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**Exploring mothers as barriers to young fathers' involvement in their children's lives:  
The perspectives of young men and women**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the academic requirements for a degree of  
Masters in Population Studies

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September 2020

# COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

## DECLARATION – PLAGIARISM

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## **Abstract**

More than half of children in South Africa do not have regular contact with their biological fathers. Children and families without a father figure have been associated with negative life outcomes, including poverty, violent behaviour, and emotional disturbances. Emerging research on fatherhood suggests that many young fathers want to be involved in the lives of their children. They want to play positive roles and become good role models for their children. However, there are many factors that hinder father involvement, including interpersonal relations, especially the relationship between biological parents; the financial situation of the father and cultural practices such as *inhlawulo* and *ilobolo*. Therefore, the overall aim of this study is to explore how mothers may become a barrier to young fathers' involvement in their children's lives. To achieve this, the study draws on rich findings obtained from conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with seventeen young men (seven) and women (ten) who were students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The findings suggest that young fathers want to build a stable relationship with their children, change the stereotypes about them and build a new narrative of fatherhood. However, they cited financial constraints as inhibiting them from achieving their status of fathers. Young mothers, on the other hand, felt that a father who is supportive during pregnancy is likely to be a good father; whereas a father who is not supportive is likely to abandon his child. The entry of a new sexual partner created conflict and tension in the relationship and subsequently affected father involvement. Young mothers used the child as bait to force the father into staying in the relationship. Additionally, regularly passing negative remarks about the father created a long-lasting memory in the child's mind that is likely to adversely affect the father-child relationship. The study, therefore, concludes that poor interpersonal relations between biological parents disproportionately affect father involvement in their child's life, especially for young unemployed and student fathers. In this regard, mothers are encouraged to make decisions that are in the best interest of the child. Psycho-social initiatives and future research should focus on strategies that would support the involvement of young unemployed fathers.

## Acknowledgements

A special thanks to my guiding angels, my brother, who was stillborn, and my grandmother. Sibongakonke Khumalo, I thank you for your tireless protective shield over me, Qondeni Gertrude Gwala (Gogo), uyidlozi eliphilayo kumina, I thank you for your prayers, motivation and always believing in me.

My sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Pranitha Maharaj. Thank you for your support, patience, and constructive criticism. Thank you for recognising the potential in me.

My heartfelt appreciation also goes to the following people:

- My mother, Tholakele W Khumalo, uyibekile induku ebandla. Your love, support, and the countless sacrifices you have made for me, I will forever be grateful.
- Mam'ncane, Thandazile E Khumalo and Malume, Philani S Khumalo, your support and prayers have not gone unnoticed.
- To my sister Emuhle Khumalo and my son Lubanzi Khumalo, you guys have and always will be my motivation.
- To umama kaLubanzi Nonstikelelo P Manganyela, your love and support is deeply appreciated.
- Sandile G Nkwanyana and Simangele A Shezi your countless encouragements, advice, and constructive criticism kept me going through the most terrifying odds. I will forever be grateful.
- To the young men and women who participated in the study, thank you for giving me your time and allowing me to access your personal lives. I owe this document to you; I will forever be grateful.
- To friends, for your support, encouragement, and always believing in me. You have contributed both directly and indirectly to the successful completion of the document. Ngithi umdali wezinsuku anigcine, anandisele njalo.

## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSSREC	Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MTV	Music Television
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
SA	South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SARChi	South African Research Chairs Initiative
STATSSA	Statistics South Africa
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
USB	Universal Serial Bus

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# Chapter 1 : Introduction

## 1.1 Background

There has been a growing body of literature advocating for increased male involvement in the family, as fathers and for greater efforts to include them in a variety of family-based issues including maternal health, sexual and reproductive and child well-being (Bartlett and Gender, 2004; Eddy et al., 2013; Richter et al., 2010; Swartz et al., 2013; Van den Berg and Makusha, 2018). This has been followed by several research studies that focus on the role of men as fathers in the household. For example, having a father involved in the house is associated with positive achievements for the household and the children, including increased levels of household expenditure, better access to resources, and increased protection (Mavungu, 2013). On the contrary, the absence of a father figure in the house can have adverse outcomes for the household and the children. For example, households that lack a father figure are characterized by high levels of unemployment and poverty and can also have psychological implications such as lower emotional and behavioural wellbeing of the child. (Eddy et al., 2013; Langa, 2010; Mavungu, 2013; Van den Berg and Makusha, 2018)

The conceptualization of fatherhood may seem simple, but it has been shown to be problematic. A simple definition refers to the father as a male parent of a child and fatherhood as the social roles that men partake in raising the child (Richter and Morrell, 2006). As noted by other scholars, fatherhood refers to the physical and emotional presence of a father to the child (Mavungu, 2013; Mazembo et al., 2013). However, a growing body of literature, particularly in the African context, suggests that the status of fatherhood is not limited to the biological process, rather it extends to other men that play a role in taking care of the child (Langa, 2010; Makusha and Richter, 2016; Van den Berg and Makusha, 2018). For example, Langa (2010) notes that the use of terms such as *ubaba omuncane* (younger father) and *ubaba omkhulu* (older fathers), who in the Zulu culture are often the siblings (younger and older, respectively) of the biological father and they may also assume responsibility of taking care of the child. Van den Berg and Makusha (2018) in their study, suggest that there are many types of fathers in South Africa including biological, social,

economic, gay, straight, young, and older fathers. These different types of fathers have been influenced by several factors including cultural practices, relationship dissolution, re-parenting, long term migration, and high rates of paternal orphaning resulting from premature male mortality (Hosegood and Madhavan, 2012). While acknowledging the multifaceted nature of these terms, the focus of this study is on the biological father and his relationship with both the mother and child.

The structure of a South African family, like the case of many African countries, does not conform to the normative ideas of a nuclear family structure (Bhana and Nkani, 2014; Madhavan et al., 2016; Swartz et al., 2013). Only 39.9% of households were classified as nuclear while 32.7% of children live with both their parents (Statistics South Africa, 2019). In addition, South Africa has one of the highest numbers of absent fathers when compared to other African countries and has the lowest rates of parental maintenance in the world (Richter et al., 2010). Some of the major contributors to this are the rural-urban labour migration that persists in the post-colonial era, unemployment, poverty, and poor health conditions such as the AIDS pandemic that has resulted in men's premature mortality (Langa, 2010; Padi et al., 2014; Richter et al., 2010). This has also led to an increase in the number of female and child-headed households (Clowes et al., 2013). Therefore, this highlights issues like absent fathers and the prevention of parental involvement by a former partner as threatening the existence of coherent families (Swartz et al., 2013).

History is paramount to consider when one seeks to understand contemporary South Africa. For example, the discovery of gold and diamond, and the Group Areas Act of 1950 have and continue to shape the country's political and economic landscape as well as family dynamics (Langa, 2010; Padi et al., 2014; Richter et al., 2010). The discovery of these resources resulted in the then government introducing legislation that levied taxes on local people which required them to work and earn money (Howitz 2001 cited in Richter et al., 2010). The Act enforced racial differences in residential and business areas and assigned the most developed and urban areas to Whites only. These legislations also entrenched a system that forced men to leave rural areas to seek employment in the cities and maintained that no permanent movement from rural to the city was allowed. This system disrupted family structures and gave birth to female headed households (Clowes et al., 2013). Families were

separated for long periods of time; some would visit home once every 6 months while other would visit once in a year. Today, majority of black South African's still reside in the least developed area and white South African's lives in most the developed (Padi et al., 2014). Thus, majority of fathers in South Africa are said be absent because they left home in search of employment.

In society, a good and responsible father provides and protects his family or children. A father is expected to provide physical and financial resources and protects for his children and protects them from any psychological and social harm. However, in South Africa, unemployment is high, and poverty is rife. For example, unemployment rate is 27.5% and about 40% of South African live below the poverty line (Statistics South Africa, 2018). This suggests that fathers who belong to these groups ,unemployed and living poverty, are therefore unable to meet these social expectations and thus regarded as absent but living fathers (Department of Social Development, 2013).

Richter et al. (2010) noted that majority of children in South Africa do not have a positive father-child relationship. According to the Activities of Young People Survey of 2015, in South Africa only 35.4% of children lived with both biological parents, only 3.5% lived with their fathers, about 36.7% lived with mothers and the rest reported living without neither parent (Stats SA, 2015). Ramphele (2002) cited in Langa (2010) found that children who grew without a biological father were more likely to engage in gang-related activities, drug abuse, and violent behaviour. A study conducted in Cape Town found that participants who grew up with an absent biological father felt a sense of emptiness, lack, and incompleteness (Ratele et al., 2012). Furthermore, Langa (2010) found that many young fathers spoke of a dream of becoming a better father and different from their absent father. Clowes et al. (2013) suggests that was because of the ability of mothers, grandmothers, and extended family members in the absence of biological fathers, to provide support and a positive parenting role.

Parenting is a joint effort between the mother and the father. If the father-mother relationship is in good standing, fathers appear to be more involved with their children (Makusha and Richter, 2016). On the other hand, a poor father-mother relationship may reduce the father's

ability to be involved in the child's life (Chili and Maharaj, 2015; Swartz et al., 2013). Therefore, a good father-mother relationship is paramount to create and maintain a good father-child relationship. Additionally, mothers play a crucial role in facilitating or preventing fathering opportunities. The extent to which mothers promote or inhibit father's involvement may be influenced by the nature of relationship with the father, culture and family beliefs, employment status, and entry of a new partner following the dissolution of the union (Madhavan et al., 2014). In conflictual relationships, mothers usually control the father's access to the child and she may influence the child's interaction with the father if they do not have a good relationship. This does not only restrict the father from any involvement, but it also makes it complicated for the father to have any relationship with the child (Makusha and Richter, 2016).

Different understanding regarding parental roles and parental involvement are crucial to establish because they directly or indirectly influence the types and levels of father involvement. Father-child relationship appears to be influenced by how the mother perceives fatherhood and, in most cases, it is informed by her family beliefs and cultural background (Makusha and Richter, 2016); whether or not the father provides social and material resources for the child, he has fulfilled his cultural responsibilities (inhlawulo or ilobolo in the cases of the Zulu culture), and his relationship with the mother of the child. In situations of non-marital childbearing, for example, the mother and her family usually take full custody of the child. This means that the involvement of the father, his role and relationship with the child is both directly and indirectly dependent on the acceptance and willingness of the mother's family (Swartz et al., 2013). A study by Chili and Maharaj (2015) found that such behaviour presents limited opportunities for the non-residential father because the time spent with the child, feeding, and doing other caregiving roles are restricted by the mother and her family. Moreover, this makes it harder for young fathers to maintain a close relationship with their child if they have not fulfilled their cultural duties coupled with the lack of financial resources to provide for the child (Madhavan et al., 2014; Swartz et al., 2013).

## **1.2 Rational of the study**

Anecdotal data suggests that young fathers are irresponsible, deny paternity, and choose not to be involved in the lives of their children. This perception of young fathers foregrounds the ideology of men as breadwinners, providers, and protectors (Clowes et al., 2013). Hence, such perceptions arise because many young men are not able to fulfil the expected roles of fathers as protectors, providers, and breadwinners. Recent studies have confirmed that indeed this is a popular view in many societies (Bhana and Nkani, 2014; Langa, 2010; Padi et al., 2014; Ratele et al., 2012). However, they suggest that such discourses tend to overshadow how culture, religion, social stereotypes, and economic related issues facilitate barriers that prevent these young men from being responsible fathers. For example, in South Africa, as is the case of most low-income countries, the current political-economic climate is not conducive for these young men, unemployment rates are high at 27.5 %, economic prospects are low, and many people are living in dire conditions of poverty (Statistics South Africa, 2018). In this regard, the political economy becomes an indirect barrier to young father's involvement and an also stressor, as they aspire to fulfil expectations, as fathers who are breadwinners, providers, and protectors. Thus, denying them the possibility of acquiring the status of fatherhood.

In many instances biology and society have been shown to hold contrasting views as to how best to define a father. For instance, when a man contributes to the conception of a child, he becomes a father (Richter et al., 2010). On the other hand, a father in societal terms is a social role that men partake in raising a child (Clowes et al., 2013). This study is more interested in exploring the involvement of the biological father. This is because father absence among children under 15 years old is among the highest in Africa, one in two children live with their father, and most children in South Africa are not fortunate to grow up with their biological fathers (Eddy et al., 2013; Elam et al., 2016; Richter et al., 2010). For example, in 2016 only 3% of children lived with their biological father alone compared to 41% who lived with their mothers alone; 34% lived with both their biological parents and just above 22% lived with neither parent (Van den Berg and Makusha, 2018). Although this is due to different social, cultural, and economic circumstances, they also appear to threaten the ability of the family to function as a critical agent of socialization, nurturing, care, and protection (Swartz et al., 2013; Van den Berg and Makusha, 2018).

Father absence in South Africa is common and studies have shown that it has risen over the past two decades. A recent report on absent fathers indicated that one out of two fathers are absent in their children's lives (Eddy et al., 2013). The White paper on Families in South Africa attest to this by outlining that father absence is common and increasing in contemporary South Africa. Between 1996 and 2010 the proportion of absent but living fathers increased from 41.6% to 47.4%, while the proportion of a present father decreased from 49.2% in 1996 to 36.5% in 2010 (Department of Social Development, 2013). Furthermore, Morrell and Richter (2006 cited in Eddy et al., 2013) found that about 54% of men between the ages of 15 and 49 years are fathers. However, nearly half of them reported they did not have daily contact with their children. When this phenomenon is analysed by race the magnitude begins widening. The proportion of children below 15 years living with a father is 30% for African, 53% for Coloureds, 83% and 85% for Whites and Indians respectively (Eddy et al., 2013). Van Den Berg and Makusha (2018) reported only 36% of children under 17 years old living with their biological father.

Contrary to this, Swartz et al. (2013) in their study, noted a new trend of young man showing a strong desire to be more involved in the lives of their children, to play an active role, and to be positive role models. Morrell and Jewkes (2011 cited in Bhana and Nkani, 2014) observed a trend of young African fathers who were involved in the care of their children, who had access to their children, and were able to provide financial and emotional support. In addition, significant evidence has been documented suggesting positive effects of having an involved and a present father in a child's life which is reflected in academic performance, social, emotional, and cognitive functioning (Langa, 2010, Ratele et al., 2012, Clowes et al., 2013, Swartz et al., 2013). However, many of them reported an inability of these young men to fulfil these desires because they were faced with barriers which include, but are not limited to financial, cultural, and relationship problems. Therefore, exploring their perceptions, experiences and expectations of father involvement is at the centre of this study.

Like the concept of fatherhood, as demonstrated in the previous section, father involvement is socially constructed. There may be different conceptions of father involvement between societies and these they may change over time, depending on the context at hand (Mavungu, 2013). For example, the idea of an involved father as an available, accessible, and co-resident

father may not fit the South African context. South Africa is characterized by a long history of labour migration, household fluidity and non-marital childbearing (Hosegood and Madhavan, 2012). Some fathers are not physically and emotionally supportive because of these reasons but through their financial and material support, they are involved. Father's involvement might also be influenced by cultural background and family expectations (Makusha and Richter, 2016). Traditionally, fathers are expected to be providers and breadwinners. However, increasingly fathers are also expected to be involved in caregiving activities (Mavungu, 2013). Therefore, a strict definition of father involvement that may appear to undermine the role of social and cultural background, mothers' attitudes and perceptions, and the economic contexts may not well describe the situation of South Africans fathers. Thus, this study is interested in understanding how young mothers perceive this phenomenon.

Parenting is a collaborative activity. In this sense, the role of the father is as important as the role of a mother. This study acknowledges that young fathers unduly face challenges that inhibit them from being involved in the lives of their children (Swartz et al., 2013). However, it is particularly interested in exploring the influence of mothers as barrier to the involvement of young fathers 'in their children's lives. For instance, many young fathers are unemployed and still studying, as a result, they are not financially capable to play a fatherly role. Failure to provide financially, may limit physical, and emotional interaction with the child (Makusha and Richter, 2016). Furthermore, most young fathers or mothers may not be in a long-standing relationship with the co-parent of their child, thus a poor relationship with the mother of the child may limit the time spent and the role played by the father in a child's life (Swartz et al., 2013). Also, a young mother may be reluctant to facilitate a positive father-child relationship because her family has rejected him for failing to pay 'inhlawulo' (cultural damages), a cultural practice to acknowledge paternity of the child (Bhana and Nkani, 2014).

Young fathers are also challenged by family attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs with regards to the types and levels of father involvement (Makusha and Richter, 2014). A young father's relationship with the child may be influenced by his family's attitudes and beliefs about the role of a father in a child's life. Similarly, a father-child relationship may be influenced by the mother's perceptions about the role of the father. Both these perceptions may be informed by

their families and cultural background. Therefore, mothers have an important role to play in facilitating a positive father-child relationship. The study explores the perspectives and experiences of both (young) mothers and fathers aged between 18-24 years old, and how their perceptions and experiences influence the father and child relationship. Thus, exploring this issue is critical in a quest to understand contextual factors that influence a healthy father-child relationship and to add to the growing literature on young fathers, fatherhood, and responsible fathering.

While acknowledging the complexities involved in defining fatherhood, especially in the South African context. This study is more interested in exploring how a biological father navigates his relationship with his child and the mother of his child amid these structural challenges. Therefore, for the purposes of this study the focus is on the biological father. Recent literature has defined a young father on the basis of age, many of them choosing a more flexible definition of a male parent who is below the ages of 25 (Swartz et al., 2013; Chili and Maharaj, 2015; Mkhwanazi and Bhana, 2017). Enderstein and Boonzaier (2015) defined a young father as a male aged between 18 to 23 years old and should have fathered a child before age 21. In this study, a young father is a biological father aged less than 25 years. Emerging literature on absent fathers has documented differences in the definition of the term 'absent' father. As such Padi et al. (2014) argue that the term is multifaceted and does not differentiate between non-involved, unknown, and undisclosed fathers. The White Paper on Families in South Africa uses the term absent living fathers to refer to fathers who are not involved (Department of Social Development, 2013), however, this term also does not consider unknown and undisclosed fathers. Therefore, in this dissertation, like the study by Eddy et al. (2013), the term will refer to a living biological father, who does not reside with their child.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

The phenomenon of father absence continues to grow and poses serious threats to the wellbeing of young South Africans. An increasing body of research on fatherhood notes that having an involved and caring father contributes to positive health and social outcomes for children, women, and men (Clowes et al., 2013; Mavungu, 2013; Makusha and Richter,

2016). However, only 32.7% of children live with both parents and 42% live with only their mothers (Statistics South Africa, 2019). This suggests that a huge proportion of children and mothers may be on the verge of negative health and social outcomes. There are a variety of factors that inhibit a father's involvement including culture, unemployment and poverty, residential, and interpersonal relations issues. While most of the literature of fatherhood and absent fathers look at how these different factors affect fathers' involvement, there has been limited focus on how mothers of the child may affect the involvement of the fathers. Therefore, this study seeks to document, from the perspectives of young mothers and fathers on parental involvement.

