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# FATHERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR CHILDREN UNDER SIX YEARS: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

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## **Abstract**

When fathers are actively participating in the early social development of their children, such children tend to do much better later in their lives trajectory. Given this dictum, the research reported in this paper explored the roles South African fathers play in their children's early social development. Previous literature found that fathers appear to be confronted with constraints that impact their abilities to get involved in more ways than one. Therefore, the main aim of this study was to establish whether the fathers selected for the study had experienced any difficulties in participating in their children's early social development. The convenient sampling technique was used to select fathers (n = 20) whom the researchers thought were experienced to respond to the various issues raised during the semi-structured in-depth interviews. A thematic approach was employed to make sense of the data obtained from the fathers. Opportunely, the cohort of fathers who participated in the study appeared to desire to be involved in the early social development of their children under six years. However, the findings of the study reveal that these fathers faced numerous constraints as they battled to get involved. The results shows that strained partner relationships a major source of constraint to fathers. Furthermore, results also show that working long hours was a major challenge to father involvement in the early social development of the child. Data also revealed that lack of experience in childcare constituted a source of constraint to fathers' participation in the early social development of their children. Time spent at work by fathers was a major issue as to how and when they want to get involved in their children's social development. However, the father effect connotes the quality of time fathers spend with their little ones as well as the benefits that accrue from such paternal presence on the early social development of the child. It is therefore recommended that fathers be adequately equipped to participate in the early development of their children.

**Keywords:** Children; Early development; Fathers participation; Social capital; Social development

## **INTRODUCTION**

Fathers are recognised as significant influences on their children in every society. What fathers do, however, differs concerning social backgrounds that appear to shape the numerous influences that fathers have on their children (van Rensburg, 2013; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Basil & Ndijuye, 2019). Much of the current research on fatherhood in South Africa is concerned with the deficit model of fathers absent and thus their failures to participate in the early social development of their children (Morrell, 2005; Talitwala, 2005; Richter, 2006; Ratele, Shefer, & Clowes, 2012; van Rensburg, 2013). Research on the values of parental and more specifically fathers' participation in their children's early lives have been largely acknowledged (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Basil & Ndijuye, 2019). Equally important is the emerging global literature signifying that father do want to get involved in their children's

lives (Behson & Robbins, 2016; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Basil & Ndjuyeye, 2019; Ellis, Khan, Harris, McWilliams & Converse, 2021). Partner separation, divorce, toxic relationships, construction of father as automatic teller machines (or ATM), the ‘painful’ experiences from previous broken relationships, and the very expensive cultural practices like the ‘ilobolo’ are some of the reasons adduced to suggest why most men do not want to get involved in their families (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor & Mphaka, 2013; Basil & Ndjuyeye, 2019). Notwithstanding, studies by the above authors (Eddy *et al.*, 2013; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Basil & Ndjuyeye, 2019) fully demonstrate that engaging fathers in their children’s early social development facilitates healthy early childhood development and leads to enhanced outcomes not just for the children themselves, but also for their parents as well as family and the community at large. Within South Africa’s fatherhood research tradition, it appears more work are required to be done to fully establish the constraints that tend to dissuade fathers from fully and passionately participating in the early social development of their children. Hence, the study is reported in this paper.

### **What social development of the child entails**

The process by which children acquire the capacity to engage and interact with others around them in a social context refers to as social development (Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016; Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN) (2021). Social development is a lived experience that appears to occur as children begin to progress through their personal life trajectories within the community in which they live (Alzahrani, Alharb & Alodwani, 2019). This developmental life course includes the discovery of their personality as well as the acquisition of basic skills that enable them to cohere within a particular social setting in positive conformity with others (Alzahrani *et al.*, 2019). The importance of the cumulative quality of the child’s social development within their primary habitats, and their reactions to the pressures around them in such social context have been highlighted by prominent theorists. For instance, Erickson’s (1950) theory of personality development highlights the interaction between social skills and the domains of emotions. Vygotsky (1978) notes the collaboration between the social and educational developments of the child using the dynamics of the functional imperatives of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) to highlight the power of quality interactions in the life of the child. Moreover, Bandura (1986) in his social learning theory argues that the child’s self-efficacy, which amounts to the beliefs about his/her competencies, appears to influence the quality of the child’s social development. In addition, Bronfenbrenner (1979) uses his multi-layered bio-ecological theory to demonstrate the impact the child’s significant orders, can particularly have on his/her social development.

