

**University Students' Lived Experiences of Parenting While  
Studying at The University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

Education is believed to provide knowledge and skills that hold the potential for economic empowerment, better livelihood, and social development. However, in traditional society, a man is perceived as the head of the family and a provider, while a woman is perceived as a home keeper and must be trained to provide care. This role is difficult, and more so when one is a student. This study aimed to explore lived experiences of university students who are parenting while studying.

This qualitative study included fifteen students who were purposively sampled and interviewed individually using a semi-structured interview schedule. The key findings indicated that young parents are struggling to balance their dual roles of full-time university students and parents, distance from their children was a significant issue, and many had financial challenges. For the male participants, the payment of damages was a major issue, while rejection by fathers of their children was significant for the female participants.

## **DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM**

I, SINENHLANHLA NGINAPHI MBUYAZI, declare that:

- (i) The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- (ii) This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This thesis does not contain other person's data, pictures, graphs, or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
- (iv) This thesis does not contain other person's writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
  - a) Their words have been re-written, but the general information attributed to the has been referenced;
  - b) Where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks, and referenced.
- (v) This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the References section.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## Table of Contents

Cover page.....	i
Abstract .....	ii
Declaration .....	iii
Acknowledgement .....	iv
Table of contents .....	v
<b>Chapter one (Introduction).....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1.Background of the study.....	1
1.2.Problem statement.....	3
1.3.Aims and objectives .....	4
1.4.Research questions .....	5
1.5.Theoretical framework .....	5
1.6. Definition of concept.....	7
1.7.Organization of the dissertation .....	7
1.8. Conclusion .....	8
<b>Chapter two (Literature Review) .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1. Introduction .....	9
2.2. Parenting definitions and implications .....	9
2.3. The construction of motherhood .....	10
2.4. The construction of fatherhood .....	11
2.5. Unmarried fathers and parenting in South Africa .....	13
2.6. Gender roles and the impact on parenting .....	16
2.7. Challenges of parenting while studying .....	17
2.8. Coping mechanisms used by students who are parents .....	19
2.9. Conclusion .....	21
<b>Chapter three (Methodology) .....</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1. Introduction .....	23
3.2. Location of the study .....	23
3.3. Research paradigm .....	23
3.4. Research approach .....	25
3.5. Sampling strategies .....	26
3.6. Data collection methods .....	28

3.7. Data collection instruments .....	30
3.8. Pilot .....	30
3.9. Methods of data analysis .....	32
3.10. Trustworthiness .....	35
3.11. Ethical considerations .....	38
3.12. Conclusion .....	40
<b>Chapter four (Results and discussions of the findings) .....</b>	<b>42</b>
4.1. Introduction .....	42
4.2. Participant's socio-demographic information .....	42
4.3. Experiences of young parents .....	47
4.4. Perceptions of self as a parent .....	52
4.5. Coping mechanisms used by young parents .....	62
4.6. Conclusion.....	66
<b>Chapter five (Summary, conclusions, and recommendations) .....</b>	<b>67</b>
5.1. Introduction .....	67
5.2. Objectives.....	67
5.3. Main findings and conclusions .....	68
5.4. Policy implications .....	71
5.5. Conclusions.....	72
5.6. Recommendations.....	73
5.7. Conclusion.....	75
References.....	76
Appendix 1(Poster) .....	91
Appendix 2(Consent form) .....	92
Appendix 3(Information sheet).....	93
Appendix 4(Consent form audio-recording).....	94
Appendix 5(Interview schedule).....	95
Appendix 6 (Ethical clearance certificate).....	96

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

The study sought to gain an understanding of young parents' experiences towards parenting while studying. This study was concerned with both male and female students. The definition of young parents adopted in this study is relevant to the definition of youth in the South African National Youth Policy (2015-2020), which defines youth as any person between the ages of 14 and 35 years. Similarly, the White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) defines a young person as a woman or man aged between 16 to 30 years. This study used the term young parents to refer to males and females aged between 21 and 27 and who have children. This chapter presents the background of the study, the aim and objectives of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, definition of concepts, and organisation of the dissertation.

### **1.1. Background of the study**

Much research on young parenting tends to focus on young mothers, assuming that they have different parenting experiences from young fathers; for example, Macleod (2001), Ichou (2006) and Temblador (1990) found that women are not only responsible for the care and upbringing of the children, but also spending time with them, playing with them, calming their fears, and helping them with their homework.

Men are not so involved in parenting and in studies exploring parenting experiences. However, new fathers' typologies (Pleck, 2010) are emerging where men are more emotionally involved in childcare and recognize their role in parenting. Young fathers are now more likely to experience parenthood, much more similar to how young mothers do in ways such as being more involved in the upbringing of their children, supporting and caring for their children, and playing the fatherly role of being a

provider, a protector, nurturer, caregiver, and life coach to their children (Morrell and Richter, 2006).

Early parenthood is predominant in developed and developing countries. Although improving adolescent sexual and reproductive health is high on the global health agenda, young parenthood remains high in both developed and developing countries (Wado, Sully and Mumah, 2019). Each year an estimated 21 million pregnancies occur among young women of ages 15-19 years in developing countries, almost half of which (49%) are unintended; while in Sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 45% of the pregnancies among young women ages 15-19 are unplanned resulting in unintended births, unsafe abortions miscarriages (Wado *et al.*, 2019). In South Africa, pregnancy among young women is a matter of great concern. By the age of 19 years, almost 28% of young women reported ever having been pregnant (Statistics South Africa, 2017). According to Ngubane and Maharaj (2019), most pregnancies among young women occur outside marriage, and most are either unplanned or unwanted.

Young parenthood is common among university students in South Africa (Makhanya, 2016; Taukeni, 2014; Kubeka, 2016). According to Statistics South Africa (2017), about 93.8% of mothers aged between 20-24 years and 95.1% between the ages of 25-29 years gave birth in Durban alone in 2017. Those are the births that biological mothers registered immediately after delivery. Although these statistics include all women who gave birth in Durban but looking at the age range, those mothers may be university students among different universities in Durban such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Mangosuthu University of Technology, Durban University of Technology and the University of South Africa, and others in the private sector.

Young parenthood has been associated with a number of adverse outcomes, such as school disruptions, poor educational outcomes, negative health impacts and

economic struggles (Ngubane & Maharaj, 2019). According to Chauke (2013), young parenthood is mainly characterised by absenteeism wherein one finds that they must attend to the child's related problems, whether illness or clinic. This fact that young parents do not regularly attend school is confirmed by the study conducted by Mohase (2006) who found that 90% of his respondents often left school on a monthly basis to take care of their children. Young parent's studies were disturbed as a result of their new roles as fathers and mothers and they struggled to find enough time to navigate between studying and parenting (Chili & Maharaj, 2015; Taukeni, 2014).

Among the different legislations in place to support youth who become parents is the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996 stipulates that pregnant students should be in school and cannot be refused entry after giving birth. This is in accordance with the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (No 6 of 2000) which clearly states that students who become pregnant should not be unfairly discriminated against (Willian, 2013). This might have contributed to an increase in young parents who are in educational institutions at the primary and secondary school levels. It is estimated that 11% of childbirths worldwide occur to young women who are university students, resulting in 16 million young women giving birth each year (Kaufman, Wet & Stadler, 2001; WHO, 2008).

## **1.2.Problem statement**

Despite having various structures in place to reduce teenage pregnancy incidences among young people, the prevalence of young parenthood remains, particularly in tertiary institutions. This becomes problematic when young parents cannot fulfil multiple roles at once and take longer to complete their degree while studying while others stay away from home. Their responsibilities are taken over by others, such as grandmothers, meaning that they do not see their children often. According to Mngadi,

Thembi, Ransjo-Arvidson and Ahlberg (2002), parenting can pose severe problems to young university students as it comes at a time when they are not yet ready for parenthood physically, emotionally, and financially.

Young parenthood is prevalent in the UKZN Howard College campus (Kubeka, 2016; Chili and Maharaj, 2015). Parenting leads to time constraints and the inability to find a balance between parenting and studying (Kubeka, 2016). Taukeni (2014) found that students who have children while studying are more likely to skip lectures, fail to write the first opportunity examination or to fail a module. A 2015 study by Chili and Maharaj among young fathers at UKZN found that their studies were disturbed due to their new roles as fathers mainly because they had to look for a job to support their children financially while studying. The ability to balance parenting with studying and also part-time employment is very difficult (Kubeka, 2016; Swartz & Bhana, 2009; Taukeni, 2014). While there are some studies on young fathers and mothers (Swartz & Bhana 2009 and Taukeni 2014), few have considered the experiences of young parents who are university students and what parenting means to them (Chili & Maharaj, 2015; Kubeka, 2016). The proposed study aims to build on the previous studies on parenting among university students at UKZN.

### **1.3. The aim and objectives of the study**

The aim of this study was to explore lived experiences of university students who are parenting while studying.

Objectives of this study included the following:

- a) To explore how young mothers and fathers negotiate their simultaneous roles as parents and students.
- b) To identify the coping mechanisms of these students.

- c) To explore the meaning of motherhood or fatherhood for the students against the dominant constructions of what it is to be a good parent.

#### **1.4. Research questions**

The following research questions were proposed:

- a) How do young mothers and fathers negotiate their simultaneous roles as parents and students?
- b) What are the coping mechanisms of these students?
- c) What is the meaning of motherhood or fatherhood for the students against the dominant constructions of what it is to be a good parent?

#### **1.5. Theoretical framework**

This study used gender role theory to understand the meaning of parenthood from the perspective of young students against the dominant constructions of good parenting. Sandra Lipsitz Bem first proposed gender role theory in the 1970s. It is grounded in the supposition that individuals who are socially identified as males and females tend to occupy different ascribed roles within society and tend to be judged against divergent expectations of how they ought to behave (Shimanoff, 2009). Males are traditionally socialized to perceive risk-taking positively and to embrace masculine characteristics. In comparison, traditional female gender roles prepare women for their roles as caregivers in the private sphere of the home, with feminine traits emphasizing the value of passivity and obedience while discouraging risk-taking (Policastro 2016). Through gender socialization, males and females learn the social expectations associated with one's sex.

Gender role theory grounds itself in the claim that culture has prearranged behaviors and characteristics that are categorized as masculine and feminine that have been deemed normal (Shimanoff, 2009), for example, society has developed the idea of little girls being encouraged to play with dolls at a young age and little boys identifying with aggression. This theory explains why differences in parenting between mothers and fathers may emerge. According to Shimanoff (2009), the central hypothesis of gender role theory is that society expects the mother's role to be that of a caregiver, girls are taught to be caring and to provide warmth at a young age. The father's role, on the other hand, is characterized to be that of financial provider and disciplinarian. Boys are socialized to be serious and stern, and that to show warmth and sensitivity is a sign of weakness. As such, fathers traditionally have little involvement and responsibility in child-rearing.

Gender role refers to the behaviours, attitudes, values, and beliefs that a particular culture considers normative for one's biological sex (Sasso, 2010). Some scholars (Eagly, Wood and Diekmann, 2000) believe that gender roles are the result of a socialization process starting in early childhood and developing during adolescence. Eagly et al. (2000) further stated that men develop "agentic" characteristics such as assertiveness, independence and competence that are in line with male social role expectations. In contrast, women develop "communal" traits such as friendliness, generosity, kindness, and compassion that are consistent with female social role expectations (Eagly *et al.*, 2000). In the study, male participants considered themselves providers based on such traits, while female participants described their roles as homemakers.

## **1.6. Definition of concepts**

**Student:** Any person who has registered and studying at the university. For the purpose of this study, a student is any learner who is registered at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

**University:** A high-level educational institution where students study for degrees and academic research is done. For the purpose of this study, a University will refer to the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College) situated in Durban.

**Young parent:** The National Youth Policy (2015-2020) defines youth as any person between the ages of 14 and 35 years. The White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) also defines a young person as a woman or man aged between 16 to 30 years. For the purpose of this study, young parent will refer to both males and females aged between 21-27 years and have at least one child.

## **1.7. Organisation of the dissertation**

This report is structured as the following:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Chapter one focuses on the background of the study on the lived experiences of university students towards parenting while studying. The study's background helps the researcher put the study into perspective. The chapter discusses the problem statement of the study, rationale, the aim, objectives, and research questions of the study. The theoretical framework is also presented. The chapter ends by highlighting the structure of the dissertation.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

This chapter focuses on the literature relevant to the topic, which helped the researcher to familiarise herself with the experiences of young university parents.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter provides details about the research methodology that was used for this study. A description of study context is presented. This study is qualitative in nature and has adopted an interpretivism paradigm. The research design for this study and sampling strategies are also presented. To gain an in-depth understanding of university student's experiences towards parenting while studying, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Data were analysed through thematic content analysis. The chapter also gives the ethical considerations that were used as required in the research.

