Journal of Educational Studies

University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF BLACK FATHERS' LIFESTYLES AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Chinedu Ifedi Okeke
University of Free State
OkekeCO@ufs.ac.za

Abstract

A conceptual map of fathers' lifestyles is adapted to provide an interconnected network of fathers' lifestyles derived from social capital theory. The study explored fathers' lifestyles and their impact on their children's early development. The impact of lifestyle factors resulting from behaviour patterns like alcohol misuse, multiple partners, domestic violence, and absence from home among others, on South African fathers require extensive research to provide empirical evidence that may lead to meaningful interventions for affected fathers. The researcher's university approved this study, and all ethical considerations were strictly adhered to. This was an exploratory multiple case study of 25 Black fathers who were purposively selected from a suburb in one rural Eastern Cape municipality in South Africa. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to obtain data, which was analysed thematically. Findings identified and provided evidence of father lifestyles that are incongruent with the kind of parental behaviour needed to support the healthy early development of children. Findings suggest that these negative lifestyles appear to incapacitate fathers, who fail to make a positive contribution to their children's early development. To ensure that fathers make the expected contributions to their children's early development, policies aiming to rehabilitate fathers who are involved in negative lifestyles should be put in place, while strategies to check proper implementation established.

Keywords: Childhood Development, Fathering, Fathers, Intervention strategies, Lifestyles, South Africa

Introduction

Lifestyle is defined, in a sociological sense, by the various personal idiosyncrasies that reflect the way individuals go about their daily lives, including their day-to-day behavioural activities, their jobs, their recreational activities, and their diets (Farhud, 2015). Cabello et al. (2017); Zareiyan (2017); and Akbarpour et al. (2019) categorise lifestyles as healthy or unhealthy; unhealthy behaviours are characterised by excessive tobacco intake, heavy drinking, substance use, inactivity, excessive intake of sugary drinks, and consumption of salty and processed foods (Li et al. 2018). Unhealthy behaviours are further exacerbated by their excessive expression of masculinity, aiming to intimidate, abuse and resort to family violence (Kader & Roman, 2018). Boothroyd and Cross (2017) also found that fathers were absent, engaged in multiple-partner relationships and had multiple-partner fertility.

According to Abbafati (2010), Al-Amari and Al-Khamees (2015), Mohanasundari et al. (2020) and Maniaci et al. (2021), they found that an individuals' lifestyle has a significant influence on their physical and mental health capabilities to function responsibly within a given context.

As a result of this, Abbafati (2010) reported that parental lifestyles have significant long-term impacts on children's lifestyles. He cites that parents are an important stimulus for children's behaviour. If children perceive their parents as role models, they will likely emulate or model their parent's behaviours (Zareiyan, 2017). Rigles (2019) argues that the family is an important contributor to the development of children's lifestyles. Their (family) behaviours will significantly impact the children's patterns of behaviour and how these children will perform in domestic, academic or civic responsibilities. Campagne (2021) opines that unhealthy lifestyles are known to reduce the ability of both parents to perform their duties as responsible parents (; Lawrence et al., 2020; Rizzuto & Fratiglioni, 2014; Walsh, 2011).

De Figueiredo and Dias (2012) report that parents' lifestyle choices can impact the development and behaviour of their children. These authors found that children from divorced families presented significant behavioural problems. They concluded that divorce has a negative impact on parents' ability to care for r their children – thus having negative implications on children's behaviours. Marsh et al. (2020) also found a significant correlation between chaotic lifestyles and socio-economic outcomes that affected both parents and children. Marsh et al. (2020) state that these parents are unable to devote quality time to their children; thus, resulting in unhealthy behaviours among children. Akbarpour et al. *(*2019) found that parents whose lifestyles were characterised by excessive intake of sugar-sweetened drinks; high salt intake, processed food and a lack of physical activity were more susceptible to incapacitating illnesses. As a result of these conditions, they were unable to care for their children, often leading to neglect or abandonment. Studies also found that some parents were incapable of handling their personal affairs resulting in them being incapable of taking responsibility for their children. Mukong et al. (2017) found that some parents lacked the resources to meet their parental responsibilities. These parents engaged in excessive consumption of alcohol and smoking, therefore, neglecting their parental responsibilities towards their children. It is crucial to understand the lifestyle factors that inhibit fathers' capabilities to make meaningful contributions to their children's early development. It is therefore vital to determine appropriate intervention programmes to rehabilitate fathers and to ensure that these programmes are in place and can be effectively implemented. These interventions may help to reduce the over-reliance on the deficit model of fathering, which tends to portray fathers as deficient in skills and knowledge about childcare (Lechowicz et al., 2019, p.85).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual map in Figure 1 illustrates the various ways research has conceptualised lifestyle factors that impede fathers from meeting their family responsibilities. The conceptual map highlights the various lifestyle factors that have an impact on fathers' responsibilities towards their families.

The concept of 'lifestyle' was mentioned for the first time in the earliest work of the Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler (Mairet, 1964; & Veal, 1993). According to Veal (1993, p.234), Adler used the term lifestyle to denote the individual's lived, basic character, which appears to resonate throughout early childhood and continues to influence and direct their behaviour and the manner of their reactions to environmental situations.