Within the framework of social development, Huitt and Dawson (2011) argue that caregivers such as parents, fathers in particular who engage their children in interactive ways that ensure their social skills’ acquisition, appear to lay a better foundation for their children’s future social development. This is because these social skills are connected with the ability to positively interact with others in such settings as the classroom with their peers and their teachers (Alzahrani, Alharb & Alodwani, 2019). When fathers as development actors participate in the social development of their children, Browne and Millington (2015) suggest that this will inevitably result in the raising of better children who can deal with their emotional issues. Conversely, when parents particularly fathers are unable to participate in this aspect of the development of their children, this may impede their capacity to develop positive relationship skills; such children may become anti-social within contexts where positive social skills matter if they want to achieve (Browne & Millington, 2015; Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016). Darling-Churchill and Lippman (2016) opine that early positive

social experience with the proximal others as adults in the life of the child, tends to lay the foundation for the child's positive developments in all other areas of his/her life course. It is therefore necessary that fathers are encouraged to participate in their children's early social development.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The research reported in this paper was theoretically informed by Coleman's (1988) social capital theory. Although there have been other prominent social capital theorists (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000), however, that promoted by Coleman (1988) provided the ontological fit and explanations we aimed to draw by adopting the theory in our research. According to Coleman (1988), social capital theory is delineated by its operational roles that are only facilitated by certain actions of actors within the social structure. Qi (2018) notes that what stands out in Coleman's exposition on social capital theory is its connection with rational choice theory, which resonates clearly at the level of the individual's calculative capacities to decipher what is right from wrong. Coleman (1988) opines that social capital theory is productively dynamic and makes the achievement of certain human endeavour possible whereby in its absence, achieving such human endeavour would still have been impossible. Still, according to Qi (2018: 2125), the rational choice theory contends that the individuals' actions are based on self-interest that aims to satisfy their purposes through the tactical application of the means carefully selected for their effectiveness.

Coleman (1988) notes that the social capital theory dispositions present in the family; in parents and fathers in particular, when activated by way of father-child interactions could play a huge role in the creation of the necessary human capital in their child. The social capital of fathers will continue to contribute to the social capital accumulation of their children where fathers can be able to contribute to the early social development of their children. This is because social capital in the family is commonly measured by the quality of parental participation in the child's formal activities, parents' expectations of their growth as well as the father-child interactions at home (Claridge, 2018; Chen & Starobin, 2019). However, Coleman (1988) notes that if families are absent in their children's lives or unable to get involved in their early development, such children will lack the possession of the necessary social capital dispositions imperative for success in society. A child's social capital may still be deficient despite having professional parents because of the parents' unavailability to spend quality interactive moments with their growing child or not participating in the early social development of the child. This appears to be the common scenario that confronts the majority of the South African children according to most fatherhood literature in the Republic (Eddy *et al.*, 2013; Fazel, 2017; Salami & Okeke, 2018). Thus, we found this theory well-suited for the study reported in this paper.

### **Problem statement**

It is no longer news that the majority of South African children experience their early years' developmental trajectories without the presence of their biological or any father figures. , This is a scenario acknowledged by researchers to have already grown into a somewhat pandemic proportion (Richter, 2006; Ratele *et al.*, 2012; Doku, 2014; UNICEF, 2015; Okeke, 2018). What is worrisome, however, is the fact that most research aimed to try to provide empirical explanations on the reasons for this situation, end up theorising from the perspective of the deficit model promoting how unfit and responsible South African fathers have been (see Morrell, 2005; Talitwala, 2005; Richter, 2006; Ratele *et al.*, 2012; van Rensburg, 2013). Equally worth noting is the fact that the majority of existing literature emanates from studies that were led by female researchers (Okeke, 2018; Salami & Okeke,

