



**Exploring father-child relationships through the perspectives of young fathers**

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## DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM

I, Anelisa Dabula declare that:

This dissertation is my original research except where otherwise indicated.

This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

This dissertation does not contain other people's data, unless specifically acknowledged as been sourced.

This dissertation does not have other people's writing, unless specifically acknowledged. All the quoted sources have been referenced.

Where the exact words of participants have been used, their words has been placed in italics and inside quotation marks, and referenced.

Signed

.....

Date

.....

## **DEDICATION**

To all young fathers making a difference in their children's lives through dedication and commitments to them, indeed children are gift from God and they deserve to be loved and cherished.

To my mother Pateka Portia Dabula without your support this research would not have been possible.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores parent-child relationships from the perspectives of young fathers. Fatherhood is essentially a human, social and cultural role; fatherhood shapes male power consequently, serving as a platform where men express their masculinity. Traditionally fathering concepts have stayed the same throughout the years, with fathers expected to be the breadwinner and primary providers. The aim of the study was to investigate the challenges young fathers face in their journey into fatherhood. Data collection was achieved through ten in-depth interviews with respondents, mainly students between the ages of 18-24 years.

Findings suggest that young fathers are interested in playing an active role in their children's life contrary to previous research findings. It was observed that playing an active role and taking responsibility in their child's upbringing was imperative to most young fathers, especially for those who grew up without a father. In spite of the fact that Inhlawulo (damages) are still required to be paid by young fathers as damages for placing young girls in a family way, young fathers unable to pay this damages shows enthusiasm to be involved in their children's development. This demonstrates a dramatic breakaway from past trends where fathers were denied access to children until acknowledgement of paternity as a father.

The findings suggest that young fathers strive to provide for their children even though most of them are unemployed and co-parenting with the mothers and in most cases are not in any spousal relationship. It was ascertained that the major problem faced by young fathers is absenteeism from their children, mostly due to their schooling. As a result, most of them end up seeing their children only a few days in a year. Support received from their families make the transition into fatherhood a little easier; therefore they are important support structures for these young men. The father child-relationship is influenced by the relationship the young men had with their own fathers, and the relationship with the mother of their child.

More needs to be done for young fathers, especially those who are scared to claim paternity. Society needs to stop seeing them as delinquents who impregnate girls and run away from their responsibilities but rather encourage them to play an integral role in the lives of their child.

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## **GLOSSARY**

**Imbeleko:** a castrated male goat is slaughtered for a baby boy to introduce him to the ancestors of the clan.

**Inhlawulo:** refers to damages paid to the family of a woman who became pregnant out of wedlock by the father of the future child.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of study

Relatively little research has focused squarely on fathers. According to Devey and Posel (2008) current databases in South Africa do not reveal the number or profile of fathers in the country. Traditionally, research focused solely on motherhood, presenting a biased view of fathers who were deemed either unnecessary or uninterested in becoming part of their child's life. It has been observed that South Africa has the highest number of females headed households illustrating that fathers tend to be absent in their children's lives (Ratele, 2006). According to Roseberg et al. (2006) children who have an involved father are more likely to be emotionally secure and confident to explore their surroundings. Emphasis should be placed on the role of men as parents, which can be done by understanding the relationship between young fathers and their children.

According to Swartz et al. (2013) obstacles to fathering have not been well documented especially regarding young fathers who became fathers while at school or college. Hence, these young fathers are mostly portrayed in the media as unwilling to take responsibility for their children and in this way, disadvantaging those who actually want to be involved with their children on a day to day basis. Current research on young father emphasis the negative life outcomes of these young men including delinquency, lower levels of education attainment and employment opportunities leading to their subsequent poverty (Swartz et al. 2013)

These young men face the challenge of claiming the child's paternity because some may not even know they have fathered a child, while others deny the paternity if they are unable to pay inhlawulo (damages) (Hunter, 2006). It could be argued that a close assessment of their relationships with their fathers will help in understanding how the relationship between young fathers and their children are forged. There are three types of fathers namely social, economic and biological fathers who play different yet integral roles in children's lives. It is important to note that these three kinds of fathers play a crucial role in the child's life and influence their initial development, not forgetting the relationship that is forged between the father and the child. Fathering relationships are usually classified by the relationship of the

man to the child's mother and the biological relationship that the man has to the child (Richter, 2012).

However, available literature depicts that the role of fatherhood are influenced by the responsibility of the family. In South Africa roles changed as a result of the migrant labour system, which led to delayed marriages as well as the absence of fathers from the domestic environment. According to Richter (2012), the absence of fathers affects women, children and families because households headed by women are vulnerable to poverty unlike when households are headed by a man, who often have access to other resources within the community that may not be easily available to women. It is suggested that "children are not necessarily disadvantaged by the absence of their father, but are disadvantaged when they belong to a household without access to the social position, labour and financial support that is provided by men" (Townsend, 2002 cited in Richter, 2012, p270).

About half of all men over 15 years of age are fathers (Devey and Posel, 2002 cited in Richter et al. 2013). To date, information on fatherhood was deemed unimportant and was never given the required attention, Morrell et al. (2006) states that fatherhood is a social role that fluctuates over time and the role shifts. Devey and Posel (2008) also holds the assertion that a father is presumed to be a man, but not all men are fathers, however in African societies it has become a customary practice to pass on the responsibility to other male relatives. Fatherhood is a role exercised in different ways; a person does not have to be a biological father in order to accept the fatherhood role towards one or more children (Morrell et al. 2003). Tan (1994) noted that there are many dimensions used to classify fathers: economic fathers are those who contribute to the upkeep of a child, social fathers are men who live with and care for children who may not be their off-springs (Morrell et al. 2003). Fatherhood is a complex subject and thus requires recognition and establishment of the paternal value of fathers within society, not only for children but also for the establishment of policies, which provide and protect fatherhood rights.

According to Swartz et al. (2013) young men, particularly those under the age of 18 are too young to be legal guardians of their children hence they are frequently excluded from claiming paternal rights since financial provision often overshadows other aspects of fatherhood, which is problematic for young fathers who have limited access to finances. Many young fathers want to play an active role in their children's lives, while some remain disinterested and uninvolved (Swartz et al. 2013). The young father experience barriers that

do not allow them to be involved in their children's lives. Financially, teenage fathers cannot provide especially in the context of poverty as this puts a strain on the already poverty stricken family. Culture also plays a huge role in marginalizing men from playing their roles as fathers because as Swartz et al. (2003) note young men are frequently rejected by the mother's family if they are unable to contribute financially. Culturally, the fathers' involvement is hampered by cultural expectations, especially if the couple never married. Since the men must pay damages as a sign of acknowledgment of the baby thus showing that, they are willing to take responsibility.

## **1.2 Reasons for focusing on fathers**

Social fathering is a term used to describe adult males who plays an integral role in the life of a child; they can either be grandfathers, uncles and stepfathers who fulfil the role of a father in the child's life. According to Anderson et al. (2014) there are approximately 90% of children in South Africa who live with co-resident adults and other relatives emphasizing the long trend of care by extended family members. Changes in the roles played by men within the family have reshaped the norms and expectations concerning fatherhood, therefore, a child is likely to have non-resident biological fathers and resident social fathers playing these roles in his life (Anderson et al. 2014).

In the absence of the biological father, social fathers become role models teaching the child important life lessons. They are in charge of the child's upbringing within the family as well as the community at large. Social fathers may assume some or all the roles that fathers are expected to perform in a child's life (Colely, 2001 cited in Rosier, 2011). Makofane (2015) have indicated that a father absence mostly stems from the fact that the parents never married or did not live together at all, therefore, it is important to understand why fathers tend to be absent from a child's life.

Father absence is described as a father being absent from the family home because of parental relationship breakdown, this refers to the actual physical absence of the biological father during the child's childhood development stage. Young fathers are striving to change that situation. Studies suggest that young men in South Africa are often involved in their children's lives even if they do not reside together as a family (Clark et al. 2015). South Africa has one of the lowest rates of father-child residence in the world; however observation

confirms a change with most young fathers playing their role in promoting positive child outcomes (Carlson & Magnuson, 2011 cited in Clark et al. 2015).

One of the reasons for father absence is low employment opportunities and decline in formal marriages among black South Africans (Posel et al. 2011 cited in Clark et al. 2015), thus creating that space for the family to step in and offer assistance to both parents of the child. In instances where the young father needs to pay for damages or lobola, the family often assist financially. Clark et al. (2015) noted that fatherhood among young men in South Africa affects the entire family rather than an individual, meaning that, young fathers are not the only one who gets affected by this phenomenon, however, most families assist in the nurturing of the early development stage of the child. Looking at the maternal side, their role has often involved the making of decisions vis-à-vis how the child is raised and by whom, they also act as gatekeeper for the child in situations where the father refuse to acknowledge paternity or when they are denied access to the child for not honouring damages. Hence, family involvement for both the male and female young parents has always been a process of negotiation between the biological parents and their respective kin (Clark et al. 2015).

Young fathers often claim they are restricted in their interactions with their children, by ex-partners who use this as a means of demanding financial support, and are still deprived of seeing their child even if they comply with these demands (Lesch, 2017). Young black fathers in South Africa are portrayed as ‘dead beat dad’ an expression which connotes men who are unwilling to take financial responsibility for their children (Lesch, 2017). According to Richter et al. (2014) financial support of a child is acknowledged as a universal responsibility of fathers. It has been noted that fathers who do or do not provide financial support do not actually benefit from the children’s attention the way they expect. Mothers play a pivotal role in mediating the relationship between the father and the children however; this also depends on factors including age, educational background and the marital status of the mother (Linder et al. 2014, 454). Indeed these factors affect the manner in which the young father interacts with the child

According to Makusha et al. (2015) even though many black children grow up in households with absent fathers; they have multiple people who actually care for them within the family. It must be noted that biological fathers in South Africa are still important regardless of this fact, since they have cultural and social significance in society. For instance, the father passes

on his surname and clan name to the child which forms part of the child's identity. As much as the family members contribute in nurturing of the child, they cannot fill the void created by an absent biological father. Biological fathers are instrumental in 'transmitting cultural values to children and promoting identity development' (Makusha et al. 2015). This explains the imperative for mothers to promote the relationship between the father and the child regardless of their circumstances and their relationship status. The father has the right to get to know the child and vice versa, for the child in particular to identify with the extended family and his ancestral roots. This can only be achieved by allowing young fathers to claim paternity over their child, regardless of their disadvantaged background because denying a father his paternal rights does not only affect the father alone but the child as well. Makusha et al. (2015) states that by supporting and encouraging young fathers in such circumstances enables them to be more involved in their children's upbringing which in turn ensures better life outcomes for the children.

### **1.3 Why study fathers?**

This study, which explores father-child relationships through the perspectives of young fathers, is imperative because it examines why young fathers are excluded from their paternal rights even when they have eagerness to play active roles in the lives of their children (Bhana et al. 2014). According to Doherty et al. (1996) a responsible father will acknowledge the paternity of the child, by being present and being actively involved in the child's life, by providing financial assistance whether divorced or not married to the mother of the child. Doherty et al. (1996) further states that 'responsible fathering' is used as a set of derived norms for evaluating a father's behaviour, since some fathers may be classified as being irresponsible in terms of their involvement with the child.

The absence of a biological father has been identified as a problem for both male and female children (Ratele et al. 2012). Either fathers are absent or in most cases branded as bad or irresponsible by the mother once the child attempting to investigate whom the father really is. Hence, through this study the parent-child relationship through the perspectives of young fathers will be explored using qualitative interviews with young fathers between the ages of 18 to 24 years (Ratele, 2012).

This study will further help to comprehend challenges that young fathers face in South Africa, unfortunately, no literature has comprehensively explored this topic and current

research has mainly focused on single mothers. According to Ratele (2016), the absence of fathers has led to a rising number of single mothers. There are underlying factors that prohibit young fathers from being involved with their children, which are beyond their control, young fathers' face these prohibiting factors since the majority of them are unemployed or completing their schooling. Thus, this study will help to appreciate how young fathers perceive fatherhood through their personal experiences. In doing so, the platform will be set to encourage future studies on the topic. Bhana et al. (2014) noted that in KwaZulu-Natal there is a significant attachment of masculinity to fatherhood especially to the role as the primary breadwinner which is closely linked to the provider masculinity. This term was identified by Hunter (2010) in his study on Zulu men in South Africa. This excludes young fathers because they are powerless due to cultural constraints such as *inhlawulo* (payment for damages), which prevents a father from claiming their parental responsibility over their child. Focusing on constraints and challenges faced by young fathers through this study, will help ascertain and appreciate them thoroughly.

#### **1.4 Families in South Africa**

According to Ward (2015), the father absence affects the child's development. Most studies have focused on the role of the mother in parenting, hence it is imperative to explore the role of fathers in their interaction with their children. Family structure plays a significant role in accomplishing the tasks of parenting. In South Africa family structures are different in the sense that findings obtained from the General Household Survey show that most children live with only one biological parent and within a household with other adults present (Ward, 2015, 69).

This means that father figures do not necessary have to be biological fathers in order to have a positive impact on a child. South Africa has the highest level of non-marital childbearing, particularly among Africans and Coloureds (Nzimande, 2007 cited in Department of social development, 2012). Non-marital childbearing has been found to have a negative impact not only on the overall total fertility rate, but also on the children's education, economic and overall wellbeing. (Department of Social Development, 2012)

Due to South Africa's history, regarding migrant labour system many men had to migrate in search of work in the urban areas resulting in low levels of marriage and increase in female headed households. This is apparent from findings obtained from the General Household Survey which recorded that in South Africa 40 percent of households are headed by women

and these numbers are still increasing. Holborn and Eddy (2011; 3) have indicated that African women constitute the largest group of female headed households and are mostly between the ages of 25 and 34. This is highly correlated with family poverty since female headed households are generally disadvantaged when it comes to obtaining assets or resources such as land, livestock, credit and education. Female headed households are rated poorer than their male counterparts. Generally poverty and unemployment contribute to large numbers of fathers failing to take responsibility of their children (Rabe et al. 2015; 24). The cultural ritual of inhlawulo exacerbates poverty for these young fathers and their families, as acknowledging the paternity of the child requires the father to buy two cows for both the father and mother. This is seen as a sign of respect for impregnating their daughter. However, this cultural practice is inhibiting young fathers who are poverty stricken from claiming paternity. Cows are an expensive commodity, thus most young fathers will choose to stay away and not say anything to their parents.

### **1.5 Aims and objectives of the study**

The overall aim of the study is to explore parent-child relationships from the perspectives of young fathers. Statistics South Africa (2010) estimated that there are 4 million children that are maternal, paternal or double orphans. These statistics are supported by the increased number of female headed households, an indication that South Africa is at the trajectory of understanding the phenomenon of absent fathers and its impacts as a whole on children. Bhana et al. (2013) noted that between 1996 and 2010 the number of children living with their fathers decreased from 44% to 31%. Young fathers were specifically selected for this study from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Weber (2012) argues that a study of young fathers allows for insights into the way that men relate to fatherhood, especially in South Africa where culture still plays an integral role in the way fathers view themselves and relate to society as a whole.