Since Adler coined the term "lifestyle", this concept has been adopted by researchers in various ways. For example, Abbafati (2010) states that parents' lifestyles have a significant influence on children's unhealthy behaviour such as smoking, drinking and inappropriate physical activities. Similarly, De Figueiredo and Dias (2012), found that children who seldom experience their father's physical and emotional presence appeared to present more behavioural problems in specific social contexts, such as the school or when they are with their peers. Lawrence et al. (2020) indicate that the transition of these children to adulthood could be problematic due to their lack of emotional support. Furthermore, Akbarpour et al. (2019) found a significant relationship between lifestyles and blood pressure of Iranians; certain lifestyles appear to cause complications, which reduce lifespan-father-absence from home due to untimely death (Li, et al., 2018; Rizzuto and Fratiglioni, 2014).

According to Jensen (2007:64), the concept of lifestyle draws attention to the idea that something in the life of an individual needs to change if they want to achieve a particular set of goals during their lifetime. While research has paid much attention to various aspects of fathers' failure to ensure their children's welfare, we know little about how lifestyle factors of fathers may be constraining their ability to cater to their children's early development. Zareiyan (2017) states that since certain lifestyle factors are inimical to an individual's capacity to perform certain functions, fathers who are affected by these factors may be unable to assume the fatherly roles required by their children. Zareiyan further state that this inability of the father may not necessarily be due to him being irresponsible or unwilling – external factors have contributed to this situation. Walsh (2011) believes that negative lifestyle factors may have embedded themselves deep into the father's psyche, therefore, leading to diminished discriminating power. As a result of this, the father is unable to sensibly distinguish right from wrong, or to show an interest in his children and family's affairs (Campagne, 2021). This paper does not advocate for father irresponsibility or unhealthy behaviours. There are no justifiable excuses for any father to neglect to take responsibility for the children. However, the author aims to provide a useful explanation to support intervention programmes to assist South African fathers to become proactive in their children's early development.
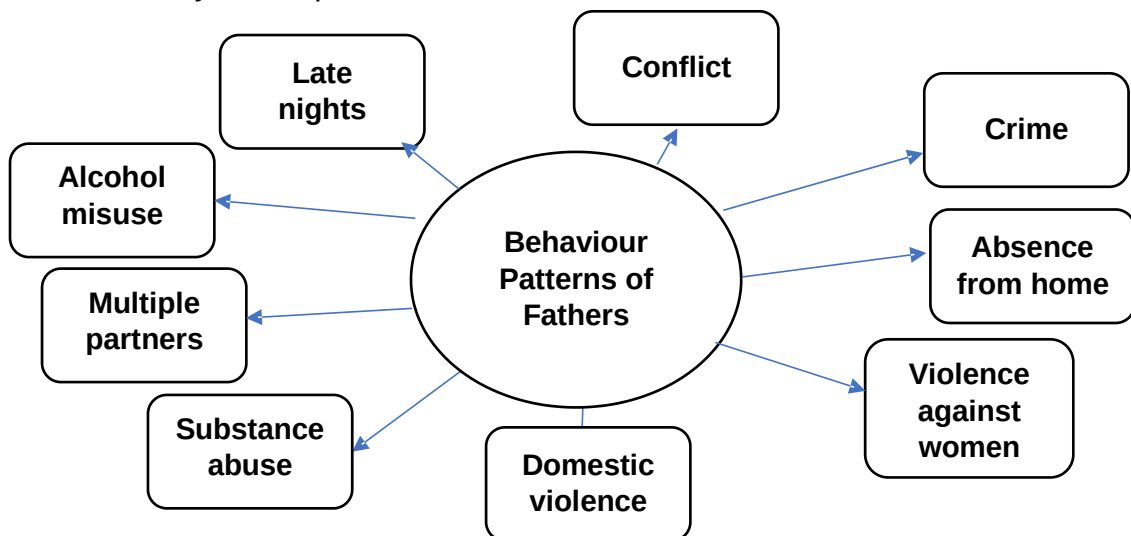

Figure 1: Conceptual Map of Father Patterns of Behaviour (Created by Author)

The conceptual map in Figure 1 lists some elements of the web of behavioural lifestyle factors that resonate through the lived experiences of some fathers. For example, research on the impact of gender-based violence (GBV), crime, and family conflict on the perpetrator paint a rather complex picture for fathers. The World Health Organization (WHO) and Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) (2012), Queensland Government (2018), and Al Majali and Alsrehan (2019) report that men whose lifestyles epitomise deep toxicity, continued family conflict, perpetuate GBV and committing other criminal acts often lack the ability to cater for their children's early developmental needs. As a result of these behaviours, the family environment is uninviting which makes it difficult for fathers to develop the child–father bond. Findings by Petren (2017) also highlight the poor relationship between fathers and children, especially those fathers who are involved in multiple romantic relationships. These fathers are unable to 'juggle' their time between multiple families and relationships.

Theoretical Dimension

Coleman's (1988) social capital theory guided this study. Coleman (1988) believes that every person is important and resourceful and therefore argues that social capital is the networks of relationships that exist between family members and significant others (teachers). The creation of significant individuals for society depends on the quality of the networks and their interconnected relationships. Adam (2016) believes that a useful resource that makes it possible to accomplish some goals is social capital, a view that is also shared by Coleman (1988) and Mncanca, Okeke & Fletcher (2016). In the context of this study, the social capital of the father is expected to have a significant impact on the development of schoolchildren. However, the author argues that if children do not receive quality parenting from their fathers, it could have a negative impact on their holistic development. As a result, children will not receive the appropriate support (social capital) from their fathers.

