their fatherly

role when they have conflict with the mother. For the sake of avoiding responsibility the study found that there are men who were threatened by the rights of the child when children flashed them in their faces clearly indicating a broken fibre in the family structure. Coming out in this study was the frustration that fathers had due to human rights children exercised over their fathers yet these rights are meant to safeguard children against any form of abuse.

CONCLUSION

The study set out to explore the factors that hinder men's capabilities to actively participate in the early social development of children. The findings of the study revealed that although fathers were aware of their mandate, some were not involved revealing varied reasons for their non-involvement. This study found out that issues such as labour migration, estranged relationships, substance and alcohol abuse, apathy and unemployment causes poverty which hindered fathers to actively participate in the social development of their children as they did not spend quality time with them. The study concluded that social development which is the core influence on cognitive and physical development and humanness are intertwined and dependent on the early attachment children have with their caregivers particularly the father.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study has the following recommendations:

- ♦ Attachment and bonding plays a vital role in making fathers become more responsible, hence, the need for paternity policies that encourage father-child attachment from birth to be designed and adopted.
- ♦ There should be a national drive to break the unstable ancestry families for men to learn that they can make a difference for their descendants. This is where male dominated men's organisations can do the roadshow campaigns which include multiple systems at different levels seeking to break the pattern of normalizing the social ills sanctioned by men who have the power to break the cycle of violence. High schools are fertile ground for developing and initiating programs that groom boys to be responsi-

ble men and girls to be responsible mothers. Social development at school may help destroy the cycle of abuse and neglect experienced at home.

- ♦ There should be tailor-made programs that encourage co-parenting to unmarried parents to shield children from hostile emotional disputes from adults.

LIMITATIONS

Due to the sensitivity of the study in revealing faults about men, they were not forthcoming with their frank responses to the female researcher hence she enlisted a male assistant researcher. The use of pseudonyms encouraged the respondents to be frank in their responses. However, respondents were not forthcoming with their own situations preferring to advance their observation on other men.

REFERENCES

- Ackerman BP, Brown ED, D'Eramo KS, Izard CE 2002. Maternal relationship instability and the school behaviour of children from disadvantaged families. *Developmental Psychology*, 38(5): 694-704.
- Adema W, Clarke C, Thevenon O 2011. Background Brief on Fathers' Leave and Its Use. From <www.oecd.org/els> (Retrieved on 17 June 2017).
- Ainsworth MS, Blehar MC, Waters E, Wall S 1978. *Patterns of Attachment: A Psychological Study of the Strange Situation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Ainsworth MS 1979. Infant-mother attachment. *American Psychologist*, 34(10): 932-937.
- Alio AP, Bond MJ, Padilla YC, Heidelbaugh JJ, Lu M, Parker WJ 2011. Addressing policy barriers to paternal involvement during pregnancy. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 15(4): 425-430.
- Arnold DH, Kupersmidt JB, Voegler-Lee ME, Marshall N 2012. The association between preschool children's social functioning and their emergent academic skills. *Early Child Res Q*, 27: 376-386
- Attachment Treatment and Training Institute 2004. Attachment Explained. From <http://attachment-experts.com/whatisattachment.html> (Retrieved on 12 May 2017).
- Ball J, Wahedi MOK 2010. Exploring fatherhood in Bangladesh. *Childhood Education*, 86: 366-370.
- Barnett SW, Belfield CR 2006. Early childhood development and social mobility. *The Future of Children*, 16(2): 73-98.
- Bennet J, Palaiologou I 2013. Personal, social and emotional development. In: I Palaiologou (Ed.): *The Early Years Foundation Stage: Theory and Practice*. London: Sage, pp. 345-365.
- Bosmans G, Kerns KA 2015. Attachment in middle childhood: Progress and prospects. In: G Bosmans, KA Kerns (Eds.): *Attachment in Middle Childhood: Theoretical Advances and New Directions in an*

