

Factors Affecting Rural Men's Participation in Children's Preschool in One Rural Education District in the Eastern Cape Province

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ABSTRACT A descriptive survey design enabled the use of a structured questionnaire instrument on 164 randomly selected men to obtain the factors affecting their participation in their children's early education. Spearman's correlation coefficient was used for data analysis. Results show that demographic variables do not prevent men from participating in the early education of the children. Mothers constitute barriers to how men want to get involved in the child's education. It also shows that the less educated men are more likely not to know how to help their children at home. No statistically significant relationship exists between the men's occupations and their views on the factors that affect their participation. Occupation is not a determinant factor that can prevent men from taking part in children's education. It is recommended that fathers be encouraged to develop positive attitudes towards the education of their children. More recommendations have been made.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of men's participation in the early childhood education of their children has been highlighted in various studies (Atmore et al. 2012; Camlin et al. 2014 Change 2015; Mashiyi et al. 2015; Noel et al. 2015; Mathwasa and Okeke 2016; Mncanca et al. 2016). Notwithstanding, it is common that when issues or topics relating to stakeholders working in partnership with parents in the early childhood education (ECE) sector are being discussed, it is often tactically understood that men tend to be invisible in services of young children (Okeke 2014; Khewu and Adu 2015; Okeke et al. 2015; Mncanca et al. 2016). Despite the growing publicity on the huge potentials of men's participation in education by researchers in South Africa (see for instance, Lemmer 2009; Mmotlane et al. 2009; Richter et al. 2010; Mashiyi et al. 2015), it would appear that little is known about the participation of men in the early childhood development of children.

Numerous studies show that fathers are faced with challenges with regards to contributing to parenting of their children (Allen and Daly

2007; Berlyn et al. 2008; Roberts et al. 2014; Okeke et al. 2015; Mncanca et al. 2016). However, lack of empirical data on men's participation in ECD and the barriers they face in South Africa would certainly create a huge gap in knowledge in the ECD sector. Secondly, such a scenario would constrain efforts aimed at intervention via policies. It was thus essential to undertake the study of factors affecting men's participation in early childhood education of their children. The researchers were of the opinion that by so doing, empirical evidence would be generated to impact the schools based support programs for men.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are factors affecting rural men's participation in the early education of their children?
2. What are the relationships between fathers' demographic variables and the challenges they faced in their participation in early education of children?

Theoretical Framework

Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory has been a very useful tool in understanding of the nature of social rela-

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tions within the family (Hasan and Bagde 2013). Social capital of the family can lead to the creation of the conditions that enable the promotion of education through which people acquire human capital and achieve upward mobility (Bran and Xie 2010). Literature shows that social capital in the family can impact the academic achievement of children within a particular family (Morgan and Sorensen 1999; Sacerdote 2011). According to Coleman (1988), social capital within the family gives the child access to the adult human capital, and depends both on the physical presence of adults in the family and on the attention given by the adults to the child's welfare.

According to Coleman (1988), social theory can be explained through the function it performs. Coleman (1988) observed that social capital of the family is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common, that is, they all consist of some aspect of social structure and facilitate certain actions of actors, whether these are persons existing individually or corporate actors. Human capital is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in some new ways. Social capital, however, comes about through changes in the relations among persons that facilitate action (Coleman 1988).

The rationale for selecting this theory is that within the educational context, an important form of social capital is the potential for information that inheres in social relations, whereby information is important in providing a basis for action. Hence, social relations between the parents will promote social capital and human capital, and information to the men will bring action by the men. Furthermore, social capital within the family that gives the child access to the human capital depends both on the physical presence of adults in the family and on the attention given by the adults to the child (Coleman 1988).

Whatever the source, if the human capital exists within the parents but the social capital is missing, the child does not profit (Coleman 1988). The empirical value of social capital in the creation of human capital lies on both social capital in the family and social capital in the community, which plays a role in the creation of human capital in the future generation (Coleman 1988). By applying this theory in the present study, the researchers attempt to explain how social capital of men operates within the family and how it affects the education of their children in the ear-

ly years. It argues that children benefit more from men who are available and tend to relate well with their children, and those who provide emotional supports to their children, and assist them in understanding various puzzles that confront them daily.