The deficit model has reported that absent fathers are a phenomenon that is widely reported in various cultures and societies (Lechowicz et al., 2019; Tully et al., 2018) believe that this might have unwittingly constrained research to focus more on the impact factor of lifestyle. Fathers being absent from home is a lived lifestyle factor that poses serious consequences for both the father and their family. Studies by McLanahan et al. (2013), Anderson (2014), and Kessler (2019) found that despite fathers being absent from the home, their absence from their families lacks the psychological ability to cater to their children. This absence hinders the establishment of a quality father-child relationship. Fathers who fail to actively participate in the early development of their children because of being absent from home, appear to suffer the consequences of abandonment when they become frail due to aging and require the support of their children (Boothroyd & Cross, 2017; Flouri, 2021). Boothroyd and Cross (2017) found that American girls who grew up in homes where fathers were absent appeared to be more susceptible to early coitus, resulting in them engaging in sexual activities. Boothroyd and Cross (2017) also found that boys in such homes were more susceptible to engaging in verbal and physical aggression against perceived weaker peers. Other studies suggest that such children are more likely to experience depression that leads to thoughts of suicide, low self-esteem, and poor performance in school (Kismet, 2020).

According to Kuhn and Slabbert (2017); Lander et al. (2013); Lipari and Van Horn, (2017) and United Nations, (2018) found that substance and alcohol abuse are lifestyle factors that hamper fathers' ability to contribute to their children's early development. Lipari and Van Horn (2017) report that parents with substance use disorder are incapable of fulfilling their responsibilities at home. Similarly, Franzoso (2018) explains that a father who is addicted to alcohol and other substances is usually emotionally unavailable, and often estranged from his family due to his addiction.

Problem Statements and Research Gaps

The unhealthy parental lifestyle choices and their possible impacts on the overall development and activities of their children have been documented in several studies. De Figueiredo and Dias (2012) report the high rates of unhealthy lifestyles of parents have significantly affected their children's behaviours negatively. This worrisome situation has also been reflected in a past systematic review by Marsh et al. (2020) that the chaotic lifestyle of fathers is adversely represented in their children's socio-economic outcomes. Presently, the situation is becoming alarming among many South African fathers. It has been found that many fathers smoke excessively and engage in pathological alcohol use. These fathers' economic support to their families is compromised (Mukong et al., 2017). Such parents were found to be incapable of handling their personal affairs and were unable to fulfill their fatherly responsibilities. Against this backdrop, the author is poised to ask, '***what are the fathers' lifestyles and the impacts on their children's early development?'*** Currently, there is limited research on this alarming situation. With the need for research on the implication of the impacts of fathers' unhealthy lifestyles on children's development, the author undertook a qualitative study.

Aims and Objectives

The impact of lifestyle factors on South African fathers requires extensive research so that meaningful interventions can be planned and implemented for affected fathers. This study aimed to explore fathers' lifestyles and their impact on schoolchildren's early development. Specifically, the study sought:

i) To obtain participants' descriptions of the nature of a responsible and good father;
ii) To investigate the state of fatherhood and the father-child relationship;
iii) To explore participants' views on the current behavioural lifestyles of fathers; and
iv) To advance understanding of participants' views to identify appropriate strategies to strengthen fathering skills.

Research Method and Design

Study Design

An interpretive paradigm was adopted for the study (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p.33) because I was interested to gain a subjective understanding of the social world of humans.

Creswell and Creswell (2018, p.8) argue that these subjective meanings are often socially negotiated and suggest that researchers should approach the setting and the participants using more interactive techniques. This technique will allow participants to do most of the talking, while the researcher listens carefully to understand what they are saying. In addition, the interpretive paradigm reclines on relativist ontology, which draws attention to the idea of the multiplicity of realities (Okesina, 2020, p.60). I adopted this paradigm because I was interested in understanding the meanings and lived experiences of fathers who participated in the study - attached to their personal circumstances, and how these meanings cascaded through the lifestyles they chose for themselves. I applied the exploratory multiple case study design to pursue an in-depth exploration (Flavell et al., 2019: 4) of the understanding fathers had of the lifestyle factors that impeded their ability to meaningfully participate in the early development of their children. Although case studies usually make use of multiple data sources (Vasileiou et al., 2018), I relied only on semi-structured in-depth interviews to gather data and this choice has been rationalised in the section on participant selection.

Participants' Selection

I purposefully selected 25 fathers in one rural Eastern Cape Municipality to participate in the study, whom I believed possessed relevant experience that would enable them to contribute data reliably and credibly (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). It is relevant to mention that only two of the fathers who took part in the study lived under the same roof as their children. All the participants confirmed they had fathered between one and three children. Some of the fathers confessed that they were not sure where their children were at the time of the study. Lack of basic education and/or skills to guarantee employment was a major characteristic among the participants. In contrast to some organised populations, such as learners and teachers and other professionals, the demographic uniqueness regarding the location of the participants is that the fathers lived in places all over the municipal area. It would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to bring them together at a single venue, such as a community centre, where techniques such as focus groups and/or observation would have been possible. As a result, individual interviews at participants' homes were the most appropriate data collection tool.

Marshall et al. (2013) recommend a sample size of between 20 and 30 interviews after they failed to find evidence to suggest that studies with more than 30 interviews generated any more data that significantly affected the outcome of their study. In this study, a sample size of 25 fathers guaranteed 25 interviews and led to the collection of relevant data to answer the research questions that guided the study.

Data Collection

Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. By using semi-structured interviews, I was able to obtain the fathers' actual words, which confirmed the data's trustworthiness. I personally recruited the fathers after they had given consent and I interviewed each of them. The fathers agreed to audio recordings of the interviews which made it possible for me to report verbatim the participant's responses. Each interview lasted for a duration of 60 minutes. The fieldwork spanned over a period of 6 weeks.