- Emerging Field. New Directions in Child and Adolescent.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 1-14.
- Bowlby J 1953. *Child Care and the Growth of Love.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Bowlby J 1973. *Attachment and Loss: Separation: Anxiety and Anger.* Volume 2. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby J 1979. *The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds.* London, UK: Tavistock.
- Bowlby R 2007. Babies and toddlers in non-parental daycare can avoid stress and anxiety if they develop a lasting secondary attachment bond with one carer who is consistently accessible to them. *Attachment and Human Development*, 9(4): 307-319.
- Brown GL, Mangelsdorf SC, Neff C 2012. Father involvement, paternal sensitivity, and father-child attachment security in the first 3 years. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 26(3): 421-430.
- Bruce DP 2013. Bonding and Attachment in Maltreated Children: Consequences of Emotional Neglect in Childhood. From <www.childtrauma.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Bonding_13pdf> (Retrieved on 26 May 2017).
- Bryman A 2012. Mixed methods research: Combining quantitative and qualitative research. In: A Bryman (Ed.): *Social Research Methods*. 4th Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 628-252.
- Cabrera NJ, Tamis-LeMonda CS 2013. *Handbook of Father Involvement: Multidisciplinary Perspectives.* New York: Routledge.
- Cassidy J, Shaver PR 2008. *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*. 2nd Edition. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Chideya Y, Williams F 2013. Adolescent Fathers: Exploring their Perceptions of their Role as Parent. From <<http://socialworkjournal.ac.za>> (Retrieved on 24 April 2015).
- Clare A 2000. *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis.* London: Chatto and Windus.
- Connell RW, Messerschmidt JW 2005. Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, 19(6): 829-859.
- Creswell JW, Poth CN 2017. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. 4th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Daly M 2013. Parenting support: Another gender-related policy illusion in Europe? *Women's Studies International Forum*, 41(3): 223-230.
- DeKlyen M, Speltz ML 2001. Attachment and conduct disorder. In: J Hill, B Maughan (Eds.): *Conduct Disorders in Childhood and Adolescence*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 320-345.
- Denham SA, Brown C 2010. Plays nice with others: Social-emotional learning and academic success. *Early Education & Development*, 21: 652-680.
- Denzin NK, Lincoln YS 2005. Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In: NK Denzin, YS Lincoln (Eds.): *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 133-155.
- Department of Social Development 2011. *Draft Reviewed Framework for Developmental Social Welfare Services*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Devaney C, Kearns N 2010. Family support now: Reflecting on contemporary challenges. *Administration*, 58(2): 1-14.
- Eagly AH 1987. *Sex Differences in Social Behavior: A Social-role Interpretation.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ederberg M, Shaikh H, Rimal RN, Rassool R, Mthembu M 2017. Development of a communication strategy to reduce violence against children in South Africa: A social-ecological approach. *The African Journal of Information and Communication (AJIC)*, 20: 49-76.
- Feeley N, Waitzer E, Sherrard K, Boisvert L, Zolkowitz P 2013. Fathers' perceptions of the barriers and facilitators to their involvement with their newborn hospitalised in the neonatal intensive care unit. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 22(3-4): 521-530.
- Ferrell K 2013. *Where are all the Dads? Exploring the Barriers to Engaging Fathers in Child Protective Services Cases and the Strategies to Overcoming the Barriers.* Doctoral Dissertation, Unpublished. San Marcos: Texas State University.
- Fletcher R 2008. Father-Inclusive Practice and Associated Professional Competencies. *Australian Family Relationships Clearing House Briefing Paper No. 9.* Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Flouri E, Buchanan A 2003. The role of father involvement in children's later mental health. *Journal of Adolescence*, 26(1): 63-78.
- Goldman R 2005. *Fathers' Involvement in Their Children's Education.* London: National Family and Parenting Institute.
- Goleman D 2006. *Social Intelligence: The Revolutionary New Science of Human Relationships.* New York: Bantam Dell.
- Government of Western Australia 2012. *Father Inclusive Practice Policy Paper.* Department of Communities.
- Graham J, Grewal I, Lewis J 2007. Ethics in Social Research: The Views of Research Participants. London: Government Social Research Unit. From <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/wpcontent/upload/2011/09/ethics_prcticipants_tcm6_5783pdf> (Retrieved on 20 January 2017).
- Greene S 2003. Reaching out to fathers: An examination of staff efforts that lead to greater father involvement in early childhood programs. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 5(2): 1-7.
- Gresham F, Elliott S 2009. *Social Skills Improvement System: Teacher Rating Scales.* Bloomington, MN: Pearson Assessments.
- Harris D 2015. A Meta-analysis on Father Involvement and Early Childhood Social-emotional Development. From <http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/opus/issues/2010/spring/father_childhood_development> (Retrieved on 20 May 2017).
- Holcomb P, Edin K, Max J, Young Jr A, D'Angelo V, Friend D, Clary E, Johnson Jr WE 2015. In Their Own Voices: The Hopes and Struggles of Responsible Fatherhood Program Participants in the Parents and Children Together Evaluation. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation. From <<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/program/>> (Retrieved on 20 April 2017).
- Ingoldsby EM, Shaw DS 2002. Neighborhood contextual factors and early-starting antisocial pathways. *Clinical Child Family Psychology Rev*, 5: 21-55.
- Karoly LA, Kilburn MR, Cannon JS 2005. *Early Childhood Interventions: Proven Results, Future Promise.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