Review of Literature

Importance of Men's Participation in the Education of Their Children

Research indicates that children who experience father to child relationships that are nurturing and meaningful are more likely to have educational progression (Horn 2002; Palkovitz 2002; Chauke and Khunou 2014; Change 2015). In addition, fathers' participation in children's education is a predominant factor for future academic success and children's complete total development (Pleck 2010). More evidence from research shows that there is a positive relationship between fathers' participation and children's physical, mental, emotional, and social development (Dubowitz et al. 2001; Shears and Robinson 2005). Generally, various studies have shown that fathers' participation in their children's early education portends numerous significant and positive outcomes in children's psychosocial and educational wellbeing (Horn 2002; Okeke 2014; Karani et al. 2015; Kraft and Rogers 2015; Noel et al. 2015).

In an earlier study, Horn (2002) reveals that fathers' participation in the education of their children is very unique. This is because their participation is irreplaceable because when they participate, children develop emotionally, intellectually, socially and physically. The participation of fathers in a child's wellbeing or education cannot be fully replaced (Palkovitz 2002). Palkovitz (2002) also argues that participation of fathers in the education of their children is seen as a good behavior that teaches self-control and socially appropriate behavior. However, children whose fathers do not participate in their education demonstrate worse outcomes in life (Horn 2002; Mashiya et al. 2015; Noel et al. 2015). In addition, young children with involved fathers display enhanced social skills and have greater empathy, higher self-esteem, more self-control and less impulsive behavior (Pruett 2000; Okeke 2014; Khewu and Adu 2015; Mathwasa and Okeke 2016; Mncanca et al. 2016).

Fathers' participation in the education of their children begins when the father communicates with children at home concerning schoolwork, helping children develop confidence, dealing with children's behavior, coping with stress and taking responsibility for their anger (Sheehy 2004; Chauke and Khunou 2014; Karani et al. 2015). When a child is disciplined by the father, this educates the child on how to be responsible for their own behavior and to learn about themselves and others, thus the children's social, psychological, and emotional development, as well as behavior are improved according to Sheehy (2004). In addition, Flouri (2005) reveals that active fathers' participation not only negates bad behavior, but also protects them from extreme victimization. However, children whose fathers are not participating in their lives are more likely to experience behavior problems at school (Obeidat and Al-Hassan 2009; Lamb 2010; Karani et al. 2015; Mashiya et al. 2015; Mathwasa and Okeke 2016). Studies explain further that children whose fathers are not there for them at least two to three times a week are more likely to be poor, engage in drugs, show lower academic performance, health deterioration, emotional deterioration and behavioral deterioration than those children with involved fathers (Rosenberg and Wilcox 2006; Nock and Einolf 2008; Mashiya et al. 2015; Noel et al. 2015).

Evidence from research findings indicate that fathers must be able to make a promise to be the best parent they can possibly be by actively participating in their children's education and contributing to their wellbeing (Palkovitz 2002; Mashgo and Tarvinga 2014). More importantly, fathers should know that it is of significance to provide healthy and enabling environments for their children to thrive and learn. Allen and Daly (2007) write that toddlers whose fathers are involved in their care are more likely to be securely attached to them, are better able to handle strange situations and are strong when faced with stressful situations. In addition, such toddlers are anxious and willing to explore the environment, relate more maturely to visitors, respond more competently to difficult and learning situations, and are more confident to explore their knowledge (Allen and Daly 2007). According to Fitzpatrick (2011), fathers no matter what their income or cultural background can play a critical role in their children's education. When fathers are involved, their children learn more,

perform better in school, and exhibit healthier behavior.