#### **1.4 Objectives**

The overall aim of this study was to explore how young mothers may become a barrier to young fathers' involvement in their children's lives.

The specific objectives of this study were:

- To understand the mother's perspectives of the father-child relationships.
- To explore the influence of the mothers on the father-child relationship.
- To understand how the mother and father relationship impacts the relationship with the child.

In order to address the aims of the study the key research questions were:

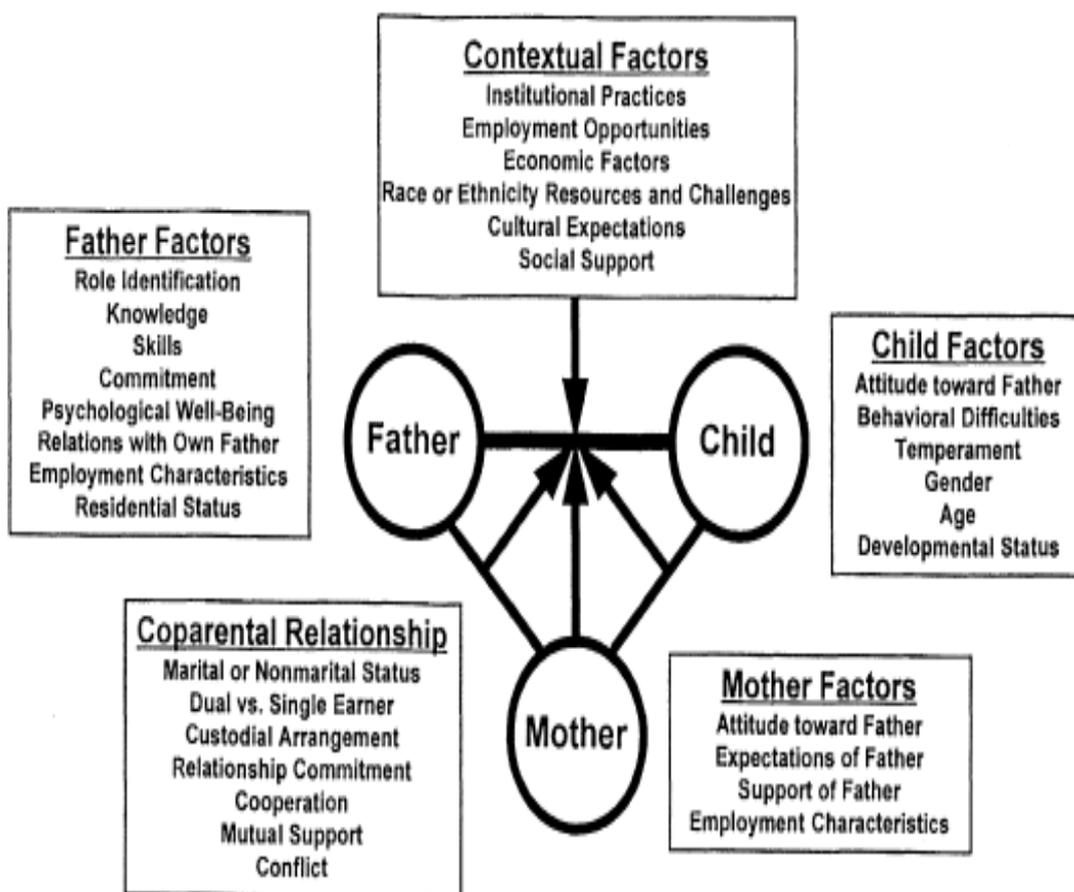
- How do mothers perceive the father-child relationship?
- How do mothers influence the father-child relationship?
- How does the mother and father relationship affect the relationship with the child?

These key questions were used as a guide to inform and conduct semi-structured in-depth interviews.

## 1.5 Theoretical framework

This study used the conceptual framework developed by Doherty et al. (1998) that focuses on influences on responsible fathering. This model was developed as a response to the vast emerging literature and theoretical work on fathers, responsible fathering, and fatherhood. With a primary aim to “include fathering inside or outside marriage and regardless of co-residence with the child” (Doherty et al., 1998: 285). The model places emphasis on the triangular relationship between father, child, and mother and then explores the external factors that influence fluctuations in this triangle (Doherty et al., 1998).

Figure 1.1 Influences on responsible fathering: A conceptual model



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

According to this framework, the relationship between father, child, and mother is the central unit of interaction and each member produces individual meanings, beliefs, and behaviours

that influence their interaction with the other. Also, each person is part of a broader social context that influences them as individual actors and their interactions with the broader society (Doherty et al., 1998). For instance, a young father might be prevented access to his child if he has not paid damages as a traditional token of acknowledging paternity and might also alienate himself from the child because he is unemployed, he is unable to provide for his child and therefore he feels he cannot fulfil his expected fatherly roles. Therefore, this framework provides a tool to explore and understand why such tendencies are apparent in society.

The model specifically highlights factors pertaining to fathers because one of its aims is to guide father-specific research, programs, and policies (Doherty et al., 1998). In as much as all the five factors (co-parental relationship, father factors, mother factors, contextual factors, and child factors) may affect both parents because they are generic to parenting, they appear to have strong twist when it comes to fathers. For example, the relationship between the father and child both inside and outside marriages is highly dependent on the quality of relationship with the co-parent, then in the case of a mother-child relationship (Makusha and Richter, 2016). Therefore, this conceptual framework is ideal for this study because one of its objectives is to investigate how mothers influence this co-parenting relationship.

The following are five factors that are paramount to responsible fathering as outlined by the conceptual framework (Doherty et al., 1998): first is the co-parental relationships. In their analysis, fathers seemed to pull back from their child when their relationship with the mother (co-parent) is not going well. For this, they argue that there is more negotiation in families over what fathers will do over what mothers will do, hence fathers' behaviours are more influenced by meanings and expectations of mothers, the child, the family, and the broader society. Thus, objective number three of this study seeks to investigate how does the relationship between mother and father impact the relationship between father and child. Second is the mother factor, it appeared that a father's involvement, both inside and outside of marriage, with his children is dependent on the mother's attitudes towards, beliefs about, expectations of and support for the father. In this regard, they argue that when conceptualization of responsible fathers should include an agreement that responsible mothering means supporting the father-child relationship. Therefore, this factor resonates

well with objective number two of this study which seeks to investigate how mothers facilitate this father-child relationship.

Contextual fathers are the third factor which is identified by Doherty et al. (1998) arguing that fathering is vulnerable to contextual and institutional practices. From the establishments of acknowledging (culture) paternity, legal paternity, race, and ethnicity challenges, to the greater impact of economic and employment. For example, lack of economic and employment prospects appears to have a negative impact on fathering. Consequently, objective number one of this study attempts to investigate how mothers perceive this relationship with respect to these contextual factors and how they inhibit the father-child relationship. Fourth is the child factor, from their research, it appeared that father's involvement also varied by certain aspects like age, sex, and attitudes of the child. For instance, fathers may relate more with a boy child than a girl. As a result, they argue that more research is required on how the child's beliefs about father involvement impact the fathers' and mothers' expectations and behaviours. Although this is not part of this study, the characteristics of the child may influence a positive or negative father-child relationship.

Lastly, in the model is the father factor. Doherty et al. (1998) found that father's role identification, skills, and commitment can have a huge impact on fathering, however, they are closely associated to mothers' expectations and father residential status with the child. They argue the positive support from mothers and the larger context can produce a responsible father even when circumstances do not allow him to do so, and strong knowledge, commitment, and skills from the father have the capacity to overcome any negative co-parenting, material, and contextual factors. This study is more interested in exploring the factors that influence father-child involvement outside an intimate relationship because, for example, fathers sometimes appear to withdraw after union dissolution (Madhavan et al., 2016). It is of the view that fathering is not a clearly spelled out role, as much as mothering is. Therefore, it agrees with this model in that the behaviour of fathers is influenced by expectations and meanings of themselves as individual actors and by meanings and expectations from the mother, the child, the family, and the society at large (Doherty et al., 1998).

## **1.6 Structure of the dissertation**

This dissertation comprises of five chapters. Chapter one provides the background the study, it motivates as to why the focus on both (young) men and women and why focus on father involvement, it provides the objectives and key questions of the study and finally describes the conceptual framework used. Chapter two is a review of current debates in the literature, and it is informed by the three key objectives of the study: the mother's perception about the father-child relationship; mothers influence in the father-child relationship; and how the mother and father relationship influence the relationship between father and child. The third chapter is the methodology chapter. It describes the study location and includes an outline of the methods used and the process of data collection. Chapter four provides an in-depth outline of the main findings from the interviews. The final chapter (chapter five) gives a discussion of the study results, a conclusion, and provides some possible avenues for future research.

## **Chapter 2 : Literature review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

On the one hand, the presence of a father in a child's life has been associated with positive life outcomes such as better academic achievements, physical and emotional health, higher literacy, and improved cognitive development (Richter and Morrell, 2006; Langa, 2010; Eddy et al., 2013). On the other hand, father absence has been associated with negative life outcomes such as poor academic performance, violent behaviour, and drug abuse (Richter and Morrell, 2006; Mavungu, 2013). This chapter reviews the relevant literature on fathers and their involvement. The themes used to structure this review were guided by the key research questions and the conceptual framework on influences of responsible fathering by Doherty et al. (1998).

### **2.2 Defining fatherhood**

Clowes et al. (2013) argues that biology cannot be the sole defining process of becoming a father because it overshadows other dimensions of becoming a father. Several studies conducted on fathering, although they may differ in definition, also agree that becoming a father goes beyond the biological process (Richter and Morrell, 2006; Langa, 2010; Richter et al., 2010). Richter and Morrell (2006: 18) defines fatherhood "as social roles that men undertake to care for their children." Langa (2010) notes that, in many African societies, obtaining a fatherhood status involves a range of social roles performed by different men, besides the biological father, that are involved in raising a child. In their study, Richter et al. (2010) observed that it is possible that a man may be providing and supporting his brother's children that may be or not living with him because the brother might be incarcerated or deceased, and may continue to support and keep regular contact to his child from a former partner. All these children may refer to the same man as a father. This resonates with the African philosophy highlighted by Langa (2010: 519) that "every child is my child", simply meaning a child is raised by the entire community, which further suggests, especially in the

African context, that indeed biology is not necessary the sole way of becoming a father (Richter et al., 2012).

Doherty et al. (1998) stresses the important of understanding how fathers identify with their new role of fatherhood. Several studies have been conducted in this regard with adolescent boys and men, particularly to explore how they conceptualize they the term fatherhood (Langa, 2010; Eddy et al., 2013; Van den Berg et al., 2013; Chili and Maharaj, 2015; Enderstein and Boonzaier, 2015). In their study, Van den Berg et al. (2013) found that men described fatherhood as not limited to discipline and provider role but includes nurturing, companionship, active involvement, and affection towards the child. Enderstein and Boonzaier (2015) found that young men described fatherhood as a choice to take responsibility, increased involvement and being present in the child's life. Eddy et al. (2013) in their study, found that in the African context the term assumed a metaphysical meaning, whereby the presence of a father in a child's life is regarded as important for the identity and prosperity of the child as well as a source of success and connection with the ancestors. It is therefore important to understand that fatherhood is a multidimensional phenomenon and the meaning differs from one social context to another (Çelik, 2020).

### **2.2.1 Types of fathers**

Fatherhood goes beyond the biological conception and it encompasses different roles, functions, and responsibilities that men partake in the household (Makofane, 2015). Similarly, there is no single definition of the term father. Lamb (2000 cited in Makofane, 2015) posits that in some societies and subcultures, becoming a father is a sign of maturity and a man is granted a social status. Lesejane (2006 cited in Richter et al., 2010: 361) explains that “a man becomes a father and is treated with the respect attached to the role, when he takes responsibility for his family and becomes a role model of appropriate behaviour for young men”. In both definitions it appears that fatherhood is associated with maturity and responsibility. On the other hand, Makofane (2015) believes such conceptions of fatherhood may be misleading. For example, a man may have children with a former partner but have no contact with them or support them, because he has moved on with another partner or she has moved on with another partner. The same man may be supporting

his new partner with her children from her previous relationship, and may have refused to acknowledge a child of a former partner (Richter et al., 2010). For this reason, it is important to understand how men make sense of their role as fathers and how they understand fathering (Mavungu, 2013).

Fathering may also take up different forms and these formations maybe influenced by different contexts. Also, there is evidence to suggest that there are many types of fathers (Marsiglio et al., 2000; Van den Berg and Makusha, 2018; Parke and Cookston, 2019). In their work on the State of South Africa's fathers, Van den Berg and Makusha (2018) note that South Africa has many types of fathers, namely: gay fathers, young fathers, old fathers, straight fathers, social fathers and biological fathers. Parke and Cookston (2019) observes that the available types of fathers (coresidential and non-residential fathers) does not recognise distance fathers who have little to no face-to-face contact with their children because of different circumstances. As a result, distanced fathers include incarcerated fathers, military deployed fathers working in foreign lands, transactional or economic fathers, coresident fathers and non-residents fathers. In their study (Marsiglio et al., 2000: 273) identified four types of father:

biological fathers married to and living with the children's mothers; biological fathers divorced from (or never married to) their children's mothers but living with their children; unmarried biological fathers living neither with their children nor with the children's mothers; and adoptive or informal stepfathers, both living with and living apart from these children.”

### **2.2.2 Fatherhood and Masculinity**

In their work, Richter and Morrell (2006) explains that in isiZulu- the dominant language in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa- the term father (uBaba) refers to an older male or man and it encompasses elements such as masculinity, generational and gendered hierarchy, and respect. Hunter (2006) explains that uBaba refers to a man who meets certain fatherhood responsibilities such as being a provider, breadwinner, protector for his children, and is the head of the family regardless of his economic status. It follows that in such

societies, as Morrell (2006) elucidates, fatherhood is associated with successful masculinity and therefore, it is more in line with the social roles of fathering than that of a biological conception. For this reason, Mkhize (2004 cited in Richter et al., 2010) argue that conceptions of fatherhood cannot be understood outside social, political, economic, and other processes, by which men understand their role in society.

In the same way that dominant ideals of becoming a father are associated with the biological conception (Morrell, 2006), masculinity is associated with man, hence fatherhood is linked to manhood (Hunter, 2006; Morrell, 2006; Makofane, 2015). Various studies on boys and men have indicated that masculinity is conferred on a man who is a breadwinner and the head of the family and home (Richter and Morrell, 2006; Swartz and Bhana, 2009; Ratele et al., 2012). However, like fatherhood, masculinity is socially constructed. It is not determined by biology nor automatic (Morrell, 2006). There is no universal masculinity and it can change over times depending on the social context (Ratele et al., 2012; Bhana and Nkani, 2014). As such, Morrell (2006) notes that fatherhood and manhood are roles that are understood and acted in different ways. For example, terms like Baba (father), Baba omncane (younger father), and baba omkhulu (older father) are used in the Zulu culture to refer to different men that are involved in raising a child (Langa, 2010). Therefore, this suggests that fatherhood is a social role that can be performed by different men other than the biological father.

Recognizing the social constructions of a father (protector, provider, and breadwinner) it is not surprising to see that it has a great influence on social policy development of families. For example, the South African White Paper on Families argues that high rates of unemployment, poverty, and financial constraints have contributed towards many fathers failing to take responsibility for their children, thus hampering positive and active father involvement (Department of Social Development, 2013). As highlighted above, Clowes et al. (2013) note it is important to understand that with the socio-economic obligation attached to fatherhood as breadwinners and heads of households, majority of men in Africa may not succeed in achieving successful masculinity. In South Africa, only 32.7% of children live with both their parents while a large percentage (42%) live with only their mothers in the household (Statistic South Africa, 2019). The proportion of children who were under the age of 15 years living with their father was 30% of Africans, 53% of coloureds, 83% of whites, and

85% of Indian children (Eddy et al., 2013). The magnitude widens even further as the phenomenon is explored according to rural and urban areas. The proportion of African children living with absent fathers became more prevalent in rural areas, 55%, compared to 43% in urban areas (Holborn and Eddy, 2011).

Ideals of fatherhood and masculinity are a product of the historical as well as current social, cultural, economic, and political factors (Goodman, 2018). Understanding that fatherhood is essential to the construction of masculinity, then, having a child is one way in which the status is conferred (Clowes et al., 2013). However, masculinity may also bring about anxiety to some men because failure to achieving successful masculinity is associated with weakness and shame (Hunter, 2006). For instance, Chili and Maharaj (2017) in a study titled “I was not planning to have a child at such a young age’: Experiences of young men in Durban, South Africa”, found that young men were more likely to follow dominant ideas about masculinity, such as the engaging in unprotected sex as it signified trust and partner commitment. However, when the girl announces her pregnancy, men react with fear and shock. As such, Chili and Maharaj (2017) suggest that these news invokes anxiety and stress and thus threatens dominant masculinity. Additionally, Swartz et al. (2009) argue in this regard, that lack of power is situated within South Africa’s political economy, aligned with structural and social inequalities and coupled up with cultural values that place a high value on the provider fathers.

Recent studies on fatherhood and family dynamics are beginning to document new narratives of fatherhood and masculinity (Mavungu, 2013; Bhana and Nkani, 2014; Chili and Maharaj, 2015; Enderstein and Boonzaier, 2015). Goodman (2018) describes how two dominant roles intrinsic to fatherhood in American history shifted over time, from being a moral teacher and guider to include being a role model, breadwinner, nurturer, and active father as societies evolved with time. A study by Andreasson and Johansson (2016) draws on father blogs in the internet, found a shift toward a new concept of fatherhood associated with emotional closeness and parental worries when New York stay-at-home fathers shared their experiences of depression and anxiety while being the primary caregiver for their daughters (Andreasson and Johansson, 2016). Therefore, such narratives are important because they reflect a

gender-neutral position of fatherhood which is understood less in terms of masculinity and gender-divided roles.

### **2.2.3 Fathers in South Africa**

South Africa has a great number of children who do not reside with their fathers, only 36% of children live with their biological father (Van den Berg and Makusha, 2018). Consequently, it is unlikely for these children to have a positive father-child relationship (Richter et al., 2010). This phenomenon, absent fathers, has been recognized, according to the White Paper on Families in South Africa, as the most common and increasing issues affecting contemporary South African families (Department of Social Development, 2013). Scholars have argued that living arrangements of men, and their roles and expectations, continue to be diverse and complex (Desmond and Hosegood 2011 cited in Makusha et al., 2012). One reason for this is that perspectives of father involvement, in many low income and poor societies, are usually associated with gender ascribed roles such as provider and breadwinner (Mavungu, 2013). Thus, many studies have argued that current ideals of father involvement continue to exclude poor, unemployed, and non-residential fathers (Langa, 2010; Ratele et al., 2012; Mavungu, 2013).