Young fathers are confronted with a number of stereotypes. They tend to be seen as selfish and uncaring and are not interested in the nurturing and development of their children (Weber, 2012). Young fathers are unduly faced with challenges that hinder them from being involved with their children especially in situations where relationships no longer exist with the mother of the child and the child resides with their mother. Ultimately, this affects the way these men relate to their children and how they perceive themselves as fathers. Exploring this phenomenon is critical in understanding the experiences of young fathers. Furthermore, it

gives insights into how they deal with these challenges to overcome them. To achieve these, the study has a number of objectives.

The overall objectives of the study are to explore the young fathers' conception of fatherhood.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To examine the extent of involvement by young fathers in their children's lives.
- To investigate the factors influencing the relationship between young fathers and their children.
- To determine the challenges young men face in their roles as fathers.

This study attempts to answer the following key research questions:

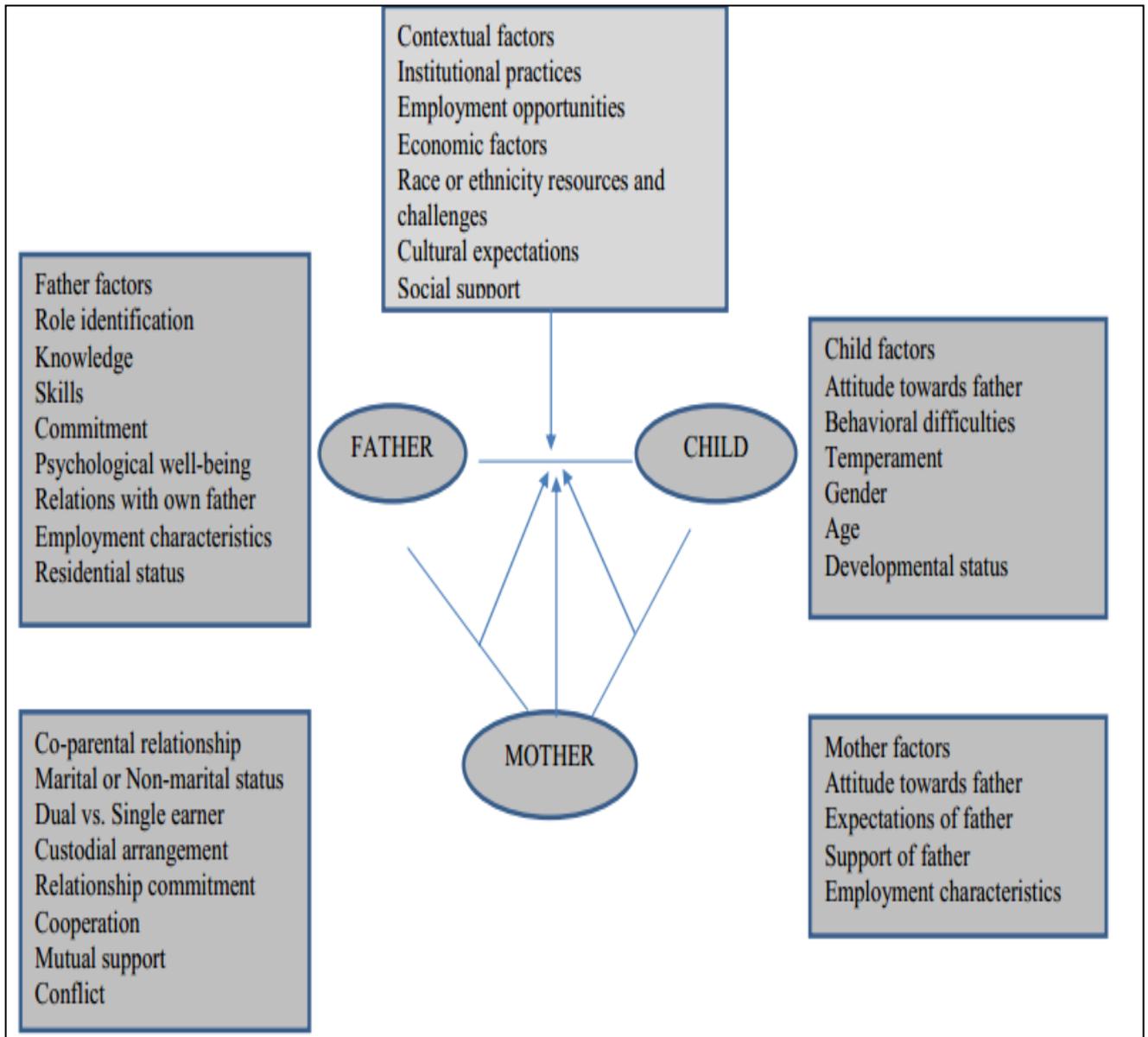
- What is the young fathers' conception of fatherhood?
- What factors influence the young father's relationship with their children?
- What are the challenges young fathers face in fathering their children?

The following key research questions will be used in order to determine the circumstances of young fathers in South Africa, their conceptions of fatherhood, factors influencing their relationship with their child as well as the challenges they face in their role as fathers.

## **1.6. Theoretical framework**

Figure 1.1 below explains the concept of fathering drawing on the conceptual framework developed by Doherty et al. (1998).

**Figure 1.1.** Fathering conceptual framework



**Source:** Doherty, Kouneski & Erickson (1998, p.285)

This study draws on the model developed by Doherty et al. (1998) which elucidates on the factors that influences the interactions of fathers and their children. It explains the importance of fathering practices even though in most cases fathers no longer reside with their children. The model takes into account factors, which affects fatherhood, such as the mother’s attitude towards the child’s father, the mother-father rapport including other external factors influencing fatherhood (Doherty et al. 1998). It was further observed that fatherhood is an integral element in the construction of masculinity since the mere fact of having a child is often used to claim the status of manhood. In South Africa, most men are

not able to claim their paternal rights especially teenage fathers since they are not in a financial position to take responsibility for their children. In addition, the cultural practice of paying damages which is a sign of respect towards the family of the mother of their child also influences their role as a father.

The fathering conceptual model highlights that the involvement of black African men in their children's lives is also hampered by cultural expectations. In cases of unmarried couples, a father is required to make payment for damages to the family of the mother of the child known as *inhlawulo*. Failure to pay for damages results in the young father being denied access to the child (Swartz et al. 2013). This cultural practice is a barrier that denies young father the paternal rights to their children, the most affected are teenage fathers of school going age that are unemployed and living in poverty. Making such payments is a challenge to them (Bhana et al. 2014). According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), these factors can affect the relationship between a father and child. The fathering conceptual model also highlights the role father's plays in the lives of their children, which includes fathers who do not reside with their children and the external factors that affect fatherhood roles from being fulfilled.

Contextual factors illustrate the difficulties young fathers experience in establishing paternity which has negative effects on fathering. Fathering is vulnerable to the changing trends of the economy especially within the workforce (Doherty et al. 1998). According to Makusha (2013), contextual and structural factors are important in determining father-mother-child relationships. The father factors are an important aspect of the young fathers understanding regarding the relationship between him and his children. Therefore, acknowledgment of paternity is important in order to be part of the child's life as stated by Richter et al. (2013). It is also an important element in identity development, especially the relationship between the father and the child. The father ought to understand what his role as a father is and what it really means, in order to embrace the experience.

Societies have their own perceptions of what fatherhood is and how it should be expressed. According to Taylor et al. (2013), this perceptual construct embraces a broader range of socially constructed gender identities. Young fathers do not always meet these socially constructed gender identities. In South Africa fatherhood is a social status, which is attained by having a child (Taylor et al. 2013). It is a known fact that fatherhood among African

extends beyond biological children, therefore fatherhood is shared by male figures in the family.

The employment status of the young father determines whether he will be part of the child's life. Fathers are distinguished as providers, hence when they are unable to provide they are perceived as weak, consequently excluding them from being part of the child's life. This affects those who are unemployed and come from families that are poverty-stricken. Generally it is difficult for young fathers to get employment without qualifications, and South Africa has a high unemployment rate among the Africans race which means that the majority of these men are unable to assume the responsibility of fatherhood, which then robs both the father and the child the opportunity of getting to know each other.

### **1.8. Organisation of the dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter gives an introduction and provides a brief background to the study as well as outlines the theoretical framework. The second chapter reviews the relevant literature on fatherhood and the impact on young fathers. The third chapter explains the methodology employed by the study followed by the fourth chapter which reports on the main findings of the study. The last chapter provides a discussion of the key findings as well as conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Introduction

This study investigates the father-child relationship through the perspectives of young fathers. Hence, the intent of the literature review is to explore the challenges that young fathers face on daily basis in their quest to play an active role in their children's lives. To achieve this, the review will be guided and informed by the research question posed in the study. According to Lemey et al. (2010), young fathers are said to be a vulnerable group with little research conducted on them. The review will thus be tailored to identify existing gaps in the information existing on these young men,

#### 2.2. Definition of fatherhood

According to Richter et al. (2006) fatherhood is essentially a human, social and cultural role. Bhana et al. (2014) states that fatherhood is a consequence of and shapes male power therefore serving as a platform where men can express their masculinity. Weber (2012) validates this assertion by explaining that men can express their masculinity as a set of cultural ideals that are dominant in the manner they are entrenched within society. Goodman (2015) have also indicated that fathering has been a highly debated topic since the definition of fatherhood has not changed to accommodate the new types of emerging fathers, as well as living arrangements.

Traditionally fathering concepts have stayed the same throughout the years, where fathers are still expected to be the breadwinner and primary providers. Societies have different perceptions of what fatherhood is and many view fatherhood as a construct which embraces a broader range of socially constructed gender identities (Taylor et al. 2013). Taylor et al. (2013) further elaborates that in South Africa fatherhood is a permanent social status attained by having a child. This statement by Taylor et al. (2013) does not take into account what Devey and Posel (2008) indicated that a father is presumed to be a man, but in most cases, not all men are fathers.

There are rising number of evidences regarding absent fathers in South Africa, where parental rights are passed onto other male relatives. According to Richter et al. (2006) being a father

has more to do with kinship ties meaning that in African communities, especially in the case of absent father's other family members end up taking the responsibility of raising the children as their own. These fathers are known as social fathers as described by Richter et al. (2006). There are many ways in which a child may be connected to a male adult; these men usually play an active role in the child's life. These men are usually grandfathers, uncles or the new men in the mother's life who plays the role of being the father. It should be noted that fatherhood definition has change greatly, because the notion of fatherhood has also changed. In pre-colonial times, fathers were seen as providers and protectors, however, with time the notion of fatherhood has become reinvented depending on the situation and the context it is looked at. The patriarch no longer exists in the African families especially since fathers have become people of suspicion to society (Lesejane, 2006).

### **2.3. Who are young fathers?**

According to Lemay et al. (2010) adolescents and young fathers represent a vulnerable population, since little is known about this group in South Africa and studies on teenage fathers is said to be uncommon, however, interest in this field has increased due to the rising numbers in teenage pregnancies (Bhana et al. 2014). According to Lemay et al. (2011), little is known regarding the attitudes and beliefs pertaining to the parental role of adolescents and young fathers, particularly self-identified needs required to be regarded a good father. Young fathers are usually still in school and unemployed therefore they are faced with many challenges. Many young fathers in South Africa do not have employment and this makes it difficult to financially support their children. The payment of damages to the family of the mother of the child also places a great deal of pressure on the father and influences his interactions with his child.

Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend the challenges young fathers face from society as well as from their own self-introspection. According to Paschal et al. (2011) current research findings puts a huge emphasis on the negative outcomes on adolescent parenthood which has become conceptualized from deficit perspectives in terms of how they deal with new responsibility of becoming a parent. It is known that men are the ones in control of contraceptive use in the relationship. Bhana (2015) who noted that gender remains a key influence in shaping sexuality. Bhana (2015) argues that these assumptions are supported by dominant social and cultural norms emphasising an active male sexuality and a submissive

female sexuality. Therefore, according to Jewkes and Morrell (2012 cited in Bhana et al. 2014) hegemonic masculinity is predicated on increasing male power leading to women and girls having limited space in negotiating condom use. Authors have noted how male power within dynamic relationships actually hinders the use of condoms (Bhana et al. 2014).

Fatherhood often ushers in life changes that are required to become a more responsible parent (Swartz et al. 2013). This statement could not be more exclusive of young fathers who have to go through endless hurdles just to be involved in their child's life. Ratele (2013) states that the discourse of fatherhood in South Africa is overlapped with masculinity, gender power and control, fuelled by the notion that men are providers. Therefore, making it very difficult for young fathers to construct their own definition of fatherhood, which would truly speak to them as a whole and how they relate to being a father. However, it can be said that "being a teenage father does mean that young men are able to reflect on masculinity, rethink condom use and advance caring relationships" (Bhana et al. 2014). Through contesting their roles and responsibilities as teenage fathers, they are able to reconstruct, change and reflect on masculinities whilst relying on dominant provider masculinities as an ideal (Bhana et al. 2014). Young fathers are usually still in school and unemployed therefore they are faced with many challenges. Many young fathers in South Africa do not have employment and this makes it difficult to financially support their children.

#### **2.4. Impact of fatherhood on young fathers**

Young fathers are viewed and assumed to be disinterested and wilfully absent (Enderstein et al. 2015). According to Bhana et al. (2014) African teenage fathers are seen as sexual predators who deny the paternity of their children. Society actually views these young boys as delinquents who become parents at a young age (Swartz et al. 2013). Arguably, the most frequently reported by authors is the low education attainment of these young fathers, since they have to look for employment so they will be able to support their unborn and their baby. It can be said that young fathers are more likely than non-fathers to suffer emotional and psychological problems caused from adjusting to being a father at such a young age. In most cases, the fathers are still attending school therefore; they are still dependent on their family for financial support (Bhana et al. 2014).

Low education attainment is very detrimental to the young father's future not to mention the unborn child or the child he has already fathered. Therefore, low education attainment will

determine whether fathers will be able to provide for the child in the future, ultimately determining if he will have access to the child in the present or future (Enderstein et al. 2015). Hunter (2006) following Bhana et al. (2014) states that fathering is based on a men's ability to provide for his family. Young fathers therefore have difficulty in finding part-time employment in order to provide for their children, without an income, involvement in the child's life becomes very limited. This then "extends the stark social inequalities (Bhana et al. 2014). The assertion by Hunter (2010) about provider masculinity being deeply rooted in the construction of fatherhood is strongly linked to disposable income and the ability to provide economically for their family.

Therefore, it is true to say that gender and masculinity play a huge role in how these young men relates to becoming fathers. According to Morrell et al. (2012), hegemonic masculinity is culturally dignified as it consists of dominant ideas of what it is to be a man. Provider masculinity will always remain the dominant view because it is the idealized version of manhood that is socially and hierarchically exclusive and associated with the breadwinner. Society is not at all concerned that hegemonic provider status is difficult for young fathers to achieve (Bhana et al. 2014).

