FATHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE PREPARATION OF SONS FOR FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

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ABSTRACT

Being an effective father requires a close relationship with sons, which leads to fostering trust, open communication, mutual support, respect and shared values. This paper sought to gain an insight into fathers' perspectives on the preparation of sons for family responsibilities in South-Western Uganda. A qualitative research method supported by phenomenological, explorative, descriptive and contextual designs was adopted. Purposive sampling facilitated the identification of twenty Bakiga fathers, who were interviewed through semi-structured interviews in Kabale, South-Western Uganda. The ecological system theory was employed to understand how various systems such as family, school, community and work in the father-son environment influence their functioning. The study found that fathers play a pivotal role in preparing sons holistically for family responsibilities across various dimensions such as emotional, mental, spiritual, social, economic and academic aspects. This preparation involves cultivating deep friendships, providing formal and informal education, promoting good money management, offering emotional support, emphasising spiritual values and passing on culturally relevant customs. Given the unique needs of fathers and sons, social workers should collaborate with stakeholders to provide tailored interventions that promote self-reliance and strong father-son bonds, ultimately improving their social functioning.

Keywords: ecological systems theory; family responsibilities; father; social workers; son

INTRODUCTION

Becoming a responsible man is characterised by key developmental tasks (Conger & Little, 2010; Trible, 2015), such as completing school, becoming employed and gaining financial independence, developing intimate relationships, and maintaining adult relationships with one's own parents. Fathers are known to protect, nurture, discipline and serve as guides and role models to sons. In Africa, traditionally, fathers are regarded as providers and protectors, while mothers handle household tasks. Thus, fathers nurture sons on family responsibilities. Family responsibilities are social concepts influenced by cultural differences that accord roles and functions within a family (Masipa, 2015). In this paper, family responsibilities refers specifically to roles fathers play in the home, involving caring and nurturing family members, spending quality time with sons; fostering a positive relationship with the son's mother; disciplining sons and serving as role models (Long et al., 2014). It is acknowledged that these roles are based on patriarchal hierarchies and yet there are different socio-economic dynamics occurring within families in this ever-changing context. Since fathers are like a blueprint for their sons (Strange, 2012), from time to time sons need reference points, given the fact that in patriarchal families, which are characteristic of most of Africa, values and norms are passed from one generation to the next through the elders (Magezi, 2018) and fathers (AfriChild Research Policy 2021).

In patriarchal systems, fathers are rightly positioned to instil, amongst other things, skills, values and attitudes on financial stewardship, socialisation and care, since they are at the centre of every family (Lanz et al., 2020). Good handling of family responsibilities builds independence, resilience, self-esteem and strong family ties. Bakiga, a patriarchal society, is located in the south-western part of Uganda. They are a 'people of the mountains' known to be energetic, hardworking and predominantly agriculturalists (Kwekudee, 2013). Traditionally, Bakiga men avoided having many open conversations with their children; instead, they were expected to listen and respond sparingly (Nibyobyonka 1996; Oruru et al., 2021). The Bakiga sons are often taught through stories and legends, but some fathers have limited quality time to teach family responsibilities, leading in turn to poor interactions (Grando & Ginsberg, 1976). The Bakiga safeguard cultural family values such as valuing work, family stability, respect and extension of one's lineage (Atekyereza, 2016). Parents, guardians, and community members bear the primary duty for raising sons and play a crucial role in preserving, promoting and transmitting cultural norms and values (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development [MGLSD], 2015, 2018). Today, the absence of fathers is to blame for many communities' most disturbing social ills affecting sons (McLanahan et al., 2013; Richter et al., 2010). Inadequate upbringing typically has detrimental effects that show up later in life and are challenging to correct (Gežová, 2015). It is noted that deprived father-son relationships yield negative outcomes for sons, such as thoughts of killing oneself and/or the father, depression, rebellion, disrespect, anger (Long et al., 2014), and alcohol and drug abuse. Since children are more receptive to teaching when they are still young (Sandstrom et al., 2015), fathers are encouraged to take advantage of this teachable stage to positively influence the son's behaviours (Proctor, 2015) while teaching family responsibilities. Family responsibilities such as cultivating meaningful friendships, providing education, promoting financial management, offering

emotional support, reinforcing spiritual uprightness, and teaching culturally appropriate values and norms lead to independence, resilience, sound self-esteem, strong family ties, as well as promoting personal growth among sons (Marcus, 2017).