Studies have also indicated that in South Africa, one out of two fathers are absent from their children's lives (Eddy et al., 2013). According to Richter and Morrell (2006), about 54% of men between the ages of 15 and 49 years are fathers, however, nearly half of them reported they did not have daily contact with their children. When this figure is distributed according to population groups, the magnitude is much bigger. For instance, the proportion of children below 15 years living with a father is 30% for black Africans, 53% for Coloureds, 83% and 85% for Whites and Indians respectively (Eddy et al., 2013). In their study, Van den Berg and Makusha (2018) reported that only 36% of children under 17 years old lived with their biological father. As such, significant evidence has been documented advocating for increased involvement of fathers in the family and especially in children's lives. Also, suggesting positive effects of having an involved and present father in a child's life such as academic performance, social, emotional, and cognitive functioning (Langa, 2010; Ratele et al., 2012; Clowes et al., 2013; Swartz et al., 2013).

Fathers, especially young fathers, are often misrepresented in society. They are often seen as sexual predators, an irresponsible group of men who impregnate girls and abandon their children (Richter et al., 2010; Eddy et al., 2013; Bhana and Nkani, 2014). Swartz et al. (2013) argues against media images that suggests young fathers choose to be absent and uninvolved, saying these are incorrect. Emerging research on young fathers suggests that many young fathers want to be involved, play a positive and an active role in lives of their children (Ratele et al., 2012; Swartz et al., 2013; Chili and Maharaj, 2015). While some fathers may be fortunate to do so, others may be buried with obstacles and others may be prevented. The White Paper on Families in South Africa outlined that high rates of poverty, unemployment, and financial constraints have contributed to a large number of South African men failing to perform their responsibilities as fathers (Department of Social Development, 2013). Swartz et al. (2013) argue that these factors not only make father involvement difficult, but it also a reason why many of them who fail to negotiate out of these obstacles remain uninvolved and disinterested. Therefore, (Bhana and Nkani, 2014) suggests interventions that seek to promote positive and active father involvement, especially among young fathers, with particular attention directed to social, cultural and economic factors that inhibit their involvement.

### **2.3 Father involvement**

Most families comprise of a female and a male parent, a mother, and a father, respectively. The availability of a men in the family has been associated with positive outcomes for both the child and the mother, increased household expenditure, higher protection, and increased access to community resources (Makusha et al., 2012; Mavungu, 2013; Makusha and Richter, 2016; Hatch and Posel, 2018). For example, Mavungu (2013) cites an example from Central America, where the participation of men as parents contributed to good health and well-being of women whereas previous research had shown that women with children were more vulnerable to poverty if fathers did not fulfil their financial responsibility. On the other hand, the absence of a male figure has associated with negative life outcomes, violent behaviour, and emotional disturbances (Langa, 2010; Ratele et al., 2012; Mavungu, 2013). In a study conducted by Ramphela (2002 cited in Ratele et al., 2012) in Cape Town, South Africa,

found that boys who grew up with fathers absent in their lives were more vulnerable to substance abuse, violence, and gang-related activities.

Several studies conducted on father involvement have used Lamb et al. (1985) components of fathers involvement to understand how fathers are involved (Futris and Schoppe-Sullivan, 2007; Pleck, 2012; Mavungu, 2013). According to Lamb et al. (1985) there are three components of father involvement namely: engagement; accessibility; and responsibility. These three components were developed as a point of analysis and with an understanding that father involvement is multidimensional (Lamb et al., 1985). Pleck (2012) unpacks these components and notes: engagement includes one-on-one interactions with the child, these can be in a form of playing, doing activities, or caregiving; accessibility includes physical, emotional, and psychologically availability to the child; responsibility includes the parent ensuring the well-being, care, and provision of resources for the child. In addition to these three components, Marsiglio et al. (2000) proposed a cognitive representation of involvement as a fourth component. Cognitive representation refers to a state of mind of a parent which include worry, anxiety, contingency planning that are related to the child's well-being (Mavungu, 2013).

Although the work of Lamb et al. (1985) and Marsiglio et al. (2000) provide effective components that helps to better understand father involvement, different studies have found the concept to be socially constructed (Mavungu, 2013). For instance, Chili and Maharaj (2015) in their study found that young fathers were dissatisfied and stressed about their inability to fulfil their expected fatherly roles. Suggesting that for the young men, father involvement is dependent on their ability to provide financially. Mavungu (2013) notes that in American the meaning of father involvement has shifted along with industrialization. He notes, traditionally fathers were merely moral teachers and guiders. However, these roles have shifted to include the responsibility for breadwinning, being a role model for the child, nurturing and being an active father (Mavungu, 2013). Therefore, it can be argued that father involvement is contextual, and it is subject to change at any time. As it has done through the different phases including, industrialization, migrant labour, political and economic systems, and demand for gender equality (Richter et al., 2010; Mavungu, 2013; Swartz et al., 2013).

## 2.4 Absent Fathers

This study is targeted at exploring how mothers may become a barrier to father involvement which may result in a father being regarded as absent from the child's life. It is thus important to explore the concept of absent fathers and how it has been applied by different studies. Padi et al. (2014) note that a father may be fully, temporarily, financially, and emotionally absent from a child's life. Mancini (2010 cited in Padi et al., 2014) states that fathers are usually regarded as absent because they do not live with the child or have been away for a long time. McLanahan et al. (2013) in their study, used the term to refer to fathers who live apart from their children because of separation or divorce. For to Morrell (2006), the term refers to fathers who are physically absent in the household as a result of factors such as divorce, separation, incarceration, social dislocation, or might be working away from home. However, these definitions do not consider deceased fathers and those who have never lived with the child. Likewise, in these definitions, non-involvement and non-resident are treated in the same respect (Langa, 2010; Padi et al., 2014). In this regard, Nduna and Sikweyiya (2015) note that being a single mother does not necessarily mean a father is absent because a father may be involved in other ways in the life of a child.

On the hand, a non-resident father may keep in contact and provide economic resources to the child (Clowes et al., 2013; Padi et al., 2014). In this sense, a father may not be physically present to the child but provides financial and emotional support, or he may be physically present and provides financially but may also lack emotional connection with the child and therefore be emotionally absent (Clowes et al., 2013). Mavungu (2013) observed that the term absent fathers also refer to a state of emotional disengagement with the child regardless of their location. A study conducted in Mpumalanga province of South Africa Padi et al. (2014) found that among 20 young women aged between 14 to 36 the concept of father absence was deeply rooted in social beliefs which were mostly associated with the economic and political context. Therefore, they proposed what they called is a working definition where father absence referred to a "person who had never met their father due to either death or disappearance during the early stages of the child's life and also those who know the father but may experience feelings of abandonment and an overwhelming sense of loss and grief" (Padi et al., 2014; 54).

## **2.5 Influences of father involvement**

Father involvement, especially of young fathers, is often hindered by numerous challenges. Various studies conducted on father involvement have pointed out that it is common for a man to experience multiple challenges at the same time (Doherty et al., 1998; Allen and Hawkins, 1999; Richter et al., 2010; Eddy et al., 2013; Swartz et al., 2013). According to the responsible fathering concept, a conceptual framework employed by the current study, father involvement may be influenced by five factors: contextual factors referring to employment opportunities, economic factors, social practices and support, and cultural expectations; co-parenting factors refers to relationship commitment, marital status, custodial arrangements, mutual support, and conflict; mother factors would refer to her attitude towards the father, her expectations of the father, her support for him, and his characteristics; the child factors refers to the child's attitude towards the father, behavioural difficulties, age and gender of the child, and development status; and finally, father factors referring to his knowledge, skills, commitment, his role identification, psychological well-being, his employment status, his relationship with his own father, and residential status (Doherty et al., 1998). However, since this study is targeted at exploring how mothers may become a barrier to father involvement, it will focus on the contextual, co-parenting, father, and mother factors.

Most young fathers aspire to be involved, active, and responsible fathers. Studies on men found that for young fathers being able to provide for their child was associated with good fathering, supportive communication, physical affection, spending time, and day-to-day involvement with the child was equally as important (Clowes et al., 2013; Swartz et al., 2013; Chili and Maharaj, 2015). However, for many young fathers, this is not easy as they are hindered by social, economic, cultural, and relational factors.

### **2.5.1 Gatekeeping**

Several studies on father involvement have pointed out that mothers play a crucial role in mediating, facilitating, or restricting a father's access in the child's life (Eddy et al., 2013;

Swartz et al., 2013; Chili and Maharaj, 2015; Çelik, 2020). Mothers may prevent or facilitate, promote, or inhibit a father's involvement for various reasons. In their study, Van den Berg and Makusha (2018) observed that any form of gatekeeping, either maternal, cultural or circumstantial, is one of the most important factors that may prevent or facilitate a father's involvement in the child's life. Another study conducted in Turkey by Çelik (2020) found that there was a negative relationship between gatekeeping, especially maternal gatekeeping, and father involvement; thus, indicating that a mother is a crucial factor in the father-child relationship (Eddy et al., 2013; Çelik, 2020). However, it should also be noted that a father's involvement does not suggest automatic benefits for the child (Eddy et al., 2013; Van den Berg and Makusha, 2018). Some fathers are violent and abusive, therefore, Van den Berg and Makusha (2018) posits that gatekeeping may be a protective measure for the mother to protect the child.

Other studies have sought to define gatekeeping although most definitions tend to focus on maternal gatekeeping (Allen and Hawkins, 1999; Trinder, 2008; Puhlman and Pasley, 2013). According to Allen and Hawkins (1999; 200) gatekeeping refers to “a collection of beliefs and behaviours that ultimately inhibit a collaborative effort between men and women in family work by limiting men's opportunities for learning and growing through caring for home and children.” For Trinder (2008), the term involves nondirectional beliefs and behaviours that regulate a father's involvement. The term includes both gate closing and gate opening (inhibitory and promoting processes, respectively). Gate closing refers to a set of beliefs and behaviours that restrict or inhibit father involvement and gate opening refers beliefs and behaviours that facilitate or promoting father involvement (Trinder, 2008; Makusha and Richter, 2016). In their work, Puhlman and Pasley (2013; 177) defined gatekeeping, maternal gatekeeping in this instance, as “a set of complex behavioural interactions between parents, where mothers influence father involvement through their use of controlling, restrictive, and facilitative behaviours, directed at father's childrearing and interaction with children on a regular and consistent basis.”

As in the case of fatherhood demonstrated in the previous sections, maternal gatekeeping is also a multidimensional phenomenon produced by a collaboration of different factors. Motherhood is largely socially constructed in gender norms, vested in the social-political and

economic subordination position of women (Bhana and Nkani, 2014; Mjwara and Maharaj, 2018). A mother's role, as dictated by culture and gender norms, is mainly on reproduction and housekeeping (Seery and Crowley, 2000). Traditionally, childcare has been a mother's primary role, as she usually assumes the responsibility from childbirth until the children are self-supportive (Seery and Crowley, 2000; Futris and Schoppe-Sullivan, 2007). Although, the world has witnessed changes in women's positions in society, for instance, more and more women joining the labour market, an increase in female-headed houses, and so on. Mavungu (2013) explains that these changes have been brought about by processes such as industrialization, changes in the labour market, economic disruptions and dislocation, and demand for gender equity. However, Clowes et al. (2013) argues that even though in some societies women are the main breadwinners, men may still be perceived as heading the household. Therefore, maternal gatekeeping is a collaboration of all these factors which results in women's actions aiming to validate their traditional maternal position (Makusha and Richter, 2016; Van den Berg and Makusha, 2018).

### **2.5.2 The mother and father relationship**

The relationship between a mother and father has been shown to be extremely influential for paternal involvement (Mazembo et al., 2013; Swartz et al., 2013; Madhavan et al., 2014; Chili and Maharaj, 2015). Like fathers, mother's perception of fatherhood and gender roles are shaped by their social, family, and cultural background and thus likely to influence and sustain a father's relationship with his children (Makusha and Richter, 2016). Madhavan et al. (2014) posits that the extent to which a mother promotes or inhibits a father-child relationship is influenced by a variety of factors, among other things, including age at which the child was born, educational and employment position, nature of relationship with the father, and entry into a new relationship following union (intimate relationship) dissolution. In his work Hunter (2006), observed that in situations of low job prospects for men, women felt discouraged to enter or maintain a relationship. This suggest that a woman's choice to stay unmarried or disengage in a relationship with the father of their child is influenced by her perceptions and expectations of fatherhood. Consequently, the ability of a father to maintain a healthy relationship with the child is closely dependent on his relationship with the mother of his child (Madhavan et al., 2016).

Other studies have shown how mothers' beliefs with regards to provider masculinity has an impact on the father-child relationship (Hunter, 2006; Mazembo et al., 2013; Madhavan et al., 2014; Makusha and Richter, 2016). The extent to which a father is involved with his child, especially young children, may also be motivated by the mother's attitudes towards the father, her expectations of the father, her support for him, and his ability to provide or employment status (Doherty et al., 1998; Hunter, 2006). Other studies observed that the overemphasis on provider role by families, mothers, and fathers themselves makes it difficult to appreciate alternative father roles (Mavungu, 2013; Mazembo et al., 2013). Consequently, a man who fails to provide material and financial support for his children and family, faces humiliation and shame (Richter et al., 2010). This suggests that a mother plays a crucial role in supporting or inhibiting a fathers' involvement (Lamb et al., 1985; Makusha and Richter, 2016). Thus, failure to provide material and financial resources, and subsequently being labelled as not-good-enough by the mother and her family may result in the father being restricted access to the child (Swartz et al., 2013).

Furthermore, studies on fatherhood and father involvement have noted that relationship instability may have negative effects on the father-child relationship (Hunter, 2006; Madhavan et al., 2014; Chili and Maharaj, 2015; Madhavan et al., 2016; Makusha and Richter, 2016). Any significant changes in the relationship between biological parents such as separations and availability of a new sexual partner is likely to have detrimental effects on the types and level of a father's involvement (Madhavan et al., 2016). A study conducted by Gibbs et al. (2017) found that when relationships between biological parents were great; father involvement was observed to be better than when relationships were weak. While it is common for fathers to withdraw contact and support for the child after they have separated with the mother of the child (Tach et al., 2010; Puhlman and Pasley, 2013), studies have also shown that mothers may sometimes limit the father-child interaction as an act of revenge because of the anger she might still harbour against him (Madhavan et al., 2014; Makusha and Richter, 2016). Her choice to influence the father-child relationship may also depend on entry into a new relationship, either mother's or father's new relationship, which may also impact on a father's willingness to provide support for the child (Madhavan et al., 2014). Mothers may also restrict the father-child relationship, especially if he is not financially providing for the child, because she does not see any positive benefit for father engagement (Makusha and Richter, 2016).

### **2.5.3 Fathers' individual factors**

Ideals about gender roles and manhood are socialized and manifested to young from the day they are born. Young men learn about manhood everywhere: at home, in the media, and/or through different interactions with different men in their lives. As a result, a young father's role identification, skills, and knowledge are based on these societal ideals and conceptions of manhood (Richter and Morrell, 2006; Swartz and Bhana, 2009; Pleck, 2012). The father's individual factors, as described by Doherty et al. (1998) are important influences of responsible fathering and include components such as his education, skills, employment, residential status, and relationship with his own father. Therefore, this section touches on a few individual factors that inhibit father involvement.

Young fathers have often been portrayed as sexual predators, unsupportive and purposefully abandoning their children (Hunter, 2006; Swartz and Bhana, 2009; Ratele et al., 2012). However, like teenage mothers, young fathers may also be unprepared of their emerging role (Hunter, 2006; Madhavan and Roy, 2012). As argued by Doherty et al. (1998) understanding how fathers identify with their roles is paramount because it directly affects his actions and subsequently his involvement with the child. In their study Swartz et al. (2013) found that young fathers eluded to aspects such as providing material support, day-to-day involvement, physical affection, contact time and supportive communication with the child. On the other hand, Miller (1997 cited in Clowes et al., 2013) argues that young fathers often struggle with issues during adolescence and the transition to fatherhood is much worse. For instance, a study conducted in Alexandra township, Gauteng by Langa and Smith (2012) found that young men did not recognise themselves as good fathers because they were unable to support their children as a result of financial constraints. Young fathers are often at school, unemployed, and depend on meagre family support (Swartz and Bhana, 2009). As a result, when young men cannot live up to fatherhood expectations, they may avoid acknowledging paternity so as to avoid the socio-economic burden associated with it (Eddy et al., 2013).

Lack of educational attainment is often associated to unemployment and poverty (Madhavan and Roy, 2012; Makusha et al., 2012; Hatch and Posel, 2018). Teenagers who drop out of school are more likely to experience job instability, receive low income, and increased dependence on public assistance (Richter and Morrell, 2006). In their study, Chili and Maharaj (2015) found that young fathers reported that having a child at a young age negatively affected their education as they were no longer able to concentrate exclusively on their studies. Enderstein and Boonzaier (2015) in their study found that young fathers eluded that furthering their education and securing a job was critical to their aspirations of a providing father. As a result, young fathers reported having to find part-time employment and had to juggle between the two (studying and working) in order to provide for their children (Chili and Maharaj, 2015). Furthermore, this suggests that fathers who dropped out of school are less likely to secure stable employment than their graduated peers. As argued by Enderstein and Boonzaier (2015), young fathers are more likely to experience emotional and psychological problems coupled with compromised education and professional opportunities than non-fathers. Thereby, facing the possibility of being rejecting by the maternal family if they fail to provide financially and subsequently restricted or limited access to his child (Swartz et al., 2013).

#### **2.5.4 Employment and income**

Taking responsibility and the ability to provide resources for your child is associated with good parenting. Lamb et al. (1985) speaks of the three components of father involvement (accessibility, engagement, and responsibility) and of interest in this section is responsibility. Responsibility refers to elements such as providing care, arranging resources, and ensuring the well-being of the child (Pleck, 2012). Mavungu (2013) explains that responsibility also includes making sure that the child has food, clothes, and sufficient medical attention when needed. However, taking responsibility and providing for the child is mostly determined by employment and available income. Currently in South Africa, the unemployment rate is 27.6 % and about 40.7 % of those aged between 15 and 35 are not in employment, education, and training (Statistics South Africa, 2019). When unemployment is so rife it means many young fathers will not be able to be responsible fathers. As a result, many of them are prevented access to their children (Ratele et al., 2012). In this sense, financial provision, according to

(Swartz et al., 2013) surpasses other aspects of father involvement, such as physical contact, emotional support, and day-to-day communication.

Christiansen and Palkovitz (2001 cited in Madhavan and Roy, 2012) note that successful fatherhood is marked by one's ability to provide and co-reside with his children. However, being able to get married and live with their partner and child, is determined by an individual's available income (Mazembo et al., 2013). For example, a father who earns R10000 per month is more likely to achieve the successful fatherhood status than a father earning R3000 per month. Hence, Desmond and Desmond (2006 cited in Richter et al., 2010) argue that men in lower income groups are three times less likely to live with their children and partners than those in higher earning groups. While men strive to achieve the successful fatherhood status, those who are unemployed and have less income are shamed and denied access to their children. As Madhavan and Roy (2012) argues, those who fail to live up to the provider and caregiver expectation (hegemonic masculinity) are labelled, according to Hunter (2006) fathers without 'amandla' (power). Therefore, the shame and failure that men go through when they cannot provide for their children, as a result of no income, may lead some men to withdraw their involvement in the child's life (Richter et al., 2010).