Data Analysis

I followed the six-step data analysis procedure recommended by Creswell (2014). Firstly, I transcribed the audio-recorded data into written text. Secondly, I began to read through the assembled interview transcripts to make sense of   the voluminous fieldwork data.   This familiarised me with the transcript   and dataset (Brink, 2018). Thirdly, I initiated analysis of the dataset through the coding process,   which involved assigning sets of   text data into categories of informative segments or   labels that I had derived directly from the actual words of the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.193). Brink (2018) states that the goal of generating categories is to provide a means for   defining the phenomenon and thereby increasing understanding of   the phenomenon being studied,   which could lead to new knowledge. Fourthly, I compressed the various emerging segments of   categories to generate appropriate units of   the description of the setting in preparation for the findings that emerged from the study.   Fifthly, I presented the units of   interpretation as themes representing the findings of   the study. Finally, I used the themes to interpret   the various meanings inherent in the data, using the participants'   verbatim quotes to give credence to my interpretations.

Ethical Measures Undertaken

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of   the researcher's university. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Department of Education. As I was solely responsible for data collection, I explained to each participant all aspects of ethics relating to the study, including voluntary involvement, confidentiality and anonymity. I also explained that pseudonyms would replace their actual   names and that adequate care would be taken to prevent   any form of harm. The participants signed the consent   forms, which indicated their willingness to participate in the study.

Findings

In this section, I will outline and present the outcomes of the analysis of the fathers'   views. First, I will focus on the participants'   notion of the characteristics of   a good father.   It is important to note that the names used in the results session are pseudonyms. I also must mention the unique nature of the reporting of the results of this study. Fathers in this study spoke in narratives that   appeared to exclude them from the lifestyles they reported, however, implicit in the data they provided is an acknowledgement that unhealthy lifestyles impact their ability to carry out   various family duties. So, instead of using the active voice, for instance, the first person singular 'I', the fathers resorted to the use of 'they'   and 'their', thereby distancing themselves from the negative lifestyles they reported on in the study. So, in a way,   the fathers' narratives in the passive voice give the impression that   they were reporting on other fathers when they were describing themselves.

The Conception of a Responsible, Good Father

One striking revelation of   this study is that   the participants were quite clear   in their conceptions of the qualities that   define a responsible and good father.   Yet, the fathers confessed not being such fathers.

77

The fathers who took part in the study acknowledged a responsible and good father as one who loves his family, listens to the family and provides for them morally and financially. He takes care of his family. He must try and provide for his family.   He is a father who spends every night   at home with his family,   does not   pursue young girls,   and drinks alcohol responsibly. One of the fathers, Dhlamini, stated, '*I think a good father is someone who is involved in his children's development*'.   It is important to note that participants said that a good father   had to assume a leadership role in the family.   According to Shabalala,   a responsible and good father is '*A good father lives by the values of the church or whatever religion he abides by*'.   Furthermore, he has to be '*someone who is responsible and supports his family. He ensures that his children are going to school*' (Myeni).

A good father should be there for his child and should support and guide the child through life challenges. Shongwe said:

"A good father   is a person who provides for his family financially to make sure that   his children don't   die of   hunger. He supports his children with schoolwork like doing the homework with the children".

Being a responsible and a good father entails that   a man participates fully in the overall development of his child. The father should also be seen within his community to be living an exemplary life. According to Nkosewi, '*He must be an example to the community and his children. A good father   is someone who supports his family not   only economically but emotionally too.*

The views of some of the participants differed from that portrayed in the literature (Balcom, 1998; Grusec and Danyliuk, 2014; Mooney et al., 2009; Sarya & Turnipa, 2015), which, from a socioeconomic status perspective,   sees a father's non-involvement   as the causal effect of poverty and lack of   financial resources. Participants said that   fathers do not necessarily need money or to be rich for them to become involved in their children's lives. Here's how Tula expressed this view, '*He doesn't have to have a lot of money to be a good father but to spend time with the children so that   they get to know what kind of a person their father is'.*

It is obvious that the fathers who took part in this study have a clear understanding of what a responsible and good father   embodies. However, it was clear that the fathers in the municipality where I carried out this study were not actively involved in their children's early development. I argue that fathers who took part   in this study,   despite admitting that they failed to epitomise this exemplar   father figure, are themselves not   irresponsible, as is claimed by some of   the literature (Jessee & Adamsons,   2018; McLanahan et al., 2013; Taylor, 2019). The questions are, why were they incapable of leading and expressing the kind of fatherhood they explained as being admirable? Could it   mean that fathers face unique challenges, while fatherhood research points in different directions? These questions open new research agendas. Next, I will focus on the state of fatherhood in South Africa from the viewpoint of fathers themselves.

Fathers' Views on the State of Fatherhood in South Africa

The concept of fatherhood entails a gender-specific type of lived parenthood (Lemay et al., 2010). It refers to the circumstances that relate to being a father, with all the responsibilities that go with it. Once a man becomes a father, he enters fatherhood. This state of manliness is accompanied by many expectations within the family (Balcom, 1998; Franzoso, 2018; Jessee & Adamsons, 2018). The views of fathers who took part in the study were obtained through semi-structured interviews. The state of fatherhood as enunciated by the participants was quite negative and understanding how fathers in the study represented the state of fatherhood is fundamental to dealing with the issue of fathers' lack of involvement in the early development of their children. The responses of fathers regarding the state of fatherhood in South Africa indicate that all is not well with fathers:

"A lot is happening to fathers in South Africa. Fathers are not working and that causes frustration on them, and that frustration is taken out on their families. Most of these fathers end up being stressed or become alcoholics (Nkosewi)".