## **2.5. Cultural barriers faced by young fathers**

According to Bhana et al. (2014), young fathers are still at school and dependent upon the meagre income of their families, therefore unable to honour *inhlawulo* (damages). *Inhlawulo* is a symbol of respect and shows that the man acknowledges and takes full responsibility of the baby. This cultural practice excludes young fathers who are unemployed and therefore cannot afford to pay; especially if they come from a poverty-stricken family, in cultural terms, these young men are unable to meet this demand. According to Nduna (2014) children born out of wedlock, places a responsibility on the father to acknowledging the paternity of the pregnancy to enable the child to inherit their surname. This process known as *Imbeleko* (act of giving birth) is usually done by the father and his family to introduce the child to the paternal ancestors. The process thus allows the child to claim their paternal ancestral roots. However, young fathers under their predicaments cannot perform the ritual since they are still in school and therefore unemployed. In most cases, the family also cannot afford to perform these rituals for the child since they cannot afford to do it themselves. According to Swartz et

al. (2013), these cultural rituals hamper father involvement especially if the couple is not married.

Inhlawulo on the other hand tends to scare off young fathers from claiming paternity of a child, especially in circumstances where the father is not employed (Swartz et al. 2013). For school-going fathers cultural practices that help to legitimize the birth of the child out of wedlock tend to have detrimental effects on them. Paying inhlawulo allows the father access to their child. According to Bhana et al. (2014) fathers who want to claim the paternity of the child tend to fall short, as they cannot afford to purchase the list of items, which is presented by the young man's family to the family of the pregnant young woman. Through the years, these items have changed into a monetary amount. Studies have shown that failure to pay inhlawulo by the young father or the family denies the father access to both the child and the mother altogether (Bhana et al. 2014). In some cases, the young man's parents could be the obstacle to him in claiming the paternity of his child, if they envisage that paying inhlawulo (damages) will hinder him from completing his education or put a strain on the families limited income (Swartz et al. 2013). As much as culture is there to guide people in their daily lives, it has become impediments for young fathers and hinders their participation in their child's life.

Thus, Hunter (2006) was right when he indicated that cultural manifestation of managing out of wedlock pregnancy through the charges of inhlawulo (damages) impedes men's ability to secure such legitimate rights on their child thus resulting in the denial of paternity. Therefore, it can be said that inhlawulo (damages) illustrates a man's power in being able to take care of his child. Stemming back to the provider masculinity, which young fathers lack since they are unable to provide for their children. Consequently, the young mother's family takes primary responsibility for the child, giving them the power to determine the access they grant the young father and how involved they are in raising the child (Swartz et al. 2013).

It is vital to understand the challenges faced by young fathers, since cultural expectations make it very difficult for them to fulfil their roles as fathers (Mkhwanazi, 2010). Abandonment then becomes the norm, however it is not considered that these young fathers truly want to be a part of their children's lives yet they are hindered by the fact that they do not have amandla (power) to do so (Hunter, 2006). Therefore, the assumption that those

young fathers are irresponsible because they are unable to meet the demands for inhlawulo needs further investigation. Swartz and Bhana (2009 cited in Bhana et al. 2014) argue that these customs end up overshadowing other important aspects of fatherhood. These young fathers therefore end up being rejected and viewed negatively by society. To some certain extent, the role of culture seems has a negative consequence on the relationship between the young father and the young mother thereby causing the relationship to end. Makusha (2015) states that cultural practices of inhlawulo contribute to the social and residential separation of biological fathers from their children

According to Chideya et al. (2013), culture has made males vulnerable to becoming fathers at a young age. Society has condoned the promiscuous behaviour of these young men, making it seem normal for them to be sexually active at a young age rather than teaching them the values of being a proper man. Society has made boys to be socialized to produce, perform and achieve and this has great implications on sexuality and reproductive health. Meaning that African fathers tend to encourage their son's sexual promiscuity revealing a double standard, in cases where the daughter falls pregnant the father will be furious. However, if it were the son to impregnate a girl, the father becomes secretly pleased since the son has officially proved his manhood. "Young men who experience fatherhood are often distinguished by the fact that they can attract and keep a girl makes him of high status in the community" (Fatherhood Institute, 2013). Therefore, it should be noted that sexual experiences for men are more self-willed than for women (Bhana, 2013), it can be understood that males are encouraged to be promiscuous by society as they are expressing their manhood thus creating a contradiction when it comes to the young women who then fall pregnant and are given offensive labels.

## **2.6. Challenges faced by young fathers**

It should be highlighted that there is little research done on young father's, hence it is difficult to understand the challenges that they are faced with, however, through their experiences one can actually understand some of these challenges they face in their new phase of lives. The lack of young father involvement with their children has been linked to conflict with family members of the mother who often have the final say.

Swartz and Bhana (2009) state that young fathers face multiple challenges to remain involved in the lives of their children. However, these young men are hindered by the lack of financial

freedom, yet they are perceived as irresponsible by society. In most cases, these young men are forced to drop out of school to look for jobs in order to support their children. According to Richter et al. (2012) young fathers' view of supporting the child financially is dominating over other aspects of their involvement. It has been noted that young fathers are more likely to fail to complete their secondary and tertiary education thereby increasing their chances of being unemployable in the future because of the financial stress they face to provide for their child. According to Richter et al. (2012) there are links between early fatherhood and life outcomes such as increased poverty and dependence on welfare among young fathers.

Young fathers with low education attainment are likely to be earning less than their peers. This is because their education is usually interrupted once they find out that they are going to become fathers (Swartz and Bhana, 2009). Regardless of financial constraints, these young fathers are willing to claim their paternity rights and despite the lack of power, some fathers want to be involved in the upbringing of their children. Young fathers are not supported by families or society but are constantly face with family rejection, without support, those who do not claim the paternity of the child can never do so.

“Unwed young fathers often do not live with their children and are less involved in parenting than men who become fathers at a later stage” (Goldberg et al. 2013, 281) thus making it very difficult for them to actually make decisions about their child. This affects their custodial rights as fathers and their involvement in the child's life is usually low, so with time the relationship diminishes between the father and the child. It must be noted that many young fathers reside with their families which limits their paternal availability to the child. However, it should not be assumed that just because the father does not live in the same household they are not involved in the child's life. There are external factors that contribute to the young father's difficulty in claiming the paternity of the child such as finances, the girl's family and the fact that he is scared as well.

Financially young fathers cannot take care of the child without having to leave school in order to do so; this puts them at a disadvantaged position because they are missing vital part of their development which is education. However, some young fathers from disadvantaged backgrounds have no choice but to leave school to support their child unlike those who are from well off families who can afford to carry on with schooling. According to Bhana et al. (2014) the persistent economic crisis in South Africa aggravates the difficulties that teenage fathers have in finding part time job. Statistics South Africa (2013) reports that the

unemployment rate increased from 24.9% in 2012 to 25.2% in 2013, therefore undermining the providing capabilities of these young fathers, since they cannot provide financially for their child. Most often, the inability of young fathers to provide ends up overshadowing their whole experience of fatherhood and the manner in which people perceive them as fathers

The child's mother plays a huge role in the relationship especially with regard to the relationship the father has with the child. This is particularly serious when the two have separated. When the mother is supportive of the father's parental styles, it creates a good atmosphere for the three of them. This does not only creates a good atmosphere but also emphasizes the father's role and begins to accept his role as a father, so then the mother has great influence on the father's involvement as well as the amount of time he actually invests in nurturing the relationship with the child. The mother can act as a gatekeeper to the child- she can either be accommodating or just be ignorant of the importance of this relationship (Allen et al. 2007).

The transition into early parenthood for young fathers has been recognized as a problem since, the majority of young fathers are under the age of 25 and most are found in their teens. These circumstances are worsened by the fact that some live in disadvantaged circumstances and their entry into parenthood are unplanned (Neale et al. 2015). This leads to some young fathers becoming scared and eventually abandoning their responsibilities for fear of the unknown. According to Autumn (2002 cited in Neale et al. 2015) there is a lack of support from health services for young men preparing for parenthood as they are ignored by health centres when they had questions to ask. Research shows those men's attitudes towards pregnancy, childbirth and child-caring is different from that of women, expectant fathers feel they are seen as helpers or bread winners instead of parents, when they seriously want to be seen as a parent to the child. According to Hoffman (2011), fathers enter parenthood without the biological and experiential head start provided by pregnancy, childbearing, breastfeeding and maternity leave. They also come to fatherhood with less practical experience and knowledge of children than most women do.

## **2.7. Lack of support**

According to Swartz and Bhana (2013) media tends to describe young fathers as choosing to be absent and uninvolved in their children's lives. It should be recognized that many young fathers have a strong desire to play active roles, however they are inhibited if they never

fulfilled the cultural obligations of claiming the child's paternity through paying inhlawulo, Swartz and Bhana (2009) have noted that there is a lack of support systems for these young fathers. Most services are directed towards helping teenage mothers in their transition into parenthood, it is evident that young fathers are totally ignored in every regard (fatherhood institute, 2013). In so doing, their concerns are deemed unimportant, which can also be the driving force behind why many young fathers chose not to come forward and claim paternity.

A study by Quinton et al. (2002) cited in Fatherhood Institute (2013) states that by ignoring young father's services, the mother's wishes are being ignored as well in the process. By providing services for young fathers, it brings a positive effect on the mother's pregnancy process. The support they do eventually receive comes mainly from their mothers and the mother of their unborn child (Swartz and Bhana, 2013).

Since there is currently no support structure strictly designed for young fathers, the logical step would be to encourage the young father to be there for his family, which assist their own personal development as whole. Therefore, it is of great importance that young fathers be encouraged to be a part of their child's life. According to Khunou (2006), fathers are portrayed as not being interested in their children especially when they do not marry the mother. Khunou, (2006) advocates that policy makers and law enforcers should change their attitudes and break their silence on the interests and needs of fathers. Fathers want to be more than financial contributors, they want to have a say in the decisions that affect the child.

## **2.8 What does it mean to be a father?**

According to the Father Institute (2013), fatherhood for young fathers indicates a wakeup call for disadvantaged young men who gradually pull their lives together afterwards. Young fathers do not receive support from the community or society, which has triggered a growing maturity among them. It is important to note that young fathers are defined as men under the age of 24 and they are therefore developmentally immature according to Robinson (1990) cited in Fatherhood Institute (2013). It has been identified that being there for the child is the most important part for the father. According to Chideya et al. (2013) males are often left to define their own identity and meaning of fatherhood consequently leading to its practices becoming varied and less defined. This causes problems for young fathers since the ambiguity of the definition heightens the challenge of adolescent fathers who are still creating an identity for themselves.

According to Morrell, (2006) fatherhood is associated with manhood since a man is expected to be able to take on the responsibilities and the role of fatherhood. According to Pleck (2010 cited in Enderstein et al. 2015) in a man's definition of fatherhood, masculinity affects their definition and performance of their gender identity thereby impacting their social constructionism and understanding of their role as a father. Research indicates that fathers are seen to be financial providers, and if a man does not provide he is made to feel less than a man. "Historically, it is the responsibility of fathers to take care of the needs of his children, however differences of socio-economic statuses and background creates diversity as well as limitations" (Bhana et al. 2013, 5)

Fathers who earn a low income face a unique challenge of creating an identity as a father, leading to them seeing themselves as insufficient providers. Therefore, being a provider is more than being a decision-maker and disciplinarian even though African societies have accepted this (Richter et al. 2012). Richter et al. (2012) states that those who do assume fatherhood and those who value fatherhood, express deep affection for their children and often endure hardships in work and separation from their families in order to be able to provide financial support. In addition, men tend to feel alienated by the fact that they cannot provide for their children, however in South Africa, where men raise non-biological children fatherhood can be seen as a relationship formed between a man and his biological child or adopted children (Richter et al. 2012).

It is important to note that roles of fathers are influenced by the structure of families which include marriage, paternity and co-residence and the relationship that the father in question has with the child's mother and his own father. These factors determine whether he is going to be a great father or not. According to Hunter (2006), fathering in pre-colonial times was centred on the idea of reproducing children, leading to the continuation of the male lineage through the male heir. Therefore, fatherhood comes with lots of responsibility of being a provider, however this changed when migration began and fathering and fatherhood changed the way they were viewed and the meaning of fatherhood. Due to colonialism, these external forces shaped migrant labour and the traditional role of fathers. Men spent months away from home and went home for Christmas resulting in the role of fatherhood becoming increasingly attached to his ability to provide for the family.

## **2.9 Migrant labour system and its effects on fatherhood**

The phenomenon of migrant labour system has played an important role in the growth of the economy of South Africa. This system lured Africans who wanted to be self-efficient to become induced into labour by the Europeans who moved them from their land into reserves (Mazibuko, 2009). The migrant labour system brought about the breakdown in kinship, the family which has the sole function to provide an atmosphere of security. The migrant labour system came into being when Cecil John Rhodes passed the Glen Greys Act of 1894 in the Cape Colony. This act ensured that there was an increase in the supply and control of labour in Africa for the white farmers and miners. This act was able to bring about segregation and discriminatory laws which carried right (Hamann and Tuinder, 2012) through to the apartheid era.

Labour was achieved by replacing individual land ownership and land could now be bought and sold by individuals as well. Cecil John Rhodes knew that by taking away the land from the natives they would be forced to look for employment. A tax of 10 shillings was imposed on those African males who did not work outside the native lands for three months. The tax was introduced with the aim of actually making these men leave their families in search for employment. Thus, the Glen Greys Act was a restriction on men not to actually live at home but to look for employment, especially those who could not afford to own their own land. This was the beginning of the migrant labour system in South Africa (Hamann and Tuinder, 2012).

With the inception of the Glen Grey Act of 1894, allowed new laws to be passed including the Pass laws and Native Urban Areas of 1923 just to name a few. These laws brought about stricter control and movement of African labour, making the black people readily available for labour when the labour power was needed by the various sectors of the white economy (Hamann and Tuinder, 2012). The migrant labour system, removed the independence of African men through the laws that were passed that transformed those who still owned land as a permanent labour supply for the miner. Men spent long periods away from home thus breaking up the family. The migrant labour system resulted in families being separated for long periods of time. This began with a pattern of male migration, and a long time later female migration from rural to urban areas. The separation of families disrupted the family and studies points out that many men felt pain about being separated from their families for long periods of time. The men believed that providing financially for their children was the

hallmark of a good father and they took up migrant labour in order to provide for their children.

With the inception of apartheid, this law advocated for separate development for the different race groups, in essence they were not allowed to live in the same areas or to interact with one another unless it was in an employment environment. This was ensured through the introduction of various laws which governed where the natives could live and that also governed their movements within the city through the Group Areas Act (1950) and the Native (urban areas) Act (1923). Under apartheid, blacks were restricted to live in the native lands by the Native (urban areas) Act of 1923 which ensured that no black person actually owned a piece of land within white South African areas but could own land within their own native land. By so doing, the government was able to restrict blacks to only 8% of land. Hence apartheid brought about unequal development of African native lands as little attention was paid to these areas, thus South African government actually encouraged unequal sharing of resources with the white areas getting more investments. This resulted in unequal social and economic development perpetuated by enforcing separation and inequality in the use of state resources.