Childers (2010) points that children have a greater chance of completing school and progressing into post-secondary education when parents have a strong marital and parental relationship. A strong marital and parental relationship will enhance academic development and contribute to the accomplishment of at least one of the educational outcomes, especially for children enrolled in post-secondary schools (Childers 2010). Children benefit greatly from their fathers' participation and support the fathers give to their mothers. Research shows that a well-nurtured child by a father figure is likely to be well behaved (Palkovitz 2002; Mashiya et al. 2015; Noel et al. 2015). However, children that grow up without the participation of their fathers are significantly more likely to experience poverty, perform poorly in school, and engage in criminal activity, abuse drugs and alcohol (U.S Department of Health and Human Services 2002).

Earlier research reveals that when fathers are able to give enough guidance to children, the latter do better at school (Palkovitz 2002; Fullan 2007; Okeke 2014). Guidance means giving children adequate information about the importance of education and correcting any misbehavior exhibited by the child, while monitoring them to ensure that they remain of good character (Palkovitz 2002; Fullan 2007; Okeke 2014). As Pleck (2010) points out, one of the ways by which academic achievement can be attained by children is when their father adequately gives enough guidance to them. In addition, good nurturing by a father makes a child improve in academic performance, have better attendance in school, and is able to cope with life's stressors, and continue with his/her education (Pleck 2010).

More significantly, the level of participation and type of participation the father engages in matters greatly (Engle and Breaux 1994). In addition, the father himself has a great impact on the child's educational life, and the more the father cares for the child, the more he becomes involved with the child, and this has positive outcomes for children according to Engle and Breaux (1994). Moreover, Berger (1998) claims that father participation in the education of their children include being a model, protector, care provider, breadwinner, teacher, storyteller and play partner. This claim by Berger (1998) was sup-

ported two years later by Lamb (2000), noting that fathers' participation in children's learning and schooling has been seen and established as an important factor towards children's academic achievement. Similarly, according to Kaye (2005), the importance of fathers' participation in the education of their children is more than just being there as fathers, as they have to play an active role and have meaningful involvement in children's lives in order to improve academic performance and promote emotional stability as well as promotion of a healthy and sound mind for the child.

Barriers Affecting Men's Participation in ECD

Majority of studies show that fathers have the desire to get involved in the ECD in different social contexts (Rolfe 2006; Allen and Daly 2007; Berlyn 2008; O'Brien 2011; Best Start Resource Centre 2012; Bourne and Ryan 2012; Mathwasa and Okeke 2016; Mncanca et al. 2016). However, literature is indicative that men are faced with numerous barriers with parenting their children. These challenges extend from men's perceptions of gender roles and the status of childcare as women's responsibilities (Rolfe 2006), the social construction of fathers' roles coupled with some interpersonal factors (Berlyn et al. 2008), divorce, separation and re-partnering (O'Brien 2011), substance abuse (Allen and Daly 2007; Mathwasa and Okeke 2016), father-mother relationship, influences of own father, life transitions, choices fathers make, lack of confidence in own ability, absence of or negligence to parental leave (Best Start Resource Centre 2012; Roberts et al. 2014), to economic challenges (Roberts et al. 2014; Mncanca 2016). Despite these revelations, very few studies have engaged men in real social contexts with the intent to draw firsthand from them. It was therefore necessary to investigate the factors affecting men's participation in the ECD of their children.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design and Sample Size

This research was conducted within the positivist paradigm using the quantitative approach, which according to Muijs (2011), is a way of explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that is analyzed using mathematically based

methods. By its very conception, the researchers argue that the study fits well within this paradigm, which by its nature sets out to describe, interpret and explain the manner in which participants make sense of situations and the way meanings are reflected in their actions. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A descriptive survey design describes data and characteristics about a population being studied. The descriptive survey design is quite flexible and can appear in a variety of forms, but all are characterized by data collection using a standard questionnaire (Muijs 2011). One hundred and sixty four (164) fathers of learners attending Foundation Phase schools in one Education District in rural Eastern Cape Province were selected using the stratified random sampling technique (Muijs 2011). 'Fathers' in this study refer to married and unmarried, all male adults who have parental responsibilities and rights in respect of the Child Act 38 of 2005, Section 20 and 21 (Department of Social Development 2010).