## **Chapter 4: Results and discussion of the findings**

This chapter is a discussion of the data obtained from participants through in-depth individual interviews. The emergent themes and sub-themes are discussed in this chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Summary and conclusions**

This chapter presents the summary of the study. The conclusion is based on the research findings.

### **1.8. Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the research study, background of the study, the aim and objectives of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, and organisation of the dissertation. The next chapter presents a review of the literature.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This section reviews literature relating to the experiences of young university students who are parents. A literature review is an excellent source for focusing on a topic, as it reduces the chances of focusing on irrelevant and out-dated information (Thabethe, 2017). This chapter focuses on how parenting is defined for women and men and the associated gender roles that they play in relation to parenting. Different forms of parenting, societal expectations, and mothering and of fathering are discussed in this chapter, including the impact of parenting on women and on men, respectively.

It is evident in research that pursuing tertiary education and being a parent places tremendous pressure on many young parents (Taukeni, 2014; Kubeka, 2016). Young parents as students also have to deal with academic tasks, such as assignments, group projects and examinations (Kubeka, 2016). They do this while having to perform parental duties such as taking care of their children's physical, psychological, and emotional needs (Taukeni, 2014). These roles require not only a person's presence but also attention and dedication to both studies and the needs of their children.

### **2.2. Parenting definitions and implications**

Parenting has been linked to varying outcomes of child well-being and behaviour. According to Hoff, Laursen and Tardiff (2002) parenting involves attitudes about childrearing and the expression of the emotional climate they develop. Parenting practices are generally associated with certain beliefs about how people should raise their children. Parenting is one mechanism through which a child can learn appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, learn right and wrong choices in decision-making, acquire

skills, understand roles, and accept or not accept the norms of a community (Roman, 2014).

The birth of a child instantly changes how we define ourselves. Women become mothers; fathers become fathers, and couples become parents, thereby shifting their priorities in fundamental ways. Parenting may be the most rewarding experience, but it may also be complicated and humbling (Nelson, Kushlev and Lyubomirsky, 2014). It is mainly women-centred, and much emphasis is placed on ideal motherhood (Hays, 1996), where women are expected to spend time with their children, play with them, calm their fears, deal with their teachers, bandage their knees, discipline them, and help them with their homework (Temblador, 1990; Hays, 1996).

### **2.3. The construction of Motherhood**

According to Kaufman *et al.* (2001), motherhood is multi-layered, diverse, and continuously shaped by the particular historical, cultural, and political needs of the society in which the women mothers. Kaufman *et al.* (2001) further stated that the society informs us what it means to be a mother, how a woman should mother and what appropriate behaviours are. According to Hays (1999) and Morell, Jewkes and Lindegger (2012), societal descriptions of good mothers highlight self-sacrifice on their part, material provision for their children and the desire to put the needs of their children before their own.

Hays (1996) refers to intensive mothering, the dominant parenting paradigm that casts a good mother as one who constantly cares for, attends to, and devotes her time and energy to meeting her child's needs, and places the child's well-being ahead of her own needs and desires. As a result, much pressure is put on student mothers to conform to this idealised form of mothering even when they are unable to. The push for

young parents to complete their studies or look for employment may limit their ability to care for their children themselves, which contrasts with the dominant construction of parenting (Ward, Makusha & Bray, 2015).

There is often pressure on women to have children, and teenagers may gain respect by becoming parents (Kruger, 2003; Macleod, 2001). Society may force youth into parenthood as it becomes a way for them to gain recognition and respect; and a sign of femininity or masculinity. Marriage is often seen as a gateway to motherhood; the lower rates of marriage, and a rise in the ability of women to earn income, some women may not get married and thus have children out of wedlock (Maqubela, 2016). This does not mean that being unmarried will prevent them from becoming parents. In all religious groups, women are encouraged to procreate, and marriage is seen as a way of gaining permission to do so, therefore having a child out of marriage is discouraged, it also brings shame to the family and the community. Although many communities still frown upon unmarried motherhood, a child is often welcomed when it is born (Preston-Whyte and Zondi, 1992).

The notion of a good parent imposes tremendous pressure and judgement on young women, largely because the expectations are hard to fulfil. Widely accepted notions of what a good parent is continues to put a strain on many young women who are not only taking care of their children but are also actively involved in other activities, such as academics (Kubeka, 2016). Each society has its own ideal and accepted notion of what and how motherhood should be (Kubeka, 2016). Therefore, mothers who are students have difficulties of fulfilling those expectations as they spend much time away from their children.

#### **2.4. The construction of Fatherhood**

Existing literature indicates that a good father is the one who provides for his child financially (Morrell & Richter, 2006), and a good mother is the one who is responsible for the care and upbringing of the children (Temblador, 1990; Macleod, 2001; Hays, 1996). According to

Morell and Richter (2006), in South Africa a definition of a good father puts emphasis on accepting responsibility for the paternity, taking care of the child and being a good role model. According to Mkhize (2006, p. 186), fatherhood does not occur “in a vacuum it is a socio-moral process informed by the dominant discourses of what it means to be a man in one’s society.”

Expectations of the different gender mean that men may experience parenting differently. Good fathers are often portrayed as breadwinners, providers, protectors, and caregivers (Richter & Morrell, 2006), which is a challenge to young fathers who are not working. The expectation that society puts on a father to become a provider results in young fathers emphasizing and making their financial presence in their children’s lives the main feature of fatherhood (Morrell & Richter, 2006). Despite ideal fatherhood being impossible for young parents who are students. As a result, they are unable to physically be present in the lives of their children or provide for them. Another important part of fatherhood is a responsibility, which refers to the extent to which a parent ensures the welfare and well-being of a child, usually along financial terms for men (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012). Men do not usually play a central role in the day-to-day care of children.

Good fatherhood is normally associated with the role of a provider, even though it involves much more than just financial support (Mavungu, Thomson-de Boor and Mphaka, 2013), however, material provision and financial support remain centralized. Fatherhood involves much more than financial support (Hobson & Morgan 2002; Lupton & Barclay 1997). The literature on fatherhood emphasises the absence of men in their children's lives, especially in the black community (Mavungu *et al.*, 2013; Richter, Desmond, Hosegood, Madhavan, Makiwane, Makusha, Morrell, & Swartz, 2012). The high rate of unemployment and poverty prevent young fathers from carrying out their fatherly roles. Zwang and Garenne (2008) state that young fathers with limited finances are incapable of paying damages, getting married, or

taking care of their children. Just as good fathers are seen as those offering financial and material support, others are seen as irresponsible by being unable to support their children, gay fathers, and teenage fathers (Robinson & Barret, 1986) which means that they also have to comply with the societal expectations of what it is to be a good father.

Another issue is associating fatherhood with masculinity and implying that a caring father would provide for his family and therefore enhance his masculinity (Swartz & Bhana, 2009) and place in society, while those unable to provide are emasculated and are seen as bad fathers. The ability of other men, who are not within the dominant script of masculinity such as gay, to parent their children is often scrutinised. Furthermore, the dominant view that caring fathers are those who live with their children tends to obscure the role that men play in their children's lives. Social fathers are often not recognised by society despite the critical role that they play (Ratele, Shefer & Clowes, 2012). Although not biological fathers of children, they may be men who give support to children who are not their biological offspring such as grandfathers, uncles, stepfathers, brothers, etc. (Swartz & Bhana, 2009). While the role of *othermothers* or social mothers (Seepamore, 2018) is accepted in parenting, this is not the case for social fathers or (other fathers), which shows the different roles in which both genders are perceived in relation to parenting.

## **2.5. Unmarried fathers and parenting in South Africa**

While the literature focuses on the absence of fathers in parenting, legislation has put measures in place to address some of the social and cultural factors that affect fathers' paternal involvement, especially in the black community. Mavungu, Thomson-de Boor and Mphaka (2013) conducted a study in Johannesburg about absent fathers. The findings of their research indicated that there are numerous reasons that made fathers absent from their children's lives. Participants mentioned multiple reasons such as unemployment and poverty of fathers,

dominant constructions of men and fathers as providers, cultural factors such as the high cost of *ilobolo* and *inhlawulo* (damages). Morell (2006) emphasises the complexity of fathering and the related social expectations especially for unmarried fathers. In South Africa, when a child is born out of wedlock, a father's role is normally restricted because there are issues of damages that needs to be paid, and the maternal family becomes primary caregivers of the child.

Under section 18 of the Children's Act, an unmarried father may have full or specific parental responsibilities and rights in respect of the child. Those responsibilities and rights that a person could have includes care of the child, to maintain contact with the child, guardianship and contributing to child maintenance (Section 18). What is essential with this Act is that parents not only have parental rights but also parental responsibilities. This means that parents who have rights in respect of the child, they have to care for their children by providing basic needs such as clothes, food, and a place to live (Skelton, 2009). Parents should maintain contact with the child by having a relationship or maintaining communication through telephone, visiting the child, or being visited by the child. However, young fathers may not be able to practice those responsibilities with their children if they did not pay for the damages. According to Patel and Mavungu (2016) paying for the damages is crucial because it means that a father acknowledges paternity, that he cleanses the girl's family, can have access to the child and contributes towards the maintenance.

Section 21 of the Children's Act lists the conditions under which unmarried fathers may acquire parental rights and responsibilities, and those are men, who if at the time of the child's birth, were living with the mother in a permanent life-partnership even if they were not married and regardless of having lived or was living with the mother - (i) the man consents to be identified or successfully applies in terms of Section 26 of the same Act, to be identified as the child's father or pays damages in terms of customary law, (ii) contributes or has attempted in good faith to contribute to the child's upbringing for a reasonable period; and (iii) contributes

or has attempted in good faith to contribute towards expenses in connection with the maintenance of the child for a reasonable period. This implies that the unmarried father must apply to the court for acknowledgment as the child's father.

The socio-cultural issue of *inhlawulo* has both positive and negative effects. It is one of the contributing factors that may prevent unmarried fathers from participating in their children's lives especially when they are youth themselves. This payment also allows the child to take on the surname of the father and be welcome to the paternal family (Langa, 2010; Nduna, 2012). If damages have not been paid, or the pregnancy is not acknowledged, this can lead to embarrassment for the girl and the family therefore the payment of *inhlawulo* is one of the requirements for unmarried father to acquire full paternal responsibilities and rights in terms of section 21 of the Children's Act no 38 of 2005. The payment of *inhlawulo* may be a gateway to accessing the child because it shows acknowledgement of paternity and is seen as an apology to the girl's family. Other rituals such as *imbeleko* ceremony which is performed by paternal relatives to introduce the child to paternal ancestors (Nduna, 2014). This ritual allows the father and all paternal relatives to make some decisions in relation to the child and follow relevant paternal family customs, be present at family functions and rituals.

In terms of Section 22, an unmarried father who does not have automatic parental responsibilities and rights can enter into an agreement with whoever has parental responsibilities and rights with regard to a child. However, this agreement should be in the best interest of the child. According to Bosman- Sadie and Corrie (2010), the agreement must be registered with the family advocate or made an order of the high court or children's court to have legal effect. In terms of Section 23, a father who does not have automatic parental responsibilities and rights and who did not enter into an agreement with the mother of the child can apply to the high court or children's court for parental responsibilities and rights in relation to care and contact.

## **2.6. Gender roles and the impact on parenting**

The gendered experiences of both male and female students tend to differ, Chili and Maharaj (2015) revealed that their participants were disturbed as a result of their new roles as fathers. According to Kubeka (2016) the process of parenthood can be very difficult for young people, and it can affect their physical and psychological well-being. Young parents also face extensive difficulties in carrying out their parenting roles, this may be because they often become parents without necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to deal with early parenthood, which may add stress to their already strenuous developmental level (Macleod & Weaver, 2003). It comes at a time when they are not yet ready for parenting physically, emotionally, and financially (Mngadi, Thembi, Ransjo-Arvidson and Ahlberg, 2002).

Parents' socioeconomic status has an impact on their parenting styles, beliefs, and practices (Hoff *et al.*, 2002). Baumrind (1966) identified four parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, or permissive and neglectful/uninvolved. The indulgent or permissive parent is less demanding and very easygoing. The authoritarian parenting style is very demanding and controlling, while the uninvolved or neglectful parent is very permissive, detached, or emotionally absent. The authoritative is the ideal where the parent can balance demands with responsiveness. This has implications for parents who do not stay with their children and how they perceive themselves or are perceived by society.

Research shows that parents in the lower socioeconomic levels tend to be more concerned with their children's ability to conform to societal expectations, and they are more punitive in their discipline, while those in the higher socioeconomic class have better communication skills, negotiate with their children and are more flexible (McNeely & Baber, 2010; Parker & Buriel, 1988; Roman, 2014). A majority of young parents are financially unstable (Sekgobela, 2008), and a lack of support could lead to a feeling of failure as a parent.

