

## INTERVENTION STRATEGIES THAT CAN SUPPORT YOUNG ADULTS' TRANSITION INTO POSITIVE FATHERHOOD: IMPLICATIONS FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

*This study sought the intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood and its implications for science, technology, engineering and mathematics education (STEME). The study was anchored on the theoretical framework of Coleman's (1988) social capital theory. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study using a sample of 300 university students in Eastern Cape-based University. A 24-item questionnaire titled "Fatherhood intervention strategies" was used for data collection. The instrument was face validated by test development experts and had a reliability index of 0.71 using the Cronbach alpha method. Mean and analysis of variance were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that the intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition to positive fatherhood include: identifying all children abandoned by their fathers early, rehabilitating and providing assistance to fathers in need, offering moral lessons at government-designated centers to children abandoned by their fathers, putting in place special government agency to organize such moral lessons, Government making policy that all fathers should live with their children until they turn 18 years, among others. Further analysis showed that the race and age of the students had no significant influence on their responses. This finding implicates STEME career in that there will be an increased students' career interest in STEME when fathers are adequately supported to train their children. The researchers therefore, recommended that these strategies should be properly implemented by the South African government to engage fathers actively in the education of their children.*

**KEYWORDS:** Intervention Strategies, Positive Fatherhood, Quantitative Approach, Young Adults

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### INTRODUCTION

Research indicates that children raised in one-parent homes are more likely to do poorly in school than those raised by both parents (Tollestrup, 2018). There is a high number of absent fathers in South Africa with most children living without daily contact with their fathers (Mazembo et al., 2013). In South Africa, God's idea in terms of family roles is fading (Freeks, 2016) and there are challenges of absent fathers in communities (Freeks, 2017). Richter & Morrell (2006) that in South Africa, about 50% of fathers out of 54% had children who experienced fathers' absence. According to Richter and Morrell (2006), this statistic differs based on the race groups in which most affected children are those of colored, whites, and Indians. In terms of locality, rural children are most affected

(Holborn & Eddy, 2011)

Freeks (2016) found that globally, fathers' absence is most common in most communities worldwide. Carstens (2014), Richter et al.(2012), Freekset al.(2015), Freeks (2013), Freeks (2011), Freeks and Lotter (2009), Freeks (2004) found in their respective studies that father absence and fatherlessness are the biggest problems identified in countries including America, South Africa, Grenada showed that in each of the countries. According to Richter et al. (2012), Richter et al. (2010), Freeks (2016), there is a high rate of father absence in South Africa. In 2011, the problem of father absence increased from 42% to 48% (Bartlett, 2013). According to Dube (2016), Frazier (2015), about 2.13 million children in South Africa are fatherless, while those who fatherless are about 9 million. Freeks (2016) found that in South African, fathers' absence has caused a lot of problems including broken families, an exhibition of deviant behavior by children among others. Considering this situation, Feni (2016) opined that fatherhood is on the decline in South Africa which will result in a fatherless society. Besides, Freeks (2016) found that the increasing number of absent fathers in South Africa has not only led to a state of dilemma children's development but a serious debate. The foregoing informed the researchers' intention to explore the intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood within the theoretical framework of Coleman's (1988) social capital theory.

### **Theoretical Background of the study**

This study was carried out within the theoretical basis of Coleman's (1988) social capital theory. According to Coleman (1988), social capital entails significant roles being played out by family and community in ensuring the human capital of younger generations in society. The theory emphasized the role of family and the significance of family life in producing social capital. Family is so important in producing healthy generations in society (Coleman, 1988). According to Coleman (1988), the first social capital provider is the family while the second is the environment. The researchers adapted this theory to explore the perceptions of university students on the challenges faced by children of uninvolved fathers. The choice of the theory was based on the premise that family plays a great role in the development of the social capital of their children. Using the theory, the researchers found that children of uninvolved parents face a lot of challenges during their early education as perceived by university students. This theory has been successfully used by Von Otter and Sten-Åke (2015), Bala, Mohd and Nor (2017) to carry out similar studies. The utility of social capital was enhanced when combined with a very good parent-child relation (Von Otter & Sten-Åke, 2015). Bala, Mohd and Nor (2017) used social capital theory to explain how parental involvement affects the schooling of left-behind children in Niger State, Nigeria.