The legacy created by apartheid was a destruction of family life and this was the mastermind of the apartheid state (Budlender and Lund 2001, Hosegood and Madhavan 2010). The legacy of apartheid on the family still lingers on years after the end of apartheid. The disruption of family life resulted in women having to play a dual role as a household breadwinner and primary caregiver. A study by Budlender and Lund (2011) illustrates how the migrant system of labour was orchestrated to disrupted family life in South Africa. The migrant labour system altered family life, as men in the mining industry were given contracts for eleven months of the year thus allowing them to spend 4 weeks of the year with their partners and children (Budlender and Lund 2011). The end of apartheid did not end the family patterns that had been created by apartheid, instead South Africa has low levels of marriage, high levels of extra-marital childbearing, and low levels of fatherhood involvement from men (Budlender and Lund 2011).

In South Africa many children are raised without fathers, the absence of fathers can be said to be both the result of migration and urbanization, which led to the transformation of family life and the role in which the father once played within the family (Makofane 2015). It is important to understand who an absent father is, Jackson and O'Brien (2007) following

Makofane (2015) adopted the definition that an absent father is a “father being absent from the family home because of paternal relationship breakdown”. Therefore being an absent father actually refers to the physical and emotional absence of a biological father in the child’s life mainly due to parental breakdown.

It has been established that fathers become absent in the child’s life due to the introduction of the migrant labour system which resulted in men being forced to look for employment outside the native lands in order to provide for the family (Mazibuko, 2009). Richter et al. (2013) points out that the shame and failure of men to obtain employment as well as to provide could be the cause of the father’s choice to stay away from the responsibility of being a father. Therefore, men abandon their responsibilities since financial hardships deny them the opportunity to be the primary caregiver of the child. However, it should be noted that the absence of the father is still prevalent in the present times with statistics showing that there has been an increase from 41.6 percent to 47.4 percent between 1996 and 2010 (Rabe et al. 2015). Across all socioeconomic classes, absence of the father should be understood to be both physical and emotional absence, which has been shown to have a negative consequence on the child as well as the family as a whole. According to Lesch et al. (2016) uninvolved fathers affect the psychological well-being of children and unfortunately African men with low income are the ones who are found to be absent from their children’s lives in South Africa (Lesch et al. 2016). Moreover, with the absence of fathers in families, other male figures within the family often step in to raise the children.

## **2.10. Parental relationship**

Father involvement has improved over the past decade showing how their involvement is of great importance to the development of the child. According to Richter et al. (2012) 60% of children never get to live with their biological fathers, whilst 40% does not receive any support from their fathers at all in their first five years of life on earth. However, “very little information about the involvement of fathers with children is available in South African household surveys” (Hosegood et al. 2012, 265). This illustrates the difficulty in obtaining this type of data set, it should be noted that fathers have a crucial role to play in the upbringing of their children as they influence their development. According to Bulanda et al. (2009) adolescence is full of psychological and social challenges which parents are meant to

guide their children through since this is a developmental stage characterized by increasing autonomy and self-regulation.

This emphasises the importance of parental interactions with the child. The relationship between the mother-child relationships are characterized by intimacy, while the father-child relationship entails more leisure activities (Videon 2005 cited by Bulanda et al. 2009). The relationship that is of importance here is the one between the father and child, since there is little research done in this regard. “Father Involvement is positively correlated with children’s overall life satisfaction and their experience of less depression and deviant behaviour” (Allen et al. 2007). The father's involvement in the child’s life is measured as time well spent together and whether the father has frequent contact with the child. In addition, a father is described as being involved if the relationship between them is warm close and friendly and the child can actually seek solace and comfort in times of distress.

Therefore, there should be a bond between the father and the child in order for the father to be defined as being involved in the child's life (Allen et al. 2007). However, this excludes young fathers who do not reside within the household; hence they cannot perform the day to day tasks of actually taking care of the child, due to some being unemployed and coming from disadvantaged households. Evidence provided by Bhana et al. (2014) suggests that “teenage fathers are further constrained by their inability to pay lobola or inhlawulo” (damages).

Hence, young fathers are unable to fulfil their duties leading to their exclusion by the child’s mother and her family. Thus, the assumption that an involved father should be measured by the amount of time spent with the child as well as the bond created cannot be sustained. This suggests that the criteria should not be the main yardstick for checking how involved fathers are in their child’s life. In South Africa that premise would not be sufficient considering the historical background of the migrant labour system, which brought about distant fathers who were only there for their children financially instead of their physical presence.

Hence, it is of great importance to capture the complexity of fatherhood for young men since they “do not co-reside with their children because the pregnancies were unintended” (Bhana et al. 2014). This does not actually stop the young fathers from wanting to be there for their child. There is some evidence that “fathers are taking an active role in the day to day care of their children” (Sonke Gender Justice Network (2013). Father-child relationship positively affects the cognitive, social and moral development of young children and these contribute to

the child's character and child's development stimulated through positive interactions with the father by playing together (Sonke Gender Justice Network (2013)). It is said that children with involved fathers and a healthy relationship with the father tend to do well in school. However, Bell (2007) begs to differ regarding father-child interactions, she states that it was not given attention since there was no evidence that supported the importance of father involvement being important to the child wellbeing or development. Young Fathers are necessary indication to fully understanding the effect of father involvement and the impact it has on the child.

Fathers have an influence on children in every society (Gray et al. 2015). Authors such as Swartz et al (2013) are finding it difficult to agree whether fathers are of importance or not, however, one thing that is agreed upon is that father absence is associated with negative outcomes, which are increased risk of dropping out of school, lower educational attainment, and poor physical and mental health. Therefore, father involvement is of great importance because the child is able to create a bond with the father through play time and the fact that the father is there both physically and emotionally for the child, through the provision of direct care for the child and indirectly through financial support (Gray et al. 2015).

In order to strengthen the father-child relationship young fathers should be allowed to be involved in their child's life, regardless of whether they can afford to pay for inhlawulo (damages). The mere fact that they are willing to accept paternity should be their way of taking responsibility. In South Africa, the persistent economic crisis highlights the difficulty of young fathers to find part-time employment (Bhana et al. 2014). Instead of punishing both the father and child by preventing their interaction with each other, they should be allowed to develop relationships from birth through the child's lifetime, since continuous involvement of the father will impact in the manner in which the child will conduct themselves and ultimately, their survival (Gray et al. 2015).

### **2.11. Legal aspects of fatherhood in South Africa**

Even though South Africa has a long established legal framework for child maintenance, payments by fathers in the aftermath of divorce becomes a problem. Unemployed fathers are not forced to pay maintenance and penalties are not administered consistently (Burman and Berger, 1988: Khunou, 2012 cited in Madhaven et al. 2014). This is problematic because of the inconsistency of the legal system regarding the manner in which men are being treated,

since there are variations in expectations of how much financial support a father should give and how often the fathers should provide. Therefore, it is highly difficult when the father does not co-reside with the children, in this case the father's presence and involvement in the lives of children becomes a critical issue for social policy and programmes (Madhaven et al. 2014).

According to Gallineth (2006) acquisition of parental power over an extra-marital child is not possible unless such a child is legitimised, which is done through the parents of the child entering into a valid marriage after the birth of the child. Therefore, the father will acquire parental power over the child from the date of the said marriage. South Africa has the lowest marriage rates on the continent, the second highest after the rate of paternal maintenance for children (Madhaven et al. 2014). With that being said young fathers are therefore excluded mainly because of financial constraints to provide for their child let alone enter into a marriage. Consequently for fathers who have children out of wedlock, South African law requires that a "child born from a marriage is subject to the parental power of both parents and the high court"; fathers cannot actually make claims on the child in question (Gallineth, 2006, 205). However, despite the recognition of the positive role a father can play in the child's life, the Children's Act still has not been amended to allow unmarried fathers to have access to their children. In terms of maintenance, both parents of the extra-marital child are responsible for the support and upkeep of that child.

It is stated that in Roman Greek law, an illegitimate child fell under the parental power of the mother and the father has no authority to claim for paternity unless he marries the mother. It is true to say that in South Africa the law does not accord a father an inherent right of access to his illegitimate child, the important thing is the child's welfare as indicated by Gallineth, (2006). Nonetheless, there have been cases where a father was granted access to the child "reasons given by the court in granting the father inherent access was that he was obliged to maintain the child because of the biological relationship he has with the child, but this relationship did not allow him access to the child" (Gallineth, 2015, 208). Hence, this is a presumptuous statement because anyone can actually provide financially for his or her child, however it does not mean the father would be a fit father to the child.

It is safe to say that according Section 21(1) unmarried biological fathers do not have the same rights as biological mothers. This law was further improved for unmarried fathers in Section 21 (1) (a) which states that they can acquire parental responsibilities and rights if he

lives with the mother in a permanent life partnership. As soon as the relationship between the mother and fathers ends then the father loses his rights to the child (Skelton et al. 2016). Young fathers are excluded again in this regard since in all cases during the time of conception they don't reside with the mother of the child, since they are still unemployed and schooling. This statement will remain true despite their aspirations to do well and be present for their children, young fathers face considerable challenges and barriers to parenthood (Clayton, 2016). It is evident that there is still a lot that needs to be done for unmarried fathers in South Africa where despite living arrangements they are not recognized automatically by the courts and given recognition and access to the child regardless of their obligation to the child.

## **2.12. Summary**

This section has reviewed the situation of young fathers who are between the ages of 18-24 years. Young fathers are usually still in school and unemployed therefore they are faced with many challenges. Many young fathers in South Africa do not have employment and this makes it difficult to financially support their children. The payment of damages to the family of the mother of the child also places a great deal of pressure on the father and influences his interactions with his child.

## CHAPTER 3

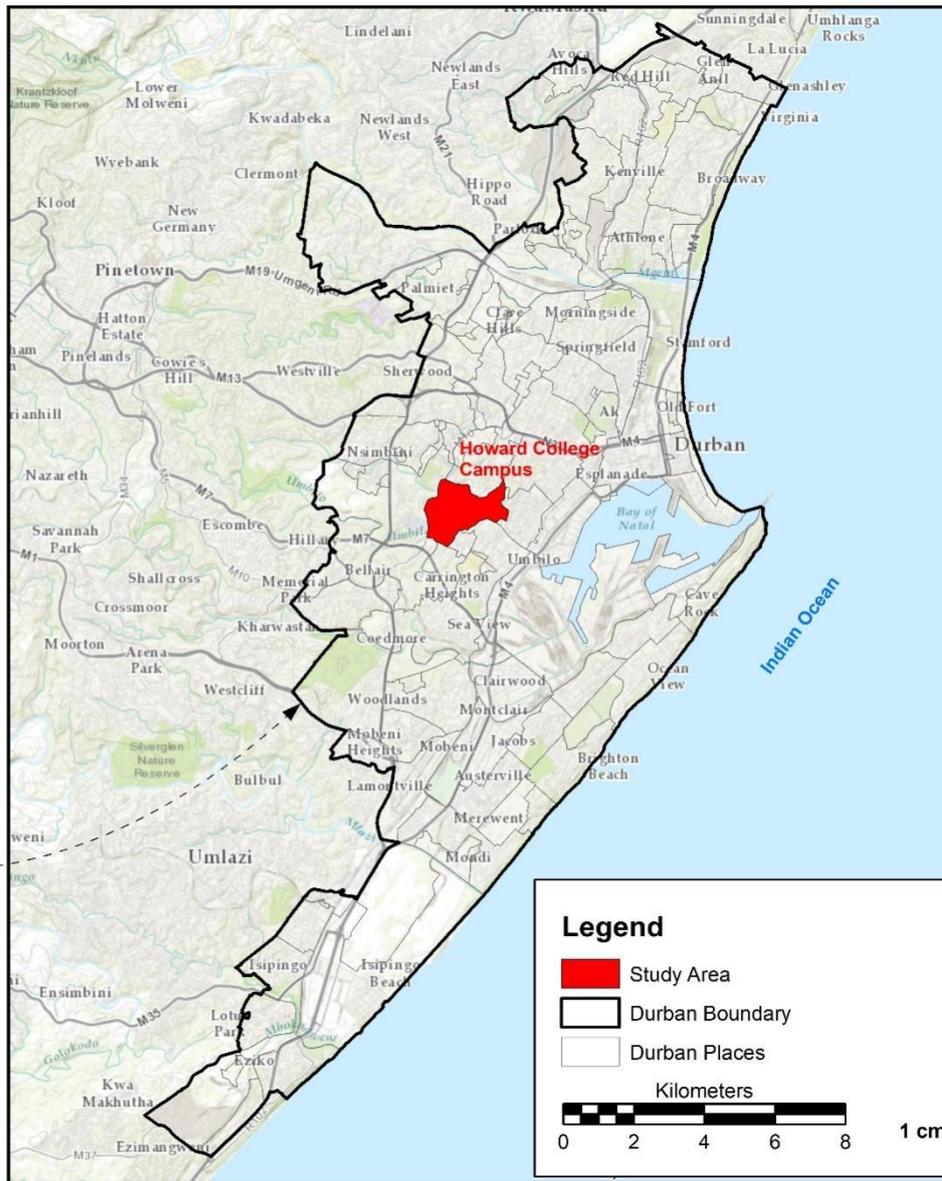
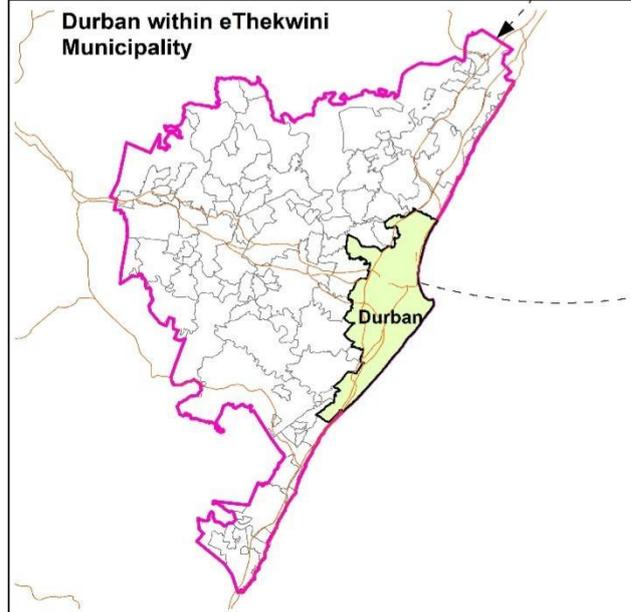
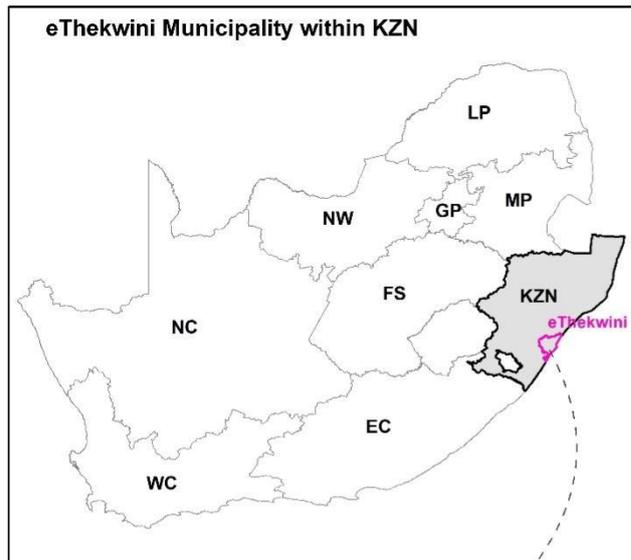
### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology that was employed throughout the study in exploring parent child relationships from the perspective of young fathers. The study is a qualitative study which utilised in-depth interviews as a way of gathering data. According to Mtikrakra (2009), qualitative research is based on discovering information that you did not intend on finding, in-depth interview allows the participant to feel more comfortable in answering personal questions. This chapter highlights the research method, sampling, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations and the limitation encountered during the study. Young fathers were chosen for the study as they constitute a vulnerable population. In addition, there is relatively little research in South Africa on young fathers. Student fathers were chosen for the study because they are most affected by cultural and economic barriers. They are best suited to give insight in how they overcome these barriers in their journey into early fatherhood. Since they are students the majority of them are still unemployed, and they rely on parents for financial support and financial aid as a means to survive.