2018). The situation in which men are researched from what Richter (2006) refers to as the predominance of the maternal template appears to account for why the fatherhood research from the deficit model seems popular. The authors of this paper argue that the empirical challenges presented by this scenario are twofold. First, the fact that the involvement of fathers continues to be lacking, despite the acknowledged fact that children benefit in more ways than one when their fathers are positively involved in their early social development. A second empirical challenge posed by the scenario described above is the fact that while the deficit model appears to predominantly inform fatherhood research, few studies have tried to fully establish the constraints impeding fathers' interests in the welfare of their children. Without obtaining empirical evidence on the everyday issues affecting the modern-day South African fathers, and especially on how they participate in their children's matters or on how they want to do so, generated knowledge will remain predominantly informed by speculation. Based on this argument, we undertook to explore the challenges impeding fathers' participation in the social development of their children under six years old. We were of the view that by so doing, we will be in a position to obtain empirical data to implicate the strategies for improving fathers' participation in their children's early social development.

### **Values of father participation**

Studies show that father participation can be of significant value in four broad areas of the children's lives namely: behavioural, psycho-emotional, social, and academic (or cognitive) development (Behson & Robbins, 2016). For example, research (Byrd-Craven, Auer, Granger, & Massey, 2012; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017) have shown that when the relationship with their fathers is receptive and sincere, such children are less likely to be emotionally combative. This means that such children are more likely to relate with peers within a social context. In the same vein, the engagement of fathers in their children's lives appears to be of immense social benefits to such children as they are more susceptible to display pro-social behaviours in context (Basil & Ndjuyé, 2019; Ellis *et al.*, 2021). Such children's externalizing behaviours will be more self-regulated in the manner they act out towards others especially when in such social settings as the classrooms and school. This means that such children will exhibit more improved social conduct (Behson & Robbins, 2016; Basil & Ndjuyé, 2019). Behson and Robbins (2016) also note that when fathers participate in their children's early lives, they tend to develop a greater ability for higher academic readiness, and such children are less likely to drop out of formal schooling. A study by Yoon, Bellamy, Kim and Yoon (2018) found that good quality father participation correlates with a lower level of internalizing and externalizing behaviour problems among children. In addition, research by Fazel (2017) has equally shown that girls tend to have a balanced understanding of relationships later in their lives, while boys tend to have a balanced behaviour when they have experienced warm and receptive relationships from their engaged fathers. It is thus left to say that the values accruing from fathers' engagement in their children's early social development are immense as such efforts must be made to reduce if not eliminate such constraints that may be impeding fathers is playing this important role. This next subsection looks at some of these constraints.

### **Challenges to fathers' participation in their children's social development**

There are major challenges commonly mentioned by fathers across the globe that impact their capabilities to effectively participate in the early social development of their children (Cookston, 2012; Roberts *et al.*, 2014; Ball & Moselle, 2016; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Fathers have reported in numerous research that lack of financial resources, their commitment to paid work, and availability of time resources are major constraints to their active participation in the early social development of their children (Roberts *et al.*, 2014;

Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). The psychologist Cookston (2012) highlights the absence of role models and roles' expectations; non-existence of paid leave; economics interpretations on how fathers perceive themselves; absence of communal support; the dynamics of child custody at the time of separation; and the armour and lifestyles associated with manhood as very serious constraints to father participation in their children's welfare. More so, research shows that children whose fathers fully participate in their early social development generally perform better and positive schooling outcomes in the long run (Ball & Moselle, 2016). Research also shows that the presence of fathers at home is highly valuable to the children's early social well-being if such fathers are truly actively present (Richter *et al.*, 2010). Given these scenarios, the choice of the social capital theory of Coleman (1988) became very appropriate for application in the study report in this paper.

### **Research questions**

The main research question we addressed in the study was: what challenges do fathers confront as they attempt to participate in the social development of their children under six years and what strategies may support improvement? To ensure the successful exploration of this task, we drew up the following subsidiary research questions.

- How do fathers understand the social development of their children?
- What challenges impede them from ensuring that this takes place in their children?
- What strategic implications for policy and practice, are there to support the fathers?