Unemployed fathers may feel like failures due to their inability to financially support their children (Makhanya, 2016), and those who can support their children may feel that they have accomplished their role.

Parenting can be difficult under any circumstances, and the stakes are high without a partner. As a single parent – usually the mother - one might have sole responsibility for all aspects of day-to-day childcare. According to Stephen and Usidi (2016), single parenthood is a phenomenon that has always been in existence and is as old as mankind. A single parent refers to a parent not living with a spouse or partner who has most of the day-to-day responsibilities in raising the child or children (Stephen & Usidi, 2016), regardless of her age. This means that being a single parent can result in added pressure, stress, and fatigue. Ntini & Sewpaul (2017) found that young women often become single mothers despite the fathers of their children being physically present. Chances of dropping out of school are increased with single parenting, and this tends to be the case for girls more than boys. The society also tends to blame and stigmatize girls who become mothers at a young age (Ntini & Sewpaul, 2017), while boys tend to be given support and usually continue with their education despite being fathers at a young age.

## **2.7. Challenges of parenting while studying**

It may be difficult for young mothers to fulfil their parenting roles when they are studying. Parker (1997) stated that balancing parenting with other activities such as studying or working is challenging. However, education is important for young people because it prepares them for the future. According to Dlamini, Van der Merwe and Ehlers (2003) young mothers need to be educated because education will enable them to have a better life with their children. This means that, with better education, young mothers would be able to escape poverty and be able to support themselves and their children.

Women may feel judged by people who do not acknowledge that motherhood can be carried out in conjunction with studying. Young mothers are stigmatized by stereotypes that are associated with having a child at a young age (Ntini & Sewpaul, 2017). It is also difficult for them to perform everyday duties freely in their social and educational spaces because of the stigma associated with teenage pregnancy or parenting (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). It is evident in research that pursuing tertiary education and being a parent places significant pressure on many young parents (Taukeni, 2014; Kubeka, 2016). They also have to deal with academic tasks, such as assignments, group projects and examinations (Kubeka, 2016). They do this while having to perform parental duties such as taking care of their children's physical, psychological, and emotional needs (Taukeni, 2014). These roles require not only a person's presence but also attention and dedication to both studies and the needs of their children. Students who pursue tertiary qualifications while parenting have a different experience of university compared to those who do not have children (Kubeka, 2016). Being a parent presents one with constant worry about the well-being of one's child.

Although there are negative experiences of young parenthood, it may also be perceived as a positive experience. It may give parents a new sense to life, a new sense of purpose and a feeling that offers a better future (Smith, 2000). Children may bring meaning to the parents' lives and encourage them to do well for the sake of their children. Noria, Weed and Keogh (2007) state that being parents at a young age can be perceived as a way of uplifting their status and may symbolise a positive new start for the parents. With the proper support and motivation, young mothers may be able to cope with parenting demands, leading to feelings of competency and increased self-esteem. Support, be it emotional or financial, is essential for any mother to deal with parenting. While women's support networks such as caregiving, childcare facilities and other nannies are available, the importance of financial support cannot be emphasised more. Studies have shown the critical role of government child support grants, especially in

families where the parents are unemployed such as young parents (Lund, 2011). While there were arguments that the social grant may encourage young girls to fall pregnant, this has been found to be untrue (Makiwane *et al.*, 2006; Lund & Agyei-Mensah, 2008; Richter, 2009). Instead, Mchunu, Peltzer, Tutshana, & Seutlwadi (2012) found positive outcomes for children whose caregivers received the social grant in the form of better nutrition and school enrolment.

## **2.8. Coping mechanisms used by students who are parents**

As a result of the difficulties faced by young parents, it is important to understand how they cope. According to Thabethe (2017), young parents have used different strategies to cope with their studies and parenting. Young parents who have social support from peers, partners or family members cope better with their studies and do not experience negative symptoms of loneliness (Thabethe, 2017). In Brown and Amankwaa's (2007) study, student mothers reported that having a support system helped them to manage their dual roles and taught them responsibility in being both a mother and a student. Support from family and friends seems to buffer the challenges they may experience (Taukeni, 2014).

Young fathers, like young mothers, struggle to balance their dual roles and they also need support. Evidence suggests that some families and friends may not view engagement with or social support for young fathers as a priority (Lau-Clayton, 2016), perhaps because, most of the time, young fathers are not as involved in child-rearing at the same level as mothers. However, when good support is provided at the right time, young parents are more likely to balance their dual roles successfully (Lau-Clayton, 2006). It was evident in Madiba and Nsiki's study that was conducted in 2017 that young parents are able to manage their academic work when they get support from their friends, partners, and family members. Young parents in Thabethe's (2017) study were

willing to put in extra effort, which helped them pass, and their desire to provide a good future for their children encouraged them to work hard to achieve their goals.

Coping with the demands of parenting and schoolwork makes young parents very stressed, thus requiring coping strategies to manage the two roles. In this study, most of the participants did not plan to have children. Therefore, they felt shocked, embarrassed, disappointed, and ashamed that they were going to be parents while they were still studying. In addition, some participants reacted negatively and expressed disappointment for their parents, siblings, friends, and partners. As a means to withstand the negative experiences, young parents used resilience and accepting as coping strategies so they would be able to focus on their schoolwork.

According to Collins (2010), resilience refers to positive outcomes in the presence of adversity rather than a positive adaptation in general. It surfaces in the face of hardship and denotes the ability of individuals who are able to bounce back from adversity (Collins, 2010). The resilience perspective implies a focus on competencies and positive outcomes rather than problematic, negative ones. This means that resilience is our ability to do well in spite of stresses. It is about successfully coping with problems and building strengths that protect and promote wellbeing. In this study, participants decided to focus on the positives of being a parent so they will be able to focus on their studies. For example, one of the participants said that she has never considered her child a mistake nor thought of the child as such because he is the most amazing thing ever in her life. This illustrated that having a resilience perspective on this matter gave the participants a chance to look at parenting differently.

Young parents also used acceptance as a coping strategy in order for them to cope with parenting and with studying at a university level. According to Nakamura and Orth (2005), acceptance means facing reality, even if it does not fit one's

expectations or desires, and the willingness to deal with it, nevertheless. It is when individuals make every effort to stay engaged with the important goals that give structure to their lives (Nakamura & Orth, 2005). In this study, participants reported that they adopted this strategy to focus on their studies and reach their goals. To them, acceptance meant focusing more on being students than on being a parent. This therefore meant that they had to adapt to the situation of leaving their children behind in the care of their parents. Acceptance was found to be one of the key variables in the adaptation process in order for participants to balance parent/student life.

## **2.9. Conclusion**

The ideology of parenthood continues to show that the roles of women and men in parenting are different. While motherhood is constructed through caregiving, presence and emotional support, fatherhood tends to be constructed along financial and material lines. Despite the stigmatisation of young motherhood and the dominant view that young mothers drain state resources, this experience is sometimes an opportunity for growth and self-development. Young fatherhood, on the other hand, seems to be less stigmatised and does not always have calamitous consequences such as boys leaving school. Although there is legislation that has been out in place also to support unmarried fathers, various social and cultural issues may hinder their involvement in parenting. Both young parents seem to receive support from other women's networks and relatives who often care for their children when they are born, but girls carry the heaviest care burden. The literature also indicates the challenges that young parents often face while studying and some of the ways in which they cope with this responsibility. The following chapter discusses the research methodology.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This section explains the methodology used for this study. The overall design or strategy that helps in obtaining the desired goals and objectives of the research are referred to as research methodology (Alsaif, 2016). The research methodology chapter includes the study area, research paradigm, research approach, research design, sampling strategies, data collection instruments, methods of data analysis, ethical consideration, and trustworthiness.

### **3.2. Location of the study**

The University of Kwa Zulu-Natal (UKZN), Howard College campus was chosen as a research site to explore the experiences of university students who were parenting while studying. UKZN has five campuses; out of these five, Howard College campus was chosen because of its vicinity and the high number of young parents (Makhanya, 2016).

This is an urban campus with students from various communities, with most students aged between 18 to 35 years, when most young people explore their sexuality. According to Edelman and Mangle (cited in Qinisile, 2013), the period concerned includes many physical and emotional changes and provides an opportunity for learning by experience and experiment. Most students at this campus stay at university residences away from their parent's supervision, and some are able to hide their pregnancies.

### **3.3. Research paradigm**

A research paradigm is a research perspective grounded in a set of shared research concepts, values, norms, and practices about doing research (Johnson & Christensen,

2014). The interpretive research paradigm aims to understand how participants derive meaning from their surroundings and how this meaning influences their behaviour (Davies, 2004). A research paradigm provides a rationale for the research and commits the researcher to certain methods of data collection, observation, and interpretation (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006).

This study adopted an interpretivist paradigm, which assumes that there are socially constructed multiple realities and experiences (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). It rejects the notion that a single, verifiable reality exists independent of our senses. According to the interpretivism, truth and reality are created, not discovered (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). According to Grix (cited in Rehman & Alharthi 2016; p.83) “researchers are inextricably part of the social reality being researched, i.e., they are not ‘detached’ from the subject they are studying”. The experiences of young parents can thus be understood from their own understanding and meaning (Rubin & Babbie, 2013).

The interpretivist paradigm stresses the importance of placing analysis in context and understanding the world as it is seen from individual accounts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006), the interpretivist paradigm differs from the positivist stance, which views the world as based on objective and neutral facts. Interpretivists assert that research must capture the in-depth experience of subjects and understand this experience in its natural context (Mayer, 2009). This means that the researcher positions themselves in the data and is the instrument of the research. Interpretivism thus focuses on exploring the complexity of social phenomena with a view to gaining understanding. The purpose of research in interpretivism is to understand and interpret everyday happenings (events), experiences

and social structures, and the values people attach to these phenomena (Rubin & Babbie, 2013).

### **3.4. Research approach**

This qualitative research design is a method of inquiry aiming for an in-depth understanding of human behaviour by investigating why and how young people balance their parenting and academic needs (Creswell, 2007). There are three broad categories of research approaches: namely qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. I chose the qualitative approach because I wanted to understand the participants' experiences from their own points of view. This means that the qualitative approach enables the in-depth examination of students who are also parents. A qualitative approach is particularly field-based and collaborative, and it usually reveals micro-level individual, group, and society practices which are neglected by less demanding approaches (Furstenburg & Hughes, 1997).

Qualitative research is flexible and has interests in presenting reality through participants' eyes (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). In this study, a qualitative approach was employed to gain insight into how young parents make sense of their experiences of being a student and of being a parent. A qualitative approach allows for flexibility of the research process and allows the researcher to ask follow-up questions while also allowing the participants to explain their stories (Kubeka, 2016). The qualitative research method does not restrict any party in terms of exploring the phenomena in

different ways; it allows the researcher to follow any idea that seems complex, interesting, or worth exploring with the participants (Howitt & Cramer, 2011).

The qualitative nature of this study makes it possible to “paint a picture” using words or numbers and to present a profile, a classification of types, or an outline of steps to answer questions such as who, when, where and how (Neuman, 2013; 38). Descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship (Neuman, 2013), and it was suitable because the primary focus of this study was to describe the experiences of university students who were parenting. This study provided an opportunity to hear these students’ experiences, and descriptive research permits the researcher to witness and describe what they have observed (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

### **3.5. Sampling**

A study population is the total number of possible units or elements that can be included in a study (Gray, 2004). The process of selecting a portion of the population to be investigated is known as sampling. A sample is a small set of cases a researcher selects from a large pool (Neuman, 2013; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). I used a purposive, non-probability sampling technique to select participants for the study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011). It is “a non-random sampling method which the researcher uses to locate all possible cases of a highly specific and difficult-to-reach population” (Neuman, 2013, p.273). Purposive sampling entails selecting participants with specific information that will be investigated (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Furthermore, purposive sampling enables the researcher to define the target sample and gives succinct inclusion criteria to determine which participants to include in the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2005).

Purposive sampling was useful for the study because participants selected for this study were the typical population the research seeks to study and were easily available. This study targeted female and male students currently enrolled at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College campus at the time of data collection. In order for the participants to be included in the study, they had to meet the following inclusion criteria:

- Have a child who is at least two months or older.
- Be under the age of 35 years
- Currently enrolled at the Howard College campus full time
- Be an undergraduate student

The sample consisted of 15 students, seven males and eight females, who were full-time, undergraduate young parents. The students had children from the age of two months and two years because the study required students who have children. The sample size of 15 participants was adequate for this study and was chosen because at this point it was evident that data saturation was reached (Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole, 2013). This is the point at which no new information emerges, and where the addition of any further data is unlikely to contribute anything new to what has already been learnt. The sample selected was also considered adequate for the study because the main aim of this study was not generalisability but to better understand the experiences of young university parents.