In their study, Clowes et al. (2013) argue that times of economic crises disproportionately affect poor and unemployed men who aspire to live up to hegemonic masculine expectations, such as the provider and protector role. In the United States for example, the 2010 census report showed that only 6.6 million men were employed on a full time bases, which was lower than 2007 before the 2008 economic recession (Roberts et al., 2014). According to Roberts et al. (2014), this was important to mention because employment leads to a higher income and income is a good predictor of child support. As a result, fathers who were unemployed and those who receive low income are more likely to be penalized for not paying child support (Futris and Schoppe-Sullivan, 2007). In South Africa, like many other African countries, unemployment is associated with poverty, hence obtaining employment is a key factor in avoiding poverty (Eddy et al., 2013). Chili and Maharaj (2015) in their study, found that young men expressed difficulties in making substantial financial contributions because they were either working in low paying jobs or unemployed. In this regard, Mavungu (2013)

argued that lack of stable employment and income, deprives many non-resident fathers the ability to live up to the provider expectations.

### **2.5.5 Family relations**

Many young mothers and father are unemployed, still in school, and live with their parents or other family members. Their families often take full responsibility and care for the child, and in most cases it is the maternal family (Mkhwanazi and Bhana, 2017). Madhavan and Roy (2012) note that maternal families provide various forms of support to the child, such as providing financial support, moral guidance, assistance in schoolwork, and other activities. However, kin support, especially maternal kin, can sometimes be one sided. Studies have observed that a (young) father's involvement is mostly influenced by the wishes, desires and expectations of the maternal family (Madhavan and Roy, 2012; Madhavan et al., 2014). A study conducted in Cape Town, South Africa by Clark et al. (2015) found that a close bond between the mother and maternal grandmother was negatively associated with father's involvement. Another study, also conducted in Cape Town, South Africa by Swartz et al. (2009), observed that the young father's contact was restricted by the maternal family, especially when the biological parents are no longer in good relationship or the father has not fulfilled his cultural duties. Thereby, suggesting that maternal families, as the primary caregiver of the child, often has the power to regulate the degree of a young fathers interaction with the child (Swartz et al., 2013; Makusha and Richter, 2016).

Families also provide a strong support base for young, unemployed, and school going fathers. The paternal family can help the young father pay *inhlawulo*, *ukubika isisu* and other payments that are mandatory for acknowledgement of paternity (Clark et al., 2015). The family may also warn the young father against acknowledging paternity if the payments of cultural damages will cause him to abandon school or strain the family resources (Swartz et al., 2013). Clark et al. (2015) in their study, found that paternal grandmothers played an important role in supporting and motivating young fathers to maintain good relations with the mother of the child and maintain contact with non-resident child. Paternal grandmothers were also found to be encouraging young men to become better fathers, helping them maintain good relations with the mother and encourage them to finish school so that they can find better employment opportunities (Swartz and Bhana, 2009). This suggests that while the

efforts of the young father to be involved in the child's life is supported by his family, his care and contact with the child largely remains in the hands of the maternal family. In this regard, Madhavan and Roy (2012) in their study, observed that when both sets of kin (young mother and young father) work together, it does not only enable father involvement but also strengthens a young father's status. Therefore, arguing that support from both families could also be used to buy time for young fathers to complete school and establish themselves (Madhavan and Roy, 2012).

### **2.5.6 The influence of culture and social practices**

In many societies, fatherhood has cultural meaning and provider expectations (Hunter, 2006). Eddy et al. (2013) argued that poverty and unemployment of men are not necessarily factors of father absenteeism, rather it is the interplay of socio-economic conditions that are embedded within dominant expectations, where man should always provide for his family. Suggesting that this is done without considering his economic situation that which creates conditions where men feel excluded. In most African countries, there are cultural practices that are paramount to every male, regardless of being young and/ or unemployed, that legitimizes the birth of their child outside marital union (Enderstein and Boonzaier, 2015). Paternity acknowledgement in most cultural societies in South Africa, comes with a payment of cultural damages also known as "Inhlawulo" in isiZulu, one of South Africa's indigenous languages (Nduna, 2014). This becomes a problem for many young and unemployed fathers because one cannot claim paternal responsibility without having to pay damages. As such, failure to pay damages may result in the woman's family neglecting the man and are likely to deny him access to his child (Bhana and Nkani, 2014; Enderstein and Boonzaier, 2015).

The process of acknowledging paternity, in most cultures in South Africa, encompasses a set of rituals that a man ought to fulfil. (Bhana and Nkani, 2014) speak of rituals like *ukubika isisu*, meaning announcing the pregnancy, *ukubhula amazolo* means trashing the grass to remove the morning dew, and *ukugezwa kwezintombi* to cleanse all virgins of that area from the bad luck associated with having a child out of wedlock. *ukubika isisu* is a traditional Zulu ritual that begins early in the morning where a pregnant girl and her family goes to the alleged father's family to announce the pregnancy (Nkani, 2017). After announcing the

pregnancy, they would charge him for *ukubhula amazolo* and *ukugezwa kwezintombi*. The charge for *ukubhula amazolo* may vary from family to family and *ukugezwa kwezintombi* involves slaughtering of a goat. The slaughtering of a goat is very important to the pregnant girl's family because the goat will cleanse the family from the shame caused by their child for having a child out of wedlock and cleanse all virgins of the area from the evil spirit associated with losing virginity (Bhana and Nkani, 2014). However, this is problematic as many young fathers are still at school and unemployed. Again, failure to comply with these rituals may limit the father's access to his child (Swartz et al., 2013).

Studies on fatherhood and father involvement have often argued that for black African fathers, especially young fathers, cultural expectations often hinder their involvement in their children's lives (Ratele et al., 2012; Eddy et al., 2013; Swartz et al., 2013; Bhana and Nkani, 2014; Chili and Maharaj, 2015). However, culture is not static. People have managed to negotiate their positions on culture and were able to reach consensus on issues. For example, a study conducted by Bhana and Nkani (2014) in a township called Inanda in KwaZulu-Natal found that households headed by women appeared to be more flexible in allowing a young father's interaction with his child even though cultural damages had not been paid. In their study, Langa and Smith (2012) observed that the practice of payment of cultural damages may not be as common in urban areas compared to rural areas and this was likely due to the erosion of cultural practices in townships or the unavailability of fathers and uncles in the household. However, Hunter (2010) argues that patriarchy is embedded in a culture where power is invested in the male being the head and on women's subordinate social and economic positions. Therefore, suggesting that households headed by men are strictly off-limits and inflexible to allow father involvement without the payments of cultural damages (Bhana and Nkani, 2014).

Despite the payment of *inhlawulo*, most cultural societies, especially in the Zulu culture of South Africa, marriage may also be considered as an indication of the father's responsibility to the mother and the child, and an also precondition for his access to the child (Mazembo et al., 2013). In the Zulu culture, a precondition of marriage is payment of bride wealth (*ilobolo*) and as Hunter (2006) notes fathering is associated with a man's ability to pay *ilobolo*. Makusha et al. (2012) note that in some social settings a biological father would not be

acknowledged as a legitimate father until he pays ilobolo. However, young, and unemployed fathers cannot afford to pay ilobolo. As a result, failure to pay ilobolo may result in restricted or denied access to the child (Bhana and Nkani, 2014). While unemployment and income have contributed to paternal exclusion and maternal gatekeeping, cultural norms continue to shape the role of kin and fathering in most low income and societies (Madhavan and Roy, 2012).

## **2.6 Summary**

The chapter has reviewed relevant local and global literature on father involvement. Several studies have indicated that the notion of fatherhood is multi-dimensional, it is socially constructed, and it is context based. Although, studies may differ in terms of definitions, the literature suggests that fatherhood is a social role that men partake in raising a child. The review also suggests that many fathers are not involved in lives of their children and this adversely affects the wellbeing of children and the family at large. For instance, the absence of a father has been associated with negative life outcomes such as poverty, violent behaviour, and emotional disturbances. Having an involved father is associated with positive outcomes such as, academic performance, increased household expenditure, higher protection, and increased access to community resources. Finally, the literature shows that father involvement is influenced by different factors including the relationship between biological parents, employment and income, family relations, culture, and social practices, which disproportionately affect young and school going fathers.

## **Chapter 3 : Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The aim of the present study is to reflect on the perspectives and experiences of young men and women on the issue of father involvement. To do this, the study employed a qualitative approach to research and conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with young men and women to answer the research questions. As such, this chapter outlines the methods used to conduct the research. It begins with a detailed account of the study context, research design, and sampling criteria followed to identify potential participants. Data collection and analysis techniques that was used are also discussed. Ethical considerations are also discussed, with emphasis on protection of the participant's right to dignity. This chapter ends by outlining some of the limitations of this study.

### **3.2 Study Context**

This study was conducted in the province of KwaZulu-Natal located along the east coast of South Africa and stretches across 94 451.0 square kilometres (KwaZulu-Natal Government, 2019). KwaZulu-Natal is the second-most populous province, after Gauteng in South Africa. It is bordered by Swaziland and Mozambique on the north, the Indian Ocean on the east, and Eastern Cape and Lesotho on the south and west respectively (Africa, 2018). It is home to about 11.3 million inhabitants and contributes 19.7% towards the country's total population (KwaZulu-Natal Government, 2019). In terms of racial composition, Africans largely dominate the province, constituting about 87.6% of KZN's total population, followed by Indians at 7%, Whites and then Coloured's at 4.1% and 1.4% respectively (KwaZulu-Natal Government, 2019).

According to a socio-economic review of KwaZulu-Natal, the province has a high dependency ratio of 58.7% resulting from a large number of children between ages 0 to 14 years, constituting 31.5% of the total population (KwaZulu-Natal Government, 2019). This

phenomenon is also associated with the high rates of fertility (17.6%) among adolescent mother between the age 10 to 19 years and 46% for women between ages 20 to 24 years (Statistics South Africa, 2016), this rate was also the highest among other provinces in the country (KwaZulu-Natal Government, 2019). Most of these young women have their first child outside any formal marital union, some are still at school and they have no financial means to sustain themselves and their children. As a result, early childbearing is closely associated with single parenthood and father absence. However, single parenthood and father absence is not limited to the province; it is a national concern (Department of Social Development, 2013; Eddy et al., 2013; Van den Berg and Makusha, 2018). In South Africa, one out of two fathers are absent in their child's life.

This study was conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), a higher learning institution. that is one of the largest in sub-Saharan Africa (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2017). In 2016, a total of 46 520 students were registered (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2017). Out of these registered students, 71.6 % were black African students, 21.9% Indians, 1.1% Whites, followed by 0.1% Coloureds and other races constituting 0.43% (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2017). The university is racially diverse like the province of KwaZulu-Natal. This learning institution is organized into four colleges, namely: College of Agriculture, Engineering, and Science; College of Health Sciences; College of Humanities; and College of Law and Management Studies (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2017).

UKZN is organized into five campuses located in two cities, Durban, and Pietermaritzburg, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal: Edgewood, Howard, Westville, Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine, and Pietermaritzburg. This study was conducted in Howard college campus located in Berea area, Durban. The campus has approximately 15 000 students with a racial composition that resembles that of UKZN and the province of KZN (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2017). Currently, the campus offers a range of degree courses which all fall under the field of science: Law, Management Studies, Humanities (including Architecture and Music), Engineering, Social Sciences (which include Social work), and other sciences (including Geography, Environmental studies, and Nursing).

Figure 3.1: Map of Howard College Campus



Source: Google Maps (2017)

### 3.3 Research Methodology

In a quest to capture individual perspectives and experiences of young mothers and fathers, the present study utilized a qualitative approach to research. Exploring how young mothers can be a barrier to young father's involvement in their child's life, an overall objective of this study, is a complex issue that is embedded in people's different cultural, societal, and gender beliefs. It therefore, requires a detailed and an in-depth understanding of the phenomena

(Bernard and Bernard, 2013). As such, this would have not been achieved effectively by applying quantitative methods or statistical procedures because quantitative approaches only allow a researcher to get a broader understanding. Qualitative approaches allow the research to tap into more complex situations and interpret "the multifaceted nature of human phenomena" (Morrow, 2007: 211). In addition, the qualitative approach was useful in this study because it allowed the researcher to explore the perceptions and experiences of participants and produced a rich interpretation of their behaviours as described by them in the in-depth interviews.

Available literature suggests that when attempting to understand people's perceptions, behaviours and experiences, a qualitative inquiry is the most useful approach (Haverkamp and Young, 2007; Morrow, 2007; Bernard and Bernard, 2013). One of the fundamental purposes of qualitative research is to "describe and clarify experiences as it is lived and constituted in awareness" (Polkinghorne 2005 cited in Morrow, 2007: 211). For example, interacting with the study population and using the local language as a research tool, the researcher is able to explore in detail the richness and depth of social experiences to obtain meanings that are not easy to observe and that cannot be obtained using surveys and other quantitative methods. Furthermore, qualitative inquiries are useful when studying societal factors that are not easily identifiable, population groups that are not easy to reach, and/ or phenomena that is not well understood. As Haverkamp and Young (2007) notes a qualitative inquiry is likely to produce new or unexpected knowledge to the discussion.

### **3.4 Study design**

#### **3.4.1 Interpretive paradigm**

A paradigm guides a research project and sets the standard by which its rigor and trustworthiness are evaluated. Morrow (2007) explains that a paradigm is an umbrella that encompasses a set of beliefs that guides a research project and the researcher's philosophical assumptions (ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology). This study adopted an interpretive paradigm because of the complex nature of its overall objective, that is, to

explore how young mothers may become a barrier to young father's involvement in their child's life. According to the interpretive paradigm, knowledge is co-constructed and meaning is created through people's interaction, thus it must be interpreted (Haverkamp and Young, 2007). In the present study, this paradigm allowed the researcher to tap into the participants' perceptions and experiences regarding fatherhood and parental relations. The interpretive paradigm thus enabled the researcher to effectively capture how different social backgrounds and individual experiences shaped their knowledge and beliefs regarding their parental roles.

Parallel to the paradigm above, the researcher also applied a phenomenological descriptive research design because this study is mostly interested in the lived experiences of young men and women. A phenomenological descriptive study foregrounds the idea that "only those who have experienced a phenomenon can communicate it to the outside world" (Todres and Holloway 2004 cited in Mapp, 2008: 308). This design allowed the researcher to collect rich data from the individuals affected by the phenomenon and was able to produce a thick description of the essence of their experiences (Groenewald, 2004). The idea that knowledge is an active and co-created process between the researcher and participants is in line with the interpretive paradigm. Like Haverkamp and Young (2007) posits, a study that seeks to adopt an interpretive model of understanding would be congruent with the application of a phenomenological description. This design has therefore allowed the researcher to conduct interviews and collect rich description of the experiences of young men and women regarding father involvement.

### **3.5 Sampling strategy**

Sampling refers to a process of selecting a subset of the population to represent the entire population (Creswell and Poth, 2016). The present study used a purposive and snowball sampling methods. In a purposeful sampling technique, the researcher purposefully chooses a group or individuals based on certain criteria and those who he or she assumes would maximize understanding of that phenomenon (Haverkamp and Young, 2007; Creswell and Poth, 2016). This study seeks to capture the perspectives and experiences of young mothers and fathers regarding father involvement. However, identifying who is a young mother and a

father is difficult, especially in a learning institution. As a result, this study also used a snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling, also known as a referral system, is a non-probability sampling where a researcher relies on other participants for referrals (Neuman, 2014). This sampling method carries an assumption that each person is connected to another through a direct or indirect linkage (Neuman, 2014). In the present study, the snowball sampling technique was convenient because young mothers and fathers are not an easy group to locate, but one young father may know a friend or two who are also young fathers, who may know other young fathers, creating a chain of referral until the required number of participants is reached. Thus, Neuman (2014) note that this type of sampling is the best for a researcher working with not easily identifiable populations.

### **3.5.1 Sample characteristics**

The study was conducted among young men and women who were registered students at UKZN at Howard College campus. All the young men and women who participated in the study were young mothers and fathers aged 25 years and below. This age group was selected purposefully to get insights into the phenomenon of young parenthood who are also university students. Also, the broad age group allowed the researcher to obtain diverse views of men and women at different age groups and different levels of study. In total, 17 interviews were held with seven young men and ten women. Only seven young men participated in the study. This was because some of the men who agreed to participate unfortunately withdrew on the day of the interview and also as in other studies on young fatherhood, locating young fathers can be problematic (Chili and Maharaj, 2015; Enderstein and Boonzaier, 2015).

### **3.6 Data Collection**

Since this study seeks to explore how young mothers may become a barrier to young father's involvement in their child's life, a semi-structured in-depth interview was chosen as the best method of data collection. Semi-structured in-depth interviews allow the researcher to obtain detailed information related to the participant's experience and simultaneously allowing them

to share this information on their viewpoint (Turner, 2008). In qualitative inquiries, semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most used method of data collection and are mostly suitable for one-on-one interviews and group discussions (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). This method is also recommended for studies seeking to apply the interpretive paradigm. As Mapp (2008) explains, using semi-structured in-depth interviews in a phenomenological descriptive study allows the researcher to draw a detailed picture of participants' experiences which leads to a better understanding from the participant's viewpoint. The present study used semi-structured in-depth interviews and it was able to extract rich, thick, and detailed information about parental behaviours from the perspectives of young mothers and fathers.

Prior to the interviews, potential participants were emailed an information sheet that described the nature, purpose, and key objectives of the study. Participants who were interested were then contacted via email and WhatsApp, social media messaging platforms, and scheduled appropriate times and venues to conduct interviews. Some participants requested a copy of the interview guide prior to the initial interview because they felt they would be more comfortable having the interview questions beforehand, as such they were emailed the guide on their request. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher explained the purpose and key objectives of the study, committed to the confidentiality of the participant, and reminded participants that their participation is voluntary. All interviews were conducted at a place most convenient to the participant and where they felt comfortable to speak freely and without disruptions.

It is common that in semi-structured in-depth interviews a set of predetermined open-ended questions are designed to inform the interview, then other questions arise as probes during the dialogue between the interviewer and participant (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). In this study, a set of well-structured open-ended questions as an interview guide were prepared and centred around the key objectives of this study. The use of probes and follow up questions allowed the researcher to better understand the participants viewpoint and rule out any misunderstandings (Neuman, 2014). The researcher requested permission from participants to audio record the interviews and participants signed the informed consent form as an indication of their voluntary permission. All interviews were done solely by the

researcher and were audio recorded using both a cell phone and a digital recorder. Participants were given the opportunity to be interviewed in the language of their choice. This allowed them to fully express their perceptions and experiences. As such, some responded in IsiZulu while others responded using a mix of both isiZulu and English. Audio recordings were stored in a laptop and a Universal Serial Bus (USB) flash drive that is password protected by the researcher. The interviews questions were slightly different to accommodate both sexes and thereafter, they were all transcribed verbatim.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

This study used a thematic approach to data analysis. A thematic analysis approach provides a flexible and useful research tool that makes it simple for the researcher to identify, analysis and report themes within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The goal of thematic analysis is to identify patterns or themes in the data that are important and use them to address the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is a process of identifying patterns within the data and these patterns become the categories for data analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the following steps were followed:

**Familiarisation and immersion:** This step refer to the process of transcribing the data collected from conducting interviews with study participants. It involved reading and re-reading the transcripts, as well as taking down of notes of the initial ideas that arise while reading the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The researcher also used the time spent during transcribing the data to gain a thorough understanding of the data which also informed the early stages of analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). After transcribing, the researcher began to go over all the transcripts to check against the original audio recordings to avoid misunderstandings. And lastly, the research read the data with the aim to pick up connections to the broader literature available on the topic at hand.