"I think we are not happy at home. Our wives or mothers of our children are not giving us enough attention. No. there are no jobs for these fathers, so they lose hope and ignore their responsibilities (Myeni)".

Fathers in the study clearly stated that they were not happy because all is not well with them at home or within their communities. Fathers were suffering from abject poverty, and unemployment faced rejection by their families and was stereotyped as alcoholics. All the fathers who participated in the study had experienced depression and suicidal ideation. It became clear that fathers were faced with a state of hopelessness. However, instead of accusing fathers of being irresponsible, indifferent about family affairs and absent from their children's lives, an attempt should be made to understand the circumstances facing fathers. Research that is focused on understanding the deep-seated reasons why fathers find themselves in this sorry state is essential. As indicated by the fieldwork data, participants in the study were rejected by their families due to poverty and unemployment. The fathers did not reject their families, instead, their partners and children appeared to have rejected them, since they were unable to provide financial support to their families. The author noted that fathers who took part in the study appeared to live the unhealthiest of lifestyles due to the complicated situations they faced. Next, I will discuss fathers' lifestyles and the implications of these lifestyles for their children.

Fathers' Lifestyles Implications for Involvement in their Children's Early Development

Since the participants had a clear understanding of the responsibilities of a responsible and good father but failed to fulfill their obligations to their children, it became imperative to explore their lifestyles. This would help the author to determine if this information could lead us to understand why these fathers were failing to take responsibility for their children's early development. In the introductory part of this paper, I presented Farhud's (2015) definition of lifestyle, to provide some understanding of the concept.

Fathers in this study acknowledged that they lived unhealthy lifestyles, which appeared to contribute to rendering them incapable of performing their duties in the family. Participants also bluntly claimed that most fathers in South Africa behave badly. The unhealthy lifestyles involve alcohol and substance abuse, a lack of interest in childrearing, violent behaviour towards women and children, spending the children's grant benefits on alcohol, being drunk in the presence of children, fathering children while still teenagers, and engaging in statutory rape. Other lifestyle factors mentioned by participants are that some of them are not interested in seeking employment due to laziness. Below are quotes from the fieldwork data that reflect fathers' views on their lifestyles:

"Not all fathers can participate in their children's social development, some fathers like myself would want to take part but due to circumstances, they can't. It might be because they are unemployed (Shongwe)".

"Some Black fathers in my community drink a lot. I also drink a lot sometimes. I have sometimes used my children's money to support my some of my habits. Our children are starving because there are no jobs and we feel frustrated as fathers (Maka)".

"What I see in my community is that fathers invest most of their money if not all in buying alcohol. They drink too much (Lakejo)".

"I can say that they shouldn't behave in a bad manner and should not be involved in bad things like doing drugs and taking alcohol (Ndulule)".

The author opines that when a father fails to meet his obligations to the family, the children will be affected. Although the interviews with the fathers did not aim to obtain data on the way their lifestyles impact their children, some of the participants referred to the impact of their children. According to Maka, some fathers (including himself) had the habit to '*use their children's money to support their addiction… our children are starving because there are no jobs and we feel frustrated as fathers'*. Fieldwork data also appeared to suggest that some children were raped by their fathers – who were supposed to protect them. In the words of December, some f*athers 'drink too much and rape little children'*. This was corroborated by Vusi, who proclaimed, *'there are some fathers who really misbehave, for example, fathers who rape babies. They are giving all fathers a bad name'*. Further impacts of lifestyle on both father and child will be given in the discussion session of this paper. Let us deal with fathers' views on interventions that might help to improve the situation.

Fathers' Views on the Strategies to Enhance Fathering Skills.

Finally, I invited the fathers to tell me what they think is the way forward in terms of the strategies to help them to become responsible to their families. In this regard, the key intervention suggested by Shongwe is behavioural change. If fathers want to experience improvement in their circumstances, and if they want to be able to meet their obligations to the family, they must change their ways:

"They must try and change the way they behave…There should be support groups for fathers and fathers-to-be, to help them by giving them skills on how to be positive fathers (Shongwe)".

I found their acknowledgement that fathers need to change their behaviour fascinating, given that the same fathers who acknowledged their flaws, acknowledged that they were behaving badly also acknowledged that they had to change their behaviour. Despite fathers reporting negative behaviours as examples of other men, there is no doubt in the author's mind that these fathers were merely projecting their lifestyle. This projection is articulated in Freud's depth psychology theory.

Another important strategy some of the participants mentioned was the establishment of community-based father-specific support groups that could teach fathers and young men about responsible fatherhood. This suggestion resonated in the interview data obtained from Nkosewi:

"Fathers in the community can form a sort of support group that is aimed at teaching young males about the importance of fatherhood. I think that would be of great help for young males".

Similarly, Musi believed that workshops presented mainly at schools (and community centres) would go a long way to teach fathers and their children responsible fatherhood skills. He added that the government has a role to play to ensure success. He stated:

"Fathers *should organise community workshops in schools and the government must play a role. A father must be an example to his family, community and everywhere he goes*' (*Musi*)".

Ganqa also alluded to the need for fathering skills to *'be taught in schools and workshops in the communities we stay in'*. Establishing an organisation was suggested by Mdane, who said:

"We should create some sort of organisation for fathers that will teach them how to be a father and how a father behaves".