Because parenting by young people is stigmatised, I understood that it might be difficult to approach some of the participants directly. I also used participants' posters to advertise the study on the university and residence notice boards. Permission to advertise was obtained from Risk Management Services (RMS) and Residence

Assistances (RAs). Participants replied using an email address that was provided in the poster (see Appendix 1). I then confirmed whether the student who responded met the inclusion criteria for participating in the study or not and then they were asked to join the study. Permission to undertake the study was also obtained from the university ethics committee (see Appendix 6).

### **3.6. Data collection method**

Data collection is an essential step in research. I used in-depth interviews to collect data (Patton, 2002). Silverman (2006) pointed out that interviews are the most commonly used data collection method for qualitative studies. At the core of in-depth, one-on-one interviews is an interest in understanding other people's experiences and the meaning they make of that experience (Greeff, 2011). Although in-depth interviews are time consuming (Neuman, 2003), they allow for thick and comprehensive descriptions of the phenomena they study (King & Horrocks, 2010). Interviews are flexible and allow participants to elaborate on their responses and clarify what they mean. Interviews allow researchers to understand individuals' life experiences and allow for deeper insight and understanding of the clients' experiences (King & Horrocks, 2010), and they are also relatively economical in terms of time and resources.

Individual interviews were arranged with each participant and they were informed about their rights prior to the interviews. Discussions involved one-on-one interaction between the researcher and a participant. The individual interviews with participants aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of individual experiences. Fifteen students were individually interviewed, and they all participated freely. Individual interviews were useful in helping me to gain in-depth information on the personal experiences of young parents and for them to express their views and concerns privately. I was aware that interviews could be anxiety-provoking, I therefore made

them aware of this process when they were invited to the study and explained the process beforehand.

By interviewing the participants individually, participants were able to share openly and freely. They were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 3) before participating in the study, which also included a request for permission to audio-record their responses. It was also helpful to interview the participants face-to-face. I was able to ask follow-up questions because I am fluent in isiZulu, which made the participants more comfortable as it became easier for us to have a flowing conversation and to clearly understand some traditional concepts such as *inhlawulo* or *imbeleko*. All my study participants were also fluent in isiZulu and it created a safe atmosphere for participants to express themselves. Nzuza (2012) states that language can be an obstruction between the researcher and participants. Throughout the interviews, I recognised non-verbal signals, expressions, implied meanings, and gestures that other non-isiZulu speakers might have misunderstood.

Like other data collection methods, in-depth face-to-face interviews have some strength and weaknesses. The strengths are that it allows the researcher to probe and explore as the study is conducted, and the participants' own words are captured (Holloway, 2005). Another advantage is the interviewer can easily engage with the interviewee and clarify some of the questions that are not clear. Also, during an interview, non-verbal cues can be noted and recorded (Holloway, 2005). However, the method has weaknesses in that it requires the researcher to establish rapport with the participants in order to gain more information (Morse cited in Greeff, 2011). Interviewing is also time consuming, particularly transcription and analysis of data (Holloway, 2005).

### **3.7. Data collection instrument**

Neuman (2013) defines data as the form of empirical information collected or obtained during a study. In this study, I used a semi-structured individual interview schedule/guide for collecting data (see Appendix 5). According to Chauke (2013) a semi-structured interview schedule allows both the interviewer and the person being interviewed the flexibility to probe for more details. The interview guide “indicates the topics and their sequence in the interview” (Kyale, 1996, p.129). The advantage of using an interview guide is that it outlines the issues to be discussed and to focus the discussion (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). The interview guide used in this study consisted of open-ended questions related to the research questions and allowed space for unexpected or new issues during the interview. Other questions related to academic work, challenges that young parents face, and support structures were formulated in order to understand young parents’ experiences of parenthood and being a university student.

During the interviews, I noted non-verbal cues throughout the interviews as some participants expressed their emotions. Giving participants time to talk should always be extremely emphasized in qualitative research (Mouton, 2012). All interviews were audio-recorded to yield rich data in the analysis and participants were asked to give consent before the interviews were conducted. Semi-structured individual interviews proved to be very useful in allowing the participants to talk about their experiences as I was able to probe further. Interviews were conducted at the Howard College campus from November to December 2019 and each interview took a maximum of 1 hour.

### 3.8. Pilot

Bless *et al.* (2013) define the pilot study as a small study conducted prior to a larger piece of research to determine whether the methodology, sampling, instruments, and analysis are adequate and appropriate. Janesick (1994) concurs that the pilot study in qualitative research allows the researcher to make use of the actual qualitative interviews. According to Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003), the researcher can begin to identify and correct imperfections by piloting an interview guide with a select few people in order to establish their clarity. Piloting further assists in eliminating ambiguous questions, as well as in generating useful feedback on the structure and flow of the intended interview (De Vos *et al.* 2011).

I conducted a pilot study on a small scale prior to the main study. The purpose was to determine the feasibility of conducting the study; suitability of the sampling frame; identification of any difficulty or unforeseen problems with the method or instrument; investigation of the accuracy and appropriateness of the instrument; and establishment of the adequacy and suitability of the methodology (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). A total of eight postgraduate students were invited to participate in the pilot study using a purposive sampling technique. Postgraduate students were invited because the actual study's population target was only undergraduate students. The pilot study's findings helped me review some of the questions in the interview schedule as they seemed to produce the same answers.

The responses showed that I needed to find out what led to the pregnancy and what the reactions were of both the males and females in this study. The stages of loss were also very clearly articulated by the pilot, in other words, the loss of their childhood or youth by becoming parents. The issue of finances featured much in the responses, and so did the fear that they had

transgressed societal expectations and disappointed their parents by becoming parents at an early age. Finances in terms of *inhlawulo* were also expressed by some of the participants.

### **3.8.1. Some of the findings from the pilot**

Clearly, the participants had not planned to have children and were, therefore, in denial and reacted with shock when they found out that they were pregnant or their partners told them they were pregnant. For example, in the pilot study, participants were asked their reaction when they first found out that they were pregnant or that their partner was pregnant. Most of the participants reported that they were in shock, denial and angry.

Bonisiwe (25) said

*“I was angry and frustrated. I couldn’t accept it. To be honest I was not even ready”.*

Jabulani (24) said

*“when she first told me, I kind of joked about it because I thought she was joking. Then she went to a doctor to confirm. Yoh I was so shocked, I didn’t know what to do because we were not ready, we never spoke about having a child”.*

These findings reveal that, it is common for young people to be in denial when they first find out about the pregnancy. The findings correlate with the findings of Taukeni (2014) who asserts that denial is the first reaction among pregnant students when they discover the pregnancy. This is illustrated that the pregnancies were not planned or anticipated.

Male participants in the pilot study wanted to assume financial responsibility for their children, however, they were finding it difficult because they were unemployed. They reported that their failure to pay damages (*Inhlawulo*) for their children restricted their interactions with their children. Young fathers also reported that their new roles as fathers impacted negatively

on their education. The pilot study helped with including questions around *inhlawulo* which had not been included in the initial interview schedule.

### **3.9. Methods of data analysis**

The procedure of transforming all the obtained information into useful data in order to obtain a clear conclusion about the data is the process of analysis (Alsaif, 2016). In this study, results obtained from interviews were analysed using thematic content analysis, which is the process of indentifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The goal of a thematic analysis is to indefity emerging themes and patterns in the data that are important or interesting. I followed the five-phase process to thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), that is: familiarisation and immersion, which includes reading and re-reading transcripts. The second step is generating initial codes across the data set. The third step entails searching for themes. The fourth step is about reviewing themes, and the fifth step is about defining and naming themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) report that these steps do not assume a linear process of moving from one phase to the next; rather, it is a recursive process with back-and-forth movements.

#### **Step 1: Become familiar with the data**

The first step is to repeatedly read the transcripts. In this study, interviews were recorded and I had to listen to the audio tapes a couple of times to familiarise myself with the data. Through continuos listening, I was able to gets new understandings. According to Thabethe (2017) at this phase, it is crucial for the researcher to take notes of his/her observations and to make comments of potential significance. My notes focused on the content of the discussion, the language and non-verbal cues that were used and highlighted the emotional responses of participants. Thematic analysis is

flexible thereby providing a rich and detailed account of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The interview guide helped to identify and develop the initial codes. Transcribing the responses helped me to immerse myself into the data and I highlighted repeated issues raised by participants, and this helped to guide me in developing the emerging themes.

### **Step 2: Generate initial codes**

In this step, I started to organise the data in a meaningful and systematic way. Coding reduces lots of data into small chunks of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I worked through each transcript coding every segment of text that seemed to be relevant to the research questions. Then, I compared the codes, discussed them with the supervisor and modified them before moving on to the rest of the transcripts. Coding is utilized to spot similar or dissimilar segments of information which indicate the development of the themes (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). I categorized meaningful fragments to gather bits of coded material together, and the emerged themes. This phase is about categorizing the transcript data that is expected to be useful in elaborating the themes (King & Horrocks, 2010).

### **Step 3: Search for themes**

As Braun and Clarke (2006) explain, a theme is a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and/or research question. In this study, I examined the codes and some of them clearly fitted together into a theme. At the end, the codes were organised into broader themes in relation to the research question. This phase, which re-focuses the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes, involves sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006),

for instance in this study the issues related to motherhood and fatherhood, caregiving, cultural issues, etc. were grouped into themes that made sense.

#### **Step 4: Review themes**

During this phase I reviewed, modified and developed the preliminary themes that were identified in step 3. At this point it is useful to gather together all the data that is relevant to each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I ensured that themes are coherent and that they are distinct from each other.

#### **Step 5: Define themes**

This is the final refinement of the themes and the aim is to “identify the essence of what each theme is about” (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 92). At this step, I looked at what each theme is saying, whether subthemes interact and relate to the main theme and how do each theme relate to each other. Terre Blanche & Durrheim (1999, p. 326) recommend that the researcher go through the interpretation with “a fine-tooth comb” and try to repair any points perceived as weak and to check for contradictions or a different way of interpreting the data.

### **3.10. Trustworthiness of the study**

Several measures have been taken to ensure trustworthiness in the study. Trustworthiness refers to the manner in which qualitative data is dependable, consistent, stable, predictable and reliable, thus producing the same results or outcomes in the future as it had in the past (Delpont & Roesternburg, 2011). According to Morrow (cited in Thabethe, 2017), trustworthiness in qualitative research is conceptualised as the validity or rigour of a given study. The concept of trustworthiness evaluates the quality of qualitative research on the basis of four concepts which are credibility, dependability,

transferability and conformability (Creswell, 2007). All these aspects address the appropriateness of the methodologies used in collecting and analysing data.

### **3.10.1. Credibility**

Credibility refers to the extent to which the inquiry has been conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject has been accurately identified and described (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, Creswell (2007) contends that credibility is the extent to which qualitative researcher can demonstrate that their data are accurate and appropriate. Shenton (2004) refers to credibility as the truthfulness of the research findings. It is established by making sure that the research findings truly represent the information drawn from the participants' original data and is the correct interpretation of the participants' original views. According to Babbie & Mouton (2005) credibility in qualitative research seeks to ensure that the study found and reported what it intended to explore. Babbie & Mouton (2005) stress that the concept credibility is used to assess the extent to which the results are congruent with reality.

In this study, credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement with participants. This means that I spent enough time with participants to build up trust and by asking probing questions. I also used a voice recorder and field notes to record verbal and non-verbal responses. Voluntary participation was ensured in this study in order to include those who are genuinely willing to share their experiences.

### **3.10.2. Dependability**

Dependability refers to whether the findings will be consistent if the research were to be conducted with the same people or in a similar context (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999), or the extent to which research findings can be repeated in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained.

Dependability is concerned with the consistency of the research results. It questions the extent to which results would be similar should the study be repeated in the same context with the same participants and methods (Babbie & Mouton, 2005).

I ensured dependability in this study by keeping a detailed collection of all field notes and interview voice records for inquiry audit purposes. I ensured dependability by meticulously keeping a record to the information I used and how it was obtained. Dependability was also upheld by providing extensive descriptions of the study context, participants' demographics and location of the study to ensure that other researchers who might want to repeat the same study will find it easy to replicate it with the provided information.

### **3.10.3. Transferability**

According to Anney (2014), transferability focuses on whether the research findings can be applied to other circumstances with other participants. Transferability is the extent to which it is possible for study results to be applicable across different contexts, including settings and populations (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). This often refers to the generalisability of the study. Due to the interpretivist nature of qualitative research, the aim is not to generalise the results and another researcher could come to a different conclusion from this one. However, a qualitative study may show transferability by providing a clear description of the research process and methods which were used. In this study, I ensured transferability by creating an open and comfortable space for participants to express themselves genuinely (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

#### **3.8.4. Confirmability**

According to Shenton (2004) confirmability refers to the extent to which other researchers could verify the research results. Confirmability seeks to ensure that the results presented by the study are a true reflection of the participants' experiences and opinions and not those of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2005).