### **Review of Related Empirical Studies**

According to the White House Washington (2012), the choice to be an actively engaged parent is dependent on the factors within and outside the family. In line with that, fathering is influenced by culture, which must support fathers taking active roles in the healthy development of their children (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996). Taylor et al. (2011) noted that fathers' ability to maintain their dignity and motivation in the face of unemployment is a difficult task. This implies that the active participation of fathers in the education of their children requires deliberate actions by the public and private sectors across the country (White House Washington, 2012). The fatherhood and mentoring Initiative was launched in the US as a strategy for enhancing fathers' participation in the education of their children (White House Washington, 2012). This initiative which promotes responsible fatherhood through partnerships with fatherhood is an ongoing national effort in the US (White House Washington, 2012).

Dina, Behrmann and Wulfohn (2017) found that responsible Fatherhood programs aim to improve the well-being of fathers by giving fathers a place to reflect on their familial role and plan for better futures of their children. In 2015, the Office of Family Assistance in the US awarded a grant to 39 organizations to support the fatherhood initiative (Dina, Behrmann&Wulfohn, 2017). Cancian, Slack and Yang (2010), Carlson and Magnuson (2010) found that there is a strong link between supportive fathering and child outcomes and that a lack of father involvement can pose developmental risks for children. Randles (2020) found that fathers who were exposed to the fatherhood program realized their involvement goals, and as a result, were able to better align their paternal identities and behaviors. Stahlschmidt et al. (2013) found that providing transportation and incentives, collaborating with other community agencies, offering parenting programming along with other programming valued by fathers such as employment assistance among others are effective strategies for ensuring the proper transition to fatherhood in urban African America. Cornille et al. (2005), Fabiano et al. (2012) found that exposing fathers to fatherhood programs increases their positive parenting of their children. Fathers who were exposed to parenting training displayed less negative parenting (Reid, Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 2003). Lemay et al. (2010) found that in Massachusetts, one of the strategies for a proper transition to fatherhood is to allow the fathers to employ them or allow them to finish school.

Ensuring proper involvement of young fathers at the early stage in life will likely help them to maintain their involvement in parenting over time (Maxwell *et al.*, 2012). According to Cundy (2012), well-funded and structured provision ensures a significant difference in the lives of young fathers and their children. Appropriate formal support for the fathers ensures better psychological, emotional, and economic wellbeing of young parents for proper parenting (Hadley, 2014). fathers Good parenting support programs for young fathers include successfully engaging and working with them (Davies & Neale, 2015). Among the strategies for positive fatherhood are tackling professional attitudes towards young fathers and effective identification of young fathers (Osborn, 2015).

Wilder research (2016) found that the best practices or strategies for parenting education are the active engagement of parents, reaching parents early, ensuring cultural adaptations, offering frequent sessions over several months, promoting family routines, and using skilled parent educators. van der Gaag et al. (2019) opined that the strategies for a positive transition to fatherhood are transforming social and gender norms, guaranteeing financial assistance to fathers, improving laws and policies, helping couples and co-parents thrive, putting individual fathers' care into action. Enacting a policy that gives men the responsibility to take their children to school ensures positive fatherhood (Chopra, 2014). Nazneen and Chopra (2016) found that in the Philippines, a program that provides cash assistance to poor families, as well as discussions on family responsibilities, requires fathers and mothers to attend. However, a review of large social protection programs revealed that most of them are for women while only three of them were meant for the men. (<https://eba.se/en/pagaende-studier/men-and-masculinitiesin-social-protection-strategies-for-womens-economicempowerment/6568/>). According to Tollestrup (2018), counseling and training on children's relationship skills, and employment and training services to help fathers financially are some of the fatherhood initiatives.

### **Gaps in Literature**

Literature has extensively portrayed the relevance of proper fatherhood in the overall development of children both at home and in schools. Fathers' involvement in the early education of their children has received serious concerns by researchers globally. Available empirical evidence indicates that there is a lack of fathers' involvement in the early education of their children in South Africa and this possesses a lot of challenges to the proper development of children at

the early stage and beyond. However, unlike some other countries of the world who have already established fatherhood programs for the proper transition of young fathers to fatherhood, there is a paucity of empirical evidence on such programs in South Africa. This situation in South Africa, therefore, calls for a study such as this to come up with the best intervention strategies that will enable young fathers to transit positively to fatherhood.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study sought to achieve the following objectives.