Instrumentation

The Parental Participation in Education Questionnaire (PPEQ) was designed by the researchers to enable them to obtain data from the participants. The questionnaire was made up of two parts. The first part sought demographic information and asked questions regarding fathers' age, marital status, race, education and employment status, while the second part was aligned to the research questions using a rating scale. Questionnaire instruments were personally administered by the researchers. Fathers were identified with the help of the class teachers. However, while some of the participants were reached in the schools' premises during parents' meetings, others received questionnaires, completed and returned the instruments through their children.

Validity of the Instrument

According to Muijs (2011), validity refers to the extent to which a data collection method accurately measures what it is intended to measure and is probably the single most important aspect of measurement. The instrument was given to an expert in the Faculty of Education in University of Fort Hare, and comments and suggestions from this expert were used to effect

further changes on the instrument to ensure content validity.

Reliability of Instrument

Reliability of the instrument was also maintained by the researchers. Muijs (2011) writes that reliability of an instrument refers to the extent to which test scores are free of measurement error. In addition to why reliability must be ensured, Okeke and Dlamini (2013) argue that the ability of the instrument to yield consistent numerical results each time it is applied is referred to as reliability. To ensure instrument reliability, the researchers used the Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficient, which was statistically measured at 0.01 and 0.05 levels of significance (Cohen et al. 2011).

Data Analysis

The researchers analyzed data using descriptive and inferential statistics. With descriptive statistics, frequency tables were used to present nominal variables. The results were presented in the form of percentages (%) and grouped into different tables. With inferential statistics, Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficient was used to discuss the information, which was statistically measured at 0.01 (2-tailed) and 0.05 levels (2-tailed).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance followed a well-established formal structure. First, the researchers obtained ethical clearance from the research ethics unit of their institution. Second, permission was also obtained from the research ethics of office of the Department of Education. The researchers endeavored to act within the ethical principles and rules during the study. Selected participating schools were then approached and were given all clear to approach fathers of learners who attended their various schools. The following ethical measures were observed, that is, gaining entry permission, participants' rights, informed consent, confidentiality, protection from harm, achieving anonymity and maintaining professionalism.

FINDINGS

The main findings of the study are summarized as in this section.

In section A of the questionnaire, which deals with participants' demographic information, the results show that the majority (89%) of the participants were over 30 years of age, 63.4 percent married, 70.1 percent were Black fathers representing majority in terms of level of education, and 55.9 percent were public workers, representing the majority in terms of the occupational information of the participants. Sections B, C and D of the questionnaire obtained information on the topic of the research work. Results show that 85.3 percent of the fathers were in agreement with the view that it is their responsibility to discuss the importance of good education with their children. These may then suggest that the demographic variables of age, marital status, level of education, and race of fathers appear not to be preventing the fathers from participating in the early education of the children.

In addition to the above, the majority of the fathers representing eighty-eight percent opined that they ensured that their children always attended school. Ninety-one percent of fathers who took part in the study agreed that it is their responsibility to provide nutritious meals and adequate time for sleep for their children. Moreover, seventy-six percent were in agreement that it is their duty to monitor their children's homework, while, eighty-seven percent agreed that it is their duty to keep an eye on their children's progress.

Based on the findings, 95.1 percent of the fathers consented that the principal and teachers are interested and cooperative when they discuss their children with them. In addition, 96.3 percent of the fathers indicated that they feel welcome in their children's schools. However, 54.9 percent, representing the majority of the respondents, agreed that they get involved in their child's education because the child's mother wants them to be involved. More importantly, the majority of the fathers (56.1%) get involved in their children's education even if they are not close geographically to the family. However, there is an indication from the statistics, which appear to suggest that the child's mother still constitutes barriers to how fathers want to get involved in the early education of their children when both parents are either separated or divorced.