To ensure confirmability in this study, my supervisor reviewed my analysis and interpretation in order to confirm them. She critically commented on my findings and her comments were considered in reworking the final document. An extensive literature review was done to identify similarities and differences in the study and to confirm whether existing literature supported the findings or not (Thabethe, 2017). I also documented my own role in the research process, including assumptions, biases or reactions that might influence the collection and interpretation of data (Ulin, Robinson & Tolley, 2005).

I also took the transcribed data back to the participants for confirmation. After conducting interviews and analysing the data, the results of the study were sent back to the participants via email, that was used for recruiting. The purpose was for the participants to comment and give feedback as their confirmation that my interpretation of the data is valid. I received several responses thanking me for sharing the results and for not being biased during the interpretation of data, however, not all participants responded.

#### **3.11. Ethical consideration**

When people participate in a research investigation, researchers should protect the rights of individuals. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study in

order to protect participants from any form of harm. To ensure the safety of participants, the researcher considered the following ethics:

#### **3.11.1. Permission to conduct the study**

The proposal was presented to the school colloquium and also submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal for ethical clearance (HSSREC/00000319/2019). According to Jeukendrup (2009) the ethics committee is a body responsible for ensuring that research is carried out in an ethical manner. After getting the ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee (See Appendix 6), permission was sought from participants prior to interviewing them.

#### **3.11.2. Informed consent**

According to Neuman (2013; 151) informed consent is “a statement, usually written, that explains aspects of a study to participants and ask for their voluntary agreement to participate before the study begins”. Individuals participating in a research study have a right to be informed of the nature of the study and may choose whether or not to participate and to be aware that they are not by any means being forced into participation (Wiles, Crow & Charles, 2007). There were no rewards and exchange of monetary value promised for being part of the research, and participants understood this from the beginning. Before consenting to participation, each participant was clearly and fully informed about the research goals, possible risks and benefits, the right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences (See Appendix 2). Participants were invited to the study, and each participant who agreed to be in the study signed a consent form to show that they were comfortable taking part. All signed forms were kept in a locked area in my supervisor’s office.

#### **3.11.3. Confidentiality**

Neuman (2013; 155) defines confidentiality as “ the ethical protection for those who are studied by holding research data in confidence or keep them in secret from the public, not releasing information in a way that permits linking individuals to specific responses”. According to De Vos *et al.* (2011, p.114) “ every individual has the right to privacy and it is his or her right to decide what will be revealed”. In this study, I did not divulge any information shared to any other person. To ensure confidentiality, during data collection process, I stored devices (tape recorder) and paper documents such as informed consent and interview schedule in a locked area to protect them from being seen or read by someone else. All the participants had consented to the use of an audio recorder, and I was able to interview participants in a private space such as their room at university residence or where they felt comfortable especially because this study focused on a stigmatised topic of early parenting.

#### **3.11.4. Anonymity**

Anonymity is “the ethical protection that participants remain nameless; their identity is protected from disclosure and remains unknown” (Neuman, 2013; 154) Or unidentifiable. The participants were assured that data collected would be used for this study only, and pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity in the reporting of data. Prior to the interviews, participants were informed that none of their identifying particulars such as name, surname, and student number would be used in any way.

#### **3.11.5. Voluntary participation**

According to Neuman (2013) voluntary participation means that participants can agree to participate in the study or refuse at any time. In this study, voluntary participation was followed by ensuring to participants that they have a right to refuse to participate in the study, the right to discontinue the study if they felt uncomfortable and the right to choose not to answer any question. Participants were also assured that there were no

consequences as a result of declining or discontinuing participation. None of the participants refused participation, but the topic under discussion made some participants emotional. I did not dwell much on topics that were clearly uncomfortable to the participants and offered them further emotional support outside the interviews, should they need it. Wiles *et al.* (2007) note that ensuring that no harm happens to research participants is very important when conducting a study.

### **3.12. Conclusion**

This chapter documented the research methodology followed in conducting this study. I have also explained the data analysis process, data collection methods, trustworthiness, and ethical consideration. The following chapter contains the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

### 4.1. Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore lived experiences of university students who are parenting while studying. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data from the semi-structured individual interviews that were conducted with participants. The findings were drawn from the in-depth interviews that were conducted with 15 young parents. The results of the study are presented in themes and sub-themes originating from data analysis.

Themes	Sub-themes
Experiences of young parents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Financial difficulties</li><li>2. Poor performance in their studies</li></ol>
Perceptions of self as a parent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Different views on <i>inhlawulo</i></li><li>2. Transition to becoming a parent</li><li>3. Involvement with the child</li></ol>
Coping mechanisms used by young parents.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Social and family support for young parents</li><li>2. Resilience</li><li>3. Acceptance</li></ol>

Table 1: summary of themes and sub-themes of experiences of young parents who are University students.

### 4.2. Participants' socio-demographic information

A total of 15 students, seven males and eight females participated in the study. A summary of the demographic information of participants is provided in Table 4.1

below. In order to protect the participants' identity, pseudonyms were used in the study. All participants were African, and their ages ranged from 21 to 25 years, the majority were 21-22 years old, and their children's ages ranged from two months to two years. Of the 15 participants, 12 (80%) had one child, while three had two children. Fourteen out of the fifteen participants (90%) reported that they do not stay with their children. Participants were full-time undergraduate students enrolled in different courses in the College of Humanities. Three of the fifteen participants were in their 1<sup>st</sup> year. Four were doing 2<sup>nd</sup> year, the majority of participants were doing 3<sup>rd</sup> year and three were doing 4<sup>th</sup> year.

**Table 4.1: The demographic information of the participants**

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	No of children	Age of children	Level of study
1. Zinhle	Female	22	1	2 months	1 <sup>st</sup> year
2. Mduduzi	Male	23	1	1 year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year
3. Celiwe	Female	23	1	9 months	3 <sup>rd</sup> year
4. Nqobile	Female	21	1	4 months	2 <sup>nd</sup> year
5. Dumisani	Male	24	1	1 year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year
6. Siphos	Male	26	1	2 years	3 <sup>rd</sup> year
7. Nobuhle	Female	24	1	1 year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year
8. Zandile	Female	25	1	5 months	4 <sup>th</sup> year (undergrad)
9. Nhlakanipho	Male	25	1	1 year	4 <sup>th</sup> year (undergrad)
10. Phumlani	Male	25	1	2 years	4 <sup>th</sup> year (undergrad)
11. Busisiwe	Female	22	2	2 years & 6 months	3 <sup>rd</sup> year
12. Sifiso	Male	27	2	1 year & 2 months	3 <sup>rd</sup> year
13. Siyabonga	Male	21	1	11 months	1 <sup>st</sup> year

14. Nokwazi	Female	22	2	2 years & 4 months	2 <sup>nd</sup> year
15. Nomonde	Female	22	1	2 months	1 <sup>st</sup> year

Zinhle (22) had one child, a girl. She gave birth to her child this year while she was doing her 1<sup>st</sup> year. Her child is living with her mother, and she visits on weekends. Zinhle's mother agreed to look after her child, so she could further her studies. She is using the child support grant to support her child.

Mduduzi (23) had one child, a boy. At the time of the interview, Mduduzi reported that he broke up with the mother of his child, but they have a good relationship. He had his child while he was doing his 1<sup>st</sup> year. Although he is unemployed, he tried to support his child so that he could maintain the relationship with his child. He only gets to see his child during school holidays because his child lives with the mother's family.

Celiwe (23) was the mother of a 9-month-old boy. The father of her child denied paternity and told her that he was not ready to be a father. Her mother allowed her to complete her studies, but she has to go home every weekend to take care of her child. At the time of the interview, she was doing 3<sup>rd</sup> year, which was her final year.

Nqobile (21) had one child, who was four months old during the time of the interview. She fell pregnant while she was doing her 1<sup>st</sup> year. Her child lives with her mother, but Nqobile's mother is not happy, she was very disappointed when she found out that Nqobile was pregnant. She only gets to see her child during university break.

Dumisani (24) was the father of a one-year-old boy. Dumisani's child was born when he was doing his 2<sup>nd</sup> year. He is still in a romantic relationship with the mother of his child and she lives with the child. Dumisani gets to see his child during the university break.

Sipho (26) had a daughter. He broke up with the mother of his child, but he has a good relationship with his child. He stays at the student residence leaving his child in the care of his mother who helped him to pay for the damages. Although he is not working and is unable to financially support his child, Sipho emphasized that he loves his child and spends time with his daughter during university break.

Nobuhle (24) was the mother of a one-year-old boy. She fell pregnant with her child when she was doing her 1<sup>st</sup> year. The father's family took care of the child, and she was able to continue with her studies. She is still in a romantic relationship with the father of her child. She only gets to see her child during weekends.

Zandile (25) had a daughter, who was five months at the time of the interview. She gave birth to her child when she was doing her final year. She said that she does not get to see her child often, and that made her feel like a bad parent. Zandile's child lives with her paternal grandmother.

Nhlakanipho (25) had one child, who was one year old during the time of the interview. He was still in a romantic relationship with the mother of his child, and she was also a university student, but she had to stay home and look after the child. At the time of the interview, he was doing his final year. He only gets to see his child during the university break.

Phumlani (25) had a son. He broke up with the mother of his child when she was pregnant. He was doing his final year, and he said that he could not wait to graduate and look for a job so he would be able to pay for the damages and see his child.

Busisiwe (22) was the mother of two boys with different fathers. She gave birth to her first child when she was 20 years old and doing her 1<sup>st</sup> year. Her mother took care of the child, so she could return to school. When her child was one year old, she fell

pregnant with her second child, who was six months old during the time of the interview. She said that both her children stay with her mother, but she has to go home every Friday to take care of her children.

Sifiso (27) was the father of two children, a boy and a girl from the same mother. Sifiso was the oldest participant. He was married to the mother of his children and stayed with his wife and children. He was doing his final year during the time of the interview. He had a very different experience than all other participants because he was working before coming to university.

Siyabonga (21) had an 11-month-old son during the time of the interview. He was still in a romantic relationship with the mother of his child. The mother of his child fell pregnant when they were both doing matric. She had to stay home and look after the child while he was coming to university. He gets to see his child during the university break.

Nokwazi (22) had two daughters with the same father. She fell pregnant when she was 19 years and doing matric. She stayed at home until her child was six months old, and she was able to leave her and come to university. When her first child was one year old, she fell pregnant with her second child. The father's family took the older child, and the younger child lives with her mother. She gets to see them during the university break.

Nomonde (22) had a two-month-old girl. She was still in a relationship with the father of her daughter. She said that she didn't know she was pregnant until she was four months, then her mother allowed her to continue with her studies and agreed to look after the child. She goes home every weekend to see her child. She said that the father of her child supports them financially.

Thirteen out of fifteen participants had their children while they were already at University. None of the participants was a couple in the study, however, one participant was married, while others were still in a romantic relationship with their partners. Others had broken up with their partners but had a good relationship with them. Some of the participants left their children in the care of their parents so they could continue with their studies.

### **4.3. Experiences of young parents**

The aim of this study was to find out the experiences of students who were also parents. The themes that emerged were related to financial difficulties and poor academic performance.

#### **4.3.1. Financial difficulties**

Most of the participants reported financial challenges as both partners were unemployed. Lack of money made it difficult for them to get what they needed for their children. For example, Zinhle (22) said:

*“being a mother is very difficult when you are not working. To me it was really difficult I won’t lie, even when I was pregnant, I couldn’t get or eat things I wanted because my boyfriend was also not working. It was difficult and I will not fall pregnant again not until I finish my studies and get a stable job because even now, we are only relying on the child support grant and it’s not enough”.*

It was difficult for them to get what they wanted or to provide for their children financially. The findings of the study are similar to those of Madiba and Nsiki (2017) who noted that young mothers experience financial hardship and that they struggled with money. They also relied on the child support grant to support their children.

Nqobile (21) said:

*“I have to support my child with the child support grant, and it is not enough to cover all the child’s needs. It’s really difficult and it becomes more difficult as I am not staying with my child, I have to buy formula, nappies, food, and other baby stuff. It would be better if I was staying with my child because I would be breastfeeding her and only use the money for nappies and food”.*

While most of the male participants said that buying clothes, food and nappies for their children was a challenge, they also relied on the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to support their children. For example, Mduduzi (23) said

*“I had to use my nsfas allowance to support my child, because you know if you don’t provide for your child, you don’t get to see him. You know I love my child, but I can’t give him everything he needs and it’s difficult you know”.*

The society’s expectations of the ideal father also impose great pressure on young men to provide for their children. It seems that the scholarship money was used to support the children rather than the intended beneficiaries. Swartz and Bhana (2009) explained that men unable to provide for their children financially face significant barriers in achieving regular involvement with their children. As a result, some fathers relied on the NSFAS scholarship to support their children. The money they receive from NSFAS is barely enough to meet the father’s needs as a student, but they are expected to contribute towards maintaining their children.