#### 3.2. Study Area

The study was conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College in Durban, South Africa. Howard College is one of the five campuses under the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Howard College is located on King George V Ave, Glenwood. The University was established on the first of January 2004 after the merger of the University of Durban Westville and the former University of Natal. Howard College was chosen as a study area because of its cultural and racial diversity among students there. The study focused on young fathers aged between 18-24 years old with respondents rating from undergraduate students to master is students. Figure 3.1 below provides a map of the study area.

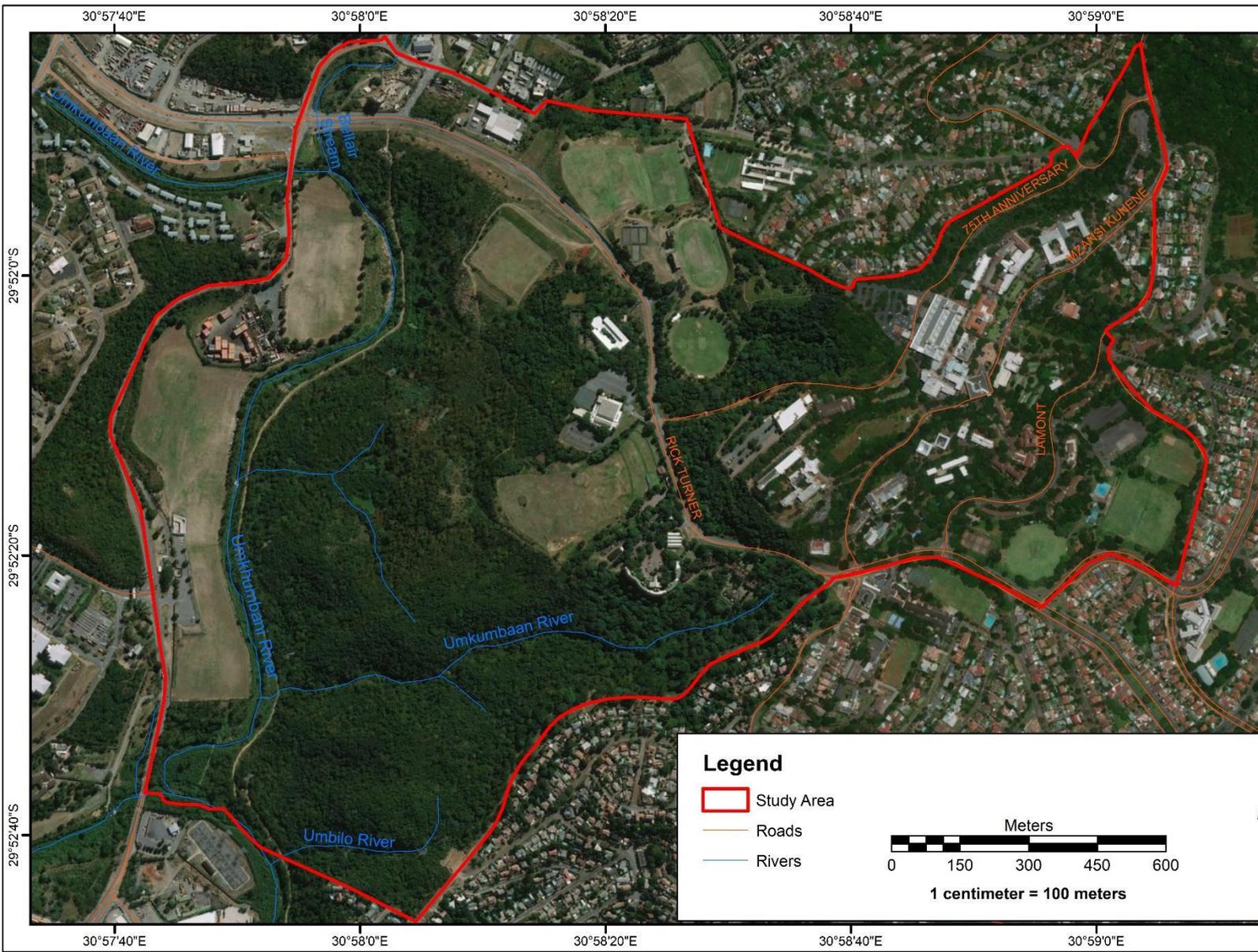


**Legend**

- Study Area
- Durban Boundary
- Durban Places

Kilometers

0 2 4 6 8 1 cm



**Figure 3.2**\_Map illustrating Howard College (study area)

### **3.3. Research Methodology**

This study draws on qualitative data collected from young fathers, who are students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The method adopted was qualitative research approach which was employed to explore parent-child relationships from the perspectives of young fathers. Qualitative methods were chosen because it allowed the researcher to gain insight into young father's perceptions of fatherhood through their own experiences (Bless et al. 2013, 16).

The qualitative research methodology usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection of and analysis of data (Bryman, 2012, 380). Qualitative research uses methods such as participant observation and in-depth interviews. In this study, interviews were conducted with 10 informants, mainly young fathers who were interviewed to ascertain their experiences of fatherhood. This method of data collection (qualitative research) allows researchers to gain insight into young father's attitudes and behaviour. It was ascertained from the interviews that young fathers face a number of challenges when it comes to claiming paternity of a child among other things. According to Bless et al. (2013) qualitative research is concerned with interpreting the reality faced by the participants by understanding the natural causes of such occurrences and this is what the researcher achieved through the process.

### **3.4. Research design**

Hennink et al. (2011) have indicated that the research design cycle is the first component of the overall qualitative study where deductive reasoning is used. Research design is said to be the gap between the research questions and the data to be collected. It is the strategy adopted to collect information that informs the research questions posed in the study (Myer 2009) It is the overall plan, for selecting respondents on a specified study (Welman et al. 2009). In this study, the research design was a step by step guide that the researcher used to plan, structure and guide the research from start to finish. The research design was the overall strategy that the researcher chose to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical manner (De Vos, 2001). Through the evidence obtained from data collected, the research was able to use it effectively to address questions in the study (Thomas, 2010).

### **3.5. Data Collection**

Data collection was achieved through in-depth interviews with 10 young fathers between the age of 18 and 24 years. According to Hennink et al. (2011) an in-depth interview is known as a one on one method of collecting data which involves an interviewer and an interviewee discussing specific topics in depth. An in-depth interview was thus used to ascertain information regarding father-child relationships through the perspectives of young fathers which allowed the researcher and the participant the opportunity to explore the subject matter in detail (De Vos, 2011). This approach was Ideal since according to Hennink et al. (2011) it allows detailed information to be collected through open-ended questionnaires. It should be noted that the in-depth interviews provided a comfortable space, where the respondents were able to answer honestly and provide more detailed regarding their perspective on the subject under investigation.

### **3.6. Sample selection**

Snowball or chain referral sampling is a method that has been widely used in qualitative sociological research. This method yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some knowledge or characteristics that are of interest (Biernacki et al. 1981). Snowball methodology was employed in this study which focuses on a sensitive issue, concerning young father's private life on fatherhood. It was apparent that the phenomenon under investigation requires the knowledge of insiders to locate targeted group of respondent for the study.

Purposive sampling was also employed in the study. Purposive sampling is very time efficient; according to Palys (2008). Purposive sampling is very different with qualitative research. It is a non-random theory that does not require any theory prior to undertaking the research (Tongo, 2007). It is defined as a non-probability method where participants relevant for the sample are chosen based on the judgment made by the researcher. Purposive sampling is effective when the study sample is limited to small numbers of people as in the case of this study which explored father-child relationships through the perspectives of young fathers (Neuman, 2011).

It needs mentioning that participation in the study was voluntary for the respondents and could have chosen to pull out from the interview during the process. Another reason why respondents from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Howard College, were used was their readily availability which made it easy to set up interviews. **Students were chosen for this study because they are more likely to be aged 18 years and over. In addition, they were easier to locate than other young fathers. There are also few studies on young fathers who are university students.** Young fathers were recruited through referrals by other young fathers that were interviewed for the study. This was easy, because this made finding respondents for the study to be more efficient and less time consuming. Most males hide the fact they have children from other students especially those at the undergraduate level. The only people that know that they are fathers are those that are close to them. University students were chosen because they face barriers both economically and socially. Society sees young fathers as delinquents that impregnate girls and run away from their responsibilities. Insights can be drawn on their experiences of being young fathers and how they deal with the transition from being teenagers and becoming fathers. Ten respondents were chosen for the study to get a wide range of responses that would help unpack the barriers young fathers face. For the study, only **ten young fathers were chosen for the study as it is not easy to recruit men. Young fathers are likely to be reluctant to be identified as fathers because of the stigma associated with an early pregnancy.**

### **3.7. Sample Size**

According to Burmeister et al. (2012) sample size allows for accurate results and for research resources to be used efficiently and ethically. A sample size is defined as the minimum number of participants required to identify the study being researched. Natasi (no date) have indicated that sampling refers to the selection of individuals for a study. In this study, the sample frame was young fathers between the ages of 18-24 years of age. Specifying the type of participant allowed accurate results to be achieved as well as illustrating that the sample was chosen purposely and the individuals who meet the criteria were included in the study. Using correct sampling methods allows researchers the ability to reduce research costs, conduct research more efficiently (speed), have greater flexibility, and provides for greater accuracy (Burmeister et al. 2012).

Sampling is a practical way of collecting data when the population is infinite or extremely large, thus making a study of all its elements impossible. The sample method involves taking a representative selection of the population and using the data collected as research information. . For this study, interviews were conducted with ten young fathers aged 18-24 years.

### **3.8. Data analysis**

Data is analysed to obtain usable and useful information, according to Hennink et al. (2011). It involves interpreting participant experiences in order to understand the study that was chosen. In this study, the researcher immersed herself in the study in order to understand and identify unique responses from the ten participants, which created patterns and relationships among the data collected. In-depth interviews were undertaken, where data was collected after which thematic analysis was employed in identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data collected

According to Attride-Stirling (2001), thematic analysis is an analytical tool that allows the researcher to draw on common features, by exploring and understanding the study instead of just comparing different definitions by different authors. Thematic analysis was relevant to the study because it assisted the researcher to identify underlying themes of the study through the interpretation of the data collected through in-depth interviews, and this allowed for efficient interpretation of information (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

### **3.9. Ethical considerations**

According to De Vos et al. (2000) ethical considerations are very important in research as they govern the norms and standards in which the research is conducted. Therefore, ethics are a set of moral principles that are suggested by an individual or group, which are subsequently accepted. Research without ethical considerations cannot continue therefore ethics are a very important aspect of any scientific research exercise (Babbie, 2001).

During the interview processes, the researcher ascertained the names of the participants, all in keeping with the ethics in ensuring that the process was effectively conducted without prejudice or bias. For instance, this assisted with familiarising the respondents and consequently creating an open environment for them to freely cooperate and ask question on the process.

In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the researcher used pseudonyms as a way of protecting the participants' identity. The researcher also made available contact details: email address and the cell phone number of the researcher to participants who might require feedback. This ensured that participants benefit from this study since findings will be shared in electronic format upon request from respondents.

Participant who agreed to take part in the study were given a consent form, with detailed information about the purpose of the study. The researcher briefed participants thoroughly before each interview took place. The consent form served as a legal contract between the researcher and the participant, clearly stating that the researcher will not share the participant's identity under any circumstances. Ethical clearance for this study was received from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Participants participated freely in the process and they were informed of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time. According to Vos et al. (2000) participants should be psychologically and legally competent to participate in the study.

### **3.10. Reliability and Credibility**

The danger with the purposive method is that the researcher exercises judgment on the informant's reliability and competency. This is a genuine concern especially regarding key informants on whom much of the data quality rests. It is therefore critical to be certain of the knowledge and skill of the informant when employing purposive sampling method, since the wrong informants will render the data meaningless and invalid (Godambe, 1982). The researcher must also be alert for possible prejudice on the part of the informant (Seidler, 1974). Reliability is central to the measurement of data as it ensures consistency and allows for the estimation of error because the larger the reliability the smaller the error and the smaller the reliability the larger the error (Punch, 2005, 96). According to Neuman (2011), validity increases dynamic connections across diverse realms with the number of specifics that are connected. In this research, validity was achieved through analysing the different responses and experiences observed from interviews with young fathers between the ages of 18-24 years at the University of KwaZulu –Natal Howard College.

### **3.11. Limitations of Study**

One of the limitations of the study is related to the sample size. It was difficult to find participants for the study. It is possible that men were reluctant to provide personal information during the interviews and this impacted their willingness to participate in the study. Besides available data on fatherhood is very limited since most surveys are geared towards the role of women in parenting. Little research has focused squarely on fathers, according to Devey and Posel (2008) current databases in South Africa do not reveal the number or profile of fathers in the country.

The study focused on exploring parent child relationships from the perspective of young fathers; this being an area with little research conducted. Finding young fathers that were willing to speak about their experiences was also a challenge, since most people contacted earlier turned down the invitation based on the sensitivity of the subject matter under discussion. Indeed none of them wanted to be seen as irresponsible in the eyes of the researcher. Lastly, the qualitative research method adopted was extremely laborious particularly when it came to data collection and analysis, which restricted the researcher to have as few participants as possible, which ultimately affects the representativeness of the findings.

### **3.12. Summary**

This chapter has provided information on the research methodology adopted to conduct this study. The research was based on a qualitative study which was obtained from in-depth interviews. The aim of the interviews was to explore parent-child relationships through the experiences of young fathers. The sample was relatively small and this is likely to influence the generalizability of the study. The study also highlighted some of the challenges that were faced during the research.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter outlines the key findings from the in-depth interviews. The study draws on qualitative data based on 10 in-depth interviews conducted with young fathers between the ages of 18 and 24 years. The study aimed to find out how young fathers manage to provide for their children whilst being students. It starts by exploring the key characteristics of the sample and then moves to explore the relationship between the father and the child. This is done through the main themes which were identified.