- Determine the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood.
- Influence of age on the university students' views on the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood.
- Influence of race on the university students' views on the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood.

### **Research Questions**

- What are the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood?
- What is the influence of age on the university students' views on the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood?
- What is the influence of race on the university students' views on the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood?

### **Hypotheses**

- **Ho<sub>1</sub>:** The views of university students' on the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood will not differ by age.
- **Ho<sub>2</sub>:** The views of university students' on the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood will not differ by race.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design and Approach**

The design of the study was descriptive survey research. According to Creswell (2014), survey design provides a quantitative description of the attributes of the population using a sample of that population. This research adopted a pure quantitative research methodology. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical analysis of data collected through surveys.

### **Population, Sample Size, and Sampling**

The target population for this study was all the university students in the Faculty of Education of one Eastern Cape-based University. A sample size of 300 University students was selected for the study. Using a simple random sampling technique, a sample of 300 students from the Faculty of Education of the participating University was drawn across the different levels of study. The demographic characteristics of the participants are as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	128	42.7
Female	172	57.3
<b>Age</b>		
28-25 years	150	50.0
26-30 years	61	20.3
31-35 years	48	16.0
Above 35 years	41	13.7
<b>Race</b>		
Black	234	78.0
White	41	13.7
Coloured	20	6.7
Indian	5	1.7
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	59	19.7
Single	207	69.0
Divorced	34	11.3
<b>Number of Children</b>		
None	126	42.0
1	97	32.3
2	49	16.3
3	20	6.7
4	6	2.0
5	2	0.7

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

An instrument titled Fatherhood Intervention Strategies Questionnaire was used to obtain quantitative data from the 300 University students. The instrument is a 24-item questionnaire structured on a 5-point response option of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). The minimum score on the questionnaire is 24 while the maximum score is 120.

### **Validation and Reliability of the Instrument**

To ensure the face validity of the instruments, copies of the instrument were given to experts for their constructive criticisms. The comments of the validators were used to arrive at the final version of the instrument which was later subjected to trial testing. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, the field test of the instrument which gave an internal consistency reliability index of 0.71 using Cronbach's alpha method was conducted.

### **Ethical Measures**

Ethical clearance was obtained through the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) and University Research Eastern Committee (UREC) of one Eastern Cape-based University. The researchers endeavored to act within the ethical principles and rules during the study. During the study, the following were, therefore, observed: gaining entry or permission, participants' rights, informed consent, confidentiality, protection from harm, achieving anonymity, and maintaining professionalism.

## Data Analyses

Data were analyzed using mean and analysis of variance. Mean was used to answer the research questions while analysis of variance was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

### Research Question One

What are the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood?

**Table 2: Mean Analysis of the Ratings of the University Students on the Support Strategies for Young Adults' Transition into Positive Fatherhood**

n = 300			
Item Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
It will help to identify all children abandoned by their fathers early	4.02	.92	Strategy
Support groups will help rehabilitate and provide assistance to fathers in need	4.06	.80	Strategy
It will be helpful if all children abandoned by their fathers to be offered moral lessons at government-designated centers	4.03	.96	Strategy
A special government agency should be put in place to organize such moral lessons	4.14	.83	Strategy
Government should be in-charge of the educational training of children whose fathers cannot be identified	4.09	.92	Strategy
Government should make policy that all fathers should live with their children until they turn 18 years	3.79	1.11	Strategy
Government should establish policy measures to check single parenthood	3.88	1.01	Strategy
Government should establish policy measures that protect children without fathers	4.13	.93	Strategy
Ministry of Men is very important to help oversee the affairs of all men	4.01	.96	Strategy
Government should establish income support for two-parent families	3.77	1.13	Strategy
Children abandonment should have legal consequences for both fathers and mothers	4.00	.95	Strategy
Government should provide training for fathers to be	3.99	.97	Strategy
All fathers should be receiving periodic counselling	3.93	.93	Strategy
Government should be organizing fathering skills workshops	3.99	.93	Strategy
Social workers should be made available to provide fathers with skills to raise good families	4.15	.82	Strategy
Creation of employment opportunities will help fathers to become responsible	4.04	.89	Strategy
Government should provide support for community projects that help teach fathering skills	4.02	.84	Strategy
Creating more employment opportunities for fathers can help make them responsible fathers	3.91	.99	Strategy
Government should create schools for fathers to learn good fatherhood skills	3.87	1.06	Strategy
Male role models should be made to play active roles in positive parenting workshops	4.04	.90	Strategy
Schools, colleges and universities should play active roles in equipping children with positive parenting skills	4.06	.89	Strategy
All male students should take modules in positive fatherhood practices	3.93	.96	Strategy
Positive parenting and fatherhood skills should be compulsory for all students	4.02	.93	Strategy
Parenting skills should be made a requirement for all teachers	4.08	.93	Strategy
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>96.03</b>	<b>12.53</b>	<b>Strategy</b>