This shows how much young fathers are willing to be involved in the lives of their children and to uphold the dominant construction of fatherhood. According to Morrell and Richter (2006;18) fatherhood is understood as “the social role that men undertake to care for their children”. It denotes both a physical and an emotional

presence and involvement in a child's life. In the study young fathers associated their role with being a provider and said that they failed to live up to the provider expectations. According to Patel and Mavungu (2016), in the context wherein both masculinity and fatherhood are strongly associated with being a provider, fathers who are struggling to provide material or financial support to their offspring may feel like they are failures. In this study, masculinity and fatherhood were mainly understood or defined in terms of one's ability to provide for his child's needs.

Sifiso (27) who had a different experience than all other participants because he was married, and he was working before becoming a university student, said that being able to provide for your child financially is a relief. He said that financial support makes one feel like a good parent and like a real man. It gives one satisfaction that as a man, they are able to take care of their children financially.

There is a connection between father, fatherhood and masculinity (Morrell, 2006). The "term masculinity signifies a collective gender identity and not natural attributes" (Ampofo & Boateng, 2007;52). This means that masculinity is socially and cultural constructed to regulate male behaviour. Masculinity determines how men should behave, be treated, and what they should succeed at and what qualities and attitudes they should possess (Ampofo & Boateng, 2007).

#### **4.3.2. Poor performance in their studies**

Participants were undergraduate students at the University of Kwa Zulu-Natal, fourteen out of the fifteen participants stated that they were experiencing some academic-related difficulties as a result of their parenting roles. Participants indicated that they had difficulties in finding enough time to navigate between studying and parenting. For instance, Celiwe (23) said

*“I am forced to go home every weekend and when I am at home, I don’t find time to do my schoolwork because I have to look after my child and do washing for him”.*

Nqobile (21) on the other hand said

*“I always worry about my child even when I should be doing my schoolwork. My mother always calls me when my child is not feeling well so I will go and take her to the clinic. Once I receive a call from home, I can’t concentrate at all and sometimes I end up not attending lectures”.*

Taukeni (2014) also found that his participants who were students at the University of Namibia, were more likely to skip lectures, fail to write the first opportunity examination or to fail a module than those without children. Most of the difficulties experienced by young parents when trying to balance their dual roles arise from the traditional stereotype that a student is someone who is single, childless, and focused solely on their studies. This representation of the ideal student may not include the population of students who are balancing the roles of being a student and a parent simultaneously as shown in this study and that of Kubeka (2006).

Nokwazi (22) said:

*“I fell pregnant with my first child when I was doing matric and I had to stay home until my child was six months while my boyfriend continued with his studies”.*

The findings of this study showed a similar pattern to a study that was conducted by Taukeni (2014), as participants reported that their grades dropped when they first found out that they were pregnant or that their partners were pregnant. However, participants mentioned that becoming parents increased their determination and focus

because they wanted to be good parents to their children. They believed that education would help them find better jobs so they could provide for their children financially, as a result they went back to university after giving birth to continue with their studies.

Young parenting is one reason why young mothers drop out of school or don't further their studies. Although the prevalence of childbearing among university students is declining throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, in South Africa national data, show that one in five 18-year-old women has given birth, and more than 40 per cent have become mothers by the age of 20 (Grant and Hallman, 2009). It was evident in the study that young mothers' education was disrupted due to the pregnancy and those that were able to further their studying after birth, they did so because of the support they got from their families. According to Grant and Hallman (2009), adolescent childbearing becomes a problem to the extent that it interferes with educational attainment, particularly for young mothers. Most 20-22-year-old females attributed their school disruption to pregnancy (Grant & Hallman, 2009).

Siyabonga (21) said

*“My girlfriend had to drop out of school after giving birth so she will look after our child”.*

According to Kaufman *et al.* (2001) young mothers who have given birth, often find it hard to continue with their studies because of the difficulty in managing time to accommodate both academic work and the responsibilities that come with being a mother. This is usually the case for women as they are expected to spend more time with their children.

For men the need for paying for the damages and child maintenance may lead them in being unable to maintain their dual roles. Paying maintenance for a child is one

of the requirements that all unmarried fathers have to fulfil whether or not they have automatic parental responsibilities and rights (Children's Act 38 of 2005, section 21). According to the Maintenance Act 31 of 2008, child maintenance is the amount of money paid by the unmarried father (or any person responsible for the child) in contribution to the child's upbringing. It was difficult for the male participants in the study to pay child maintenance because they were unemployed and studying.

#### **4.4. Perceptions of self as a 'good or bad' parent**

Although there are negative experiences of young parenthood, in the study, participants spoke positively about their experiences. Some participants saw parenthood as a new sense to life, which carries a new sense of purpose and a sense that offers a future (Smith, 2000). Others said that their children brought meaning to their lives and encouraged them to do well for the sake of their children. Noria, Weed and Keogh, 2007 state that being parents at a young age can be perceived as a way of uplifting their status and may symbolise a positive new start for the parents.

Sifiso (27) said: *"being a parent changes everything, my priorities have shifted ever since I became a parent. My children are the reason I am here. I was working well but I did not have a qualification. But then I realised that I have to study and have a qualification so that I will be a good example to my children"*.

Nokwazi (22) said: *"Even though I had my first child when I was in High School, I had to make sure that I continue with my studies so that my child will see that in life you should not give up, that you should push hard"*.

Parenthood could offer young parents a chance to change their lives for the better (Cater & Coleman, 2006). It was evident in the study that young parenthood led to personal growth rather than regret.

Nomonde (22) said: *“To me, motherhood means a lot of things, but what I love the most about it is that it has brought meaning to my life, I love my child and I leave for him now. Everything I do, I do it for him”*.

In describing the characteristics of a ‘good’ parent, participants believed that a good parent is the one who is responsible for the care, upbringing, and financial support of the child. Their description of a good parent derived from the society’s expectations of what and how parenthood and parenting should be. Although these responsibilities are of a good parent, providing the child's actual care and upbringing is always assumed as a role of the mother. While on the other hand, a father’s role is assumed to be that of mainly providing financial support. However, this is how they perceived themselves as parents. Celiwe (23) said

*“I believe that I am a good parent to my child even though I am not always with her, but I make sure that I go home every weekend, and I call home every day just to check if she is okay”*.

For some male participants, being a good parent meant providing financial support, while for some female participants, it meant spending time with the child. Since they could not provide material needs and were not living with their children, they felt like failures. However, this reflects how they perceived themselves as parents. Zandile (25) said

*“I do not see myself as a good mother because I do not spend enough time with my child. You know, I only get to see him during mid-year break (winter vacation) and year-end break”.*

There were various issues that portrayed young university parents as either good or bad parents. Issues such as being unemployed while having to be a parent at a young age made young parents see themselves and be seen by others in society as not fit enough parents. Some participants saw themselves as good enough parents for reasons such as being able to call at a home where their child is and check on the child's wellbeing. And also, being able to go home and spend time with their children during weekends, holidays and vacation breaks from university made young parents proud of themselves, and they saw these acts as being good parents.

Most participants reported that they had a good relationship with their children. These are participants that, during the holidays they, would spend time playing with their children at local parks, singing to their kids and teaching them skills like how to ride a bicycle or to build things such as paper planes and soccer balls from household material. While some participants were able to maintain a good relationship with their children, others found it challenging to have a good relationship with their children because their children knew them as their sisters and grandmothers were the known parents to the children. Some of these mothers found it difficult to bond with their children and therefore, could not do much with their children because the child preferred to be more with the grandmother than the actual parent to them.

Nokwazi (22) said:

*“my first-born stays with her father’s family and I don’t see her often. We don’t have a relationship, sometimes she doesn’t want to see me. She is 2 years old now and sometimes I only see her twice a year.*

In the study, none of the participants were employed, which negatively impacted the male participants. The lack of job opportunities affected the active involvement of the young fathers with their children (Makusha, 2013; Swart *et al.*, 2013). This revealed the socially constructed perceptions of masculinity since it defined a good father as the one who is able to provide financially for the child (Makusha, 2013). Being unemployed also affected the father-child relationship because young fathers were unable to meet the financial expectations. However, they used the love they had for their children to make themselves feel as good fathers. For example, Nhlakanipho (25) said

*“even though I am not working, I love my child and wish to do right for my child one day”.*

According to Morrell and Richter (2006), society’s definition of a good father emphasizes taking responsibility for paternity, supporting the child and being a good role model. However, Nhlakanipho’s definition of a good father did not only focus on the provider role but also on emotional support. Nhlakanipho’s definition of fatherhood is similar to Morrell and Richter (2006), who stated that fatherhood denotes both a physical and an emotional presence in a child’s life.

#### **4.4.1. Different views on *inhlawulo***

In various Southern African societies, particularly the Zulu culture, “when a man impregnates a girl it implies social and financial commitment to the child” (Varga, 2003:166). Paying for the damages symbolises that the child’s father acknowledges the pregnancy, whether planned or not (Hunter, 2006; Nduna, 2014). This means that the

child's father should support the child financially and provide necessities such as food and clothes. Even though fathers are not hands-on in nurturing their children, once damages are paid or financial support is provided, they are regarded as good parents or supportive fathers.

Nhlakanipho, like many other male participants, was unable to see his child as a result of the inability to pay for the damages (*inhlawulo*). The findings of the study indicated that participants believed that being able to support your child automatically translates into being a good father. It was evident amongst male participants that providing for the child financially and paying for the damages was an indication of being a good parent.

Section 21 of the Act Children's Act (2005) clearly indicates the responsibilities and rights of unmarried fathers. They may automatically acquire full parental responsibilities and rights and be identified as fathers to their children only if:

- i) they were living with the mother in a permanent life partnership at the time of the child's birth,
- ii) they have paid for the damages in terms of customary law, or
- iii) they have attempted to contribute towards expenses in connection with the maintenance and upbringing of the child.

In addition, an unmarried father who has consented to be identified as the father and who has paid maintenance and cultural damages can automatically acquire parental responsibilities and rights.

According to this Act, unmarried fathers may acquire parental responsibilities and rights in respect of a child (Section 18) only if certain sections of the Act are met. In section 18, the responsibilities and rights that unmarried fathers could have include

caring for the child, maintaining contact with the child, guardianship and contributing to the maintenance of the child. Only one male was married in the study and lived with his children. Others did not have automatic rights and had to meet certain criteria to have automatic responsibilities and rights.

When asked what *inhlawulo* means to them and why it is important to them, female participants reported that *inhlawulo* is a means through which they could regain their dignity in the face of their premarital pregnancies. It also cleanses *umuzi* (household) and shows remorse on the part of the male who impregnated the girl. According to Lubbe (2020) when *inhlawulo* was paid, women were likely to experience positive emotions, higher self-esteem, and a sense of unity between their family and their partner's family. It was evident in the study that when *inhlawulo* was not paid, women were more likely to experience feelings of shame, stigmatisation, and reduced self-worth. For example, Celiwe (23) said

*“As a woman, I feel like I am not good enough because other people have been paid, and even in my community, they always refer to me as that one who they (partner's family) didn't pay inhlawulo”.*

The findings of this study are consistent with findings by authors such as Mturi and Moerane (2001) and Phoofolo (2007), who identified how young, unmarried women who engage in sexual practices before marriage could threaten their family's reputation and honour and how there was a sense of devaluation that came with these transgressions.

Sipho (26) said

*“I believe that inhlawulo is important and should be paid as an apology to the woman's family. And also, to show that you acknowledge the pregnancy”.*

Male participants on the other hand reported that *inhlawulo* is a means of uniting, connecting, or bringing the two families together, it meant ancestral connection and a way of apologising to the female's family. When a male has not paid *inhlawulo*, some women's families may refuse to let the biological father have contact with the child or to let the child use the father's surname. It is believed to be problematic when an African child has unresolved paternity, as there is no opportunity for the child to connect with kin or ancestors on the father's side of the family (Denis and Ntsimane, 2006; Hunter, 2006; Nduna and Jewkes, 2012; Ramphele and Richter, 2006).

One of the participants was informed by his child's family that he would be denied contact with his child and that his child to use his surname would not be allowed until he paid damages (*Inhlawulo*). Phumlani (25) said

*"I was told by the mother of my child's family that I will not have contact with my child until I pay inhlawulo (damages). It's difficult you know my child is not even using my surname because I didn't pay inhlawulo".*

Although the participants' grandparents and other family members will deny the father's child contact, none of the female participants reported denying the father of their children contact with the child due to not paying *inhlawulo*. For example, Nomonde (22) said

*"Even though I believe that the father of the child has to pay damages, I still allow the father of my child to be in our child's life".*

#### **4.4.2. Transition to becoming a parent**

Seven out of fifteen participants reported being in a romantic relationship with their partners, however, parenthood came as a surprise. Participants stated that they reacted with shock, fear, and denial to the news. This reaction was common in other studies,

for instance, Madiba and Nsiki (2017) and Ntini and Sewpaul (2017) found that fear is the most common reaction to the news of becoming a parent. Young parents usually fear their parents' reaction to the news of the pregnancy and their inability to provide for their children because they are young, at school and unemployed (Madiba and Nsiki, 2017).