The participants suggested professional counselling sessions for fathers. The author agrees with the participants that therapeutic counselling services should be provided for fathers, given the depressing revelations in the data presented in this paper. According to December, counsellors *need to sit down with fathers for counselling, to tell them what is right and what is wrong in being a father'*. Part of this counselling should focus on good parenting skills and the responsibilities of fathers within the family system. According to Dhlamini, fathers '*must be taught to be good fathers, they must be told that if you don't practice safe sex there could be some devastating results like being a father prematurely'*. Another participant said that fathers '*should plan the baby that is where it all starts. They should take good care of themselves and plan. We should establish workshops aimed at equipping young adults with fathering skills* (*Ayandile*).

Discussion

Participants clearly understood the roles and responsibilities of a good father. The author believes that what may be missing is a policy framework to take this information about fathers and make it implementable. Participants reported some of the characteristics of a good father which included showing love and affection towards his family, listening to family matters and issues, providing financial support, being present at home, and showing mutual trust, respect and authority in the family. Furthermore, fathers who engage in substances such as alcohol should do so moderately and they should assume the mutual leadership role in the family. These characteristics are in line with those listed in Table 3 of Lemay et al. (2010, p.226). However, it was striking that, despite fathers in the study being aware of the responsibilities of a good father, they nevertheless failed to live according to such ideals. Perhaps, the explanation for this failure resides in the fathers' lifestyles. Tedgard et al. (2019) argue that unhealthy lifestyles of parents tend to have a negative effect; fathers may unwittingly become negligent regarding their responsibilities, with adverse consequences for their children. I found that fathers who participated in this study required urgent help to elevate themselves from their poverty-stricken and depressive state of living, which they claimed caused them to engage in aspects of negative lifestyles.

Results indicate that the state of fatherhood in the municipality where the study was conducted was deplorable and required urgent intervention. I found that the numerous challenges faced by the fathers in the study forced them into a state of hopelessness, which might have caused the fathers to engage in unhealthy lifestyles. A study by Campagne (2021) argues that individuals may knowingly engage in unhealthy lifestyles if they feel hopeless and that life has no meaning. Campagne (2021:353), however, argues that, when individuals are appropriately counselled to make the right lifestyle choices, they can be motivated to take personal responsibility and become accountable for living a healthier life. The onus is, therefore, on the relevant government agency to assist this category of fathers who participated in this study.

A further revelation of the study relates to the various negative lifestyle factors that, taken together, constrained fathers' ability to contribute to their children's early development. Numerous unhealthy lifestyles, including alcohol and substance abuse, lack of interest in childrearing, violent behaviour towards women and children, spending children's benefits on alcohol, being drunk in the presence of children, the tendency of becoming teenage fathers, and engaging in rape, were identified. Other behaviours are a lack of interest in seeking and getting employment, and laziness. A wide range of research has reported on these unhealthy lifestyle factors and has also highlighted their implications for children (Walsh, 2011; Farhud, 2015; Li et al., 2018; Campagne, 2021).

Although this was not the focus of this paper, empirical evidence, however, suggests that, when fathers fail to fulfill their obligations relating to their children, it has consequences for the children. Studies (Balcom, 1998; Sarya & Turnipa, 2015) found that children who are not exposed to a positive influence by their fathers may present numerous behavioural problems in society. Children tend to face performance challenges in their academic careers (Cherry, 2021).

Children whose fathers are not involved in their developmental trajectory tend to present complex socialisation problems in context (Kuhn & Slabbert, 2017; Franzoso, 2018). The consequences of fathers failing to engage in healthy lifestyles,   for both them and their children, are considerable and require urgent   action. This need will   be taken up in the section on implications.

Recommendations

The participants in this study were open in reporting the various lifestyle challenges they face. The strategies   for overcoming this   problem suggested by   participants appear plausible. The need has arisen for   fathers themselves, all tiers of government, men's groups and relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to ensure that   the fathers' ideas for intervention strategies are put into action. Despite the interventions suggested by the fathers, the government – at both municipal   and national levels – must develop father-friendly and father-specific policies to help equip fathers with the right kinds of skills, not just to enable them to become more responsible fathers, but also skills to facilitate more stable and permanent employment for the fathers. Certainly, more research will be needed to fully understand the fathers and the problems that   impact their ability to contribute to the early development of their children.

Conclusion

The data makes it clear that fathers who participated in this study, and probably their peers too, are engaged in various negative lifestyle behaviours that impinge on fathers'   ability to make meaningful contributions to their children's lives. Fathers are supposed to participate in the development of the children whom they brought into the world. Given the revelations fathers made through the interview data,   it is germane that urgent and relevant interventions need to be put   in place to help these fathers minimise their   unhealthy behaviours so that they can become responsible to their families. Therefore, to ensure that fathers can make this kind of contribution, relevant father-specific policies should be put in place to facilitate the rehabilitation of fathers who are engaged in unhealthy lifestyles.

References

Abbafati, C. (2010). *Parental influence on children's unhealthy lifestyle activities in the UK*. Working Paper No. 7/2010, Department of Economic and Social Analyses, University of Rome. http://www.diss.uniroma1.it/sites/default/files/allegati/wp-07-10-Abbafati_WP7_2010.pdf

Adams, C. G. G. (2016). *Fathers' involvement in the social development of children under six years: A social   capital perspective and implications for early childhood development in the East   London Education District.* Unpublished doctoral thesis. East London: University of Fort Hare.