- Knox V, Cowan PA, Cowan CP, Bildner E 2011. Policies that strengthen fatherhood and family relationships: What do we know and what do we need to know? *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 635: 216-239.
- Ladd GW 2005 *Children's Peer Relationships and Social Competence: A Century of Progress*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lamb ME 2010. *The Role of the Father in Child Development*. 5th Edition. New York: Wiley.
- Leedy PD, Ormrod JE 2005. *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. 8th Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Legotlo MW 2014. *Challenges and Issues Facing the Education System in South Africa*. Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa.
- Linn JG, Wilson DR, Fako TT 2015. Historical role of the father: Implication for childbirth education. *International Journal of Childbirth Education*, 30(1): 12-18.
- Lopez V, Corona R 2012. Troubled relationships: High-risk Latina adolescents and nonresident fathers. *Journal of Family Issues*, 33(6): 715-744.
- Mackey WC 2001. Support for the existence of an independent man-to-child affiliative bond: Fatherhood as a biocultural intervention. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 2(1): 51-66.
- Makusha T, Richter L 2015. Gatekeeping and its impact on father involvement among Black South Africans in rural KwaZulu-Natal. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 18(3): 308-320.
- Maritzburg F 2017. Violence against Children in South Africa - A National Disaster. *News24*, June 14.
- Marsiglio W, Amato P, Day R, Lamb M 2000. Scholarship on fatherhood in the 1990s and beyond. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62: 1173-1191.
- Marsiglio W, Hendricks JJ 2012. American fathers, children and their educational experience. In: H Ho, DB Hiatt-Michael (Eds.): *Promising Practices for Fathers' Involvement in Children's Education*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishers, pp. 1-16.
- Marsiglio W, Pleck J 2005. Fatherhood and masculinities. In: MS Kimmel, J Hearn, RW Connell (Eds.): *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 249-269.
- Maxwell N, Scourfield J, Featherstone B, Holland S, Tolman R 2012. Engaging fathers in child welfare services: A narrative review of recent research evidence. *Child and Family Social Work*, 17: 160-169.
- McLanahan S, Tach L, Schneider D 2013. The causal effects of father absence. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39(1): 399-427.
- Melhuish E, Sylva C, Sammons P, Siraj-Blatchford I, Taggart B 2004. *Social Behavioural and Cognitive Development at 3-4 Years in Relation to Family Background*. London: The Institute of Education.
- Morrell R, Richter L 2006. *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Moss P 2015. International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2015. From <<http://www.leave-network.org/lpandorreports>> (Retrieved on 20 February 2016).
- Ngala (n.d.) Nurturing the Pilbara. From <<http://www.ngala.com.au/Inactive-Pages/Nurturing-the-Pilbara>> (Retrieved on 19 January 2017).
- O'Brien M, Moss P 2010. Fathers, work and family policies in Europe. In: ME Lamb (Ed.): *The Role of the Father in Child Development*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp. 551-577.
- Ortiz RW 2004. Hispanic/Latino fathers and children's literacy development: Examining involvement practices from a socio-cultural context. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 3(3): 165-180.
- Palkovitz R 2002. Involved fathering and child development: Advancing our understanding of good fathering. In: CS Tamis-LeMonda, N Cabrera (Eds.): *Handbook of Father Involvement: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 119- 140.
- Panter-Brick C, Burgess A, Eggerman M, McAllister F, Pruett K, Leckman JF 2014. Practitioner review: Engaging fathers - recommendations for a game change in parenting interventions based on a systematic review of the global evidence. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 55(11): 1187-1212.
- Pleck J 2010. Fatherhood and masculinity. In: M Lamb (Eds.): *The Role of the Father in Child Development*. New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, pp. 27-57.
- Pougnat E, Serbin LA, Stack DM, Schwartzman AE 2011. Fathers' influence on children's cognitive and behavioural functioning: A longitudinal study of Canadian families. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue Canadienne des Sciences Du Comportement*, 43(3): 173-182.
- Preston-Whyte EM 1978. Families without marriage. In: WJ Argyle, EM Preston-Whyte (Eds.): *Social System and Tradition in Southern Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, pp. 55-83.
- Richter L, Desmond C, Hosegood V, Madhavan S, Makwane M, Makusha T, Morrell R, Swartz S 2012. Fathers and Other Men in the Lives of Children and Families. *Paper Presented at the Conference on Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality: Towards Carnegie III*, 3-7 September, University of Cape Town, South Africa.
- Rosenberg J, Wilcox WB 2006. The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children: Fathers and Their Impact on Children's Well-being. Washington, DC: US Children's Bureau. From <www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/fatherhood> (Retrieved on 10 March 2017).
- Shwalb DW, Shwalb BJ, Lamb ME 2013. *Fathers in Cultural Context*. New York: Routledge.
- Singh P, Mbokodi SM, Msila VT 2004. Black parental involvement in education. *South African Journal of Education*, 24(4): 301-307.
- Sprijt E, DeGoede M, Vandervalk I 2001. The well-being of youngsters coming from six different family types. *Patient Education and Counselling*, 45(4): 285-294.
- Sroufe LA, Egeland B, Carlson EA, Collins W 2005. Placing early attachment experiences in developmental context: The Minnesota longitudinal study. In: KE Grossmann, K Grossmann, E Waters (Eds.): *Attachment from Infancy to Adulthood: The Major Longitudinal Studies*. New York, NY: Guilford Press, pp. 48-70.
- Statistics Canada 2015. Employment Insurance Coverage Survey 2013. *The Daily*, January 19.
- Statistics South Africa 2011. *Census Statistical Release*. Cape Town: Government Printers.