**Generating initial codes:** Braun and Clarke (2006) note coding as the beginning process of analysis as the researcher organises the raw data into meaningful segments. In the present

study, the researcher read the transcripts again, however, this time with the aim of coding the data into meaningful categories that are relevant to answering the key research questions. The researcher used a qualitative data analysis software, NVivo, to highlight, organise, analyse, and generate codes. The software enabled the researcher to create and store memos that were used to inform the reporting process.

**Searching for themes:** All themes generated in this stage were informed by the key objectives of the study. After generating codes, the research organized the codes into relevant themes that were in accordance with the study objectives. This step involved separating all quotes into relevant theme according to the objectives of the study.

**Refining themes:** Following that, the researcher reread the data to refine the themes, capture meanings that were not captured in the previous stage and helped the researcher to organize data relating to similar themes together which enabled for better understanding of father involvement. All themes and sub-themes were defined and named following the key research questions.

**Naming themes:** The themes were generated based on how they relate to the research questions. As Braun and Clarke (2006) explain, the naming of the themes should capture the essence of the data and determine what aspect of the data each theme captures.

**Producing report:** The final reporting was produced by selecting rich and detailed extracts and a thick understanding of the literature, as well as the conceptual framework. This allowed the researcher to give sound and solid interpretation of the raw data.

### **3.8 Trustworthiness of the study**

In qualitative inquiries, accepting trustworthiness of a study often proves to be difficult. Previous studies have argued that this is likely because the concepts of validity and reliability

are applied in different ways than that of quantitative studies (Shenton, 2004; Nowell et al., 2017). In this study, issues of trustworthiness were addressed by employing the following steps: credibility; transferability; dependability; and conformability.

*Credibility* is concerned with the congruence of the findings of the study with reality (Shenton, 2004: 64). This was achieved by implementing the following provisions: triangulation; ensuring honesty of participants; and peer scrutiny of the study.

- **Triangulation:** The researcher drew on the conceptual framework on influences on responsible fathering by Doherty et al. (1998) as well as other relevant literature on fatherhood. This allowed the researcher to gain different interpretations when explaining the experiences and perceptions of young men and women. The researcher also triangulated the viewpoints of participants against the views of others. This allowed the researcher to gain a rich and detailed picture of participants' perceptions.
- **Honesty of participants:** To ensure honesty of participants, at the beginning of every interview the researcher reminded all individuals that their participation was voluntary and gave them the opportunity to refuse to answer or withdraw at any point in the interview should they feel uncomfortable. As a result, the seventeen young men and women who participated in the study were genuinely willing and provided information freely.
- **Peer scrutiny of the study:** In all the stages of this study, that is from chapter one to chapter five, the researcher allowed the opportunity for scrutiny by the supervisor and research peers and welcomed their insightful feedback. As Shenton (2004) note, the new insight provided by such individuals may be used to challenge the assumptions of the researcher.

*Transferability* refers to the extent to which the findings of the study can be generalizable (Nowell et al., 2017). However, qualitative inquiries are usually specific to societies, environment and are conducted with a small group of individuals, therefore generalizability of their findings is impossible. In this regard, Shenton (2004) suggest that it is therefore the responsibility of a researcher to provide sufficient description of both the study location and the phenomenon being investigated. This can enable the reader to make comparison, identifying similarities and differences. In this study, the researcher has provided a thick description of the study location (UKZN Howard College campus), the sampling methods

employed and selection criteria of participants. In addition, the study reports on the number and characteristics of individuals who participated. Finally, the methods of data collection that were employed have also been thoroughly described.

*Dependability* refers to the evidence provided by the researcher to demonstrate that if the same study was repeated, with the same participants, in the same context and applying the same methods, the findings would be similar (Shenton, 2004). As such, the processes followed when conducting the study should be traceable and clearly reported (Nowell et al., 2017). In this study, a clear inquiry audit was compiled which includes a step-by-step guide to the methods employed, the audio-recordings and verbatim transcripts from the semi-structure in-depth interviews.

“*Conformability* is concerned with establishing that the researcher’s interpretation and findings are clearly derived from the data” (Nowell et al., 2017: 3). Here, the researcher demonstrates that the findings are a true reflection of the ideas and experiences of participants and not the characteristics and preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). A clear audit trail was compiled, and the themes and sub-themes that are presented in the finding’s section were checked and confirmed by the supervisor. Also, confirmability was obtained by allowing the opportunity for peer scrutiny from supervisor and research peers to rule out any assumptions and biases.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Prior to data collection, all documents (a proposal, gatekeepers’ letter, and consent form) and data collection tools (interview guide) were submitted for ethical approval to the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC). After careful review by the ethics committee, full approval was granted on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 2019, then data collection was ready to begin.

The researcher read the consent form and explained all ethical procedures before every interview. The consent form assured participants that their participation is voluntary, and they had a right to withdraw from the study at any time should they feel uncomfortable. The consent form also confirmed that all participants have a right not to answer a question should they feel uncomfortable. Issues of anonymity, confidentiality, and the use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants were also discussed. All participants were given the consent form to sign before the actual interview began.

The researcher outlined the purpose of the study and asked willing participants to give their consent to be tape-recorded. It was also mentioned and confirmed in the consent forms that all interviews will be tape-recorded but only transcripts will be used for research purposes. The researcher also made provisions for psycho-social support, a social worker from UKZN, should a participant feel a sense of emotional or psychological discomfort.

### **3.10 Limitations of the study**

The study had initially aimed to interview twenty men and women, 10 young men and 10 young women. However, only seven young men and ten women participated in the study. The small number of interviewed young men (seven) is related to difficulty in locating young fathers and it has also been mentioned in other studies on young fathers (Chili and Maharaj, 2015). Some of the men who agreed to participate in the study unfortunately withdrew on the day of the interview. Parental involvement is an emotional topic for both young and older parents. As such, it is likely that participants may have misrepresented themselves or withheld some information. In addition, it is possible that some questions may have not been understood. Although, the researcher tried to minimize this by offering a copy of the interview guide and allowing participants to single out questions that might be difficult to understand. Lastly, the interviews were conducted in a language best preferred by the participant, English or IsiZulu. Some participants, in their responses, would mix IsiZulu with English. As a result, in the transcribing process, the researcher might have missed crucial information.

### **3.11 Summary**

The chapter has managed to provide an overview of the methods employed by the researcher in achieving the aims and objectives of this study. It gives an overview of the qualitative approach to research and used a phenomenological descriptive study design. It explains how participants were sampled and how information from seventeen young men and women (7 and 10, respectively), at UKZN Howard College campus was obtained. The chapter also discussed how thematic analysis was applied in the data analysis process. Furthermore, the chapter discussed various ethical procedures followed by the research. For example, how the identity and confidentiality of participants were followed. Finally, the chapter ends by outlining the limitations of the study.

## **Chapter 4 : Results**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Available literature suggests that fatherhood is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, produced not only by a relationship between the man and the child but by a combination of different factors including culture, socio-economic status, interpersonal relationships (Hunter, 2006; Richter et al., 2012; Bhana and Nkani, 2014; Çelik, 2020). As such, the aim of this study was to explore how young mothers may become a barrier to young father's involvement in their children's lives. This chapter, therefore, outlines the main findings obtained from the semi-structured in-depth interviews with young mothers and fathers at a university in Durban. The chapter begins with a brief description of the participants' characteristics, followed by an outline of the main findings of the interviews. The main findings are divided into themes and subthemes derived from the narratives of young men and women. The themes relate directly to the key objectives of this study: (1) parent's perceptions of the father-child relationship; (2) mother's influence over the father-child relationship; and (3) the influence of the parental relationship on the father-child relationship

### **4.2 Characteristics of participants**

The current study consisted of 17 participants, ten young mothers, and seven young fathers, who were full-time registered students at the Howard College Campus at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The small number of interviewed young fathers (seven) is related to difficulty in locating young fathers. Other studies have also reported difficulties in locating young fathers (Chili and Maharaj, 2015; Enderstein and Boonzaier, 2015). All participants were aged between 18 to 25 years old at the time of the interviews. The age of young mothers ranged from 22 years to 25 years old, whereas young fathers ranged from 20 to 25 years old. Only two (Pearl and Zandile) were married and the rest were single and had never married. Four participants (one young mother and three young fathers) said they were no longer in a romantic relationship with the mother of their child. All young parents were unemployed and mostly relied on the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and, family support for

subsistence. The participants were all black African students because they account for most of the student population at the university.

#### **4.2.1 Characteristics of young mothers**

Most young mothers in this study resided in student accommodation, and this meant that they were not living with their children. As a result, they were not the primary caregivers to their children. However, two mothers were married and living with their husbands; therefore, they reported that they were sharing caregiving with their male partners. Only one mother lived at home and reported she was the primary caregiver to her child. For the rest of the mothers, their children mostly lived with grandmothers, both maternal and paternal grandmothers. Five young mothers said their child lives with their mother (maternal family), and only two said the child lived with their father's mother (paternal family).

Most mothers in this study were postgraduate students. Seven out of ten were studying towards their master's degree. Two were studying towards an honours degree and only one was an undergraduate student. The age of their children at the time of the interviews ranged from 9 months to 7 years old. When comparing the child's age with the mother's study level, it was observed that most young mothers had their child while they were studying at university. They reported that they were able to give birth and come back to continue with their studies. Only two participants said they had their child before commencing their studies at the university. All young mothers cited their family as being supportive and motivating them to continue with their studies. All mothers had one child at the time of the interview. Table 4.1 provides a brief description of the young mother's demographic characteristics.

Table 4.1 Demographic characteristics of young mothers

	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age at interview</b>	<b>Age at childbirth</b>	<b>Level of study</b>	<b>Still in relationship with child's father?</b>	<b>Child age</b>	<b>Primary caregiver</b>
1	Emuhle	24	21	Honours	Yes	3	Own mother
2	Fezeka	23	21	Undergrad	No	2	Herself
3	Lungi	22	20	Honours	Yes	2	Own mother
4	Nokhanyo	25	20	Masters	Yes	5	Paternal family
5	Nompilo	25	18	Masters	Yes	7	Own mother
6	Pearl	25	24	Masters	Yes	1	Both parents
7	Samke	24	23	Masters	Yes	9 months	Own mother
8	Simangele	23	22	Masters	Yes	1	Paternal family
9	Zama	23	22	Masters	Do not know	1	Own mother
10	Zandile	25	24	Masters	Yes	1	Both parents

#### 4.2.2 Characteristics of young fathers

Most young fathers in this study resided in the university student's accommodation, which also means that none were primary caregivers to their children. Their children mostly lived with the maternal family, and only three out of the seven fathers said their children lived with their family (own mother). At the time of the interview, most fathers were postgraduate students (five out of seven) and only two were undergraduates. Three were studying towards an honours degree and two were studying towards a master's degree. The ages of their children ranged from one to six years old. At the time of the interview, their ages ranged from 20 to 25 years old. When looking at the mean age at first child, it appears that most of these young fathers had their children during their university years.

Only two out of seven fathers said they were no longer romantically involved with the mother of their child. All young fathers were unemployed at the time of the interviews. They cited NSFAS and family allowances as their primary source of income. Only two of the seven fathers (Sibonelo and Nichols) said they had temporary employment within the university.

One father had two children (twins) and the rest had one child at the time of the interview. Table 4.2 below provides a brief description of the young father’s demographic characteristics.

Table 4.2 Demographic characteristics of young fathers

	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age at interview</b>	<b>Age at childbirth</b>	<b>Level of study</b>	<b>Still in relationship with the child’s mother?</b>	<b>Child age</b>	<b>Primary caregiver</b>
1	Andile	24	18	Masters	No	6	Own mother
2	Sibongiseni	20	19	Undergrad	Yes	1	Own mother
3	Sibonelo	25	24	Honours	Yes	1	Maternal family
4	Sandile	24	22	Masters	Yes	2	Maternal family
5	Seluleko	23	22	Honours	No	1	Maternal family
6	Mqhele	21	19	Undergrad	Yes	3	Maternal family
7	Nicholas	22	18	Honours	No	3	Own mother

### **4.3 Perceptions of the father-child relationship**

This study found that perceptions about the father-child relationship were produced by a combination of different factors. These perceptions stem from the individual’s understanding of the meaning of fatherhood, father involvement; and his or her relationship with his own father. The following themes were derived from their accounts and it seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how young men and women perceive the father-child relationship.

#### **4.3.1 Fathering as perceived by young parents**

The findings of this study suggest that young men and women had different understandings of the meaning of fatherhood. Young women commented that a father provides financial

resources for the child; he is physically and emotionally available to the child; he takes responsibility for the child and provides protection to the child. Two mothers strongly expressed that the role of father goes beyond financial provision. They stress that a father is someone who contributes to the wellbeing of the child and not merely through their sperm in the reproduction process.

*“In my words, a father is someone who acknowledges that they are not a father because they impregnated someone with their sperm, but they are a father because they are present, they are a father because they provide. Not just financially but also emotionally and spiritually and in terms of providing love for the child, being there for the child.”*  
(Nompilo, Female, 25 years)

*“A father is someone who, besides the provision of money for nappies and clothes, is invested in the child. Besides providing, we know it is important, but it must be deeper than just money. A father needs to know his child, have a relationship with the child, and develop an emotional relationship with the child besides the mother being involved. A father must have a real connection with the child.”* (Simangele, Female, 23 years)

The interviews above suggest that young women want fathers who provide emotional support as much as they provide financial support. In their responses it is clear that fathers contribute emotionally and spiritually to the well-being of the child and they build an emotional connection with the child. Fathers were also expected to be providers, to provide financial resources in terms of food, nappies, and clothes. However, one young mother strongly expressed that a father’s role goes deeper than the provision of money. She said a father should develop an emotional relationship with the child. On the other hand, Fezeke below shares a different view to what other mothers believe to be the essential roles of a father. She believes that being a father is equally important as being a mother. Gender ideals and expectations dictate which sex should play which role in childrearing. This does not only subject many fathers, especially young fathers, to the status of absent fathers, but it also strips the child of an opportunity to be raised by both parents.

*“I think a father is just as important as being a mother, basically, it is the same thing. However, because of biology or whatever the roles are somewhat different. I think a father should be able to fulfil the needs of a child just as much as it is expected from the mother. Like, it does not mean that if you are a mother now, you need to change the nappies, bath*

*the child, and so on, but we should be both able to do that. Also, a father should be present and just be as much of a parent as you would expect a mother to be.”* (Fezeka, Female, 23 years)

On the other hand, from the accounts of young fathers, it emerged that becoming a father signified a change from boyhood to manhood. There is a saying in isiZulu that “ubudoda abukhulelwa” (manhood or maturity has no age), one becomes a man through his actions. In this study, young fathers reported that fatherhood represents a transition from being a boy to a man. In their responses, becoming a father meant they had to change their actions and act like a man, facing their responsibilities. However, they also cited financial constraints as an obstacle to their new fatherhood role. One father commented that his lack of finances prevented him from playing a role in his child’s life. As a result, he could not see himself as a father.

*“To me, being a father goes beyond just providing financially. It means being present in every step of the child’s life and not running away from your responsibilities. That is all I can gather from being a father. Because to be honest, I do not have much experience in being a father because she lives with her mom. Financially, I am still struggling, I am hustling.”* (Sandile, Male, 24 years)

*“It means I have to provide for my family. I must make sure that my children are safe and protected, and make sure they have a bright future. I must support and take good care of them. Also, I must change my ways, act like a father and not like a boy. That is being a father to me.”* (Nicholas, Male, 22 years)

*“It is someone who is there for the offspring in every manner; financially, emotionally, and all the kind of support. Someone to give you a shoulder that you can cry on. Someone who is there to protect you basically”* (Seluleko, Male, 23 years)

The study found that young men acknowledge their role as a provider for the child and the family. However, it was observed that not all of them took providing as an essential role of fathers. One man said fathering goes beyond financial provision to having greater involvement in the child’s life. In his response he said a father needs to be ‘present in every step of the child’s life.’ Some young father felt that fathers also need to protect their children and keep them safe. Moreover, young men felt that fathers provide support to their children.

Other young fathers expressed that prioritizing has become an essential element in decision making for fathers. In their responses, young men mentioned that they had to consider the needs of the child first before their own. One father described how he prioritized buying nappies and clothes for the child before he bought himself a pair of sneakers. They commented that their time, attention, and money were now directed to the child first, and then everything else follows. This suggest that fathers become less concerned about their own needs. Their priorities have changed since they have become fathers as they are more worried about meeting the needs of their children.

*“There are a lot of things that you move away from when you become a father. Like, you must think about your children first before your needs. For example, I may need something, but my children may need something more than I do. Therefore, I must prioritize their needs before mine. They come first, and I come after them. I think about them first because I am now a father... Like I said, I wanted to buy clothes for myself, and if I notice that my children are short of something like nappies or anything, I will have to buy for them before I purchase my new pair of sneakers.”* (Sibongiseni, Male, 20 years)

#### **4.3.2 Father involvement as narrated by young parents**

From the interviews with young men and women, it emerged that it was necessary to unpack how they understood father involvement because it had a direct influence on the decision-making process. As such, young parents commented that father involvement goes beyond the normative understanding of fatherhood. In their accounts, young men and women reported that father involvement goes beyond the roles of provider and protector to being actively involved in the child’s day-to- day life. Specifically, they reported that a father spends time with his child. He has physical and emotional contact with the child, and he keeps in touch with the child by calling them regularly.

*“An involved father is one who knows the daily needs, activities, and experiences of the child. A person who is there consistently, who does not need to be chased after, and who is just as invested as the mother of the child, who is interested in the child and their wellbeing, and a father who makes as much of an effort as everybody else in the child's life and their wellbeing.”* (Fezeka, Female, 23 years)

*“An involved father is not just an ATM father [economic father] that only provides financial resources. An involved father would talk to his child randomly like random phone calls, talks to the child, and ask how the child is doing.” (Samke, Female, 24 years)*

*“Well... to me, it means in my children's lives, I have a role to play. Like, your children should know that they have a father and you also know that you have children. You are not away from them, but you are available in every way possible for them. You support them, even when you cannot support them financially, but you are available to them. You spend time with them, even when you live far from them but remember that you have children and show your love for them. Like, be there for them.” (Sibongiseni, Male, 20 years)*

In the interview's availability was the most common phrase used to describe father involvement. One mother said the young father of the child is consistently there. A young man said he is available in every way possible. In this regard, a father's involvement is measured by his availability to the child. Young parents reported that fathers show their involvement by spending time with their child, keeping in touch through regular phone calls and knowing their child's day-to-day needs and experiences. Interestingly, some young men and women felt that there was a difference between being a father and being a dad. It was observed that the distinction was mostly determined by their actions. In their view, the child is related to the father by biology, but a dad has an emotional, psychological, and social connection with the child. One mother said that dad has a close relationship with the child. As such, this claim was probed to further solicit the deeper meaning of this term. Participants were asked if they also felt the same.