## **METHOD**

### ***Research paradigm and approach***

The interpretive paradigm was adopted for the study because it allowed us to seek the meanings participants brought to the world in which they lived and worked. According to this paradigm, individuals seek an understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences-meanings directed toward certain objects or things (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). By adopting this paradigm, we aimed to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live in it. Furthermore, the world of lived reality and situation-specific meanings that constitute the general object of investigation is thought to be constructed by social actors. The interpretivists believe in order to understand the world, one must interpret it. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), individuals develop meanings of their subjective experiences about the social world and act in that order. That is why interpretivist researchers believe in the understanding of the world to interpret it (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Given this, the qualitative research approach became most appropriate for the study reported in this paper. Qualitative researchers are inclined to collect data within the natural setting of the participants. Creswell and Creswell (2018) notes that the key notion behind qualitative research is to study the issue from participants' perspectives.

### ***Research design, study site, and participants' selection***

The case study design was followed. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a case study design allows the researchers to undertake an in-depth analysis of an event involving one or more individual. Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue that a case study design provides an opportunity for a thick and rich description of the phenomenon under study. We chose the design because we were interested to obtain rich empirical evidence to aid the development of an understanding of the case under study. Three schools in Eastern Cape Province of South Africa participated in this study. Demographically, the schools were located in a former Black township sandwiched in-between a couple of informal settlements, a former White suburb, and in a former Coloured township respectively. Our choices of schools were

strategic as they provided us the necessary access to relevant information to enable us to achieve the objectives of the study. Twenty fathers whose zero to six-year-old children attended the schools took part in the study. The fathers were purposefully selected based on our understanding that they had valuable information relating to the objectives of our study.

### ***The Instrument for data collection and procedure***

The semi-structured face-to-face interview was used to collect data from the fathers. The interview schedule comprised of eight open-ended questions in line with the research objectives. We sought to understand participants' experiences with participation in the social development of their children. Interviews lasted for fifty minutes each as was directed by the participants. All interviews took place at the schools that the participants' children attended as was preferred.

### **Ethical measures undertaken**

Approval for this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of one of the Universities in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Additional clearance was also received from the Education Department in the same Province. The purpose of the research was explained to the participants who also signed the piece of consent form indicating their willingness to take part in the study. Participants were assured of all forms of confidentiality and anonymity, including the replacement of their names with pseudonyms whenever the data were to be made public in the form of publications or presentations. Participants were also requested that they reserved the right to withdraw from the study wherever they felt uneasy by the issues covered in the interviews. All participants expressed their willingness to take part in the study reported in this paper.

### **Data analysis**

The data collected from the participants were analysed through the grounded theory analytic induction (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Grounded theory analytic induction refers to the procedure that allowed us to develop an understanding of the challenges confronting the fathers who took part in the study. On the other hand, grounded theory entails a sense-making process whereby theory on the subject matter was generated through the empirical data (Creswell & Creswell (2018)). The lenses offered through Coleman's (1988) social capital theory enabled us to transcribe, synthesize, organize, analyze, and make sense of the data. The outcomes of these processes were presented descriptively.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Three major constraints stand out clearly in the empirical data we obtained from the fathers who took part in the study. Below, we present the outcomes of the analysis.

### ***Strained relationship with the partner as a major constraint***

Data reveal that strained relationships among partners were a major stumbling block to engaged father participation in the early social development of their child. Partner relationship is strained when mutual consents are challenging to achieve among the individuals involved in it. This appeared to be the neglected situation reported by the cohort of fathers who took part in the study. Fathers in the study noted that once the relationship between the father and the mother is strained, a situation will then ensue, which makes it difficult for fathers to get involved in the affairs of their children. This kind of difficult and often challenging situation according to Houlfort, Philippe, Bourdeau & Leduc (2017) may evolve through, one of the parents not returning home on time or at all, partner separation, or



total divorce. Here is how some fathers represented the effects of the strained partner relationship. According to father eight (F8) actual words quoted verbatim,

*Something that makes one not to be involved, sometimes the parents are divorced...Let me talk about my own experience. I was married before and then I getting a divorce with my wife and I went to stay with my friend and then my other son is going, what is the name of that school he is going to? That school and his mother and parent do not give me chance to sit down with my child. He is 8 or 9 years old, she doesn't give me a chance because she is fighting with me and putting the child to be involved in that situation. This is making it difficult for me. How can I get involved when I have no chance? Leave me man...*

These kinds of sentiments were also alluded to by father two (F2) who mentioned that he moved out of his house he was sharing with the mother of the two children when both of them could not stay 'a day without a fight' according to F2. Continuing his justification to move away from the family house, F2 mentioned,