Siyabonga (21) said

*“When my girlfriend told me that she was pregnant, I was so shocked I felt my heart beating fast in my chest. I was shocked because I know how strict my guardians are since I live with my uncle. He has always warned me about getting a girl pregnant and he told me that raising a child is a huge responsibility. However, the thought of becoming a father made me to think about my life differently and taught me to be a responsible person.*

Siyabonga could not change his situation, so the child ended up living with the mother's family while Siyabonga continued his studies. The mother of Siyabonga's child had to stay home and look after the child while he continued with his studies. As a result, dropping out of university and putting her goal of having a career on hold and instead, became a full-time mother. This shows that boys have a better chance of continuing with their education than girls. In most African societies, having a child marks the end of education for girls (Kaufman *et al.*, 2001). Women are considered primarily responsible for taking care of children. It was evident in the study that those mothers who managed to continue with their education after giving birth have their family members, partners and the family of their partners supporting them in managing their dual roles.

Nobuhle (24) said

*“At first, I did not believe, I thought maybe something was wrong. I knew that having unprotected sex may lead to pregnancy, but I was not ready. My mother took me to the doctor to confirm that I am pregnant”.*

Celiwe (23) said: *“I was so shocked; I couldn’t believe it. When I told my partner that I was pregnant, he told me to abort it because he was not ready. Yoh, he also said that it was not his child, I was so stressed”.*

Dumisani (24) said: *“when she told me to use a condom, I said that there was no need since it was her first time. So, when she told me she was pregnant, I first wanted to deny it because I thought how can she be pregnant as it was her first time? But then I realised that it was a myth, and I acknowledged the pregnancy, but I was scared”.*

The findings of the study reveal that at first it was not easy for the participants to accept that they were pregnant or that their partners were pregnant. In the study, young fathers were unable to conform to the dominant expectation of fathers as providers, but they were happy about the new changes that fatherhood brought into some of their lives. Society’s expectations of what it means to be a father stems from the notion of masculinity, and young fathers’ involvement with their children was shaped by those expectations.

#### **4.4.3. Involvement with the child**

Young men in general, grow up in a patriarchal society which emphasises and socialises them on the importance of the provider role (Chideya & Williams, 2013). When these young men become fathers, they grow up with the mentality of patriarchy and being burdened with the notion of being providers of their own families. Young mothers on the other hand, are faced with the challenge of not being able to spend time with their

children because they are students, and they are viewed as having to play a more nurturing role in a family setting. According to Kheswa and Pitso (2014) in most African societies motherhood amongst young female students have been found to be an obstacle to educational success.

Celiwe (23) said:

*“Although I don’t live with my child full time as I stay in res, but I am involved in his life because I go home every weekend to take care of him. I know it’s not enough but at least I am able to see him and bond with him”.*

When asked about their involvement with their children, most of the participants reported that they were not primary caregivers of their children.

Nomonde (22) said:

*“My mother is the one taking care of my child as I am studying, I only see my child on weekends. I have a good relationship with my child”.*

Sifiso (27) on the other hand said:

*“my children stay with me and my wife and we have a good relationship. I am involved in my children’s day-to-day lives and I support them, I actually do everything for them”.*

Most young fathers said that they were denied access to their children because they were not able to meet the expectations of their partner’s families. There is a stereotype that men are not interested in children and that fathers are naturally ill-situated to parenting (Morrell & Richter, 2006). However, this is not always true. Part of the study was to understand young fathers’ perspectives of fatherhood, specifically, what it means to be a father and a full-time university student. The study found that young fathers

associated fatherhood with masculinity, which defines a man as the main provider and the figure of authority in the family (Chili and Maharaj, 2015). Even though there were reasons that prevented young fathers from being actively involved in the lives of their children, such as unemployment and paying for the damages, but there were not absent fathers. Nhlakanipho, who is a young father, gave a more encompassing definition of what it means to be a father to him.

Nhlakanipho (25) said:

*“although I am not working, but I care for my child and I make sure that I make time for my child no matter what. If I get money, I buy my child things such as toys, I feel like I have to as a man, you know”.*

#### **4.5. Coping mechanisms used by students who are parents**

##### **4.5.1. Social and family support for young parents**

When they were asked about how do they manage their dual roles despite all the challenges and negative reactions they received from friends, siblings and even community members, participants reported that they had support from parents and their partners. It was evident in the study that the support provided by parents, and partners helped participants to manage their dual roles.

Busisiwe (22) who was a mother of two children, said:

*“Both my children are living with my mother and she help me in supporting them. She allowed me to continue with my studies, you know. She started supporting me while I was pregnant with second baby and she is the reason why I kept the pregnancy, she used to say that “the child is a gift from God”. I know It’s wrong to have a child out of wedlock, but I am happy that I am a mother and I have support and I am able to focus on my studies”.*

In Wilson-Mitchell, Bennett and Stennett (2014) study, participants indicated that they were motivated to keep the pregnancy, because no one knew what the children might become in the future.

Nomonde (22) said

*“Without the support from my family, I would not be able to continue with my studies, they support me with everything, and I am grateful”.*

The role of the family can never be overemphasized. The White Paper on families (1997, p.3) defines a family as “a societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care or the ties of marriage (civil, customary or religious), civil union or cohabitation, and go beyond a particular physical residence”. Participants were able to cope with their dual roles because of the support they got from their families.

Sipho (26) said

*“As much as my parents were disappointed about the whole situation, but they are supporting me. My mother helped me to pay for the damages so I will have contact with my child. Because of the support I get from home, I am able to focus on my studies”.*

It was evident in the study that participants received different kinds of support from their families, friends, partners and community such as economic, practical, and emotional on an ongoing basis. Both male and female participants reported that the support they got from families, friends and partners helped them to be able to focus on their schoolwork. They also joined group studies and support groups, amongst other things, to make sure that they did better in their studies and excelled academically. According to Taukeni (2014), being a part of a support group reduces the student’s feeling of isolation and enhances focus on one’s studies.

#### 4.5.2. Resilience

A large number of participants indicated that parenthood brought a lot of challenges, however, they have decided to focus more energy on the positives than the negatives associated with being a university parent.

Nqobile (21) said:

*“Although my mother was very disappointed when I fell pregnant, but she told me that a baby is a blessing from God and that in life I shouldn’t focus on the negatives. Her words keep me strong each and every day. Not to say that everything is going well now but there are positive things to focus on such as my results (smiles) and now everything I do, I do it for my child. She is the reason I wake up every day and do better in life. Even though the pregnancy was not planned but she is a blessing to me. Fine I wasn’t ready, but it is not the end, so I am trying to be positive at all times”.*

Developing a positive attitude during any stressful situation is very relieving, as suggested by Aparicio *et al.* (2015) in Thabethe (2017). It was evident in the study that, to most participants, being a parent has taught them a lot of responsibility. Some participants viewed parenthood as one of the good things that have ever happened to them.

Zinhle (22) said:

*“I tell myself every day that I will not let being a young parent control me or stop me from reaching my goals. That is why I chose to continue with my studies, and I am focusing on finishing my degree. I know most people think that once you have a child, its done or over about one’s future”.*

Being a parent at a young age can be perceived as a way of uplifting their social status and may symbolise positive new start for the parents and show their resilience (Noria, Weed & Keogh, 2007). Resilience is seen during difficulties and signifies the capacity of persons to bounce back from hardship (Luther & Cicchetti, 2000). In the study, young parents showed resilience through their ability to cope with the demands of parenting and studying. For example, Celiwe (23) said

*“I am glad that my mother is looking after my child while I continue with my studies. Being a parent is one thing that has encouraged me to do well in life for the sake of my child”.*

#### **4.5.3. Acceptance as a coping strategy**

A significant difficulty for young parents who are students is lack of time to spend with their children and study. This has resulted in some participants having to adopt acceptance coping (Nakamura & Orth, 2005) as a coping strategy. This means that one removes him or herself psychologically from the situation and has to accept the situation as it is. Young parents reported that they played fewer roles in parenting and focused on their studies.

Sipho (26) said:

*“my sister don’t get me wrong neh, I love my daughter very much but as I am here at res, I forget that I have a child so I can focus on my studies. I have accepted the situation that when I am at school, I should be a student and focus on my studies just like other students. It is working for me; I can see that my marks are improving since I have adopted this strategy”.*

Young parents reported that they left their children with their parents and only go home on weekends or during school holidays to see them, while others call home often to

check up on their children. These actions of calling home and visiting during the holidays, enabled participants to focus on their studies and to be less worried about their children because they knew they were safe with their parents.

Nokwazi (22) said:

*“in order for me to cope well at school, I chose to have friends that don’t have children. It is easy that way because I don’t get to talk about my children, and I can focus on my studies. I have accepted that when I am here, I have to pretend they don’t exist and focus on being a student because I know they are being taken care of”.*

Participants emphasized that by accepting and moving on as if nothing has ever happened, does not mean that they are giving up on their children or they do not love them. Participants still call and also go home to check on their children.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

In summary, this study has confirmed that young parents are experiencing difficulties when trying to balance their dual roles of being parents and university students. In this chapter I have presented and also discussed my findings in relation to the existing literature, conceptualising my findings from the gender role theory perspective. I identified three themes and eight subthemes through the thematic analysis of the data. The following chapter discusses recommendations and conclusions.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The overall aim of this study was to explore lived experiences of young parents who are university students. I used a qualitative research approach to establish the meaning of parenthood to young parents and their experiences in trying to balance their dual roles. Although a qualitative research approach has some limitations, its advantage is that it offers space for in-depth information and the nuanced meanings of students' parenting experiences. The study used gender role theory to explore the experiences of young parents. Gender role theory proposes that society holds stereotyped expectations of the appropriate behaviour that men and women should exhibit. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect data from participants and data were analysed using thematic content analysis. All the participants were full-time students at the University of Kwa Zulu-Natal (Howard College campus), enrolled in different courses from the College of Humanities.

In this chapter, the objectives of the study are re-stated to show coherence and connection with the main findings. The findings and conclusions that originated from the analysis of the interviews are presented. The chapter then concludes by presenting the recommendations.

### **5.2. Objectives of the study**

The main objectives of the study were:

- To explore how young mothers and fathers negotiate their simultaneous roles as parents and students.
- To identify the coping mechanisms of these students.

- To explore the meaning of motherhood or fatherhood for the students against the dominant constructions of what it is to be a good parent.

### **5.3. Main findings and conclusions**

The main findings and conclusions are discussed in relation to each objective and framed by gender role theory. There were many similarities among young parents' experiences in this study, such as financial difficulties, the inability to be primary caregivers and the lack of balancing their dual roles.

#### **5.3.1. Experiences of young parents**

The purpose was to understand how young parents make sense of parenthood based on their own life experiences, as being a parent while studying is an added responsibility. It was evident in the study that young parents embraced parenthood, although there were some challenges. All the participants had financial difficulties since they were unemployed, however, male participants also mentioned cultural factors such as paying for the damages that prevented them from having a relationship with their children. Lack of employment has resulted in many young fathers not being able to fulfil their fatherhood requirements. They said that being unemployed has made them to feel as failures because they are unable to provide for their children financially.

The participant found it hard to raise their children and focus on their schoolwork. The challenge was finding time between studying and childcare. Participants reported that being a student and a parent is highly demanding and stressful since they have to deal with academic tasks and also perform parenting duties. It was evident in the study that young parents were not only trying to balance their dual roles, but they were doing so under particular societal pressures of the idealised mother or father and the idealised student. However, despite all the challenges, young parents

were willing to continue with their studies because they wanted to do good for their children.

### **5.3.2. Perceptions of self as a parent**

Being a young parent may be a challenging experience that may have adverse consequences on student parents in particular. Young mothers in the study defined a good or ideal mother as someone who is always there for the child, who is responsible for the child's care and upbringing. As a result, they did not see themselves as good mothers because they were studying and not spending much time with their children as per the society's expectation. Participants had to leave their children in the care of their parents to pursue their studies. Grandparents and family members became primary caregivers and providers for their children. However, they were doing everything they could to make sure that they had a good relationship with their children, such as calling home every day to check on their children and going home on weekends to take care of their children.

Male participants on the other hand, associated a good father with someone who is able to provide financially for the child. It was evident that their definition of a good father was mainly influenced by society's expectation of what a good father should be. They also did not see themselves as good fathers because they could not provide financial support to their children as they were unemployed. Young fathers in the study failed to live up to the provider's expectation, but they had much love for their children and were willing to provide physical and emotional support. I think that young parents are more than capable of being good parents to their children should they be given a chance without society's expectations. Despite all the challenges, young parents reported that they loved their children and believed that their children brought meaning

to their lives. They were motivated by their children to turn their lives around and be good parents.