*“A father is a person who is outside your life. A daddy is present, someone with whom you share a close relationship. A daddy is someone you know that when you are in trouble, you can call, and you know they will definitely come through for you because they have built a name for themselves. A daddy is someone who is responsible for their family; they put their family first in everything and the way they conduct themselves.” (Nompilo, Female, 25 years)*

*When you speak of a dad, I get the impression of a present person, who has a strong relationship with the child. However, a father, on the other hand, maybe a person who*

*only provides financial support, who does not know anything else about the child. Therefore, to some extent, there is some truth in this statement because not all fathers are willing to sacrifice their time to invest in the child and engage with the child.”* (Sandile, Male, 24 years)

From the responses above, it was observed that the quality of relationship that one has with the child determines whether he is a father or a dad. Young parents used phrases such as close relationship and strong relationship to describe a dad’s involvement with the child. A father was described as someone who is not present but provides financially. One father reported that a dad sacrifices his time and invests in the child. Therefore, it was clear in the interviews that a dad was more involved in the child’s life than a father.

On the other hand, some young men expressed that their status affected their involvement in their child’s life. They explained that as students they were not employed and as a result, they did not have enough opportunity to interact with their child. As a result, they reported that they did not recognize themselves as involved fathers because they were away from their children because of being at school. In addition, they explained that they lacked the financial resources to fulfil their cultural duties such as the payment of *ilobolo* (bride-worth) and *inhlawulo* (damages) which are paramount to the acknowledgement of paternity (Makusha and Richter, 2016). Therefore, their inability to be physically and financially involved in their children's lives created feelings of dissatisfaction. For young fathers, fathering is contingent on the ability to take responsibility for one's actions. In this regard, these young fathers expressed disappointment in themselves and, therefore, did not recognize themselves as involved fathers.

*“Well... since I am a student and in a different province away from home, the only time I get to be involved in my child's life is during the holidays. I always try to catch up on the moments I have missed in his life, which I understand is not an easy task.”* (Andile, Male, 24 years)

*“The reason why I say I am not a dad is because I believe in order to be a father, you need to have authority and support your children financially. Unfortunately, currently, I do not have that because I am a Zulu man and there are certain things, I would need to do for the maternal family in order for them to recognize me as completely a father. So, I am just a*

*half father for now, and I understand because I do not have financial resources to do what is required for the child.” (Sandile, Male, 24 years)*

### **4.3.3 Participants experiences of being fathered**

Young men and women in this study had different relationships and experiences with their own fathers. Some (seven out of seventeen) maintained that they had very good relationships with their own fathers while others (ten out of seventeen) observed that they had no contact with their fathers. Only four participants (three young mothers and one young father) said their relationship with their own fathers were perfect. This was probably because they were residing in the same household as their fathers during their childhood. Three participants (two young fathers and one mother) said they had minimal interaction with their father. Another three (two young mothers and one father) said their fathers left when they were very young. One young mother said her father died when she was only 11 years. However, she has terrible memories of him because *“he was a violent and an unpleasant person to be around”* (Fezeka, Female, 23 years). The rest of the participants said their fathers were never part of their lives, and there was absolutely no relationship.

*“He is like a brother to me. Our relationship is strong to the extent that I take him as my older brother. We talk about a lot of things. We do things together, and so on. I would say we have a strong relationship, and he loves his grandson (my son). My dad also had me when he was also in his teen years, so I think that also contributes to this big brother and little brother relationship.” (Andile, Male, 24 years)*

*“It is all right, but you know how Zulu fathers are. It is very rare to sit down and talk to them. Our relationship is just okay, but it is not the same as the relationship with the mother. I cannot sit down with him to chat, to talk about anything, and have him listen. I would only greet him, and that is it. Like I cannot even ask him how his day was, we do not have that tight relationship. He is my father, like 'hello dad, would you like something to eat?' That is just about our only conversations” (Zama, Female, 23 years)*

*“I have never had a relationship with that man. My father had multiple partners, a Casanova. As a result, he had many children; I am his sixth child. So, he was the type of person who gives you all the attention until he finds a new partner. For example, I was*

*born in 1996, and in 1997 he had another. In 1994 he had 2 children from different mothers. So, you can imagine, he was that type of person. Therefore, I did not have any relationship with him.” (Sandile, Male, 24 years)*

From the interviews, it was observed that the relationship between participant’s biological parents influenced their own relationship and experiences. One young man reported that the dissolution of the relationship between his parents also signalled the end of his relationship with his biological fathers. For example, Sandile explains that his father gave him and his mother all his attention until he found a new partner. Men were more likely to enjoy a strong relationship with their father if their father was still married to their mothers and resided in the same household. Zama, on the other hand, reveals that she grew up with both parents. Her parents were married, and they resided in the same household, but she had a very troubled relationship with her father. According to her, "he was there but not there." Her father was present in the household, however, because they did not connect emotionally, he was not available. Hence, she reported that her relationship with her father was almost non-existent.

Also, the study found that young men and women used their past experiences as lessons to navigate future relationships. One mother expressed that her experience with her father indirectly shapes her relationship with other male figures. Fezeka expressed this:

*“For some people, I think your relationship with your father sort of shapes your relationship with other men and how they view men in the future” (Fezeka, Female, 23 years)*

In this study young mothers and fathers reported that they used their experiences to navigate their relationship with their children.

*“I wish he would have a father like mine. I know that people are not the same, but that relationship and connection between a father and a child is important. A relationship where a child is able to have conversations with the father.” (Emuhle, Female, 24 years)*

*“Yes, it had a huge influence. Like when you grow up, you realize that your father figure was absent, and you had your mom. Now, when you have a child of your own, you start to realize certain traits about your upbringing, and you decide that you do not want your child to go through the same experience. They say part of being a man is the ability to*

*learn from your father's mistakes. Thus, do not repeat his mistakes.” (Sandile, Male, 24 years)*

*“Like I have highlighted earlier, for me being there for my child, having a solid relationship with my child. I want a relationship with my child, whereby I can go out with the child without the mother. That is something that has never happened to me. So, there are things that I had desired before that, like if I had this or that, my life would have been better. Therefore, I intend to provide those things to my children to close the gap that I have so that I upgrade the fatherhood version to another level.” (Seluleko, Male, 23 years)*

All the young mothers in this study admitted that their relationship with their fathers shaped how they perceived an ideal father for their child. Young fathers, on the other hand, said that they wanted to be good and better fathers to their children. They did not want their negative experiences to overshadow their relationship with their children. The young men expressed their desire to have a solid relationship with their children. However, it is important to note that there was a difference between those who had a good relationship with their fathers and those who did not. Those who had good relationships used their own fathers as a point of reference as to what they expected from the father of their child, in the case of mothers. Those mothers who did not have any relationship with their own fathers were willing to facilitate that father-child relationship at whatever cost, and the fathers said that they would not repeat their fathers’ mistakes.

#### **4.3.4 Father-child relationship**

Most young parents felt that a father-child relationship was paramount for the child's wellbeing. Young men and women reported that a healthy father-child relationship could put an end to many social ills such as transactional and intergenerational relationships and gender-based violence. Young women argued that sometimes girls enter toxic relationships because they desperately want to be loved by a dominant male figure. In their responses, young mothers commented that if children had experienced a close relationship with their fathers, they would not find themselves in such situations. Young women mostly emphasized this.

*“I have always noticed how we grow up as women. We, who did not grow up with a father, find ourselves in hurting and toxic relationships because we desperately want to be loved by a male figure. But if the child had that bond with her father most probably, they would find the same guy that treats her much like her father.”* (Lungi, Female, 23 years)

*“It is very important for the child, especially when they are growing up. I think it is also the reason why some girls end up dating 'sugar daddies' because they did not experience a father's love, so they are searching for that love. Therefore, they date an older man because they want to experience that love from a father.”* (Nokhanyo, Female, 25 years)

For young men, a father-child relationship was paramount because it gave children a sense of security. According to these young men, children who lack this relationship usually encounter several behavioural problems and find themselves in toxic relationships. They also strongly expressed that building a healthy father-child relationship will help change the negative stereotypes surrounding young fathers and build a new narrative of a father who is loving, caring, and interested in his children.

*“A father or a male figure represents a figure of authority in a child's life. I do understand most people do grow up without a father and depend on a male figure in the house, but a father represents a figure of authority. Therefore, without a father in the house, some children lack discipline and order.”* (Sandile, Male, 24 years)

*“I think a father provides guidance to his children. A father teaches his children certain things about life, and children also learn to communicate with their father. Like when they have troubles in life, they have their father to tell, and he will give them guidance. There are certain things which they might feel they cannot talk to their mother about, and they need their father. As a father, I must build a good relationship with my children so that they can have a different perspective on men. A different perception from the dominant perception that men are trash. A child will also learn how to behave, treat, and respect a male figure through his or her father's love.”* (Sibongiseni, Male, 20 years)

One young woman expressed that perceptions about father-child relationship are dependent on the individual's relationship with their own father. This young woman recognized her mother for the support she had given her throughout her life. She strongly expressed that her mother did everything for her and she was able to fill the space of not having a father. She therefore felt that the father-child relationship was not that important.

*“I think valuing a father-child relationship stems from the type of relationship you had with your own father. I would not say having a father-child relationship is important because I see myself as an example. I had a father, but my father was more like a financial father, and there were times he would not send money. So, I did not see the need for him because my mom did everything for us; she always made sure that there was not that gap. Personally, I do not see that much of an importance.”* (Samke, Female, 24 years)

Although most men and women agreed with the narrative that a father-child relationship was important, others added that this relationship was also dependent on the sex of the child. In their responses, mothers commented that men find it easier to communicate and relate to a boy child than a girl child. Young women also expressed that it was the society that created an environment where one sex was more valuable than the other. As a result, young mothers felt that preference for a boy child often led to men cheating on their partners and eventually abandoning them.

*“Although I cannot explain this in detail, what I have noticed is that a man will love you more just because you gave them a son, because men are always hoping to get boy children. I am not sure, but I feel like it is easier for men to get along with a boy child, and the kind of relationship they would have with the boy child is much stronger than the one with a girl child. I do not know about the long-term effects of that, but men find it easier to relate to the boy child than the girl child. I feel like they are always happy when they have a boy child.”* (Lungi, Female, 23 years)

*“I would say in this society that we live in; people have standards and expectations. For example, when you are pregnant people will always expect a boy child and fathers would be like ‘I want a boy child’ when you go for an ultrasound and find out that you are carrying a girl, then your relationship begins to change, and things become sour. Others will resort to cheating because they are searching for a woman that will give them a boy child.”* (Simangele, Female, 23 years)

These narratives above prompted the researcher to investigate this phenomenon further. It was found that the preference for a child of a particular sex was a common phenomenon. However, young women commented that it was mostly influenced by the father’s background and geographical location. For example, young mothers reported that child sex preference was more common in the rural areas than in the urban areas. One young mother said fathers

in the urban areas are more educated and therefore do not care as much about the sex of the child.

*“For some, it does, and for some, it does not. Fathers are not the same. For instance, fathers in rural areas believe that a father should be close to a boy child, and the girl child should be close to her mother. However, fathers in urban areas who are modernized and educated; they do not care about the sex of the child, either boy or girl. The relationship and communication with the child are equal among all his children.”* (Nokhanyo, Female, 25 years)

On the other hand, some young men simply dismissed this narrative and commented that children should be loved and treated equally. Interestingly, they expressed that in most cases, a person's actions are a result of their childhood experiences. One young father commented that if children are not loved equally, they will never appreciate the value of love and may therefore fail to love other people. Maintaining that he would love his children equally regardless of the sex of the child.

*“The bond does not actually change, but the circumstances will change. For example, if I have a daughter and a son, obviously, I will give them both equal love. However, if I do not, the circumstances between the two will be very different. Like I have outlined earlier for a daughter, and let us say in this instance, you do not give enough love to your son. Then it becomes obvious that your son will never appreciate the value of love. Therefore, if he does not appreciate the value of love, he will never be able to transfer or be in the space of loving any other person.”* (Seluleko, Male, 23 years)

#### **4.3.5 Social construction of a father’s role**

Some young mothers reported that their beliefs about the roles of a father were strongly influenced by what is socially expected from a man. It was observed that these young women subscribed to the gendered division of labour as they expressed their beliefs regarding childrearing. Men are generally expected to be the breadwinner and a provider of the family whereas women are perceived to be better equipped for domestic work, childrearing, and caregiving. Young women felt that mothers do a better job at taking care of the children.

*“If he is going to eHluhluwe I will not allow him to go alone with the child since there are no females in that house. The child needs attention, and they have never lived with a child, none of them have experience with a child. I cannot risk taking my child there, at least when he (my child) has grown. When he does not need his diapers to be changed, he does not need formula, and he eats normal food like everyone else, then I would loosen up. For now, I am scared.”* (Zama, Female, 23 years)

*“It would not have worked out, not that I am saying men cannot raise children, but a mother always does a better job. Sometimes when a child lives with his or her father, is it because we trust his mother or his sisters to take responsibility, it is very rare to find a child living with the father alone.”* (Simangele, Female, 23 years)

*“Social constructions if I may put it in general terms, because a father figure or father role is constructed by society about what a father ought to do.”* (Zandile, female, 25 years)

The interviews suggest that young women regulate father involvement because of the beliefs that men are less capable at childcare than women. Participants felt that changing a diaper, bathing, and feeding the child was the responsibility of women and they were more likely to feel that men were less experienced at caregiving. For example, Zama said she cannot risk leaving the child alone with the father because he does not have any experience with the child. Participants further explained that when children lived with the paternal family it is because they trust the women in the house and not the father of the child.

#### **4.4 Factors influencing father involvement**

Young men and women described a ranged of factors as influences of father’s involvement. These factors mostly related to personal relationships between biological parents, such as the support from the father and the relationship quality, and others were related to the broader social structure such as family, and cultural practices.

##### **4.4.1 Support from the father**

Having a child at an early age is a stressful experience for young people. In most cases, they

are shamed and ostracised, more especially by their family members. Young mothers said at some point they felt like they had failed their parents by having a child out of wedlock and while still studying.

*“My dad said, 'he loved and trusted me with everything.' I think they had dreams that I would finish my studies without a child, find a great job, and support the family. So, having a child this early disrupted his dreams, and then he felt betrayed. I think that is what hurt him the most.”* (Samke, Female, 24 years)

*“Her mother was very emotional about it like I remember she called over the phone, she was crying and shouting at the same time. On the other side, her father has never said a word to me until this day. I heard that he was disappointed too, and he was also in tears because they had never anticipated this, and they were extremely disappointed.”* (Sandile, Male, 24 years)

Early childbearing is often an emotional experience for both the mother and her family. The interviews above suggest that families go through different emotions when they are first notified about the pregnancy. Their families often feel hurt, disappointed, and betrayed. Samke above, describes how she betrayed her family and disrupted their dreams for her when she fell pregnant. At this crucial moment, young mothers often feel like their world is shutting down and they need support from the father of the child to reassure them that they will uphold their end of the bargain and raise the child together. Young mothers described how the father of their children reassured them:

*“He was understanding and accepted the child. He said, 'we will raise the child together. There is no turning back now, and there is no other way. We must raise the child together.’”* (Nokhanyo, Female, 25 years)

*“He was very supportive. I really did not trust him because we were young at that time. I thought he would run away. He was very supportive. He would accompany me to the clinic, and if he could not, he would give me money to go. He would buy anything I was craving, like everything I wanted. He was very supportive.”* (Emuhle, Female, 24 years)

*“Very supportive, maybe I would have lost my mind if it were not for him; he was very supportive. His family was excited, and they were also very supportive of us.”* (Simangele, Female, 23 years)

Young mothers speak about the different kinds of support that they receive from the father of their child. Nokhanyo and Simangele speak of the emotional support they received from the father. This is usually when the father acknowledges paternity of the child and assures them that they will raise the child together. Emuhle speaks of economic support, where the father would give her money to attend the antenatal clinic and buy her anything that she was craving at the time. She also makes mention of the father attending clinical appointments with her. However, for some young fathers, such news comes as a shock because they are either not ready to handle the responsibilities associated with becoming a father or they are not socially and economically able to take on the new role. Thus, their reactions differ as some even go to the extent of questioning the paternity of the child. They therefore rarely provide any care and support during this critical stage.

*“Honestly, I was scared and shocked. Also, I think I might have reacted in an inappropriate manner because I did not even want to be anywhere near her for about 2 to 3 weeks. I did not now know how to react.”* (Sibonelo, Male, 25 years)

*“To be honest, he was not supportive at all, and this was his second child, and I knew about it. But how he treated me, he would say he does not trust me, but he knew how I fell pregnant. He said I was not loyal to him. He would accuse me of all the bad things, but deep down, he knows he was trying to run away from the added pressure and responsibility of having a second child, and he is still in school. So, I understood his behaviour and what was the cause behind it.”* (Lungi, Female, 23 years)

It is evident from the discussions above that young mothers go through the worst during their pregnancy. Describing the tension and the lack of trust in their relationship, one young mother mentions how she was ill-treated, called names, and accused of cheating by the father of her child when she notified him about her pregnancy. Another young father admits he acted in an inappropriate manner and avoided any contact for more than two weeks. As a result, it was observed that a good relationship with the father of the child gives mothers the strength to get through the pregnancy stage. Moreover, participants felt that a father who is supportive at this stage are more likely to be a good father to the child, while a father who is not supportive or lacks interest at this stage is more likely to abandon his child, However, as noted in the expressions above, not all young fathers can provide care and support as they are facing their own challenges. Some men are not ready to be fathers at an early age.

*“It also depends on the relationship that you have with the father of your child. He reassures you that everything will be okay in the end.”* (Nompilo, Female, 25 years)

#### **4.4.2 The mother and father relationship**

Young men and women in this study expressed that the relationship between biological parents of the child was the most crucial factor that influenced a father’s involvement. Father involvement was likely to be influenced by the relationship with the mother of the child. It was observed that when biological parents were still in romantic relationships, mothers were supportive and father involvement was great as opposed to situations when the relationship was weak.

*“He knows he has not performed his rightful duties. He would sometimes tell me that he knows that I am the key to his child, and I have full power over the child. So, if I mess up things between the two of us, my relationship with my child rests in your hands. If you do not want me to see my child, I will never see my child, my relationship with my child depends on you.”* (Samke, Female, 24 years)

*“The mother of my child lied to him, and she said they were going to the Department of Home Affairs to apply for the child's certificate, the unabridged certificate because it requires both parents to be present. That was how I first saw my child. So, she is very helpful in a way that, when they deny me access, she would make something up and help me see my child. I should also admit that she is doing this because things are still smooth between us.”* (Sandile, Male, 24 years)

*“When there is a dispute between mother and father, a mother can say and do things that may push the father away for good. They may also say certain things that can make you doubt the child being yours. For example, she might say I slept with so and so. In her mind, she is doing it out of anger, and she wants you to feel pain, but she does not realize that she is killing your relationship with the child.”* (Sibongiseni, Male, 20 years)

Young man and women expressed how their relationship between the mother and father of the child influenced father involvement. In instances where parents were still in a romantic relationship, young fathers recognised how their partner disobeyed cultural and family beliefs

to grant them access to their children for example, Sandile acknowledges that his romantic relationship with the mother of his child motivated her to defy her family when they denied him access. On the other hand, Sibongiseni mentions that sometimes when mothers are angry with the child's father, they may limit the father's interaction with the child by passing insensitive remarks that pushes the father away from the child.

