

INTRODUCTION

Fathers are much less likely than mothers to be involved in taking care of the children and the family. Multiple factors contribute to this lower rate of engagement; however, the traditional ideal of mothers as the primary caregivers of children and fathers as breadwinners is an evident underlying influence. In recent years, attitudes toward fatherhood and fathering practices have undergone significant shifts. Involved fathering - in which males participate more directly and equitably in child upbringing, as opposed to indirectly or through financial contributions - has emerged as a new social ideal. The positive impact fathers can have on their children's growth and family cohesion. The socio-emotional, behavioural, and cognitive/educational outcomes are favourable for children whose fathers are highly involved. Children whose fathers read to them from an early age have superior literacy skills and are more prepared for school than other children. In contrast, children whose fathers are disengaged or negatively engaged are at risk for a variety of cognitive, social, and emotional difficulties.

In spite of the fact that father engagement has been defined in a variety of ways and measured primarily in terms of the quantity of time spent with children, evidence indicates that the quality of father involvement, rather than the quantity of contact, is associated with positive outcomes for children. The focus has shifted not only to increase the quantity but the quality of father engagement in the family as well. Fatherhood is a historically and culturally contextual practice consisting of a set of dynamic relational practices influenced by context. The definition of fatherhood and the activities associated with it vary over time and space. Changes in paternity discourse reflect the integration of parental roles (caregiving and financial provision) among males, and not necessarily a transition from provision to caregiving. Even though fathers have become more involved, or in some cases have the desire to do so, their roles remain centred on providing for the financial requirements of their children and families. Moreover, evidence from South Africa¹ suggests that men's ability to provide for their children and families continues to be a significant indicator of both culturally privileged masculinity and fatherhood.

While the discourse of an emergent nurturing father suggests that this type of fatherhood is uncommon, some authors have noted that the active participation and involvement of fathers in their children's lives has been a way of life in many African societies. The list of responsibilities traditionally assumed by African fathers include providing affection to their children, fostering self-esteem, practicing nonviolence, and sharing equally in duties, moral authority, leader, provider, and protector, and father as role model. This shows that fathers have a significant role in the family and there should be

¹ Hunter, M., 2006. Fathers without amandla: Zulu-speaking men and fatherhood. *Baba: men and fatherhood in South Africa*, pp.99-107.

advocacy for improved father engagement in families. This Charter provides a guidance and advocates for engagement by fathers in the modern day world.

CARING/ CAREWORK

Care labour is a subcategory of work that encompasses all duties explicitly involving care processes performed for the benefit of others. One expectation of the "gender revolution" of the 1960s and 1970s was that an increase in women's employment outside the home would be accompanied by an increase in men's participation in housework and childrearing. In the past decade, policy and research have paid a growing amount of attention to the role of fathers as caregivers within the family. While there have been significant changes in women's employment participation over the past three decades, men's contributions to childcare have not grown at the same rate. Even in households where both parents work full-time, women continue to assume the majority of child-rearing responsibilities.

Care work by men does not only evolve their families but evolves to other spheres of life such as involvement in Early Childhood Development (ECD). The lack of male educators in Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes has diminished the momentum of success obtained through fathers' involvement in the early years of their children's lives. The gender disparity trends in early childhood education and lower primary classes have been skewed toward women since the dawn of time, with males becoming extinct in the field. This is due to the public's perception of women as more nurturing than men, which has also become an impediment for men who intend to pursue professions in early childhood education. While some men received encouragement from colleagues, acquaintances, and family members to pursue careers in ECD, they also confronted concerns and obstacles in the field. Recognising the engendering of care work and the importance of men's involvement in care work in families we commit to

- Encourage fathers` positive involvement in family life and caring for children.
- Providing Benefit of Doubt to Male Early Childhood Development Practitioners
- Encourage men to be ECD practitioners
- Support men and their families on self-care to heal from the trauma that hinders them from positive parenting.