Table 2 shows the mean ratings of the university students on the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood. It shows that the mean ratings of the students on items 1 to 24 are more than the 3.00 criterion mean for a 5-point scale. This indicates that the university students perceived all the items in Table 2 as the intervention

strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood with an overall mean rating of 96.03 out of the maximum mean score of 120.00. Thus, the intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood include identifying all children abandoned by their fathers early, helping in rehabilitating and providing assistance to fathers in need by support groups, offering moral lessons at government-designated centers to all children abandoned by their fathers, providing educational training of children whose fathers cannot be identified by the government, making policy that all fathers should live with their children until they turn 18 years by the government, establishing policy measures to check single parenthood by the government among other strategies.

**Research Question Two**

What is the influence of age on the university students' views on support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood?

**Table 3: Mean Analysis of the Ratings of the University Students' Views on Support Strategies for Young Adults' Transition into Positive Fatherhood Based on their Age**

Age	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
28-25 years	150	96.04	12.41
26-30 years	61	94.27	10.73
31-35 years	48	99.06	11.94
Above 35 years	41	95.07	15.59
Total	300	96.03	12.53

Table 3 showed that the mean rating of the students within the age range of 28-25 years is (M= 96.04, SD = 12.41), those within the age range of 26-30 years had a mean rating of (M= 94.27, SD = 10.73), those within the age range of 31-35 years had a mean rating of (M= 99.06, SD = 11.94), while those above 35 years of age had a mean rating of (M = 95.07, SD = 15.59). This indicates that the students within the age range of 31-35 years had the highest mean rating than the others, followed by those within the age range of 28-25 years.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** The views of university students' on the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood will not differ by age.

**Table 4: Analysis of Variance of the Influence of Age on the University Students' Views on the Support Strategies for Young Adults' Transition into Positive Fatherhood**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	666.068	3	222.023	1.419	.237
Within Groups	46306.529	296	156.441		
Total	46972.597	299			

Table 4 showed that there is no significant influence of age on the university students' views on support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood,  $F(3, 296) = 1.419, p = .237$ . This implies that the null hypothesis was not rejected at  $p > .05$ . Hence, all the university students had the same views on the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood irrespective of their age differences.

**Research Question Three**

What is the influence of race on the university students' views on support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood?

**Table 5: Mean Analysis of the Ratings of the University Students' Views on Support Strategies for Young Adults' Transition into Positive Fatherhood Based on their Race**

	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
Black	234	96.41	12.55
White	41	96.51	12.15
Coloured	20	91.60	13.86
Indian	5	92.00	6.32
Total	300	96.03	12.53

Table 5 showed that Black university students had mean rating of ( $M = 96.41$ ,  $SD = 12.55$ ), White university students had mean rating of ( $M = 96.51$ ,  $SD = 12.15$ ), Coloured university students had mean rating of ( $M = 91.60$ ,  $SD = 13.86$ ) while Indian university students had mean rating of ( $M = 92.00$ ,  $SD = 6.32$ ). This means that the White university students had the highest mean rating, followed by Black university students and others.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** The views of university students' on the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood will not differ by race.