Some young mothers feel quite strongly that parents should resolve their differences and prioritize the child. Specifically, participants commented that whatever happens between them, as parents, it should not interfere the child. Also, young mothers felt that maintaining good relations between parents even after separation will have a positive influence on the child.

*"I think it comes with maturity, knowing that whatever happens between you two, it does not involve the child. If he wants to see the child, there should not be any drama. I should encourage him to be involved in the child's life because this is important for the child."*  
(Lungi, Female, 23 years)

*"If the mother, even though after separation, maintains that good relationship and constantly saying good things about the father. It is going to have a positive influence on the child, and they will have a healthy relationship."* (Zandile, female, 25 years)

Young parents also describe how entry of a new sexual partner created tension and conflict in the relationships, which subsequently resulted in maternal gatekeeping. Some young men felt some women use the child as bait to force them into staying in the relationship. Young mothers described their actions as merely responding to relationship challenges and ultimately reducing the potential harmful impact on the child. One young mother said she wanted the father of her child to feel the pain she went through when he cheated on her.

*"You know how jealousy is, especially with us baby mamas. It will change for some time because we sometimes do things because we want to punish the father by preventing him from having access to the child. Sometimes we say 'we want to hurt them. I want him to feel the pain I went through when you cheated on me.' But it is not supposed to be like that. Although we do it, it is not a good thing."* (Emuhle, Female, 24 years)

*"I have seen it in many instances where the mother basically uses the child to manipulate the father for their own gains, in most cases. Or just to mess things up for the new person*

*or his new partner. So, they use children to spite of the situation in many ways.”* (Zandile, female, 25 years)

Young men and women reported that any change in the mother-father relationship has a detrimental effect on the father-child relationship. Although in most cases, fathers appear to withdraw their involvement with the child after the dissolution of the relationship, the study finds that mothers are also capable of restricting or negatively influencing the father-child relationship after the relationship ends. Young fathers felt powerless and described how difficult father involvement becomes after a separation. One young father said his involvement would be difficult because there would be tension between him and the mother of his child.

*“If we were to break up it would be difficult to see the child because there would be tension between us, probably she would be angry at me. So, if I ask to see the child, it would be difficult because there is tension, and the mood is different now.”* (Sibongiseni, Male, 20 years)

#### **4.4.3 Consistent negative remarks about the father**

This study found that consistently passing negative comments about the father in front of the child was one-way that mothers influenced the father-child relationship. Young parents reported that labels used to describe the father, both good and bad, influenced the child's relationship with the father. They commented that when people around the child regularly refer to the father as a failure or unsupportive the child eventually begins to adopt a similar attitude. Both young mothers and fathers strongly felt that passing such remarks will negatively influence the child's relationship with the father

*“A child that young are a clean slate then when they grow up, they become a product of their environment. The people around the child deposit information in the child. There is no 4-year-old child who knows or understands that his father does not support them. The people around utter words like 'your father is a failure, he does not support you, and he does this or does that.' So, this also resonates to the idea that women, either mother of the child, aunt, or grandmother, will bad mouth the father in front of the child and the child*

*carries that. No child hates their father from the day they are born; children love everyone.” (Sandile, Male, 24 years)*

*“If I, as a parent and living with the child, am constantly talking bad and cursing the child's father. That will have a negative impact on the child in the way he or she perceives his or her father. Also, the people at home and around the child may also influence this. The words they utter about the child's father 'he is irresponsible; he abandoned you' can influence the child's perspective about the father.” (Zandile, female, 25 years)*

*“This will later create a situation where if the father wants to be involved in the child's life one day, their relationship will never work out because already the child has anger, and the negative ideas has been instilled in his or her head that men are irresponsible.” (Simangele, Female, 23 years)*

The study found that young parents strongly believed that children are taught to speak, behave, walk, and act in a particular way, and in most cases, these teachings come from the mother and other immediate family members. Specifically, Sandile believes that ‘people around the child deposit information to the child and the child becomes a product of their environment.’ It was observed that when mothers and other members in her family pass negative remarks and refer to the father as irresponsible, it creates a lasting memory for the child and affects their relationship with the father. As Çelik (2020) argued in her study, these messages gradually affects the child’s emotional bond and mental representation of the father from an early age. Consequently, this mostly affects young, unemployed, student fathers who may not be able to live up to these expectations. Thus, they are restricted access to their children, and some may even lose interest in the father-child relationship.

#### **4.4.4 Family relations**

The study observed that young men and women use their family teachings, values, and cultural beliefs about the roles of parenting to navigate their relationship with their children. Boys are taught from an early age that men provide and protect the family and girls are taught to care for the family and bear children. Makusha and Richter (2016) argued in this regard, that family attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour about the expected roles of a father regulate

father involvement. For example, in this study young women reported that they experience pressure at home to demand certain things from the father of the child.

*“We also get pressure from home, saying ‘why do not you call the father of your child and tell him that you are running out of diaper and formula,’ but you know that he (father of the child) does not work that could be a problem.”* (Nompilo, Female, 25 years)

*“One way is through the way you were raised up. For instance, words like ‘why does not he provide for the child’ create a perception that fathers are providers. What about the mother? So, I feel like families, either side, they will always have influence or impose some sort of belief or whatever.”* (Zandile, female, 25 years)

From the interviews above, young mothers shared that their families emphasized the role of fathers as providers. When they ran out of diapers or formula milk for the child their families told them to request it from the father. From their account, fathers are expected to provide regardless of their financial status. Nompilo said she felt pressured to ask for diapers and milk from the father even though he was unemployed. One mother reported that she felt like her family was imposing their beliefs on her and influencing her attitudes towards the father. One young father, Andile, who also agrees with the arguments above, said that he reached a point where it was necessary for him and his family to take full custody of the child because he could not handle the pressure from the mother and her family. He explains:

*“I took my child from her; I think 3 years ago. I made this decision because the child is my responsibility as a father, so I took my child out of a realization that I am still a student, and I could not carry out those responsibilities. For example, I cannot afford to take him to the clinic to see a doctor. When winter is approaching, I must buy winter clothes, and so on. Therefore, I took the decision to take him home to live with my parents. In that way, he will get everything he needs to grow.”* (Andile, Male, 24 years)

Andile understands that a father he is expected to take responsibility for his child and part of that responsibility is to provide financial and material resource for the child. He explains that because he is a full-time student and unemployed, he is therefore unable to carry out this responsibility. For example, he could not afford to buy clothes, food or send his child to the doctor. One mother reported that she felt like her family was imposing this belief on her and influencing her attitudes towards the father. He also acknowledged the role played by the

mothers' family which made it possible to reach such an arrangement. He said they were understanding and trusted him and his family.

*“Her family was also understanding which might have also made it easier to reach this arrangement. They trusted me and my family and they understand that we wanted what was best for the child.”* (Andile, Male, 24 years)

Unfortunately, most young fathers do not have family support. Some do not have it because of their family's financial situation which may inhibit them from taking custody of the child. Others do not have family support because they have not paid *inhlawulo* or *ilobolo* which are culturally important should a father wish to take custody of the child. As Madhavan and Roy (2012) highlights, payment of *inhlawulo* or *ilobolo* is a symbolic acceptance of fatherhood. On the other hand, one young mother expressed how she was rejected by the family of the father of her child. She reported that she tried to reach out to the paternal family even after the father of her child had denied paternity; however, they did not show any interest.

*“I tried to explain to them that it was their son who lied and shut us off because at some point my family called and tried to arrange a meeting with his family, but he refused and made-up excuses. It reached a point where he would ignore our calls then I decided to take it upon myself to reach out to you. They said they were surprised, and he has never said anything of that regard to them. They said we, my family, should have come to announce the pregnancy. I felt like for them, they thought the reason why I did not announce the pregnancy earlier is because I first announced it to a different family, and they denied, and now I am coming to them. So that is also why I have excluded them in my child's life because if they had accepted my child, even if they were not supporting but asking about the child, showing interest in the child, that would have been enough. So, I feel like they have that idea that this is not his child, and they do not want to be part of the child.”* (Lungi, Female, 23 years)

Lungi explains her attempt to create a relationship with the family of the father of the child however, she was rejected. First, she tried to contact them through their son, but she failed because he had denied paternity and was hiding it from his family. When she tried to contact them directly, they rejected her because her family did not follow the traditional route of announcing the child. In the Zulu culture of South Africa, it is required by tradition that the

maternal family goes to the paternal family to announce the pregnancy (*Ukubika isisu*) (Nkani, 2017). In Lungi's case, she could not announce her pregnancy because the two families are separated by distance and the father denied paternity. However, the father's family assumed she did not announce her pregnancy on time because she was not sure who the father was, or she had announced it to a different family and failed. As a result, she has taken a decision to completely exclude them from her child's life.

#### **4.4.5 The influence of culture**

Young men and women in this study cited culture as one of the most common factors that influenced a mother's decision to either encourage or prevent a father's involvement. Both young parents expressed the importance of culture concerning their parenting roles. To them, culture represents the wishes and values of their family. Therefore, dishonouring their culture is a sign of disrespect to the mother, her family as well as the child.

*“Even if you could not afford it because we were in school together, but at least could you have asked your family for assistance or a loan, and then you will pay them back. It is not about me or you this time; it is about our families because we were together when this child was conceived, and now a child involves both families. Definitely, it would have changed my relationship because I would have been hearing talks from my family that clearly, 'he is not responsible, he does not care about you, and then how was he going to love you fully or respect you even.’” (Nompilo, Female, 25 years)*

*“For me, who is not getting married and impregnated out of wedlock, it means I went to her family and stole something. Therefore, I should first apologize for the wrong that I have done and reconciled with the family; only then, her father will give me that consent. I committed a sin to his family I cannot come in and take the child, the proper way is to first apologize for my sins and pay the damages, and then I can have the child. That is how I believe it is done.” (Seluleko, Male, 23 years)*

The interviews suggest that having a child out of wedlock is viewed as a sin and the disrespect to the family must be reconciled by following certain cultural processes. Seluleko explains that for him having a child out of wedlock means he has stolen something and therefore he needs to apologize to the family before he can be granted access to his child. One way of accepting this sin and offering an apology is by paying damages (*ukuhlawula*) to the

mother's family. Consequently, failure to accept the sin and pay damages is seen as a sign of disrespect to the family and in the long run it alters the family's perception of the father. Also, this has implications for the young father who realizes his inability to fulfil his cultural obligations but wishes to do things the right way. Thus, he may resort to withdrawing from the child until he settles this expectation. Seluleko explains:

*"I do believe I should do things the correct way. That is going back to paying the damages and acknowledging the child. Therefore, taking the child now will give me a certain level of comfortability such that I forget that I must do things right. So, while she is on the other side because I really do want to stay with my daughter, I will make every effort to bring her back to stay with me. I do not want it because I want to do things right first and then take her."* (Seluleko, Male, 23 years)

In South Africa, it is customary that damages are paid to the maternal family first to acknowledge the child, secondly as a token of respect to the family, and thirdly, it gives assurance to them that the father is capable of taking up responsibilities that come with fatherhood. The process includes ukubika isisu and ukhulawula (pregnancy announcing and payment of damages, respectively) different tasks are to be performed on different days, and this is usually costly. This process, in most cases, disproportionately affects young unemployed and school-going father, who do not have the means that is necessary to live up to these cultural expectations. Young men explained that different payments that were expected from them.

*"I think if he were to pay this R5000 maybe he would be granted some level of access to the child. Ever since I told him (father of my child) about this R5000, he has distanced himself from any contact that he might have with my parents. So, I think only when he pays this R5000 is when he'll be able to contact them."* (Samke, Female, 24 years)

*"He paid imbula mazolo, imali yezintombi, and ingeza muzi. He is yet to pay the damages, but he has done everything else. My family was not okay with it. However, he did promise that he will do it when he has enough money. The families negotiated and came up with a solution that is best for everyone, which was, he will pay when he has enough money. And no one will restrict his access to the child."* (Emuhle, Female, 24 years)

*"I have to pay inhlawulo, inkomo kamama (mother's cow), and pay for the children. I do not think it will be above R30 000."* (Sibongiseni, Male, 20 years)

The responses above suggest that there is no fixed amount for cultural damages. One young father said he thinks the process will not exceed R30 000, whereas another young mother said her family wanted R5 000 before they can grant the father of the child access. The study also found that the process of ukubika isisu and ukuhlawula (announcement of pregnancy and damages, respectively) comprises separate payments that many young unemployed fathers could not afford. The process includes payments for imbula mazolo, imali yezintombi, and ingeza muzi, inkomo kamama and payment for the child. One mother explains that the father of her child paid imbula mazolo, imali yezintombi, and ingeza muzi but could not pay damages. When cultural damages are not paid, some families might restrict the young father's access to the child as Emuhle explains that the families had to negotiate in that regard. Also, young fathers may choose to withdraw their contact until they have enough resources to fulfil these obligations.

On the other hand, this study also found evidence of mothers who disobeyed their family and cultural beliefs. These young mothers gave accounts of how they would facilitate a father's access to the child even if they had not paid inhlawulo (damages). One young woman described how her own mother would sometimes assist her by telling lies to her father.

*“Every time he would request to see the child, my mom would have to lie to my father and say I went to a certain place but not that I went to see his (child) father. Because my father is a typical Zulu man, he would never allow that, but my mom would makeup stories and tell him lies.”* (Zama, Female, 23 years)

*“For now, her mother has been helpful in facilitating that. She steals the child. I say it is stealing because I am not allowed to see the child, and I do not yet have the right to go there myself since I have not done what is culturally expected of me. So, she would take the child as if she is going to visit her relatives or something. And I would get the opportunity to see my child at least for a day.”* (Sibonelo, Male, 25 years)

In most cases, fathers who have not fulfilled their cultural obligations are restricted access to their child as shown in the above responses. The young father above depended on the mother to bring the child to him. Also, the above responses show the flexibility of women in allowing father involvement even if damages had not been paid. For example, Zama explains how her mother would help her tell lies to her father so that she can give access to the father of the child. Her mother was flexible in allowing her to facilitate visitations with the father of

the child. On the other hand, her father, a typical Zulu man as she describes him, was inflexible because he would never allow any visitations.

Culture is an indirect determinant of a father's involvement in a child's life. It is the basis by which families construct their notions of motherhood and fatherhood. It influences a mother's decision on whether to facilitate or limit father's involvement. Young men and women reported on the importance of culture, and that failure to live up to these expectations may render negative consequences. In their accounts, it was clear that most of the fathers have not met these expectations, though not all were restricted access to their child. In cases where their involvement was restricted, young fathers reported that the mother of the child would defy their family regulations and steal the child. Therefore, the study finds that young unemployed, school-going fathers are likely to suffer restrictions of access to their children if they do not live up to these cultural expectations.

#### **4.5 Summary**

This chapter has presented, and analysed data obtained from semi-structured in-depth interviews with young mothers and fathers regarding the issue of father involvement. From their accounts, it is evident that a range of factors influenced father involvement. Starting from the quality of the relationship between biological parents to the broader social structure. However, as varying as these factors were, similar patterns were observed between young mothers and fathers. Interestingly, it appears that these factors were interconnected in one way or the other. Young men and women described what fatherhood meant to them, how their relationship influenced their parenting and how family beliefs influenced their parenting roles. Of importance to this study, young men and women reported that interpersonal relationship between biological parents affected the father-child relationship. In this regard, this chapter has therefore explored how mothers may willingly or unwillingly inhibit a father's involvement in their child's life.

## **Chapter 5 : Discussion and Conclusion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Studies on fatherhood reveal that father involvement is influenced by a combination of factors including culture, income and employment, and interpersonal relations. Of interest to the present study is how interpersonal relationships between the mother and the father influence father involvement. The aim of this study was to explore how mothers may become a barrier to a father's involvement in their children's lives. In doing so, the study uses semi-structured in-depth interviews with young men and women to better understand their perspectives and experiences. This chapter discusses the main findings of the study with the help of relevant literature on fatherhood. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the key findings and recommendations.

### **5.2 Summary of findings**

In establishing the meaning of fatherhood, the study found that young men and women foregrounded provider and protector as essential roles to fatherhood. This resonates with the findings published in many local studies on fatherhood, that the key to identifying a good father is his ability to provide financially and protect the family (Clowes et al., 2013; Mavungu, 2013; Bhana and Nkani, 2014; Chili and Maharaj, 2015; Enderstein and Boonzaier, 2015). In this study, fathers provide financial resources in terms of food, nappies, and clothes for the child and the family. Both young men and women also stressed that fatherhood goes beyond material provision. The study observed that fathers contribute emotionally and spiritually to support the well-being of the child. There was a feeling among young fathers that fatherhood presented a transition from being a boy to a man. Most expressed that prioritizing the needs of the child has become an essential element in their decision making. The interviews suggest that since these young men have become fathers, they are more worried about meeting the needs of their children. However, most fathers cited a lack of finances as a constraint to them exercise their role as fathers. As a result, their financial situation has prevented them from playing a role in their child's life. In his study,

Mavungu (2013) found that overemphasis on provider role by families, mothers, and fathers themselves makes it difficult to appreciate alternative father roles. Swartz et al. (2013) in their study, found that young fathers who lacked financial resources were likely to be rejected and excluded from any involvement with the child by the mother and her family.

Young men and women in this study described father involvement as active involvement in the child's day-to-day life beyond the roles of provider and protector. Fathers have a physical and emotional connection with their child, and they keep in touch with the child by calling them regularly. The study found that a father's involvement was measured by his availability to the child. Young men and women reported that fathers show their involvement by spending time with their child, keeping in touch through regular phone calls, and knowing their child's day-to-day needs and experiences. There was also a feeling among young men and women that there was a difference between a father and a dad. A child is related to the father by biology, but a dad has an emotional, psychological, and social connection with the child. However, most fathers experienced feelings of dissatisfaction as they were students and unemployed, and therefore unable to physically and financially involved in their children's lives. As a result, these young men did not recognize themselves as involved fathers because they were away from their children as a result of being at school and lacked the financial resources to fulfil their cultural duties such as the payment of ilobolo (bride-wealth) and inhlawulo (damages). As noted in the other studies, father involvement is constructed by elements such as engagement, responsibility, accessibility, and cognitive representation (Pleck, 2012; Mavungu, 2013). Of relevance to the present study is accessibility, which refers to a father's physical, emotional, and psychological availability to the child (Pleck, 2012; Mavungu, 2013). A study by Swartz et al. (2013) found that some young men reported that providing material support was critical to being a good father and stressed the importance of day-to-day physical involvement, contact time, and supportive communication.