Although young parents reported that being parents brought a new sense of purpose to their lives, however it may have negative consequences. Young mothers may feel overwhelmed and suffer from health issues such as depression, anxiety, or stress. They may be stigmatized for having children out of wedlock, and it could be worse if their partners denied the pregnancy and could not pay *inhlawulo*. As a result, they may have sole childcare responsibility and depend on the child support grant to support their children. While young fathers may never have contact with their children and be labelled as absent fathers should they not be able to pay for the damages. They may also have to use their scholarship or bursary money to support their children, and sometimes they may have to leave school and look for a job for them to be able to support their children or to pay for the damages.

### **5.3.3. Social and family support for young parents**

Although many women in this study reported that pregnancy was a joyful and happy period in their lives, due to the demands and changes associated with this reproductive period, they faced a lot of stress and anxiety. In order to cope well with the pregnancy, the child and their studies, young mothers reported that they followed the advice of their healthcare workers by doing what is called prenatal care. They said that it helped to calm their fears because healthcare workers told them what to expect. Others mentioned that they could cope because of the support they received from parents, siblings and partners who encouraged them to keep the pregnancy, the child and continue with their studies after giving birth. Others managed to cope by focusing on the future. In the study, young mothers reported that focusing on the future was a strong

motivation in keeping the pregnancy and the child amidst of everything, even when their partners have denied the pregnancy.

It was evident in the study that pregnancy may lead to studying disturbances and that childcare can be a burden for young mothers. While others were coping through the support they received, for other young mother's pregnancies had some implications. Instead of receiving support from families, friends, or partners, they received rejection, abandonment, and loss of support that they had before falling pregnant. Young mothers in the study said that their parents were disappointed by them falling pregnant because they had a lot of hope that they would complete their studies in record time. They also felt pressure from the society of how a good mother should be. I believe that early motherhood may have negative consequences to young mothers, including school dropouts, poor parenting and negative relationship with families, friends, and partners. Most of the participants in the study reported that they did not intend to have children. Consequently, they felt shocked, embarrassed, disappointed, and ashamed that they were going to be parents while they were still studying.

#### **5.4. Policy implications**

A main concern was balancing the schoolwork and parenting among young parents. Their experiences were widely related to socio-economic issues such as financial challenges. All the participant's children were receiving the child support grant (CSG) and this social security measure was a lifeline for them. According to Khosa and Kaseke (2017) the child support grant (CSG) represents a significant policy response to child poverty in South Africa. In addition, the CSG mainly was used to buy food and clothes for the children by the participants. The Department of Social Development (2004) conducted a study on the social and economic impact of South Africa's social security system provides evidence that social grants yield positive effects that include, amongst

other things, the reduction of poverty and hunger, promoting job searches and increasing school attendance.

In terms of the Children's Act all mothers, whether married or not have automatic responsibilities and rights (Section 19). However, only married fathers that have automatic responsibilities and rights, unmarried fathers have to meet certain criteria to have automatic responsibilities and rights (Section 21). Section 21 of the Children's Act needs to be revised as it may limit young father's involvement or contact with their children. The Children's Act grants fathers fewer parental rights than mothers and most children have been robbed of an opportunity to have a father because of these criteria that unmarried fathers have to meet. Because of this Section, many young fathers in the study had difficulties maintaining the father-child relationship or having contact with their children because they did not meet the criteria. Also, the discourse on fatherhood in South Africa needs to change from that of absence, especially when it based on material reasons.

Caregiving should be both a man's and woman's responsibility, not when the father affords to and when he wants to but because he realises that he is equally responsible for childcare. This can only be possible if the definition of fatherhood is not only associated with the provider role. It should emphasise the importance of physical and emotional support. This means that we as the society should value and encourage the father-child relationship more than cultural expectations that requires fathers to provide financial support to their children. Unmarried fathers who have shown love, commitment, and emotional support, who visit their children and maintain communication but are unemployed should be allowed to contact their children regardless of whether they meet the criteria.

## **5.5. Conclusions**

The study provided insight into the lived experiences of young parents who are university students. The study's findings indicated that young parents faced many challenges in their efforts to balance their roles of full-time university students and being parents. Major issues raised in the study mainly point to the lack of involvement in the nurturing of their children. Young parents reported that they were not primary caregivers of their children because of attending university and lack of money. There were also cultural expectations that prohibited young parent's involvement with their children such as paying the damages (*inhlawulo*). However, despite all the challenges, young parents had support from their family members, friends and partners that helped them focus on their studies.

Results of this study can be used when creating awareness on common challenges experienced by young parents who are university students and thereby find ways to address their specific experiences.

## **5.6. Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, recommendations were made that there should be part-time, or evening classes so young parents will be able to catch up with the academic work. This may have a positive impact on young mothers in particular because they will not have to drop out of school because of the burden of childcare. Also, they will feel as accommodated and supported, which may lead to them being able to focus on their academic work. However, the evening classes will have to be free so they will be able to afford them.

Another recommendation was that we should move beyond the basics of parenting and let fathers be involved in the upbringing and nurturing of their children.

Young mothers need to be encouraged not to perpetrate the hegemonic discourses around fatherhood and fathering that emphasises the provider role. Young parents should be part of awareness campaigns to educate other students about the experiences of being a young university parent. Those awareness campaigns should also involve men or young fathers, in that way they will be exposed to more information about ways of preventing unwanted pregnancies and other men will be able to seek help from them.

The participants that took part in the study were all full-time undergraduate students and their experiences of parenting were influenced mostly by socio-economic factors such as unemployment and poverty. However, they had social and family support that helped them to manage their dual roles. Therefore, a recommendation for future research would thus be to explore the experiences of young parents who are working students. Such comparison would allow researchers to establish whether or not unemployment was contributing to the experiences of young parents.

This study was only conducted with 15 students; therefore, the findings cannot be generalised, I recommend a study with a larger group of young parents. Also, a similar study with young parents from other universities in South Africa would be beneficial. In this way, it will be possible to determine whether young parents who are students from other universities share similar experiences.

#### **5.6.1. Implications for social workers**

The implications for social workers are noteworthy. Social workers play a significant role in society by conscientizing communities, developing and implementing programmes for the improvement of society. Young parents, particularly young mothers need to deal with stigma, disappointment, and anger while they raise their

children. As a result, they need to have coping strategies and support from families, friends, partners, and the community.

Social workers play a pivotal role in collaborating services and resources, along with playing a vital role in addressing the needs of the students in an educational setting. In raising consciousness about early pregnancy prevention approaches, we have to engage both young mothers and fathers in those discussions so they can tell their peers about their own lived experiences. Their positive experiences could encourage and instil hope to other young parents who are facing similar challenges. Young parents can also become mentors to other young women and young men who do not have children by sharing their undesirable experiences of early parenting and negative consequences it has on their livelihoods. However, those young parents may have to be guided on what to share as this may have some disadvantages. For example, when they share their positive experiences, others may misunderstand them and want to be parents, thinking it's a good thing.

## **5.7. Conclusion**

In chapter one, I provided a background and rationale of the study in detail and also outlined the conceptual framework. I then discussed the study's aim, objective and research questions and presented an outline of the dissertation. In chapter two, I presented a review of the literature on the experiences of young parents and coping mechanisms that helped them to balance their dual roles. In relation to a review of the literature in chapter two, the findings indicated the complexity in understanding early parenthood among young parents who are university students. Chapter three focused on the research methodology and how the study was undertaken, including a discussion on ethical considerations. In chapter four, I presented the themes that emerged from the data. The findings in chapter four provided details regarding young parents'

experiences. Lastly, in this chapter I summarised the study, drawing from the major findings of the study and made recommendations.

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## **Appendix 1: Poster for recruiting participants**

### **CALLING ALL YOUNG PARENTS**

Would you be interested to participate in a research study which is about experiences of parenting while studying?

Are you a full-time undergraduate student at the university of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard College?

Are you between the ages of 18 to 35 years and have a child over the age of 1 month?

If yes to the above and would like more information, feel free to send an email to: [youngparentsproject@gmail.com](mailto:youngparentsproject@gmail.com) and will contact you.

# **Thanks**

## Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form

**Title of Research:** University Students' Lived Experiences of Parenting while Studying at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

**Name of Researcher:** Sinenhlanhla Mbuyazi ([Snengibah@gmail.com](mailto:Snengibah@gmail.com))

Master of Social Work (MSW) student

**Supervisor:** Dr B Seepamore ([Seepamoreb@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Seepamoreb@ukzn.ac.za))

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The purpose of this research project is to understand the experiences of university students towards parenting while studying. Your participation will enable the collection of data which will form part of a study being undertaken at University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (Howard College).

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. The interview will not take more than an hour. There are no benefits from participating in this study, however you are expected to sign this form if you agree to participate. This study is only concerned with the experiences of being a parent while studying. There might be some minimal psychological risks from participating in this study such as emotional distress that might be triggered by questions being asked. However, if you do feel that any of the questions are inappropriate then you can stop at any time – I will completely respect your decision.

All the information you provide will be held in confidence. I have taken careful steps to make sure that you cannot be directly identified.

**Participant to complete this section: Please tick each box.**

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. ☐
3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Signature of participant ..... Date.....

### **Appendix 3: Information sheet**

My name is Sinenhlanhla Mbuyazi and I am a master's student in Social Work at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (Howard College). As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and the title of my research is: University students' lived experiences of parenting while studying at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The aim of this research project is to explore lived experiences of students towards parenting while studying.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview, which will take about an hour. With your permission, I would also like to audio-record the interview. I will ask you questions about your experiences of parenting while studying.

You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this research, and there are no penalties for not participating. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time or not answer any questions if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous, as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information, and the information you provide will be secured and will not be disclosed to anyone else.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a study participant, or if you are concerned about any aspects of the study or the researcher then you are welcome to contact Ms. Phumelele Ximba of the Humanities Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC), on 031 260 3587 or via email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

If you have any questions about this study, you can also talk to the researcher or contact the supervisor of this study: Dr B Seepamore, on 031 260 7640 or via email: [seepamoreb@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:seepamoreb@ukzn.ac.za)

## Appendix 4: Consent Form (Audio-Recording)

**Title of research:** University students' lived experiences of parenting while Studying at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

**Name of researcher:** Miss Sinenhlanhla Mbuyazi ([snengibah@gmail.com](mailto:snengibah@gmail.com))

Master of Social Work (MSW) student

**Supervisor:** Dr B Seepamore ([seepamoreb@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:seepamoreb@ukzn.ac.za))

In order to be able to understand clearly what has been said in this interview, and to remember it, I would like to record this interview on this small digital recorder. I will then listen to the recording and write it down word for word.

After this transcription has been made, I will then delete the recording on the digital recorder. I assure you that your name will not be linked to the recording or the written information from the recording.

Should you wish to withdraw your consent after the interview, I will immediately delete the recording from the recorder.

Do you consent to the recording of this interview?

☐☐

If **yes**, then please sign here ..... **Date:** .....

## **Appendix 5: Interview schedule**

**SCHOOL OF APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES**

**DISCIPLINE OF SOCIAL WORK**

**MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK**

---

**UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF PARENTING  
WHILE STUDYING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWA-ZULU NATAL STUDY  
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**1. Tell me a little about yourself**

- Your age?
- Your child's age?
- How often do you see your child?
- Your enrolment level of study (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>)?

**2. How did you respond when you found out you are pregnant/ your partner was pregnant?**

Probe – what did you feel? What was the first thing you did? Who did you tell?

**3. How do you feel about being a mother/father now?**

**4. How are you involved in the life of your child? How would you like to be involved?**

**5. What was your relationship with the mother/father of your child at the time the baby was conceived? By the time the baby was born? What is your current relationship with the mother/father of your child?**

**6. In what ways, had having a child affected your life? What is different in your life since you have had a child?**

**7. What makes someone a good mother/father?**

Probe – how does a good mother/father do? How does a good mother/father speak to her/his child? How does a good mother/father behave around her/his child?

**8. Who has helped you to manage the student-parent role? What help you wish you had received?**

Probe – at home, school or in the wider community?

## Appendix 6: Ethical Clearance Certificate



22 October 2019

Miss Snenhlanhla Nginaphi Mbuyazi (214555302)  
School Of Applied Human Sc  
Howard College

Dear Miss Mbuyazi,

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00000319/2019

**Project title:** University students' lived experiences of parenting while studying at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

### Full Approval – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 26 August 2019 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) 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.**

This approval is valid for one year from 22 October 2019.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

Yours sincerely,

PP Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

/dd

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)  
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

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INSPIRING GREATNESS

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