**Table 6: Analysis of Variance of the Influence of Race on the University Students' Views on the Support Strategies for Young Adults' Transition into Positive Fatherhood**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	518.595	3	172.865	1.101	.349
Within Groups	46454.001	296	156.939		
Total	46972.597	299			

Table 6 showed that there is no significant influence of race on the university students' views on the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood,  $F(3, 296) = 1.101$ ,  $p = .349$ . This implies that the null hypothesis was not rejected at  $p > .05$ . Thus, all the university students had the same views on the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood irrespective of their racial differences.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed that the support strategies for young adults' transition into positive fatherhood include identifying all children abandoned by their fathers early, helping in rehabilitating and providing assistance to fathers in need by support groups, offering moral lessons at government-designated centers to all children abandoned by their fathers, providing educational training of children whose fathers cannot be identified by the government, making policy that all fathers should live with their children until they turn 18 years by the government, establishing policy measures to check single parenthood by the government among others. These identified intervention strategies for the positive transition of young adults to fatherhood as viewed by the university students are in tandem with the fatherhoods programs in other countries of the world. The better psychological, emotional, and economic wellbeing of young parents for proper parenting may be achieved through appropriate formal support for the fathers (Hadley, 2014). Enacting a policy that gives men the responsibility to take their children to school ensures positive fatherhood (Chopra, 2014). Successfully engaging and working with young fathers are good parenting support programs for them (Davies & Neale, 2015). Effective identification of young fathers is needed, but tackling professional attitudes towards young fathers only forms one part of the solution (Osborn, 2015).



Nazneen and Chopra (2016) found that in the Philippines, a program that provides cash assistance to poor families, as well as discussions on family responsibilities, requires fathers and mothers to attend. Wilder research (2016) found that the best practices or strategies for parenting education are the active engagement of parents, reaching parents early, ensuring cultural adaptations, offering frequent sessions over several months, promoting family routines, and using skilled parent educators. Dina, Behrmann and Wulfsohn (2017) found that responsible Fatherhood programs aim to improve the well-being of fathers by giving fathers a place to reflect on their familial role and plan for better futures of their children. In 2015, the Office of Family Assistance in US awarded a grant to 39 organizations to support the fatherhood initiative (Dina, Behrmann & Wulfsohn, 2017). Randles (2020) found that fathers who were exposed to the fatherhood program realized their involvement goals, and as a result, were able to better align their paternal identities and behaviors. van der Gaag et al. (2019) opined that the strategies for a positive transition to fatherhood are transforming social and gender norms, guaranteeing economic and physical security for vulnerable families, improving laws and policies, helping couples and co-parents thrive, putting individual fathers' care into action. According to Tollestrup (2018), counseling and training on children's relationship skills, and employment and training services to help fathers financially are some of the fatherhood initiatives. Tollestrup (2018) further maintained that most fatherhood programs include media campaigns that emphasize the importance of emotional, physical, psychological, and financial connections of fathers to their children. The above discussion of the findings based on the fatherhood programs in other countries implicated the education ministry of South Africa. In South Africa currently, none of such programs is in place to assist young fathers' positive transition to fatherhood.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, identifying all children abandoned by their fathers early, helping in rehabilitating and providing assistance to fathers in need by support groups, offering moral lessons at government-designated centers to all children abandoned by their fathers, providing educational training of children whose fathers cannot be identified by the government among others are the intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood. Thus, this study has a contribution to the development of ECCE in South Africa in that it has identified intervention strategies that will support fathers' engagement in the early education of their children if properly implemented by the ECCE stakeholders. This finding implicates STEME career in that there will be an increased students' career interest in STEME when fathers are adequately supported to train their children.

Therefore, the researchers recommended that the department of child development in South Africa should ensure proper implementation of the identified intervention strategies to enable young adults transit positively to fatherhood. This will go a long way in enabling the holistic development of children at the early stage of their education and also boosting their career interest in STEME at higher education level.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

A major limitation of this study is the sample size of 300 university students in a faculty of education in one University out of the four (4) Universities in Eastern Cape Province. Drawing a sample from all the Faculties of Education in the four (4) Universities in the Eastern Cape Province should have given much room for the generalizability of the findings to the entire population. This shortfall in sampling implicates the need for further studies that will attempt to take care of the limitation of this present study.

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