In the study, only six out of seventeen young parents maintained that they had a very good relationship with their own fathers, while others observed that they had no contact with their fathers. There was a feeling among young men and women that the relationship between their biological parents influenced their current relationship with their father. For example, one young man reported that the dissolution of the relationship between his biological parents signalled the end of his relationship with his own father. This suggests that young men and

women were more likely to enjoy a strong relationship with their father if he was still in romantic relationships with their mothers and resided in the same household. In addition, the study found that young men and women used their past personal experiences as lessons to navigate their current relationships. Young mothers admitted that their relationship with their fathers shaped how they perceived an ideal father for their child. Young fathers, on the other hand, said that they wanted to be good and better fathers to their children. They did not want their negative experiences to overshadow their relationship with their children. The young men expressed their desire to have a stable relationship with their children. In their study on teenage fatherhood, Langa and Smith (2012) found that young men idolized being a good father to try to rectify their absent fathers' mistakes. In his study Langa (2010) observed that when participants mentioned being a good and different father, it was mostly associated with healing the wounds of their absent father.

The young men and women in the present study felt that a father-child relationship was paramount for the child's well-being. The study found that sometimes young women enter toxic relationships because they desperately wanted a dominant male figure in their lives. Among young men, there was a feeling that a father-child relationship gave children a sense of security. Therefore, those who lack this relationship are likely to encounter behavioural problems and sometimes find themselves in toxic relationships. There was also a desire among young fathers to build a healthy father-child relationship that will help change the negative stereotypes surrounding young fathers and build a new narrative of a father who is loving, caring, and interested in his children. A study on absent fathers in South Africa conducted by Eddy et al. (2013) observed a continuation of the vicious cycle of absent fathers, arguing that the high number of fatherless young fathers is likely to be a contributing factor to many men becoming uninvolved themselves. However, despite their negative experiences of absent fathers, the young men and women in the study seemed to embrace alternative masculinities and fatherhood ideals (Langa and Smith, 2012; Eddy et al., 2013; Swartz et al., 2013).

The present study highlighted various forms of care and support that men provided to the young mothers, especially during pregnancy. The findings suggest that men provided emotional and economic support to the pregnant mother, and some attended antenatal clinic

appointments with the mother. Equally important, the study found evidence of men who rarely provided any care and support to the mother. These young men were not psychologically and economically ready to become fathers and even sought to deny the paternity of the child. In this regard, the study observed that a good relationship with the father of the child gave mothers the strength to get through the pregnancy. There was also a feeling among young women that a father who is supportive during the pregnancy stage is more likely to be a good father to the child. In contrast, a father who is not supportive or lacks interest at this stage was more likely to abandon his child. Hunter (2006), in his study, observed that when men realize their inability to pay child support and cultural damages to the maternal family, it created feelings of self-embarrassment and subsequently led to the denial of paternity. A study conducted in Alexandra township, Johannesburg, South Africa by Nduna (2014), found that when the assumed father contested the pregnancy, it created feelings of discomfort to the mother and sometimes alienation towards the father.

Reflected in many studies on father involvement (Eddy et al., 2013; Madhavan et al., 2014; Makusha and Richter; 2016, Gibbs et al., 2017), the findings of this study suggest that the relationship between biological parents is an essential determinant for father involvement. In the present study, when biological parents were still in romantic relationships, father involvement was great, and mothers would disobey cultural and family beliefs to enable the father's access to their children even if he had not paid cultural damages. Where the relationship was weak, father involvement was limited. There was also a feeling among young men that some women use the child as bait to force them into staying in the relationship. Doherty et al. (1998) argue that the quality of the father-child relationship both within and outside marriages is highly correlated with the quality of relationship between biological parents. A study conducted by Gibbs et al. (2017) also found that when relationships between biological parents were great; father involvement was observed to be better than when relationships were weak. The young men in their study argued that women used their access to their children to control them. In their study Eddy et al. (2013) observed that children in these situations became both victims and weapons, arguing that psychosocial, relationship counselling, and other means of support are lacking in many communities in South Africa.

The present study found that any change in the mother-father relationship had a detrimental effect on the father's involvement in their child's lives. Young men and women felt that the entry of a new sexual partner created tension and conflict between biological parents. In most cases, mothers use this tension to limit father involvement. While other studies find that fathers appear to withdraw their involvement with the child after the dissolution of the relationship (Tach et al., 2010; Madhavan et al., 2016), the present study finds that mothers are also capable of restricting or negatively influencing the father-child relationship after the relationship ends. As such, young men in the study felt powerless, and their involvement became difficult after a separation. Gibbs et al. (2017) observed similar findings in their study, the women in their study argued that their actions were attempts to minimize the potential harmful impacts on the child. Another study conducted by Eddy et al. (2013) found that in such cases, biological fathers sometimes experience difficulties negotiating with their former partner and her family to see their child.

This study found that consistently passing negative comments about the father in front of the child was just one way in which mothers influenced the father-child relationship. When people around the child regularly refer to the father as a failure or unsupportive, the child eventually begins to adopt a similar attitude. The study found that when mothers and other members in her family pass negative remarks and refer to the father as irresponsible, it creates a lasting memory for the child and affects their relationship with the father. Also, the study found that this mostly affects young, unemployed, student fathers who may not be able to live up to these expectations. These findings are consistent with the conceptual framework on responsible fathering by Doherty et al. (1998), which outlines that a father's involvement is dependent on the mother's feelings, attitudes, and expectations towards the father. Also, a study conducted in Turkey by Çelik (2020) found that inconsistent messages conveyed by mothers to children about the father, either explicit or implicit, had the potential to create ambivalent feelings towards the father. Therefore, arguing that mothers can strengthen or destroy a father's mental representation in the child's mind.

As in many studies on fatherhood, young men in the study did not live with their children (Eddy et al., 2013; Chili and Maharaj, 2015; Levtov et al., 2015; Van den Berg and Makusha, 2018). The children mostly lived with the mother of the child or her family, and they were the

primary caregiver of the child. The study found that young women experienced pressure from their families to demand certain things from the father of the child. For example, when they ran out of diapers or formula milk for the child, their families told them to request it from the father. There was a feeling among young men and women that families imposed their beliefs onto the young mother and influenced her interactions with the father. Makusha and Richter (2016) note that family attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours about the expected roles of a father regulate the type and level of his interaction with the child. In their study Swartz et al. (2013), young men reported that their involvement was influenced by the relationship they had with the mother of their child and her family.

In the study, young men were full-time students and unemployed and therefore were unable to carry out their fatherhood responsibilities. One man reported that he felt that he and his family needed to take full custody of the child because he could not handle the pressure from the mother and her family. The young father also acknowledged the role played by the mothers' family, which made it possible to reach such an arrangement. Unfortunately, most young fathers do not have family support either because of their family's financial situation or they have not paid *inhlawulo* or *ilobolo*, which are culturally important should a father wish to take custody of the child. Madhavan and Roy (2012) conducted a study in South Africa and the United States and observed that when both sets of kin (young mother and young father) work together, it does not only enable father involvement but also strengthens a young father's status. They argue that support from both families could also be used to buy time for young fathers to complete school and establish themselves (Madhavan and Roy, 2012). As argued by the conceptual framework on responsible fathering by Doherty et al. (1998: 287), "father-child relations, are culturally defined as less dyadic and more multilateral, requiring a threshold of support from inside the family and from the larger environment."

Many studies on fatherhood have demonstrated how culture, especially African cultures, hamper the involvement of black African fathers in their children's lives (Eddy et al., 2013; Swartz et al., 2013; Chili and Maharaj, 2015; Enderstein and Boonzaier, 2015). In the study, young men and women described culture as a representation of the values and wishes of their families. Therefore, dishonouring their culture is a sign of disrespect to the mother, her family as well as the child. Having a child out of wedlock was also viewed as a sin and a

disrespectful to the family that must be reconciled by following certain cultural processes. In many cultures in South Africa, the process requires that a boy's family cleanses the girl's family by paying damages (cow, goat or sometimes money) for the shame and disrepute he has brought to them by impregnating their child out of wedlock (Langa and Smith, 2012; Bhana and Nkani, 2014; Padi et al., 2014). The present study found that this had implications for the young unemployed father who realizes his inability to fulfil his cultural obligations but who wishes to do things the right way. Thus, he may resort to withdrawing from the child until he settles these expectations. These findings are consistent with the influences on responsible fathering framework by Doherty et al. (1998) which identifies financial stability as universally expected from fathers by their culture. Also, Swartz et al. (2013) in their study, found that the requirement of damage payments may scare off young unemployed fathers from claiming paternity, and failure to make such payment is likely to result in denial of access by the maternal family.

The findings of the study suggest that there was no fixed amount for the payment of cultural damages. Young men and women reported different amounts ranging from R5 000 to R30 000. The process of ukubika isisu and ukuhlawula (announcement of pregnancy and damages, respectively) comprises separate payments that many young unemployed fathers could not afford. The process includes payments for imbula mazolo, imali yezintombi, and ingeza muzi, inkomo kamama, and payment for the child (Bhana and Nkani, 2014). As demonstrated above and in other studies, when cultural damages are not paid, some families are likely to restrict the young father's access to the child (Hunter, 2006; Langa and Smith, 2012; Swartz et al., 2013). The present study also found evidence of mothers who disobeyed their family and cultural beliefs. Young mothers gave accounts of how they would steal the child to facilitate the father's access even if they had not paid inhlawulo (damages). It was further observed that they would sometimes be assisted by their mothers and lie to their fathers about the whereabouts of the child.

A study conducted by Bhana and Nkani (2014) in a township called Inanda, KwaZulu-Natal, found that households headed by women appeared to be more flexible in allowing a young father's interaction with his child even though cultural damages had not been paid. Langa and Smith (2012) in their study observed that the practice of payment of cultural damages might

not be as common in urban areas compared to rural areas and this was likely due to the erosion of cultural practices in townships or the unavailability of fathers and uncles in the household. Further arguing that households headed by men were strictly off-limits and inflexible to allow father involvement without the payments of cultural damages (Bhana and Nkani, 2014).

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Television and mass media have the potential to inform and shape people's attitudes. Television has been used in the past to educate the public and remove negative stereotypes on certain issues including HIV/AIDS, homosexuality, and mental illness. This has been done by including specific scenes that target these groups in soaps, drama series, movies, and reality shows. For example, soaps and drama series like *Soul Buddies* and *Skeem Sam* on South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) 1 and *Shuga* on Music Television (MTV) Base are used to highlight, inform, and remove negative stereotypes on issues such as HIV/AIDS, homosexuality, and intergenerational and transactional relationships (blesser and blessee phenomenon). Similarly, these platforms can be used to highlight, educate, and remove negative stereotypes on the issues faced by young mothers and fathers. More especially targeting the factors that hinder young fathers' involvement in their children's lives and the outcomes of gatekeeping.

There is also a need to educate young people on life skills such as interpersonal, teamwork, and conflict management skills. The findings of the present study suggest that poor interpersonal relationships between biological parents adversely affects father's involvement. Where relationships were in good standing, father involvement was observed to be great and where there were poor relations, father involvement was limited. Therefore, equipping young people with such skills will enable them to resolve interpersonal conflicts better, be team players in parent work, and make decisions that are in the best interests of the child. These could be peer-to-peer programmes facilitated in communities and on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter. In addition, close family members can play a role by encouraging young fathers to maintain good relations with the

mother of their child, support them with their fatherhood responsibilities, and motivate them to become better fathers to their children.

The present study only used the qualitative data collection tool, that is, semi-structured in-depth, one-on-one interviews with ten young women and seven young fathers. As such, the information obtained was based on the individual's representation of the phenomenon. Future studies can improve on this by recruiting more than one data collection tool. For example, combining individual interviews with focus group discussions. Individual interviews are best to solicit rich private information from study participants. However, including focus group discussion will elicit public narratives and greatly influence the final report.

The study only managed to recruit black African young men and women. It is recommended that future studies explore father involvement with other population groups. This will not only provide for comparison rather it will shed light on how young parents from different population groups cope and manage father involvement. Also, future studies can target interviewing mothers and father of the same child who are still in romantic relationships and those who have separated, using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This study explored how young mothers may become a barrier to a father's involvement in their child's life from the perspective of young men and women. The findings of the study reveal that young men desire to have a solid relationship with their children. Young fathers want to build a healthy father-child relationship that will help change the negative stereotypes surrounding young fathers and build a new narrative of a father who is loving, caring, and interested in his children. However, most fathers cited lack of financial resources and a poor relationship with the mother as major constraints that prevent them from playing a role in their child's life. On the other hand, the study found that young women want to protect their children from unsupportive fathers. As a result, mothers felt that a father who is supportive during the pregnancy is more likely to be a good father to the child. Whereas a father who is not supportive or lacks interest at the pregnancy stage is more likely to abandon his child.

Thus, mothers may restrict a father's access or any involvement with the child if the mother perceives the father to be unsupportive. Young men and women in the study, felt that the entry of a new sexual partner created tension and conflict between biological parents which adversely affected father involvement. Young men felt that some women use the child as bait to force them into staying in the relationship. In addition, the study found that when mothers and other members in her family regularly pass negative remarks and refer to the father as irresponsible and unsupportive, it creates a lasting memory to the child and adversely affects the father's relationship with the child both currently and in the future. The young men and women in the study expressed feelings that sometimes maternal families impose beliefs on the young mother and influence her attitude towards the father. As a result, dishonouring the cultural beliefs of the mother's family was a sign of disrespect to the mother herself, her family as well as the child. This resulted in rejection and exclusion from any involvement of the father with the child.

The study draws on the conceptual framework on influences of responsible fathering by Doherty et al. (1998) to explore how mothers may become a barrier to a father's involvement in their child's life. It therefore concludes that poor interpersonal relations, especially between biological parents, disproportionately affect father involvement for young unemployed and student fathers who do not have good relations with the mother of their child. In this regard, mothers are encouraged to make decisions that are in the best interest of the child. Young men improve their confidence and become better persons when they receive support and motivation from close family members and community leaders. Therefore, psycho-social support initiatives directed to young men are encouraged to make use of community spaces as well as social media platforms.

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## Appendix A: Ethical Clearance



07 August 2019

Mr Qiniso Khumalo (210537613)  
School of Built Environment & Development Studies  
Howard College Campus

Dear Mr Khumalo,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000113/2019

Project title: Exploring mothers as barriers to young fathers involvement in their children s lives: The perspectives of young men and women

### Full Approval – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 10 June 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 07 August 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,

Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

/ms

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/>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

## Appendix B: Gatekeepers Letter



24 July 2019

Mr Qiniso Khumalo (SN 210537613)  
School of Built Environment and Development Studies  
College of Humanities  
Howard College Campus  
UKZN  
Email: [210537613@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:210537613@stu.ukzn.ac.za) [Maharajp7@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Maharajp7@ukzn.ac.za)

Dear Mr Khumalo

### RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), towards your postgraduate degree, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

*"Exploring mothers as barriers to young fathers' involvement in their children's lives: The perspectives of young men and women."*

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting interviews with young fathers and young mothers between 18 – 24 years of age on the Howard College campus.

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book. Identity numbers and email addresses of individuals are not a matter of public record and are protected according to Section 14 of the South African Constitution, as well as the Protection of Public Information Act. For the release of such information over to yourself for research purposes, the University of KwaZulu-Natal will need express consent from the relevant data subjects. Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

**MR S S MOKOENA**  
**REGISTRAR**

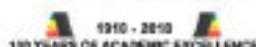
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#### Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag 2054001, Durban, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 8005/2206 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 7824/2204 Email: [registrar@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:registrar@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Website

**UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS  
COMMITTEE (HSSREC)**

**APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL  
For research with human participants**

**INFORMED CONSENT RESOURCE TEMPLATE**

**Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research**

Date: Day      of      2019

Greeting: Ladies and Gentlemen, greetings to you all.

My name is (Qiniso Khumalo), currently registered for a Masters in Population studies under the school of Built-Environment and Development studies at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN) Howard College campus.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study about **Exploring mothers as barriers to young fathers' involvement in their children's lives: The perspectives of young men and women**. The aim and purpose of this research is to explore the impact of mothers in the relationship between father and child. The study is expected to enrol 20 participants, 10 young mother and 10 young fathers at UKZN Howard College campus. It will involve the following procedures: a semi-structure in-depth interview with individuals. The duration of your participation if you choose to enrol and remain in the study is expected to be between 45 to 60 minutes. The study is funded by the researcher.

The study may invoke certain emotions which may lead to emotional discomforts. The study will not provide any benefits to participants. However, we hope that the study will create a comprehensive analysis that will shed light on the factors that influence a mother's decision

and her abilities to facilitating the relationship between father and child. Additionally, we hope to provide recommendations that will influence policy decisions and interventions promoting responsible fatherhood.

Should a participant feel a sense of emotional discomfort or offended by anything said during the interview, the researcher has made provisions for psycho-social support. The researcher has contacted Mr. Seluleko Eric Ngcobo, a qualified social worker, who has agreed to assist should a student require such support. His contact details are as follows: cell number: 074 662 5014 or Email address [selulekoericngcobo@gmail.com](mailto:selulekoericngcobo@gmail.com).

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number: HSSREC/00000113/2019).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at [210537613@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:210537613@ukzn.ac.za) or call 078 443 0399 or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

### **HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no, you may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

Participants will not be compensated in any way should you choose to participate, and you will not be penalized should you wish to withdraw.

Should a participant wish to withdraw, the researcher would appreciate a notice of withdrawal. This is to maintain efficient organization of interviews.

The researcher will terminate a participant from the study if the participant disappears for more than a week without any notice.

Please note that all the information that you share during the interview will be kept confidential by the researcher and my research supervisor.

Your names and identity will remain confidential, pseudonyms will be used in the research report. The interview transcripts will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.

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**CONSENT (Edit as required)**

I ..... have been informed about the study entitled (provide details) by (provide name of researcher/fieldworker).

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study (add these again if appropriate).

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at (provide details).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609  
Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion      YES / NO

_____	_____
<b>Signature of Participant</b>	<b>Date</b>
_____	_____
<b>Signature of Witness</b> <b>(Where applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>
_____	_____
<b>Signature of Translator</b> <b>(Where applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>

## Appendix D: Interview Guide

### Demographics:

- Gender
- Age
- Nationality
- Marital Status
- Level of study

### Research questions:

How old were you when you had your child?

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

What do you understand by an ‘involved father’?

Do you think the relationship between father and child important? Why? elaborate

How did your family react when they found out that you were going to have a child?

How did the other family react to these news?

What cultural or religious rituals were required from you?

How often do you see you child? And the other parent? What influences this?

How does the mother of your child influence your relationship with your child? What other factors influences the relationship of the father with the child?

Are you still romantically involved with the mother/ father of your child?

Does your (romantic) relationship have an impact on your relationship with your child? If yes, how?

### Reflecting on personal experience:

Did you grow up with residing with your parents?

How was your relationship with your father?

Does that relationship have an impact on your relationship with your child? If yes, how?