POLICIES, STRUCTURES AND CULTURES

Importantly, the father-child relationship is embedded within a larger sociocultural context, which includes cultural and social beliefs about the father's role in the family. As more women participate in the labour force, the importance of fathers in their children's daily lives is greater than ever. Today,

fathers assume responsibilities that were formerly designated for mothers, indicating that the father's role is in transition. In different cultures, fathers may be expected to perform different roles than mothers, and what constitutes a decent father may be highly contingent on cultural, historical, and familial ideologies. Considering that there is no distinct image of paternity because it varies so greatly across cultures, adjustments are required not only in policies and structures. Numerous widely held cultural beliefs regarding fathers are false. Decades of research have demonstrated that fathers' contributions to infant development are not peripheral, secondary, or expendable. Rather, the father-child relationship is extremely significant. Policies relating to employment, maternity care, poverty, and family separation must be revised in light of these findings, as they continue to reflect erroneous cultural beliefs. Instead, policy and practice must acknowledge and support father-child relationships and their positive effects on child development. Frequently, policy and practice, the workplace, family dynamics, and the law lag significantly behind. When relationships between fathers and children are devalued, child development suffers. Institutions and parents themselves fail millions of children unnecessarily when it comes to fathering. Recognising culture, policies, and structure in men's engagement with their families we commit to

- Measure father involvement over time
- Contributing to the reduction of harmful cultural practices to positive fatherhood.
- Advocate for policy and legal environment that promotes positively involved fatherhood.
- Engage policymakers to account for their failure to implement positive parenting policies.
- Source funding for programmes aimed at promoting positive and active fatherhood in families. This includes lobbying and advocating for government to avail for intentional recruitment and training of male workers.

CO-CREATING

Studies indicate that both mothers and fathers benefit from fathers' involvement in childrearing. Involved fatherhood is sensitive, cordial, close, friendly, supportive, affectionate, nurturing, uplifting, reassuring, and accommodating. Despite the growing recognition of fathers' potential significance to children and families, the majority of family services programs, such as home visiting, were created with mothers in mind only. Although this is changing and programs are increasingly seeking to include fathers, many programs have yet to investigate the unique role of involved fathers in rearing well-adjusted children. Programs seeking to increase their reach and effectiveness in working with fathers should first make an effort to comprehend the unique barriers to family services involvement that fathers encounter, such as non-inclusive linguistic structuring and lack of co-creation with children.

Policymakers, physicians, child support agencies, and family-services professionals are making endeavours to be father-friendly because they recognize that the more the needs of each family member are addressed, the stronger the family as a whole will be. Recognising the importance of co-creating, we commit to:

- Engaging fathers in their connections to families and communities
- Creating a process that enables families to co-create approaches to nurturing and non-violent family environments.
- Use inclusive approaches and language framing in the co-creating process.
- Normalising father voices in child affairs
- Meaningfully engage fathers and children in co-creating.

NARRATIVES

Past evidence has demonstrated the numerous disadvantages that children who do not grow up with their fathers endure. A father's absence from the home does not necessarily imply that he is absent from his child's existence, despite the fact that some children confront this circumstance during their childhood. Numerous non-resident fathers continue to maintain ties with their children, despite the fact that the dynamics and consequences of this relationship are poorly understood. Understanding the role of non-resident fathers in their children's lives and the ways in which their involvement can promote child well-being requires increased focus. Despite the evident benefit of having involved fathers, a significant number of non-resident fathers have little to no contact with their children. Although many non-resident fathers initially endeavour to maintain close ties with their children, some fathers eventually drift apart from their children, with the duration of time since union dissolution and unequal gender parenting being one of the best predictors of contact. Inequality in parenthood is not solely based on paid employment and income. Central are disparities in the number of time mothers and fathers spend with their offspring. Globally, parenting is now more time-intensive and child-centred than in the past, but gender-specific parental expectations persist. Women's initial commitments to caregiving immediately following birth (such as lactation) may establish long-lasting couple dynamics. Recognising the importance of narratives, we commit to:

- Engage the community to consistently consult with communities regarding their definitions of or aspirations of fatherhood.
- Diverse, creative and constructive public representation of fatherhood
- Commit to the narrative of love for their children.
- Promote equal gender parenting

- Popularise fatherhood through narrative campaigns
- Studying existing narratives in order to better understand the collective unconscious (problems and aspirations).