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2016), female-headed households comprised 20.2% of all households in 2002, in 2014 the proportion increased to 24.1%. The figures provided are just an indication of the number of children growing up without a father figure in homes. The father's role in the family continues to be affected; there is a rising trend of absentee fathers of "African children under the age of 15 years increased from 45% to 52% between 1996 and 2009" (Eddy et al., 2013, p. 7). This is partly attributed to migration in search for jobs, lack of income, marriage-related patterns and the increased prevalence of female-headed households. In discussing the upbringing of sons, it is important to recognise the significant role played by mothers. Although the focus of this article is not on mothers preparing sons for family responsibilities, their influence is paramount. Because of the changes in family structure, many sons learn about family responsibilities from mothers, relatives, community members (Gauthier & DeMontigny, 2013), friends (East et al., 2020) and educators (Hayes, 2014), who serve as positive role models. Mothers are widely acknowledged for teaching sons to value and respect the role of a father (Robinson & Werblow, 2012).

Whereas various studies have been conducted on parents preparing daughters for family responsibilities (Kuwabong et al., 2022); Onayli & Erdur-Baker, 2013; Ramirez et al., 2008; Zefferman, 2016), little is known about fathers preparing sons for family responsibilities.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Fathers play a crucial role in a son's development from birth to adulthood, with the nature of upbringing being a topic of debate among scholars (Whitney et al., 2017). They have various roles in the family (Hurt et al., 2017), including providing for the family, spending time with the children, being affectionate, respecting the mother, being a role model, teaching and sharing traditions. Fathers' roles in families have evolved over time in response to changing family structures and exposure to other cultures since there is global transformation in "social structures, cultural values and behavioural patterns" (Mayowa, 2019). For instance, some sons are influenced by social media and global norms (Manchester & Pett, 2015); moreover, they adopt modern roles with respect to aspects such as sexual and reproductive health, family planning, marriage and childbearing, which conflict with traditional family values. This inquiry is relevant to explore the realities of fathers regarding the preparation of sons for family responsibilities; this is done to inform effective social work support. Children' behaviour is impacted by the way they are raised (Katundano, 2020). If children are shown how to live, what to do and how to do it, practicing them becomes easier when they start caring for their own lives (United Nations Ukraine, 2020).

While working with local communities in Uganda, the first author observed that the changing family systems, parenting skills among the underprivileged and the inadequate provision of life skills all lead to an inadequate transfer of indigenous knowledge, positive values and norms from fathers to sons. This contributes to a number of social ills, including increased prostitution, gambling, inheritance sales, aberrant sexual behavior, substance and drug abuse,

teen pregnancy, and juvenile crime. (MGLSD, 2015, p. 11). It is imperative that fathers in support of mothers be tasked with the responsibility of ensuring the proper upbringing of sons, since their interactions influence the sons' social and emotional capabilities (Stgeorge & Freeman, 2017); this is an opportunity that fathers could take advantage of to prepare sons for family responsibilities.

In this paper, the research questions were prompted by the first author's observations that, in Kabale, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and faith-based organisations (FBOs) support girl children and young couples with life coaching programmes but offer limited support for the boy-child. Their mandate is often not achieved because of a lack of funding, limited programmes and limited father involvement; hence, hard-to-reach areas do not benefit from the support. Some social workers support the NGO and FBO initiatives through advocating for the needs of fathers and sons. There is a need to strengthen these existing programmes by marketing them in the most rural areas. The support offered through the programmes should go beyond preparing the girl-child. The limited support to boy-children has prompted the authors to explore the role of fathers in preparing sons for family responsibilities.