- Stevenson M, rnic K 2013. Intrusive fathering, children's self-regulation and social skills: A mediation analysis. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 27(6): 500-512.
- Summers JA 2011. Commentary on a needs assessment examining low-income fathers' barriers to participation in parenting programs. *Journal of Family Strengths*, 11(1): 24.
- Thompson R 2001. Development in the first years of life. *The Future of Children*, 11(1): 21-32.
- UNICEF 2014. Hidden in Plain Sight: A Statistical Analysis of Violence against Children. From <http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_74865.html> UNICEF> (Retrieved on 20 Feb 2018).
- Veenstra R, Lindenberg S, Oldehinkel AJ, De Winter AF, Verhulst FC, Ormel J 2008. Prosocial and anti-social behavior in preadolescence: Teachers' and parents' perceptions of the behavior of girls and boys. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 32: 243-251.
- Votruba-Drzal E 2006 Economic disparities in middle childhood development: Does income matter? *Dev Psychology*, 42: 1154-1167.
- Yates T, Ostrosky MM, Cheatham GA, Fettig A, Shaffer L, Santos RM 2008. Research Synthesis on Screening and Assessing Social-emotional Competence. Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. From <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/rs_screening_assessment.pdf> (Retrieved on 20 February 2017).

Paper received for publication on October 2017
Paper accepted for publication on December 2017