

Chapter Twenty One

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES THAT CAN IMPROVE SOUTH AFRICAN FATHERS' ENGAGEMENT IN THE EARLY EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN: A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

Christian S. Ugwuanyi¹, Charity C. Okeke² & Chinedu I.O. Okeke¹

¹*School of Education Studies, Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, 9300, South Africa.*

UgwuanyiCS@ufs.ac.za & OkekeCO@ufs.ac.za

²*School of Social Sciences and Language Education, Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, 9300, South Africa.*

OkekeCC@ufs.ac.za

Abstract

There is dearth of literature on the intervention strategies that can improve fathers' engagement in the early education of their children. This situation necessitated the present study which investigated the intervention strategies that can improve fathers' engagement in the early education of their children. 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 internal consistency reliability index of 0.71 using Cronbach alpha method. Mean and analysis of variance were used to analyse the data. The findings of the study revealed that the intervention strategies that can improve fathers' engagement in the early education of their children include: identifying all children abandoned by their fathers early, rehabilitating and providing assistance to fathers in need, offering moral lessons at government designated centres 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. The study therefore recommended that these intervention strategies should be properly implemented by the South African government in order to ensure active engagement of fathers in the early education of their children.

Keywords: Intervention strategies, fathers' engagement, Quantitative approach, South Africa

Introduction

There is a high number of absent fathers in South Africa with most children living without daily contact with their fathers (Mazembo, de-Boor Thomson & Mahaka, 2013). Longstanding research indicates that children raised in one-parent homes are more likely to do poorly in school, have emotional and behavioural problems, become teenage parents among others than those raised by both parents (Tollestrup, 2018). It is estimated in South Africa that about that 50% of fathers out of 54% did not have daily contact with their children in the past (Richter & Morrell, 2006). According to Richter and Morrell, this statistic differs based on the race groups in which 30% for African children within 15 years are living with their fathers, 53% for coloured children, 83% for whites, and 85% for

Indians. In terms of locality, 55% of African rural children under the age of 15 have absent living fathers compared to 43% of African children in urban areas (Holborn & Eddy, 2011)

Freeks (2016) found that globally, fathers' absence is a worldwide phenomenon and a worldwide tendency in most communities. Studies in most countries including America, South Africa, Grenada showed that father absence and fatherlessness is the biggest problem identified in each of the countries (Carstens, 2014; Richter, Desmond, Hosegood, Madhavan, Makiwane, Makusha, Morrel & Swartz, 2012; Freeks, 2019; Freeks, 2013; Freeks & Lotter, 2009; Freeks, 2004). South Africa is one of the countries in the world with the highest number of father absence (Richter et al., 2012; Richter, Chikovore & Makusha, 2010; Freeks, 2016). 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 live with their fathers while 9 million are fatherless.

Freeks (2016) found that within South African context, there are problems of broken families, aggressive behaviour among children, financial and social, as a result of fathers' absence. 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 there is not only a dilemma but a serious debate in South African's children's development due to the increasing number of absent fathers on the horizon. 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. According to Coleman, 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 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, Parker, Livingston, Wang & Dockterman (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 (The White House Washington, 2012). The fatherhood and mentoring initiative was launched in US as a strategy for enhancing fathers' participation in the education of their children (The White House Washington, 2012). This initiative which promotes responsible fatherhood through partnerships with fatherhood is an on-going national effort in the US (The White House Washington, 2012).

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 families role and plan for better futures of their children. In 2015, the Office of Family Assistance in US awarded five-year Responsible Fatherhood grants to 39 organisations and an additional five awards to programs that serve incarcerated fathers and fathers re-entering society (Dina, Behrmann & Wulfsohn, 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 behaviours. Stahlschmidt, Threlfall, Seay, Lewis & Kohl (2013) found that the strategies for ensuring the proper transition to fatherhood in urban African America include targeting advertising specifically to urban African American fathers, 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. Cornille, Barlow & Cleveland (2005) found that exposing fathers to fatherhood initiative program led to reductions in harsh and physical punishment used by the fathers on their children. Exposing fathers to parenting program encourages them to use more praise and less negative talk toward their children (Fabiano, Pelham, Cunningham, Yu, Gangloff, Buck, ... & Gera, 2012). Fathers who were exposed to parenting training displayed less negative parenting (Reid, Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 2003). Lemay,

Cashman, Elfenbein and Felice (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.

Young fathers are more likely to maintain their involvement in parenting over time if their proper involvement is supported at the early stage in life (Maxwell, Scourfield, Featherstone, Holland & Tolman, 2012). According to Cundy (2012), a significant difference in the lives of young fathers and their children can be achieved through well-funded and structured provision. The better psychological, emotional, and economic well-being of young parents for proper parenting may be achieved through appropriate formal support for the fathers (Hadley, 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).

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, Heilman, Gupta, Nembhard & Barker (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. 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 the financial connections of fathers to their children are one of the major fatherhood programs. 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 objections.

1. Determine the intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood.
2. Influence of race on the university students' views on intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood.
3. Influence of marital status on the university students' views on intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed for the study.

1. What are the intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood?
2. What is the influence of race on the university students' views on intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood?
3. What is the influence of age on the university students' views on intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 5% probability level.