Akbarpour, S., Khalili, D., Zeraati, H., Mansournia, M. A., Ramezankhani, A., Pishkuhi, M.A., Gooran, S. R. & Fotouhi, A. (2019). Relationship between lifestyle pattern and blood pressure – Iranian national survey. *Scientific Reports* 9, 15194. DOI: 10.1038/s41598-019-51309-3

Al Majali, S. & Alsrehan, H. (2019). The impact of family violence on the social and psychological development of the child. *Utopía y Praxis Latinoamericana 24*(5), 199–207.

Al-Amari, H.G. & Al-Khamees, N. (2015). The perception of college students about a healthy lifestyle and its effect on their health. *Journal of Nutrition and Food Sciences, 5*(6), 1–4. DOI: 10.4172/2155-9600.1000437

Anderson, J. (2014). The impact of family structure on the health of children: Effects of divorce. *The Linacre Quarterly, 81*(4), 378–387.

Balcom, D. A. (1998). Absent fathers: Effects on abandoned sons. T*he Journal of Men's Studies 6*(3), 283–296.

Boothroyd, L.G. & Cross, C. P. (2017). Father absence and gendered traits in sons and daughters. *PLoS ONE 12*(7), 1–19. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0179954

Brink, R. (2018). A multiple case design for the investigation of information management processes for work-integrated learning. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning (Special Issue), 19*(3), 223–235.

Cabello, M., Miret, M., Caballero, F. F., Chatterji, S., Naidoo, N., Kowal, P., D'Este, C. & Ayuso-Mateos, J. L. (2017). The role of unhealthy lifestyles in the incidence and persistence of depression: A longitudinal general population study in four emerging countries. *Globalization and Health, 13*, 18. DOI: 10.1186/s12992-017-0237-5

Campagne, D. M. (2021). Accountability for an unhealthy lifestyle. *The European Journal of Health Economics* 22, 351–355. DOI: 10.1007/s10198-020-01192-x

Cherry, K. (2021). Characteristics and effects of uninvolved parenting. Verywellmind. Accessed at: https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-uninvolved-parenting-2794958?print (accessed 2 November 2021).

Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Coleman, J. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology, 94,* 94–120.

De Figueiredo, C.R.S. & Dias, F.V. (2012). Families: influences in children's development and behaviour, from parents' and teachers' point of view. *Psychology Research, 2*(12), 693–705.

Farhud, D.D. (2015). Impact of lifestyle on health. *Iranian Journal of Public Health, 44*(11), 1442–1444.

Flavell, H., Harris, C., Price, C., Logan, E. & Peterson, E. (2019). Empowering academics to be adaptive with eLearning technologies: An exploratory case study. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology,* 35(1), 1–15.

Flouri, E. (2021). Fathers' behaviours and children's problems. *The Psychologist* 23, 802–805. https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-23/edition-10/fathers-behaviours-and-childrens-problems

Franzoso, E. (2018). *Types of damaging fathers and how they influence who we are*. In: Elizabeth Franzoso. Available at: https://www.elisabettafranzoso.com/articles/ (accessed 1 November 2021).

Grusec, J. E. & Danyliuk, T. (2014). Parents' attitudes and beliefs: their impact on children's development. In: *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development.* Available at: https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/sites/default/files/textes-experts/en/654/ (accessed 3 November 2021).

Jensen, M. (2007). Defining lifestyle. *Environmental Sciences, 4*(2), 63–73.

Jessee, V. & Adamsons, K. (2018). Father involvement and father-child relationship quality: An intergenerational perspective. *Parenting: Science and Practice, 18*(1), 28–44. DOI: 10.1080/15295192.2018.1405700

Kader, Z. & Roman, N. (2018). The effects of family conflict on the psychological needs and externalising behaviour of preadolescents. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk, 54*(1), 36–52.

Kessler, D. (2019). *The consequences of divorce for mothers and fathers: Unequal but converging?* Research Paper, National Science Foundation, Switzerland. DOI: 10.12682/lives.2296-1658.2018.71

Kismet, M. (2020). *Psychological effects of growing up without a father.* In: Owlcation. Available at: https://owlcation.com/social-sciences/Psychological-Effects-On-Men-Growing-Up-Without-A-Father (accessed 1 November 2021).

Kivunja, C. & Kuyini, A.B. (2017). Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education, 6*(5), 26–41. DOI: 10.5430/ijhe.v6n5p26.

Kuhn, J. & Slabbert, I. (2017). The effects of a father's alcohol misuse on the wellbeing of his family: Views of social workers. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk, 53*(3), 408–422.

Lander, L., Howsare, J. & Byrne, M. (2013). The impact of substance uses disorders on families and children: from theory to practice. *Social Work Public Health, 28*(0): 194–205. DOI: 10.1080/19371918.2013.759005

Lawrence, E., Mollborn, S., Goode, J. & Pampel, F. (2020). Healthy lifestyles and the transition to adulthood. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World, 6*, 1–17. DOI: 10.1177/2378023120942070

Lemay, C.A., Cashman, S.B., Elfenbein, D.S. & Felice, M.E. (2010). A qualitative study of the meaning of fatherhood among young urban fathers. *Public Health Nursing, 27*(3), 221–231.

Li Y., Pan, A., Wang, D.D., Liu, X., Dhana, K., Franco, O.H., Kaptoge, S., Di Angelantonio, E., Stampfer, M., Willett, W. & Hu, F.B. (2018). Impact of healthy lifestyle factors on life expectancies in the US population. *Circulation, 138*, 345–355.