*...since then it is like she doesn't want me to see my children at all if I want to see them. Sometimes I am trying to go to the school speaking to the teacher because has the teacher's number but I don't want to lie sometimes no idea know what is happening at the school with my children. How can I have interest again, tell me, because am not close to their mother...am sad to see anybody because it is like am being punished.*

Serious relationship strains can have multiple effects on the family life as well as on the welfare of individuals in that family including the children and their overall developments. Thomas, Liu and Umberson (2017) highlight types of family relationships, particularly the consequential effects on the well-being of individuals about children's welfare once such relationships involving the partners are strained. Cookston (2012) notes that the dynamics of child custody at the time of separation make it impossible for one of the partners to effectively contribute to the social development of the child even with a mandatory court order. This scenario is likely to extend to other aspects of the child's life course requiring both parents to be mindful of the situations their decisions may expose their child.

### ***The constraint from a lack of experience in child-care on the part of fathers***

Whether realistically or presumably, data reveal that fathers who took part in the study were seen as lacking in experience of child-care. Somehow, our (the authors) individual personal experiences appear to make them susceptible to supporting this claim. Some of the fathers who participated in the study claimed that it was much easier for mothers to be involved in the social development of their children because there is this societal belief that they are naturally equipped to perform such child-care roles. Fathers claimed that it is common societal beliefs that they are did not intrinsically possess what it takes to perform childcare roles. In the views of father 2 (F2),

*...patience, most men according to my search do not have patience and those with the age group from 0-6 you must have a lot of patience. That's the downside for males. The female side it's like the Lord make them with patience, for us men I won't say keep us away from that age group but we are impatient...but that's in my view how the society is looking at us males.*

More so, father six alluded to the issue of lack of patience in the statement below,

*---well, social and moral issues like it is more acceptable that women take on that role and fathers tend to lose focus, they forget that they also have to play a role in the child's life and also the way we grew up where the mothers take more charge (F6).*

This would seem to be what father nineteen (F19) referred to when he alluded, “*maybe it is their work situation or maybe they do not know how they could be involved*”. Earlier, Hass (2005) argues that men feel handicapped being involved in their children’s affairs because they have been made by the lingering traditional societal beliefs that child-care is an exclusively preserved role for women.

Hass (2005) suggests that men who subscribe to this traditional notion of matrilineal/patrilineal familial division of labour, may not feel any scruple when he fails to actively get involved in their child’s early social development given that the reasoning is already informed by child-care being a feminine field in which men may not be welcomed. In this case, being seen to be playing the fathering roles may weaken men from their sense of lived manliness. It would thus seem that perceived lack of the knowledge and the unpreparedness on the part of the fathers to venture into childcare hitherto perceived to be women’s own, were implicated in the fathers’ responses with implications for all major stakeholders in the childcare business.

#### ***Amount of time at work and the nature of work a serious constraint to fathers***

A final major finding from fieldwork data was the revelation that the amount of time they spend at work coupled with the nature of work they did prevent them from actively engaging in the early social development of their children. It is important to note that eleven of the twenty fathers' work commitments are a huge factor in their seemingly inactive engagement in their child’s early social development. Verbatim extracts from fathers’ comments on this issue are presented below as follows,

*...most of the time according to my understanding, we work and support and the only job is to provide money. Children if they are under age it's too difficult...too small...it's difficult to handle them...especially when we come from work too weak and tired. Sometimes children does not know this at all. Their mother will tell them sometimes but not every time. It is a difficult one for me (F1).*

The constraint from work appeared to have been corroborated by the comments from father four (F4) who noted that “*fathers work most of the time. Some children do not stay with their fathers, some fathers do not worry about their children as long as they support them financially*”. Again, according to father five (F5).