#### **4.2. Sample Characteristics**

All the respondents were registered students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, with the majority being first time fathers with the exception of one young man who reported that he had three children at the time of the interview and was expecting his fourth child, Most of the fathers were no longer involved with the mothers of their children. In addition, none of the fathers were married. The youngest among them was 18 years, with the oldest being 23 years of age.

**Table 4.1: Characteristics of the sample**

<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Age During The Interview</b>	<b>Age At First Birth</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Still With The Mother</b>	<b>Level Of Study</b>
1.	Qiqqa	24	18	Single	No	Honours
2.	Samkelo	23	19	Single	No	Honours
3.	Sibusiso	23	18	Single	Yes	Masters
4.	Thabani	22	18	Single	Yes	Second
5.	Thamsanqa	24	20	Single	Yes	Masters
6.	Sipho	24	23	Single	No	Honours
7.	Mzwandile	23	21	Single	No	Third year
8.	Nathi	21	19	Single	No	Second year
9.	Zolani	19	18	Single	No	First year
10.	Xolani	20	18	Single	No	First year

### **4.3. Responding to the news of the pregnancy**

Information ascertained from these young fathers suggests that they were stunned when the information of pregnancy was communicated to them by their girlfriends, indicating that the notion of becoming a father was a surprise to them since they were not prepared for fatherhood. Some of the respondents indicated that they found it very difficult to accept the reality of fatherhood. It was discovered that the main concern of these young fathers was how to provide for their children since they were students without any sustainable incomes.

*“I was scared and shocked” (Mzwandile, aged 23).*

*“I was scared since I was not ready to become a father” (Nathi, aged 21).*

*“I panicked, it was scary. It was not something I expected. The first feeling was that I did not know and was not sure I would be able to take care of the child and all of that” (Thamsanqa, aged 24).*

Most of them reflected on the financial predicament back home, vis-à-vis the struggles their parents go through to provide and support them, hence informing them about putting a woman in a family with unexpected child has not been easy for these young fathers. It was further observed that in most cases, parents had no idea their sons were sexually active to begin with, hence they received this message with astonishment and mixed feelings

One young father indicated that he was happy and disappointed at the same time when he was he was told by his girlfriend that he was going to be a father. According to him, he never envisaged to have a child at this age, in other words he never planned on having a child at a time he was being supported by his parents and would not be able to support the child's needs.

*“At first I was scared and unsure of how my parents would take it, but after some time the idea eased in and I calmed down which was followed by excitement for my unborn child” (Sibusiso, aged 23).*

*“It was difficult to accept that I was going to be a father. I had to take responsibility for my actions. I was raised by a single mom, my father was never around, and he never took responsibility for me at all. I knew I had to be an example not only to my child but to the other young fathers as well” (Sipho, aged 24).*

One respondent admitted he had mixed feelings about becoming a father, since he was not ready. According to him, he requested the girlfriend to have an abortion; this shows how unprepared young fathers are when faced with the news of an unexpected pregnancy in their relationships. However, there was not much support for termination of pregnancy by his female partner so he had to accept the pregnancy.

*“I asked my girlfriend to have an abortion, which she refused for religious reasons, so I had to grow up and accept the fact that I am a father” (Samkelo, aged 23).*

However, some of the respondents indicated their readiness to accept the challenges upon hearing the news of becoming fathers since they were excited. Taking responsibility for the child was one of the main factors some of the respondents expressed. According to them, the whole experience affected their life strongly, starting from breaking the news to their families and having to plan their future regarding their unexpected role of fatherhood. It was identified that having a child had changed the mentality of these young fathers. They state that they

now take into consideration that they are fathers and this has changed the way they think and plan for their future. They felt that *'we are no longer egocentric' but 'consider the needs of our children, whenever we have money'*.

One young father stated that he was very unhappy about the situation at first because he was worried about his parent's reaction but he later relaxed when he found that his family reacted positively to his impending fatherhood.

*"Firstly I was shocked but with time I got used to it. At home they were happy that I was having a baby that made me relax a little bit also" (Qiqqa, aged 24)*

Young fathers initially reacted with shock to the news of the pregnancy but found that as time went by they were more accepting of the pregnancy and some were also very excited. The one father who had many children stated that he experienced mixed reactions with the first child but since then he has embraced fatherhood and he enjoys being a father and gets a great deal of pleasure from his children.

*"I have been a father so many times, I have had different feelings with my first child I was very young it came as a shock I was thinking it was a bad thing and the timing is not right. As time went I got used to the idea, I love my kids. It was a challenge with my first child since I was young, but with the other kids it was okay and I am actually very happy" (Zolani, aged 19).*

*"I can't really explain the feeling it was just so hard to believe at first, it was devastating, and it was so unexpected. I was excited to see my baby, excited to see my seed but I was scared of the responsibilities. It took me a while to get used to it. I eventually got used to it and now it all just okay I am loving it but at first it was a bit too much for me" (Xolani aged 20).*

The respondent felt a sense of pride once he found out he was going to be a father, knowing that he created a child of his own, and even though the responsibility was daunting he got used to it. This response illustrates that young fathers are willing to take responsibility for their child and be part of their child's life. Enderstein et al. (2015) noted that young fathers are disinterested and wilfully absent from their children's lives.

Responses from all respondents indicate that the young fathers reacted differently to the news that they were becoming fathers. It was observed that initially, it was a shock but as reality dawned on them they got excited about the prospect of becoming fathers and were full of eagerness to fulfill the challenges of fatherhood. For instance, one of the respondents expressed the excitement that he was already a father and was expecting his fourth child soon. It was observed that the shock and fear of becoming a father which arrested most of these younger fathers initially was because they were mostly from single parent household and believed society could have expected them to have learnt from their situation and as a result, they would be more responsible. Ironically most of these young fathers had absent fathers as well, who worked in another city and they only saw them during the holidays.

While other never took responsibility for them since their birth hence, being around for their children was a factor most of the respondent never took lightly. Their response indicates that they wanted to give their children the love, attention and support which they never received from their own fathers. They were full of hope that they will give their children what they did not have when they were growing up. It was also ascertained that these young fathers do not have power to compel their girlfriend to have an abortion; hence, they become fathers when they are not ready for fatherhood. It was observed that their girlfriends refuse to consider termination of the pregnancy due to religious reasons or the fear of the unknown.

#### **4.4. Perceptions of fatherhood**

The respondents held very different notions of fatherhood. One of the respondents had mixed emotions when asked the question on being a father at a younger age and not being able to provide for the child. He exclaimed that

*“You will see that at times there are things that you wish you could do for your child and give your child things you did not get when you were young. It is very painful to be a father without any power to provide for your child” (Zolani, aged 19).*

Another young father also added that it is important for men to provide for their children. He stated:

*“To be able to take care or provide and make sure that my child is healthy and to support the child both financially and emotionally is vital. I have to be there for my child” (Sipho, aged 24).*

Another respondent indicated that being a father is about taking responsibility for your actions and taking responsibility turns you into a man. Being around for the child was also seen as extremely important for the respondents especially among those respondents who were raised up by their grandparents due to the absence of their fathers. According to them, they hardly saw their fathers except on holidays. Most of these respondents expressed their eagerness to avoid being absent father and do whatever is possible to play their role even though being a student inhibits them. Some of the respondents reported that

*“Being a father for me is being there for your child especially in the early stages of the child’s life when they are still young, since I feel that is when the bond is created. It is the most important part of the child’s life that you need to be there” (Thamsanqa aged 24).*

*“I think it is a good thing because it makes you into a man” (Thabani, aged 22).*

The respondents were of the view that seeing a child grows is the biggest reward a father can get, and that being a father transcends being the biological father of the child. One respondent went further to elaborate on how tradition and customs govern the way men behave and related it to himself as well as the community.

*“Being a man you have to be responsible but it depends on how you are looking at it as well. You have to relate it to who you are. We are governed by traditional laws, so growing up and becoming a man shifts your dynamics of thinking. You become aware of the child you brought into this world and that it is no longer about you but about the child now” (Mzwandile, aged 23).*

Some of the respondents indicated that they never had their father living with them hence, they felt they lacked a male role model. One respondent in particular revealed that he saw his father once during the holidays. He was of the view that this experience did not help him in his early childhood development and wants to avoid a repeat on his children, since being in school only allows him to see them on Fridays or during the holidays. He indicated that

*“Judging from my background growing up without seeing my father it is something I would not wish on any child” (Nathi, aged 21).*

This respondent indicated that fatherhood can be viewed in different ways, because fatherhood is not what people say it is- it is not necessarily about being a provider. This resonates with Goodman (2015) definition of fatherhood which acknowledges and

accommodates the new type of emerging father which backs up the respondents views that they cannot provide a single definition. As he exclaimed

*“To me a father is a person who gave birth to me whether he takes responsibility thereafter it is something completely different. He is my father, wherever I go, he will be my father I cannot divorce him. He is still my father. There is nothing I can do about it even if he does not fulfil his fatherly duties, for the fact that I am existing through his seed then that is my father- that is how I perceive fatherhood” (Xolani aged 20).*

The issue of support also emerged during the interviews. A respondent indicated that parents should be responsible to the child’s needs and that they should contribute the same amount of time and resources towards the upkeep of the child. Another respondent pointed out that the most important aspect of life is being a father which is also an important part of a child’s life as well. According to him, every child needs their father and to be loved by both parents, not just the mother. The respondent then pointed out that there are certain things that a child can only talk about with his father rather than the mother hence stressing the importance of ensuring that both parents are available to the child. This respondent indicated that

*“I feel like it is a very important aspect of one’s life and I was fortunate enough to be raised by both parents and I want to do the same for my child too. From my own personal experiences, there are certain things you cannot talk to your mother about, and you can only speak to your mother about. I would prefer speaking with my father I feel like it is something that each and every child needs, and I am aware that some of us are not like that” (Samkelo, aged 23).*

The issue of responsibility was a frequent response. It was observed that having a child at a young age ushered both parents into an era of responsibility, and having the duty to take care of a child has made them change their priorities. One respondent indicated that, when you have a child they look up to you and will even imitate your actions once they have grown up.

*“Being a father is the best thing that has happened to me. As a father you are not only responsible for yourself anymore, there’s an individual who looks up to you and this individual will imitate and try to emulate your actions, so being honest is the best thing you can do for your child” (Qiqqa, aged 24).*

#### **4.5. Feelings after the birth of the child**

It was observed that respondents experience various emotions after the birth of their child. Some were more comfortable with their new status whereas others were wearier about their new role. For instance, one of the respondents indicated that he is not sure how he actually feels about being a father since it is daunting to be a father at such young age without having a stable job to provide for the child's needs. Another respondent pointed out that there is nothing worse than not being able to be the father that the child can be proud of.

*"I do not know how I feel exactly, I am happy they are here. I am happy to a certain extent I cannot imagine how life would be like without them" (Sibusiso, aged 23).*

Respondents saw the birth of the child as a sense of accomplishment and were happy to be fathers to their children; however, they admitted that being a parent is a challenge with problems often between the family and the mother of the child. They acknowledged that being a father involved sacrifices as they had to put the needs of the child above any other needs. As these respondents indicated

*"I am very happy even though at times as a parent there are things that happen to your child that do not sit well with you. You cannot change them at all" (Thabani, aged 22).*

*"It has been very hard with lots of problems and not just my child but with the mother and the family. Everything has changed. It has changed my future as I had to sacrifice a lot in order to be a father to my child" (Thamsanqa, aged 24).*

*"Personally I have grown especially the way I perceive things have changed because I have a responsibility to take care of. I no longer do things for myself I have to consider my child's needs in the process" (Sipho, aged 24).*

One respondent indicated that becoming a father helped him to get his life in order through personal goals to be achieved in order to make his daughter's life better. He further indicated that having a bond with the child was essential and now he can actually acknowledge his father role compared with the time the girlfriend was pregnant with the child.

*"Now it is different, the baby comes in and you develop this bond you start to accept you have a child now. I felt like I am a father with a sense of responsibility. It is a good one, unlike the time my partner was pregnant" (Xolani, aged 20).*

*“I feel a lot more different. It has helped me a lot with my personal life, more specifically it has helped me to organise myself and it has helped to motivate me now” (Zolani, aged 19).*

Fatherhood is hard to adjust to especially when you are unemployed and did not plan to have a child. In spite of this, all respondents expressed dedication, pride and love when they spoke about their children. One respondent indicated that he was scared, but everything changed when he held his child in his arms for the first time.

*“I knew that this one was the blood of my blood, bone of my bone. It felt weird. It is not a feeling I can quite express, there was a lot of mixed feelings and anxiety” (Nathi, aged 21).*

*“Because each day when I wake up I always have this feeling that I want to make her proud and now it is a different story” (Mzwandile, aged 23).*

*“Frankly I would not want to go back if I was given a choice if I wanted to be a father or to be childless. I would choose my child over anything” (Samkelo, aged 23).*

*“Ecstatic, my child is the best thing that has happened to me” (Qiqqa, aged 24).*

However, some of the young men struggled to come to terms with their new status. The pride of having a child was overwhelming and they appreciated that having a child has changed their life. For the young men, it was important for them to be present in their child's life. They felt that they wanted to be there for their child, even if they were not in a position to provide financial support.

#### **4.6. Experiences of fatherhood**

The overall experiences of fatherhood differs from person to person, however the majority of the respondents were still struggling to come to terms with their new role as young fathers. They were not happy with their experiences of being teen fathers, which primarily stems from the fact that they are students without any disposable income to provide for the child financially.

The young men were not entirely happy with their current situation. They believed they could have done more for their child but their current predicament hinders them from taking such responsibilities. One respondent went further to elaborate that he wants to fill the void for the

child, yet he is no longer in a relationship with the mother, which makes the situation more complex.

*“To be honest I am not satisfied, because there are things I cannot do for my baby that I wish I could do for her” (Samkelo, aged 23).*

*“I am not satisfied with what I am currently doing. I could be doing much better if I was not in this situation” (Thamsanqa, aged 24).*

*“Not yet, I hardly see my child. I cannot even afford to support the child at the moment” (Sipho, aged 24).*

*“Not yet satisfied, you know because I have this void. I am no longer together with his mother so I can’t tell if he will take sides when he grows up” (Qiqqa, aged 24).*

*“What I have done so far I am not happy because I could have done more and I believe I can do more. However because of circumstances I cannot” (Nathi, aged 21).*

It was observed that lack of finances was one of the prime challenges that young fathers face, which impacts on their relationship with their child and the way they feel about themselves as well. One respondent acknowledged his unwillingness to see his children because of his inability to provide for the child whom he feels robs him of his pride, dignity and makes him feel less of a man.