Fathers play a crucial role in shaping sons' social, educational, financial, emotional, spiritual and cultural development. They teach sons to cultivate meaningful friendships, have good communication and respect elders. Fathers also guide children in childhood peer relations and provide support in the early years of interaction (Veríssimo et al., 2011). Discipline moulds well-behaved sons, but it should not be done harshly (Ito & Izumi-Taylor, 2013). In addition, fathers teach sons to respect elders (Whyte & Acio, 2017). The lessons learned from fathers are essential for future success (Gabriel & Spring 2019).

Fathers prepare sons for the future through formal and informal education (Mehus et al., 2018), advising them to be resilient to achieve their life goals (Zenenga, 2015). Through quoting his Zimbabwean father, Zenenga (2015) states that a son's success is a father's pride, and his failure in education leads to elements of embarrassment. Failure to provide appropriate education to the sons could probably affect their chance of achieving self-reliance and future financial independence.

Financial socialisation by parents instils positive financial habits, such as saving and tracking expenses (Pandey et al., 2020). It is essential to teach sons early about good finance management and resource mobilisation (Kim & Chatterjee, 2013; Silva, et al., 2017), to equip them with skills and principles of making, saving and spending money responsibly (Sadeghi et al., 2015). A Ugandan husband is expected, amongst other things, to meet the family's financial obligations, sustain a marriage, reduce frustration and, hence, maintain his dignity as a man (Mwiine & Kyomuhendo, 2011). It is the responsibility of the groom to prepare for marriage, pay bride price and make a home for his family (Schlecht et al., 2013); hence sons need to be financially mature and independent (Özyiğit, 2017). A kiga proverb regarding marriage says "Oshwera atabuurize, afa atabuurize", meaning that one should prepare well for marriage to avoid marrying a traitor (Nibyobyonka, 1996).

Emotionally, fathers teach sons to nurture and care for others through modelling. They lead by good example through controlling their emotions and demonstrating responsibility when solving difficult situations. Emotional maturity contributes to marital satisfaction, and a sons' unpreparedness may result in a lower level of maturity and responsibility (Iravani, 2020). A Ugandan proverb says "Omushaija obushaija abwetera", which means that a man commands respect not by fighting or demanding, but through being responsible and taking control in managing negative situations around him. The South African Sepedi adage that says 'Monna ke nku o llela teng' means that men do not cry (Masenya, 2018) to display their hurt. This implies that a man is associated with forbearance, silence and decency. Therefore, in most cases men hide their feelings, because they think that if they express emotions, they will be regarded as weak. Sons need to observe a healthy display of their fathers' emotions and character. It is important to be wary of the detrimental toxic traits of masculinity, because they are associated with the kind of machismo that validates male domination and female subjugation, thereby establishing male superiority as the dominant cultural position (Rose, 2016). Since individual practices of dominant masculinity occurs in communities, social workers can use existing social systems to promote transformative masculinity in father-son mentorship, aiming to promote gender equality, positive relationships, and more constructive fatherhood skills (Messerschmidt, 2019), in this way minimising the negative traits of masculinity. If the impact of dominant masculinity is negative, it could become problematic, but if it is protective, it should be encouraged (Tseole & Vermaak, 2020).

Spiritually, fathers base their expectations on religious faith, values and moral beliefs (Coakley et al., 2019). Many fathers are not capable of equipping their sons spiritually (Freeks, 2017), and it is important to have them recover and restore the original spiritual meaning of what it is to be a man and father, who represents an image of God. Religion helps distinguish between morally right and wrong, thus building unity and harmony in the family unit (Asad, 2012).

Culturally, fathers use storytelling as a tool to pass on knowledge and teach sons cultural norms, beliefs and ethics. Family institutions embody roles that are almost universally recognised and valued (Ross, 2019), helping families form a foundation of tolerance, security and justice. Traditionally, the Bakiga aimed at safeguarding cultural family values such as valuing work, family stability, avoidance of incest, preserving kinship ties, biological and social reproduction, respect and extension of one's lineage (Atekyereza, 2016). At the moment, when some families no longer live in the same geographical area, as well as the high rate of absentee fathers (Eddy, Boor, & Mphaka, 2013; Freeks, 2017; Richter et al., 2010), passing on such values from one generation to the other is becoming a challenge. The responsibility of passing on these family norms, values and traditions lies with the older generation, if the family legacies are to be preserved.