Moreover, sixty-nine percent of the fathers do know how to help their children in learning at home. Although there is an indication that the

less educated fathers are more likely not to know how to help their children at home. In terms of the demographic of age, statistics appear to suggest that the mature fathers (those above 31 years) play significant roles in terms of role modeling for their children when compared to the much younger fathers. Eighty-two percent do attend SGB meetings and other support meetings at the school. In addition, eighty-three percent of the total number of data collected agreed that support or help is always requested by the teacher to organize a field day event. More so, 59.2 percent of the fathers' concurred that the teachers do ask them to attend learners' programs at school in the evening. Furthermore, 94.5 percent of the total number of participants agreed that they were informed by the school about meetings and special school events.

There was no statistically significant relationship between the fathers' occupations and their views on the factors that affect their participation in the ECD of their children. Lastly, results suggest that occupation is not a determinant factor that can prevent fathers from taking part in the early upbringing of their children, but the emotional concerns of the father as well as the affection he has for the children.

DISCUSSION

Association Between Variables

To test for any association between the demographic variables and the fathers' views on men's participation in early education of their children, as well as the factors that affect their participation in the early education of their children, Spearman's rho correlation was used. This was found suitable because the variables were categorical (Cohen et al. 2011). Thus, the asso-

ciation between variables was sought in the following manner.

Table 1 shows that there is a negative but statistically insignificant relationship between age and fathers' views on men's participation in ECD of their children. Though the associations are statistically insignificant, in all, they suggest that the older fathers tend not to be in agreement with the views more than the younger fathers. Marital status is negatively related to the fathers' views on men's participation in early education of their children as well, and relationships with view 2, view 4 and view 5 are statistically significant. These suggest that the unmarried fathers tend to be in disagreement with the views more than the married fathers.

The relationships between the fathers' race (moving from White to Colored then to Black) and their views on men's participation in ECD of their children were statistically insignificant and negative for views 1, 3 and 4, and positive and statistically insignificant for views 2 and 5, meaning that there is no association between fathers' race and their views on men's participation in early education of their children. Level of education and the fathers' views on men's participation in early education of their children showed relationships that were statistically significant, except for view 3. This means that the less educated fathers tend to disagree more than the more educated parents with the views relating to fathers' perception on men's participation in early education of their children.

Occupation of the fathers, like their level of education, shows negative relationships with fathers' views on men's participation in early education of their children. Moreover, the relationships were statistically significant except for view 3. This implies that the artisans and the unemployed fathers disagreed more than the

Table 1: Relationship between fathers' demographic variables and their views on men's participation in ECD

	<i>Age</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Level of education</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
View1	-.034	-.089	-.027	-.185*	-.178*
View2	-.032	-.194*	.030	-.161*	-.274**
View3	-.094	-.077	-.115	-.021	-.060
View4	-.025	-.265**	-.049	-.245**	-.227**
View5	-.074	-.178*	.007	-.228**	-.182*

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

fathers that are public workers with the views relating to the fathers' role on men's participation in early education of their children. This also may suggest that the income level of the fathers and their level of education tend to be related and both are related to the views the fathers hold concerning their roles in the education of their children.

The findings agreed with numerous research works, which claim that when fathers are actively involved in their children's lives, these children are more likely to perform better at school, have higher IQs, develop improved relationships with peers, increase attendance rates, have less emotional stress, and are able to continue learning (Horn 2002; Palkovitz 2002; Sheehy 2004; Robinson 2005; Rosenberg and Wilcox 2006; Sanders and Sheldon 2009; Sheldon 2009; Obeidat and Al-Hassan 2009; Ball 2010; Pleck 2010; Lamb 2010).