*“I do not have money. It prolongs the process, that frustrates me to the point that I do not want to see my child, not necessarily that I do not want to see them but because I feel ashamed that I cannot provide even a packet of sweets for them” (Zolani, aged 19).*

*“Not yet, I hardly see my child I cannot even afford to support the child at the moment” (Xolani, aged 20).*

However, despite the feeling of dissatisfaction with their current situation they were optimistic about being able to provide a better future for their children in the future. Some respondents were satisfied with their efforts thus far, as they acknowledge that, they are still students and cannot judge themselves based on the current situation they find themselves.

One respondent indicated that his intentions are good. He made it clear that he cannot provide for the child at the moment but he was optimistic about taking up his fatherhood responsibility in the future. He was confident that he could be a better father once he had secured a job.

*“I am still learning and still growing and in due course I certainly will be a better father to my children and the kind of father I want to be to my child” (Mzwandile aged, 23).*

*“For me, it is the best thing ever. I am satisfied. I have seen other young fathers like me having to deal with so much. I am fortunate enough because I have support and I still see eye to eye with the mother so I can safely conclude that I am satisfied thus far. It has been the best experience of my life. It is not always a smooth ride but still the best experience ever” (Thabani, aged 22).*

*“Whatever I am doing now is not for me but for my children, including my progress it is for my children” (Samkelo, aged 23).*

One man felt that he was satisfied with his new role and it was an indication of his maturity.

*“I have reached full satisfaction and I am satisfied because the child is here and proof of my manhood making sure that the family name carries on”(Sibusiso, aged 23).*

For some, fatherhood is an important rite of passage for males to experience; this is when they actually develop relationship with their parents and the father starts to appreciate challenges associated with fatherhood. Young fathers face a considerable number of challenges from the moment of conception until delivery. Negotiating parenthood with the mother of the child, when they are no longer in a romantic relationship has proved to be difficult especially if the needs of the child are not considered first. Overall, the respondents were not completely satisfied with their experiences of fatherhood because of the diverse challenges they face including the inability to provide for the child, the inability to be present with the child and the inability to pay for damages which often leads to the child living with the mother thus making it difficult for the father to have easy access to the child.

#### 4.7. Involvement in the child's life

Involvement in the child's life is influenced by the acknowledgement of paternity as well as paying of inhlawulo (damages) to the girls' family as a sign of respect. In some families if inhlawulo is not paid, the father is restricted access to the child who ends up residing with the maternal family. In this study it was crucial to investigate whether the participants have honored the inhlawulo before disclosing their involvement in their children's lives.

All the respondents acknowledged the importance of paying for inhlawulo (damages) to the girl's family as a sign of respect and acknowledging the error of putting the woman in a family way outside wedlock. One respondent indicated that the damages requested by the woman's family included two cows and two sheep. It is customary for the girl's family to go to the male's house to report the matter known as ukuzobika isisu (report pregnancy); the boy then has to agree to pay for damages for impregnating the girl without the intention of marriage.

*"According to our culture the boy or my family has to pay inhlawulo (damages) to show acknowledgement of what he has done and also for the child to use the father's surname" (Mzwandile, aged 23).*

*"They asked for inkhomo ka-ma (the mother's cow) and inkhomo kababa (the father's cow), and umgezo weintombi (cleansing of the maiden) which was a sheep. I don't know if it was three goats or sheep" (Nathi, aged 21).*

*"I was not forced but it was something I knew I had to do and it was expected of me, I have paid part of it but I haven't finished with the payment" (Sipho, aged 24).*

The majority of the respondents have started to pay for inhlawulo (damages) since they knew it was part of their tradition. However it was observed that three of the respondents had not honored the damages, but they were quick to indicate that this did not prevent them from interacting with their child.

*"There were talks of it when we found out the mother of my child was pregnant. However, because of so many things going on I have not gotten to pay it. I think in the near future I shall pay for it" (Thabani, aged 22).*

*"No, I never paid inhlawulo (damages)" (Sipho, aged 24).*

When asked the level of responsibility they take in raising their child, one respondent indicated that he tries to provide as much support as possible but admitted that his current position as a student does not allow him to do much. However, another respondent stated that he was taking responsibility for his child as his child actually stayed at home with his mother who supported him.

*“It is a lot of responsibilities with raising a child. You can’t run away from it. There is nothing you can run away from when you have a child. You have to be there if the child is sick” (Zolani, aged 21).*

*“I do what I can when I am asked by the mother to assist then I find the means to do so.” (Xolani, aged 20).*

*“In all honesty the mother of the child is more responsible than I am. I am happy to change that and give my fair share of responsibility to the child” (Thamsanqa, aged 24).*

When asked how involved they were in their child’s life, one respondent indicated that most of responsibility of the child is handled by the mother and he supports her inputs. The mothers of their children seem competent in taking responsibility for their children and some of the fathers were appreciative of them. One respondent even praised the mother of his child acknowledging the work she does for the child.

*“The child is staying with the mother so I accept her parenting skills since she is being assisted by her mother. Right now I do not have a say in how I want the child to be raised. However with time I will take steps to ensure that my child is raised the right way” (Qiqa, aged 24).*

*“I was fortunate enough to get a good girl who is a good mother because I do not think that I have contributed anything that is making her a better parent” (Samkelo, aged 23).*

Two respondents acknowledged the difficulties they face in having a relationship with their child now that they are no longer in a relationship with the mother of their child especially when it comes to decisions concerning the child. They admitted that communication with the mother of the child has broken down.

*“When you are no longer together with the mother, it causes strain in the relationship between you and the child” (Sipho, aged 24).*

*“We do not communicate since the child resides with me. I do not see the point of us talking since I do everything for my son” (Nathi aged 21).*

One respondent who is still involved with the child’s mother felt very involved in the daily decision-making process. It is important for both parents to work together for the sake of the child. Support forms a vital part of a healthy relationship between the mother and father of the child.

*“We support one another and make sure that the child is raised well. She does things that we both agree and this leads to our child actually growing well as there is no tension between us that can affect her negatively” (Qiqqa, aged 24).*

*“Being there for the child sort of fixes the relationship between you and the mother of the child you are able to communicate exactly what you want and how to raise the child” (Xolani, aged 19).*

From the responses, it is clear that these young fathers value their culture and understands that paying inhlawulo (damages) is part of their fatherhood responsibilities. By acknowledging the pregnancy, they easily become part of the child’s life, but if damages are not paid then the father is excluded from decision making process and being part of the child’s life. This resonates with the assertion made by Doherty et al. (1998) that in South Africa most men are not able to claim their paternal rights especially, teenage fathers since they cannot adhere to the cultural practices of paying damages which is a sign of respect towards the girl’s family. It was observed that in spite of this challenge these young fathers are trying to show signs of commitment to their child and fulfil their responsibility as fathers.

Bhana et al. (2014) argue that cultural practices prevents fathers from accessing their paternal rights and the most affected are teenage fathers of school going age who are unemployed and living in poverty. Indeed this resonates with the finding of this study. Swartz et al. (2013) agrees that father involvement is hampered by cultural rituals especially if the couple is not married. However, if the trend observed in this study is something to go by then we see a changing tendency where none of the respondents were refused access to their child, but were reminded that they still had to pay for inhlawulo (damages).

#### **4.8. Family support**

The study found out that the young father's families were supportive of them. One respondent stated that his father was happy to hear his son had fathered a baby, since he was suspicious of his son's sexuality since he had not seen him with a girl previously. The families of these young fathers were a valuable source of support in their journey into early fatherhood.

*"Yes they are pretty much supportive they did not give me a hassle about me making my girlfriend pregnant" (Xolani, aged 20).*

*"My mom is really helping out I am fortunate enough that she loves my child if I cry out for help she is there to assist where she can" (Nathi, aged 21).*

The respondents showed appreciation for their parents support through their journey of early fatherhood. However, not all families can afford to assist their son's through their journey into early fatherhood, hence some young fathers end up taking part time jobs to assist them to raise their child. One respondent said the family helps to a certain extent; but most help he gets was from the children's mothers.

*"My family is also supportive to me towards the positive upbringing of the child since I am not fully employed although I manage to survive through getting piece jobs" (Sipho, aged 24).*

*"I am working and so does her mother, there is no need for them to contribute financially" (Mzwandile, aged 23).*

One of the respondents had a difficult time telling his parents he was about to become a father. He noted that it took him three months to tell the family after he found out his girlfriend was pregnant. He felt a lot of pressure and knew he could not hide it from them any longer. He told his older brother who advised him to inform his mother.

*"She did mention that there is nothing we can do now, just deal with it, face it and move forward. She actually relieved me because she told me that she would tell my dad so the same night she spoke to dad and my dad is very strict but he said it was fine he will pay for me " (Thamsanqa, aged 24).*

The respondent was not expecting the response he received from his father since he thought he had brought shame to the family.

*“He just laughed and that was it, He said he would pay for inhlawulo and that’s what he said and that was so unexpected from him that to this day.” (Thabani, aged 22).*

Family support is crucial to these young fathers especially those who are first time fathers, unemployed and still schooling, since this support helps them cope with the daily challenges they face. All the respondents had a positive experience when it came to support they received from the family, they all acknowledged that the support made it easier for them to be involved in the child’s life.

*“Yes my family is supportive especially my mom who loves being a grandma” (Sibusiso, aged 23).*

It should be noted that as much as young fathers want to become part of their child’s lives some are inhibited due to the limited support they receive from their families. Support can be emotional, financial or psychological. Young fathers who are first time fathers have no previous experience when it comes to their role as a father. Therefore, both emotional and psychological support is needed in order to ensure a smooth transition into fatherhood for these young fathers.

However, due to the migrant labor system which brought about a breakdown in kinship ties, many children in South Africa were raised without fathers, since fathers migrated to urban areas in search of work, thus family structures has transformed including roles such as the provider and the protector, which father once played within the family.

Due to this absence, a definition was adopted to describe the situation that was taking place. Absent fathers is a father absent from the family home because of paternal relationship breakdown (Jackson and O’ Brian, (2007 cited in Makofane, 2015). Because of this trend, male children have no role models that they could look up to; this absence has a negative effect on the child as well as the family. The sons left behind had no one to guide him or her through their teenage years, especially advising them on notions of manhood. The transition from being a teenager to being a young father is a difficult one especially when these young men’s fathers are absent from their lives and are unable to give them guidance. Being a father is more than just providing financial support. It is about being physically present for the child. These young men have difficulty with identifying the role of fatherhood they have had to assume. According to Chideya et al. (2013) males are left to define their own identity and meaning of fatherhood, this leaves lots of ambiguity for young fathers who are still unsure of their own gender roles in society.

#### 4.9. Father-Child Relationship

It is important for fathers to establish a relationship with their children; yet it is difficult for the father to have a stable relationship with the child once the relationship with the mother of the child disintegrates. Quite often, the child ends up living with the mother and her parents and the father sees the child only during the holidays. One respondent however was fortunate enough to have the child live with him and the mother visited the child twice a year. This is rare since in most cases the child remains with the mother. In the case of this respondent, he indicated that he was in the position to raise his son better than the mother of the child.

Studies identified the role of the father in nurturing of the child which can positively affect the cognitive, social, and moral development of young children (Gray et al. 2015). These also affected the child's character and stimulated positive interaction where the father is involved with the child (Gray et al. 2015).

The majority of the respondents were not living with their children; however they saw their children occasionally. When asked how often, the responses varied from once a month to once a year. One respondent who was not a first time father admitted that he had not seen his daughter who lives in Pretoria with the mother for few years and he was not happy about it, but confirmed that he often spoke to the child telephonically. According to Videon (2005 cited in Bulanda et al. 2009) the father-child relationship entails more leisure activities. This then excludes young fathers who are still in university and do not live with the child to enable them to build a relationship with their child.

*"I talk to my child every evening before I sleep. I cannot call him in the morning because the time I wake up he is also getting ready for crèche." (Qiqi aged 24).*

*"I do not talk to him often but I do from time to time" (Nathi, aged 21).*

*"I talk to him almost every day on the phone. Also I see the child when I go back to Eastern Cape then he stays with me" (Samkelo, aged 23).*

Father-child interaction is also restricted by the dissolution of the parental relationship. Mothers also play a pivotal role in mediating the relationship between the father and the child. The majority of the respondents were no longer in relationships with the mother of their child. One respondent admitted that he no longer speaks to the mother of his child. He indicated that

*“I would not know because I do not communicate with the mother of my child”*  
(Mzwandile, aged 23).

*“Having a child changed everything between us. We would fight all the time; I eventually decided to end things because it was not healthy for the child to be surrounded by the negative energy”* (Sipho, aged 24).

According to Linder et al. (2014) young mothers lack the skills to manage the relationship between their children and the fathers, thus affecting the manner in which the young father interacts with the child. Some of the respondents were still together with the child’s mother and work hand in hand to raise the child together.

*“I am not really clued on certain things about raising children but since we have little children at home my brothers’ children I have learnt some things. Fortunately for us we are still together and we agree on most of the things but obviously there are some things she would want to do that I don’t approve of or I don’t really like”*  
(Thamsanqa, aged 24).

*“The mother and I are a team so we make decisions together, our parenting styles are the same so there is less conflict”* (Zolani, aged 20).

Young fathers do not get to experience living with their children, which impacts on their father-child interaction. Father involvement is measured as time well spent together, for instance, whether the father has frequent contact with the child, sharing meals with the child and actually taking care of the child (Allen et al. 2007). As many young fathers who do not reside within the household as their children and are completing their education they are therefore less likely to spend quality time with their children. Therefore, they cannot perform the day to day tasks of actually taking care of the child; father involvement is therefore difficult for young fathers to fulfill. They are automatically excluded from the decision making and raising of the child as confirmed by Bhana et al. (2014). Teenage fathers are further constrained by their inability to pay inhlawulo (damages).

It is assumed that father involvement should be measured by the amount of quality time spent with the child as well as the bond created between them. Evidently, in South Africa, that notion would not make sense since fathers relocate to find jobs in urban area in order to provide for their families. Therefore fathers are absent from their child’s life and only send money as remittances and come home once a year. The respondents were all playing their

part in their child's life regardless of whether they saw them once a month, on weekends or twice a year, mostly they spoke to them every day on the phone.

#### **4.10. Relationship between mother and father**

The relationship between mother and father is one of the most fundamental things that contribute to child's wellbeing. The nature of the relationship between the mother and father also affects how the two parents co-parent. The research findings confirmed that fathers who were no longer romantically involved with the child's mother had more difficulty in being actively involved in the fatherhood role, as opposed to fathers who were still in relationship with the mothers of their child. Father-child interaction is also restricted by the dissolution of the parent's relationship and this limits the interaction with the child. Mothers play a pivotal role in mediating the relationship between the father and the child, but quite often the effectiveness of this depends on the age, educational attainment and whether she has re-entered into another relationship (Linder et al. 2014). The majority of the respondents were no longer in relationships with the mother of the child, which suggest a breakdown of communication between the two. One respondent admitted that he no longer speaks to the mother of his child.