Lipari, R.N. & Van Horn, S. L. (2017). *Children living with parents who have a substance use disorder*. CBHSQ Report. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/report_3223/ShortReport-3223.html

Lloyd, M. (2018). Domestic violence and education: examining the impact of domestic violence on young children, children, and young people and the potential role of schools. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1–11. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02094

Mairet, P. (ed) (1964). *Alfred Adler. Problems of neurosis: A book of case histories.* Harper Torchbooks. New York: Harper and Row.

Maniaci, G., Cascia, C.L., Giammanco, A., Ferraro, L., Palummo, A., Saia, G.F., Pinetti, G., Zarbo, M, & La Barbera, D. (2021). The impact of healthy lifestyles on academic achievement among Italian adolescents. *Current Psychology*. DOI: 10.1007/s12144-021-01614-w

Marshall, B., Cardon, P., Poddar, A. & Fontenot, R. (2013). Does sample size matter in qualitative research? A review of qualitative interviews in IS research. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, *54*(1), 11–22.

McLanahan, S., Tach, L. & Schneider, D. (2013). The causal effects of father absence. *Annual Review of Sociology* 39, 399–427. DOI: 10.1146/annurev-soc-071312-145704

McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. (2014). *Research in education: Evidence-basediInquiry.* New York, NY: Pearson Education.

Mncanca, M., Okeke C.I.O., & Fletcher, R. (2016). Black fathers' participation in early childhood development in South Africa: What do we know? *J Soc Sci,* 46(3): 202-213. https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2016.11893528

Mohanasundari, S.K., Padmaja, A., Jeet, R., Joseph, J. & Raghu, V.A. (2020). A study to assess the healthy lifestyle practices among South Indian population. *Nursing and Care Open Access Journal, 7*(4), 99–103. DOI: 10.15406/ncoaj.2020.07.00228

Mooney, A., Oliver, C. & Smith, M. (2009). *Impact of Family Breakdown on Children's Well-being*. London, UK: Institute of Education, University of London. https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11165/1/DCSF-RR113.pdf

Mufutau, M. A., & Okeke, C. I. O. (2016). Factors affecting rural men's participation in children's preschool in one rural education district in the Eastern Cape Province. *Studies of Tribes and Tribals, 14,* 18–28.

Mukong, A.K., Van Walbeek, C. & Ross, H. (2017). Lifestyle and income-related inequality in health in South Africa. *International Journal for Equity in Health, 16,* 103. DOI: 10.1186/s12939-017-0598-7

Okesina, M. (2020). A critical review of the relationship between paradigm, methodology, design and method in research. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education, 10*(3), 57-68.

Osofsky, J.D. (2018). Commentary: Understanding the impact of domestic violence on children, recognizing strengths, and promoting resilience: Reflections on Harold and Sellers. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 59*(4), 403–404. DOI: 10.1111/jcpp.12902

Petren, R.E. (2017). Paternal multiple partner fertility and environmental chaos among unmarried non-resident fathers. *Journal of Social Service Research, 43*(1), 100–114.

Queensland Government (2018). *Domestic and Family Violence and its Relationship to Child Protection*. Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women. https://www.dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au/resources/childsafety/practice-manual/prac-paper-domestic-violence.pdf

Rigles, B. (2019). The development of healthy lifestyles in families experiencing disability. *Journal of Family Issues, 40*(7), 929–953. DOI: 10.1177/0192513X19831410

Rizzuto, D. & Fratiglioni, L. (2014). Lifestyle factors related to mortality and survival: A mini review. *Gerontology, 60,*327–335. DOI: 10.1159/000356771

Sarya. M.P. & Turnipa, S.S. (2015). Attitude difference between fathers and mothers toward fathers' involvement in child rearing activities among couples with 0-12 months old babies. Community-based study in a primary health care setting. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* 190, 92–96.

Smith, T.K, Duggan, A., Bair‑Merritt, M. H. & Cox, G. (2012). A systematic review of fathers' involvement in programmes for the primary prevention of child maltreatment. *Child Abuse Review, 21*(4)

Taylor, A.J. (2019). *Business excellence and intelligence in a global entertainment company: An exploratory case study*. (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Phoenix, USA: University of Phoenix.

Taylor, A. (2019). *Impact of the experience of domestic and family violence on children – what does the literature have to say*? Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research. https://noviolence.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Impact-of-the-experience-of-domestic-and-family-violence-on-children.pdf

Thomas, P.A., Liu, H. & Umberson, D. (2017). Family relationships and well-being. *Innovation in Aging, 1*(3), 1–11.

United Nations (2018). *World drug report 2018*. Vienna, Austria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. https://www.unodc.org/wdr2018

Vasileiou, K., Barnett, J., Thorpe, S. & Young, T. (2018). Characterising and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: Systematic analysis of qualitative health research over 15 years. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *18*, 148–165. DOI: 10.1186/s12874-018-0594-

Veal, A.J. (1993). The concept of lifestyle: a review. *Leisure Studies 12*(4), 233–252. DOI: 10.1080/02614369300390231

Walsh, R. (2011). Lifestyle and mental health. *American Psychologist, 66*(7), 579–592. DOI: 10.1037/a0021769

World Health Organization and Pan American Health Organization (2012). *Understanding and Addressing Violence Against Women: Intimate Partner Violence*. WHO. http://www.who.int/about/licensing/copyright_form/en/index.html

Zareiyan, A. (2017). Healthy or unhealthy lifestyle: A thematic analysis of Iranian male adolescents' perspectives. *Iranian Journal of Nursing Midwifery Research, 22*, 1–7. DOI: 10.4103/ijnmr.IJNMR_157_15