This explains further that age, marital status, level of education, occupation, and race of the fathers do not prevent them from participating actively and playing their roles as fathers in the lives of their children in relation to views 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. This finding was corroborated by Sheldon (2009), who states that when parents are involved in the early education of their children, they are more likely to be successful and perform better in academics. Moreover, studies on effective schools where children perform excellently have consistently shown that these schools, even though they are in low socio-economic environments, have strong and positive parental involvement, and high academic achievement is found among the children (Sanders and Sheldon 2009; Sheldon 2009). More importantly, children are more likely to improve in social and emotional development as a result of parental involvement (Henderson and Mapp

2002; Richardson 2009). In addition, all children are more likely to experience academic improvement if parents are supportive (Henderson and Berla 1994; Sanders and Sheldon 2009). To explain further, Obeidat and Hassan (2009) state that not only do children with involved parents improve academically, but they also have the tendency to improve in behavior and develop better skills. More significantly, numerous research studies indicate that parental involvement has a significant influence on children's literacy skills and reading skills (Henderson and Mapp 2002; Epstein 2009; Glasgow and Whitney 2009; Sanders and Sheldon 2009; Sheldon 2009).

Table 2 shows correlation coefficient of the relationship between demographic variables and the factors that affect their participation in the early education of their children. The age of the father is negatively associated with all the factors that affect their participation in the early education of their children, but only the relationship with factor 1 is statistically significant. Generally, the findings imply that the fathers that are above 31 years of age are likely to be less in agreement with the factors that affect their participation in the early education of their children than the younger fathers. This finding shows that mature fathers (31 years above) play significant roles in terms of role modeling for their children as compared to the young fathers. This agreed with the findings of Pleck (2010) indicating that the roles of the fathers are very unique in molding children's character or image in the developmental process of their lives because children develop a good image identity when a warm and caring father is involved.

More importantly, good fathering promotes a positive relationship with children, and provision of child support has been shown to have a

Table 2: Relationship between the demographic variables and the factors that affect their participation in ECD of their children

	<i>Age</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Level of education</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
Factor 61	-.162*	.017	-.204*	-.083	-.033
Factor 72	-.108	-.052	-.190*	-.055	.012
Factor 83	-.003	.017	.067	.442**	.092
Factor 94	-.046	.020	-.057	.489**	.140
Factor105	-.029	-.098	-.172*	.581**	.119

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

positive effect on children's social, cognitive, academic achievement and improved behavior (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2004). Additionally, when fathers play positive roles in the lives of their children, the latter get better grades, are less likely to repeat a grade and are less likely to be sent out of school (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2004). There was a weak and statistically insignificant association between the marital status of the fathers and their view of the factors that affect their participation in the early education of their children. This finding shows that the child's mother still constitutes barriers to them in their involvement in their children's lives when both parents are separated or divorced. In other words, the finding was corroborated with many findings that children who have no father figure in their lives are likely to be incarcerated in life, become dropouts, engage in juvenile delinquencies, develop bad behavioral problems and perform poorly academically (Flouri 2005; Rosenberg and Wilcox 2006; Nock and Einolf 2008).

However, when children see their father and mother having a good marital relationship and working hand-in-hand in the house as a family and contributing to children's total development, such children are also likely to be good parents in the future (Shears et al. 2006; Shears et al. 2011). Fagan and Woody (2002) commented that positive roles of fathers lead to high academic achievement and improved behavior. In other studies, to shed more light on the roles of fathers, Kaye (2005) identifies the high level of native fathers in Early Head Start Center Committees as having positive results in the lives of children. This explains more that the role of fathers is very unique in molding children's character, and this was supported by Lamb (1997) and White et al. (2006) who indicate that the contemporary roles of the father are those of a caregiver, a partner with the mother and as a source of affection and emotional support.