The non-communication between the parents ends up being a hindrance to the father child relationship especially if the child does not live with the father's family. One of the responded reported that he no longer communicates with the mother of the child hence it is difficult for him to have a relationship with his child. In cases like these, the parents of the young fathers especially the mothers become the mediators for the son who is no longer on good speaking terms with the mothers of their children. As the respondent indicated

*“Things started changing after we had our child we used to fight a lot and mostly we would fight when I was unable to provide or sometimes if I would miss a month without giving her money for the child .I could say things just got complicated and toxic after we got our own child” (Samkelo, aged 23).*

*‘It not easy co-parenting, I am trying to work on my mistakes to be a better father to my daughter” (Thabani, aged 22).*

Young people struggle with their new roles as parents and this creates conflict in the relationship. Conflict between the parents causes a lot of tension and hinders the father child

relationship .One of the respondents reported that he thinks the mother of his child is bitter about their end of their relationship and blames her for the communication breakdown and inability to see the child . He asserted that:

*“That one is bitter. She wants us to have a relationship by force. I am no longer interested in her and I feel like she uses the baby to fight her battles hence we are always fighting and can never agree on visitation times” (Sibusiso, aged 23).*

However, it was observed that fathers that were still in a romantic relationship with the mother tends to fight less and have better relationships with their children

*“Tell you what we fight a lot but never about money, I thought the sole reason is simply because I am a student and she understands that. If she needs something that is beyond my means or power, I ask my parents to help or she asks her parents and they help. What can I say we have never ever fought or had an argument because of finances. We are still very much in love that makes it easier for us to raise our child together” (Mzwandile, aged 23).*

#### **4.11. Summary**

This chapter outlines the main findings from the 10 interviews conducted with young fathers. It was observed that young fathers perceive fatherhood differently from each other; young fathers are trying to create their own identity within the context of fatherhood which is not all encompassing.

It was observed that the majority of the respondents were first time fathers who had no previous experience of being a father. None of the respondents had planned on having children when their partners communicated the news of pregnancy to them. They experienced mixed emotions but shock was the common responses from all respondents.

It was also observed that with the exception of one respondent the rest were not living with the child. The majority of the children lived with their mothers, with the men rarely getting to visit with their children. They got the opportunity to see their child during weekends, or school holidays. It was also observed that the young fathers had limited say on in how to raise their child since the child did not reside with them.

This study found out that even though the young men were not prepared for fatherhood they wanted to be present in their children's lives. They emphasised that it was important to 'be there' for their child. This was established by taking responsibility for impregnating the girlfriend and paying inhlawulo (damages). Most of the young fathers admitted that they were struggling financially and as a result, they were finding it difficult to take financial responsibility for their child. This was a form of hindrance in their father-child relationship since they are restricted in their interactions with their child.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1. Introduction

This aim of this research is explore father-child relationships through the perspectives of young fathers. The objective of the study was to examine the young father's involvement in their children lives. This is done by analyzing the factors promoting and inhibiting parent child relationships through investigating the challenges they face as fathers. This was done by drawing on interviews with 10 young fathers who were also students. This chapter discusses the main themes from the interviews.

#### 5.2. Discussion

This study draws on the model developed by Doherty et al. (1998) which looks at the influence on fathers. It explains the importance of fathering practices even though in most cases fathers do not reside with their children. This model takes into account factors affecting fatherhood, such as the mother's attitude towards fatherhood, the mother-father relationship including other external factors influencing fatherhood (Doherty et al. 1998).

The study found that young fathers cherished their roles as fathers despite the initial shock of an unexpected pregnancy. Fatherhood for these young fathers means being present for their child and taking responsibility for their needs. According to Enderstein et al. (2015) young fathers are viewed and assumed to be disinterested and wilfully absent, however it was discovered from the study that contrary to this notion young fathers wanted to participate in their child's life. Despite previous research perceiving teenage fathers as sexual predators who deny the paternity of their children, this study found that this was not the case for the young fathers who were also university students.

The respondents indicated their relentless desire to be there for their children, since they do not want to repeat similar mistakes committed by their biological fathers. A young father explained that he rarely had contact with his biological father and he was determined to avoid the occurrence of this situation with his own child. Their presence in their child's life was identified as an important factor which demonstrated the young father's desire to be actively involved in their child's life.

In South Africa, young fathers are discredited when external factors play a hindering role in preventing them from fulfilling their duties as fathers. Studies show that because of the migrant labour system introduced by the apartheid government in South Africa African men were forced to look for employment outside of the native land and this led to their separation from their families. This led to many children in South Africa being raised without any father figures which led to the transformation of the family structure altogether. Men are becoming fathers at earlier ages and their chances of marriage are minimal. Consequently, increasing the number of single mothers in South Africa (Holborn and Eddy; 2011 cited in Department of Social Development 2012).

South Africa has the highest non-marital child bearing rate, accounting for 58 percent of all births in South Africa and is one of the highest in the world (Department of Social Development, 2012). Previous research illustrates that non-marital child-bearing has negative effects on family structure as well as on the child (Holborn et al. (2011). In the case of young fathers, they rarely reside with the child hence they are perceived as absent fathers in the eyes of society. Society fails to take into account that young fathers are absent because of other reasons.

Respondents that took part in this study were all pursuing their respective degrees ranging from undergraduate to postgraduate. Previous research has shown that the absence of the fathers affects the child's performance at school Madhavan et al. (2014), however this assertion was not established since the children were not interviewed, therefore, a clear analysis of this data could not be interpreted. However, South African men are beginning to reassess the value and their understanding of fatherhood in the twenty-first century. South African fathers are getting more involved in their children's lives than previously assumed (Morrell & Richter, 2006). Respondents in the study confirmed this assertion, in spite of them being students they maintained strong communication with their child. Due to previous historical events in South Africa fathers were absent from their children, but it should be noted that there are two types of absent fathers. Firstly those who choose to stay away from their child because they have failed to fulfill the role of providers and those who are absent because of a breakdown in parental relationship.

Men are seen as providers by society; hence, their failure to fulfil this role makes them to be seen as weak. Thus, men choose to stay away consequently deserting their responsibilities of being a father since they are no longer the primary caregiver. Society has

already constructed the meaning of fatherhood, as men as providers and protectors of the family. Provider masculinity will always be the dominant view because of its idealised version of manhood that is socially and hierarchically exclusive and concerned with the notion of men as the primary breadwinner (Morrell et al. 2012). This illustrates how society is not at all considerate and concerned that hegemonic provider status is difficult for young fathers to achieve (Bhana et al. 2014) Thereby affecting the manner in which fathers view themselves. According to Bhana et al. (2014) fatherhood is a consequence that shapes and moulds male power thus serving as a platform where men can express their masculinity. These young fathers are part of the child's life regardless of them being employed.

It should be noted that fatherhood is perceived differently in society; many view fatherhood as a construct that embraces a broader range of socially constructed gender identities (Taylor et al. 2013). The findings demonstrate that respondents have different perceptions of fatherhood, the most common response throughout was primarily taking responsibility for the child. Responsibility gave them a sense of maturity; it was associated with being a man. Swartz et al. (2013) insist that fatherhood often ushers in life changes that are required in order to become a more responsible parent. According to Doherty et al. (1998) role identification is an integral part of masculine identification which was also evident in the findings of the study.

Some young men welcomed their new roles as fathers. According to Taylor et al. (2013) in South Africa a man is only considered a man once he has an offspring. One respondent went further by indicating that fatherhood influences the way men behave and relate to themselves as well as the community. The definition of fatherhood has changed to accommodate the emerging fathers as well as the living arrangements of children. Young fathers, according to Lemey et al. (2013) are a vulnerable population and little is known about their true attitudes and beliefs pertaining to their parental role. "A father is a person who gave birth to me whether he takes responsibility or not", as one respondent stated. This accentuates the assertion made by Devey and Posel (2008) that a father is presumed to be a man, but in the South African context not all men are fathers. A man will not become a father by biology alone but rather he will become a father by raising children that are not actually his biological child. This is very common in the African culture where uncles, grandfathers and even brothers assume the responsibility of raising a child in the family.

Findings from the study indicate that despite the negative views they have received from society the young fathers truly want to be part of their child's life. According to Enderstein et al. (2015) young fathers are viewed and assumed to be disinterested and wilfully absent and sexual predators who deny the paternity of their children. This construct does not take into account that young fathers are actually hindered from taking part in their children's lives because of not being able to afford the cultural practices of inhlawulo (payment for damages).

Despite defaulting in the payment of inhlawulo, the study suggests that young fathers are still playing a part in their child's life. Even though the news of the pregnancy was not expected, nevertheless they have demonstrated resilience and commitment to fulfil their fatherhood role. . Having a child changed their mentality from egocentricity to responsibility and commitment to their child. For this reason, taking responsibility was one of the main factors which repeatedly emerged in this study.

Being present for the child was a driving force for these young fathers, they want to give the child their full love and attention which they never received from their very own fathers. The study also points out that these fathers go through a tremendous ordeal in order to be with their children. Young fathers who are unemployed or still completing their education cannot afford to pay damages or fully contribute towards the welfare of their child despite their willingness to do so. This is even more severe in situations where the young father is from a family that is poverty stricken. The study points out that the majority of young fathers interviewed have not paid inhlawulo simply because they cannot afford to do so financially nonetheless they were not restricted from seeing their child. This signifies that times are changing, and parents are starting to understand that these young men need to be allowed to take part in their child's life.

In the study, it was ascertained that young fathers are interested in being part of their child's life. Previous findings labelled young fathers as delinquents that are not interested in their child's life and tend to stay away from them (Bhana et al. (2013). However, the present study found that young men want to be involved in their child's life. They want to be present fathers, rather than absent fathers. The finding from the study further depicts that families supports young fathers. This was evident in the reactions they received from their parents. One respondent indicated that his father was relieved that he had fathered a child since he had never seen him with a girl before. Indeed, he was more than happy to pay for the damages since he was convinced that his son was gay.

Families have proven to be important support structures for these young boys especially in circumstances where they are still completing their education. The respondents expressed appreciation for the support they received from their families; however, it should be noted that not all families can afford to raise extra money to support their grandchild. Family support is crucial for these first time fathers, since the lack of support can prevent them from having a relationship with their child.

Father-child relationships are influenced by the relationship the father has with the mother of his child. If the mother has a negative view of the father and prevents the father from seeing the child this is likely to affect the bond between the father and the child. The relationship between the mother and father is important for the child's wellbeing. Findings from the study points out that majority of the young fathers were no longer involved with the mother of their child, thus making it difficult for some to play an integral part in their child's life and decisions. It should be noted that mothers play a pivotal role in mediating the relationship between the father and the child. As one respondent indicated, he was no longer involved with the mother of his child; however, the child stays with him and his family, with communication totally broken down between the parents of the child.

The breakdown of communication usually occurs during the pregnancy or after the birth of the child, in most cases the mother of the child expects the young father to provide financially for the child and when he fails to fulfill his responsibilities it results in conflict in the relationship. It is imperative for families of the two parties to have a good relationship to protect the child and ensures that the relationship grows stronger in the interest of the child

Young fathers are often excluded from important decisions that affect their child. In most cases the child resides with the mother, thus they have no say in the upbringing of the child. It is recommended that policies are put in place to enable young fathers to exercise their parental rights as young fathers.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

The study set out to explore father-child relationships through the perspectives of young fathers, with the objective to examine the extent of involvement by young fathers in their child's life. The study draws on qualitative data from 10 in-depth interviews with young men who were fathers. Findings from the study points out that that despite the negative views

they have received from society, young fathers truly want to be a part of their child's life. It was further ascertained from the study that family members are an important source of support for these young fathers. However, the breakdown of communication usually between the young fathers and the child's mother, coupled with their inability to honor *inhlawulo* (damages) inhibits the active involvement of these young fathers in their child's life. It was recommended that policies be put in place to enable young fathers to exercise their parental rights fully.

Young fathers are often excluded from the decision making process. In most cases the child resides with the mother, thus they have little or no say about the manner in which the child gets raised. Policies should be introduced to allow for young fathers to be able to exercise their parental rights as young fathers. According to Gallineth (2006) acquisition of parental power over an extra-marital child is not possible unless the parents enter into a valid marriage after the birth of the child. This for young fathers is impossible given their circumstances, age and lack of economic stability. Legitimization of paternity for legal purposes should be looked at because this will help young fathers to have legal access to their children. Policies geared towards young fathers should be prioritised, which will help them in the transition from adolescence to fatherhood. Financial support alone is not sufficient, as these young men require emotional and psychological assistance to get them through the process to fatherhood.

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10 May 2016

Ms Anelisa Dabula 212504971  
School of Built Environment and Development Studies  
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Dabula

Protocol reference number: HSS/0478/016M

Project Title: Exploring parent child relationships from the perspective of young fathers

**Full Approval – Expedited Application**

In response to your application received 28 April 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.**

**PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.**

**The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.**

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully



.....  
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Professor Pranitha Maharaj  
Cc. Academic Leader: Dr Cathy Sutherland  
Cc School Administrator: Ms Nolundi Mzolo

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## APPENDIX B: Informed Consent form

School of Built Environment and  
Development Studies,  
College of Humanities,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,

Dear Participant

### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Anelisa Dabula and I am currently registered for the Masters in Population Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard campus, South Africa. I am interested in exploring parent child relationships from the perspective of young fathers. My aim of the study is to find out whether young fathers have access to their children and the relationships in which they have with their children. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 1 hour and may be split depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- The research aims at knowing the challenges of your community relating to resource scarcity, peoples' movement, and effects on peace.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

I can be contacted at:

Email: [amandubula@gmail.com](mailto:amandubula@gmail.com)

Cell: 073 428 7353.

My supervisor is Professor Pranitha Maharaj who is located at the School of Built Environment and Development Studies Howard College campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: [Maharajp7@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Maharajp7@ukzn.ac.za).

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

### **Appendix C: Questionnaire questions for Young fathers**

How old are you?

What is your marital status?

Are you still currently in a relationship?

Are you a father?

Are you still in a relationship with the child's mother?

How old were you when you first became a father?

How did you feel when you found out you were going to be a father?

How are you feeling now after the birth of the child/ children?

Are you currently allowed to see your child?

In your own words what are your perceptions of being a father?

Are you currently allowed to see your child/children?

Were you ever forced to pay inhlawulo?

Is your family supportive of being a father since you are still unemployed?

How did the girl's family take it?

#### **Sub-questions**

How often do you talk to your child/children on the phone, or communicate in other ways?

Now think about the present time. These days, how much responsibility do you take for raising child/children?

These days, how much does your involvement with your child/children interfere or conflict with his/her mother's parenting of him/her?

These days, how much does your involvement make things easier for your child/children mother or make her a better parent?

These days, how much does your financial or material support, such as money, housing, or things like diapers or clothes for your child/children, help his/her mother?

How often do you and your child/children's mother disagree about how to raise him/her?

How often do you and your child/children's mother disagree about how much you see your child/children or how you act with him/her?

How often do you disagree about how much financial help you give to child/children's mother to help raise him/her?

During the past 12 months, how often did your child/children see any of your family, such as your parents or sisters or brothers?

Overall, how satisfied are you with your experiences as a father towards your child/children?  
Would you say you are...?