*...I cannot tell what happens but most of the time according to our understanding we are the people (fathers) that provides, we work, we support we thought that the only job for us is to provide money and all that stuff to the children, we don't think to parent the children is our job.*

In addition, this is what father seven (F7), below had to say on the issue:

*...in most cases fathers are breadwinners and it may be a question of time. I am lucky that I work from 8 to 15h00 while some parents have to leave early, 5h00 and return late at night, so I think it is just a question of time (F7).*

It is quite glaring to note that F5 views, support the much-sustained notion of automatic teller machine (ATM) fathers within South Africa research parlance (Eddy *et al.*, 2013) who reveal that fathers appear to justify their absence in their children's lives with the claim that they provide financial supports to their families. Eddy *et al.* (2013) argue that this notion of economic or financial provision can discourage fathers to comfortably disengage from participating in the early social development of their child with the notion that they have played their own (financially supportive) part. Fathers who took part in the study appeared to think that they were put in a dilemma by this role expectation. For instance, fathers are expected to be there for their children at all times, fathers are equally expected to be at work to earn financial value to enable them to cater for their families. Notwithstanding, previous studies by Roberts *et al.* (2014), and Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) support the claims that fathers' commitments to paid work and time factors play huge roles in impeding their active contribution to their children's early social development.

### **Limitations of the study**

We just want to draw our attention to two limitations that might have affected the quality of data obtained from the fathers who took part in this study. First, noting that the fieldwork for the study reported in this was conducted after official working hours to minimize disruptions on both sides, we were forced to make some fundamental adjustments in terms of the location of the interviews. This made us to agree to meet with the fathers wherever they found to be convenient to them. As a result, we had to spend quality time in most cases negotiating for space (wherever) to accommodate and ensure successful interviews. We are of the view that this situation might have affected the quality of data we obtained from the fathers. A second point we thought worth noting, it the fact that lack of financial sponsorship meant that we decided to narrow down the scope of the study. This meant that the findings should be used, only in the context of the fathers who took part in the study.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The challenges mentioned by fathers who took part in the study may be fewer than what exists in the literature. However, the fact remains that those challenges were quite serious as far as the participants were concerned. The issues raised by the fathers require continuous research in the area until credible solutions drop out of such endeavours. It is equally important for male researchers, to not leave it to the female researchers alone, but for them to get their hands dirty and get on board in order to finding solutions to fathers' low or non-involvement in their child's early social development. Below is the section on strategic implications, we have made some honest suggestions on how to motivate and support fathers to begin to actively engage in their children's early social development. What is more, we think that these can be productive strategies the help mitigate father active engagement. Finally, we call on all major stakeholders (particularly the school), and policymakers in early childhood development to take the findings of the study leading to this paper seriously and find ways to implement the suggested strategies.

### **Strategic implications**

As fathers who took part in the study preferred to be coached to participate in the early social development of their children, it would be plausible to suggest that strategies should be mounted to assist them in this regard.

- Fathers in the study thought that centres and schools do not always think about fathers when they plan for their children. As such, they appealed to schools to be accommodative towards fathers when planning activities for their children.

- It is very important that when planning for such activities as meetings and sports events, which tend to attract the attention of parents to witness their child's performance at such events, the school should take important care to ensure that fathers are reached via newsletter for their availability and/or convenient most suitable for them. Fathers in the study confirmed that they would be more than willing to attend such events if notified well in advance.
- To ensure that fathers are always there, they should be made to feel that their ideas are valued both in the family, ECD centres, and in the schools. It is natural that human beings want to get involved in those activities where they sense that their contributions will be valued.
- Schools and ECD centres should set up talk-in center shows for fathers whose children attend such centres where role models should be invited to hear, speak and engage with fathers. In planning such talk shows, it will be the responsibility to conduct surveys on what may be of interest to fathers from the perspective of men themselves. Once these are established, any announcements on inviting fathers to such events should be sufficiently publicised through appreciate media outlets.
- It is our argument that the increased presence of fathers in the lives of their children and schools/centres-based events will allow for more wide-ranging practices of participation. Getting fathers to be involved in the school-based affairs of their children, will require that the centres and schools should mount father-friendly activities. This should start from the family in the first place.
- Given the above, efforts must be made by the Department of Social Development in conjunction with the Department of Basic Education to support stronger and unified families in this scheme of child's affairs. This will facilitate effective father participation in their child's early social development. The Department of Labour should also take up the responsibility to further explore ways of ensuring stronger unifying policies on paternal leaves that will be bidding to both the formal and informal employer of men's labour. It is obvious that when it comes to paternal leaves, the regulations have not been very fair to the fathers. All relevant government units can do more to play a role in strengthening the policies in this regard.

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