Race was found to have a negative and significant relationship with factors 1, 2 and 5. This suggests that Black fathers are more in disagreement that they 'feel welcome at their children's school' than White fathers. The fathers' level of education is negatively but statistically insignificantly related to factors 1 and 2, while it is positively and statistically and significantly related to factors 3, 4 and 5. This implies that the less educated fathers are more likely to agree

with factors 3, 4 and 5 than the more educated fathers. For example, the less educated fathers are more likely not to know how to help their children at home (factor 5). This is not unexpected knowing that research has shown that parents' education is related to their support of their children's homework. The finding was also corroborated by numerous research work that there is an overwhelming connection between literacy resources in the homes and children's reading skills (Sanders and Sheldon 2009; Sheldon 2009; Glasgow and Whitney 2009). Moreover, numerous research studies also indicate that children who come from reading-oriented homes where books are readily available to them, wherein their parents are avid readers, have a tendency to score higher on reading achievement tests than children from less reading-oriented homes (Edward and Alldred 2000; Henderson and Mapp 2002; Obeidat and Al-Hassan 2009; Sanders and Sheldon 2009).

No statistically significant relationship was found between fathers' occupation and the fathers' view on the factors that affect their participation in the early education of their children. This finding shows that occupation is not a determinant factor that can prevent fathers from participating in the lives of their children, but the emotional concern of the father, as well as the affection he has for his children. Studies by Palkovitz (2002) and Lamb (2010) suggest that despite their circumstances fathers must attend to the needs of their children and show affection to the children to promote good family relationships. The finding agreed with numerous studies, which identify the significance of fathers' involvement in their children's lives as associated with better academic achievement (Rosenberg and Wilcox 2006; Ball et al. 2007; Ball 2010; Bubar and Hall 2011; Shears et al. 2011; Al-Sumati 2012; Huerta et al. 2013; Mashego and Taruvunga 2014).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it would be concluded (though contrary to many published views) that fathers who took part in this study have positive views on their participation in early education of their children. The study also concludes that fathers who took part in the study shoulder their responsibilities to discuss the importance of good education with their chil-

dren as opposed to the negative perception of previous researchers. Moreover, more than half of the respondents expressed their views that their children's mothers constitute a limiting factor to their involvement in their children's education. However, it was noted that the majority of the fathers still perform their duties even though they no longer stay together in the same family. So, the conclusion reached in this study is that fathers who took part in the study are aware of their fatherly responsibilities and are able to stand up for any challenges that may arise in performing their fatherly roles in the lives of their children. The researchers therefore argue that the findings of this study could represent an important step in the research on men by men in the efforts to establish a more credible knowledge base that would aim to capture how men impact the early education of their children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the researchers of this study recommend that the findings of the present study should be looked into thoroughly against the backdrop of numerous negative publications about fathers' involvement in the early education of their children. This research work provides more grounds for further studies on men by men in order to understand how men may be impacting the education of their children.

Given the findings of this study, the researchers would like to recommend that all stakeholders in children's education including the community, academic and non-academic staff of schools, parents, NGOs, civil and social service workers, and media houses should be involved in more effective dissemination of information to fathers. Doing so would help bring the best out of the fathers for positive participation in the lives of their children. Symposia, lectures, workshops, and seminars should be organized for fathers on how to be involved in their children's lives. More fathers should be encouraged to develop positive attitudes towards their children's lives as well as towards the education of their children. This will make them more responsible fathers to their children.

Although generalizing was never one of researchers' intentions, it would be interesting to be able to compare the findings of a larger study with what this research work has found. Larger

studies also have the potential to attract the attention of the fathers' views in terms of their participation in early education of their children.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The size of this study is its most obvious limitation. The fact that only five schools of Foundation Phase classes were involved is obviously a limitation, firstly in terms of seeking statistical generalization, secondly in terms of presenting a picture that may be true for fathers in their totality in the Eastern Cape Province or indeed the country as a whole. Some respondents were reluctant to accept the questionnaire, claiming they were too busy. Therefore, some of the questionnaires were not returned. Among those returned, some were not properly completed. This might have caused some vital information to be missed as a result. Moreover, the researchers had to make several visits to schools to ensure that the participants responded to and returned the questionnaires upon completion. The administration of the questionnaires was tasking and consumed too much time.

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