Ho₁: The views of university students on the intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood will not differ by race.

Ho₂: The views of university students on the intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood will not differ by age.

Methods

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.

The target population for this study was all the university students in the Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare (UFH) which is based in Eastern Cape region of South Africa. Out of the four (4) recognized universities in Eastern Cape, simple random sampling technique by balloting was used to sample UFH. 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.

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.

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.

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 intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood?

Table 1: Mean analysis of the ratings of the intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood

n = 300

S/no	Item /Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
1.	It will help to identify all children abandoned by their fathers early	4.02	.92	Strategy
2.	Support groups will help rehabilitate and provide assistance to fathers in need	4.06	.80	Strategy
3.	It will be helpful if all children abandoned by their fathers to be offered moral lessons at government-designated centres	4.03	.96	Strategy
4.	A special government agency should be put in place to organize such moral lessons	4.14	.83	Strategy
5.	Government should be in-charge of the educational training of children whose fathers cannot be identified	4.09	.92	Strategy
6.	Government should make policy that all fathers should live with their children until they turn 18 years	3.79	1.11	Strategy

7. Government should establish policy measures to check single parenthood	3.88	1.01	Strategy
8. Government should establish policy measures that protect children without fathers	4.13	.93	Strategy
9. Ministry of Men is very important to help oversee the affairs of all men	4.01	.96	Strategy
10. Government should establish income support for two-parent families	3.77	1.13	Strategy
11. Children abandonment should have legal consequences for both fathers and mothers	4.00	.95	Strategy
12. Government should provide training for fathers to be	3.99	.97	Strategy
13. All fathers should be receiving periodic counselling	3.93	.93	Strategy
14. Government should be organizing fathering skills workshops	3.99	.93	Strategy
15. Social workers should be made available to provide fathers with skills to raise good families	4.15	.82	Strategy
16. Creation of employment opportunities will help fathers to become responsible	4.04	.89	Strategy
17. Government should provide support for community projects that help teach fathering skills	4.02	.84	Strategy
18. Creating more employment opportunities for fathers can help make them responsible fathers	3.91	.99	Strategy
19. Government should create schools for fathers to learn good fatherhood skills	3.87	1.06	Strategy
20. Male role models should be made to play active roles in positive parenting workshops	4.04	.90	Strategy
21. Schools, colleges and universities should play active roles in equipping children with positive parenting skills	4.06	.89	Strategy
22. All male students should take modules in positive fatherhood practices	3.93	.96	Strategy
23. Positive parenting and fatherhood skills should be compulsory for all students	4.02	.93	Strategy
24. Parenting skills should be made a requirement for all teachers	4.08	.93	Strategy
Overall Mean	96.03	12.53	Strategy

Table 2 shows the mean ratings of the intervention strategies that can support 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 intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood?

Table 2: Mean analysis of the ratings of the university students' views on intervention strategies that can support 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 2 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 mean rating of (M= 94.27, SD = 10.73), those within the age range of 31-35 years had mean rating of (M= 99.06, SD = 11.94), while those above 35 years of age had 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.

Research Question Three: What is the influence of race on the university students' views on intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood?

Table 3: Mean analysis of the ratings of the university students' views on intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood based on their race

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 3 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.

Testing of the Hypotheses

Ho₁: The views of university students on the intervention strategies that can support 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 intervention strategies that can support 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 the intervention strategies that can support 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 intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood irrespective of their age differences.

Ho₂: The views of university students on the intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood will not differ by race.

Table 5: Analysis of variance of the influence of race on the university students' views on the intervention strategies that can support 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 5 showed that there is no significant influence of race on the university students' views on the intervention strategies that can support 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 intervention strategies that can support young adults' transition into positive fatherhood irrespective of their racial differences.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of the study revealed that 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 others. The participants used for this study may have identified the above as the intervention strategies for positive transition to fatherhood because of their life experiences which may have informed their opinion. It has already been established in the introduction that most children in South Africa are either fatherless or have experienced lack of fathers' involvement in their lives. Thus, coming up with these strategies will help to encourage most fathers to actively engage in the early education of their children. These identified intervention strategies for the positive transition of young adults to fatherhood as viewed by the university students are in tandem with the fatherhood's programs in other countries of the world.

Buttressing this finding, Hadley (2014) found that the better psychological, emotional, and economic wellbeing of young parents for proper parenting may be achieved through appropriate formal support for the fathers. Similarly, 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, Office of Family Assistance in US awarded five-year Responsible Fatherhood grants to 39 organizations and an additional five awards to programs that

serve incarcerated fathers and fathers re-entering society (Dina, Behrmann & Wulfsohn, 2017). 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.

Researcher questions two and three with their corresponding hypotheses showed that the demographic characteristics of the participants did not influence their responses on the intervention strategies for positive transition of young adults to fatherhood. These results may have been so for the fact that in South Africa, most of the fathers irrespective of their cultural background are found to be uninvolved in the education of their children.

Conclusion

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.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. To ensure positive transition of young adults to fatherhood, the implementation of the above identified strategies should be ensured by the appropriate education authority.
2. Every young adult in South Africa should be assisted by the government to have a positive transition to fatherhood irrespective of his demographic characteristics.

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