It is essential to appreciate the unique contribution fathers make in the lives of sons. Despite the realities facing some fathers in preparing sons for family responsibilities, family social workers and stakeholders such as families and communities, NGOs and government departments collaborate to strengthen interventions for sons and families. In Uganda family social workers have a critical role to play in contributing towards social development (Lombard & Twikirize, 2014). They assist in identifying sons with challenges in order to customise

intervention plans to suit individual needs. They support proper family functioning, assist in problem-solving (Driscoll, 2020; Weick et al., 1989) and contribute to community development (Dhavaleshwar, 2016). Social workers possess professional knowledge to sustain, strengthen and promote family resilience, to teach life skills and to contribute to parenting programmes that aim at nurturing gender equality and improving father-son relationships, but also including a girl-child at home and in the communities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The ecological systems theory was adopted as the theoretical framework to broaden the understanding of perspectives on fathers' preparing sons for family responsibilities. The ecological systems theory serves as a useful strategy for social workers, aiming to improve the social functioning of the overall service user's system through the provision of holistic interventions (Pardeck, 1988; Teater, 2014). It provides an opportunity to assess fathers and sons in the context of the environment in which they interact. This theory suggests that appropriate interventions to address individual problems occur at the micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono systems simultaneously (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; East, 2016). The five systems are discussed briefly below within the context of this paper.

The microsystem refers to the immediate surroundings that influence a child's development. This system includes a primary environment system such as a child's family and parents (Jaspal et al., 2016; Piel et al., 2016; Sincero, 2012). A son is brought up into adulthood assimilating behaviour, attitudes and actions from his microsystemic surroundings. Barriers affecting the preparedness of sons for family responsibilities could be identified during the assessment process to receive social work intervention. The mesosystem represents the home and school systems (Piel et al., 2016; Sincero, 2012). If there is a conflict at home between parents, a son's school performance may be affected, thus impacting on the overall development of the son. The exosystem is the system that indirectly affects sons (Jaspal et al., 2016; Piel et al., 2016) It includes, amongst other factors, the neighbourhood, parents' workplace and social networks in which the thinking pattern of the family may be influenced. For instance, a father's unavailability because he is working far from home may serve as a barrier to prepare sons for family responsibilities. The macro system refers to political, cultural, socio-economic status, ethnic or racial identity, poverty and the social realities forming part of this system (Jaspal et al., 2016). These aspects influence the development of sons. For instance, through culture, children learn which behaviours and values are preferred or discouraged. Major decisions or important life transitions define the chronosystem. Any change that alters the family's lifestyle may have a long-lasting impact on the sons' psychological development (Sincero, 2012). For instance, the timing of a parent's death or divorce may impact on sons differently.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Fathers play an important role in mentoring sons into a healthy growth and transitioning into adulthood (Freeks et al., 2015). In Africa, studies have been conducted on the impact of fathers' absence (Freeks, 2017; Richter et al., 2010); however, not much is documented on fathers' engaged preparation of sons for family responsibilities in Kabale, South-Western Uganda. Although not much is documented on family responsibilities, it is reported that a man is

culturally expected to take over the paternal responsibility for children, and hence responsible traditional leadership should be encouraged and facilitated (Roby et al*.,* 2009). Parents need to be tasked to prepare sons for the physical, psychosocial and educational responsibilities in relation to the specific culture (Bornstein, 2013). While there is no formal training for fatherhood (Enrique et al., 2007) and parenthood, the older generation is expected to pass on cultural norms, values and traditions to the younger generation for family continuity, in accordance with the different stages of development (Ross, 2019). The Ugandan government recognises that fatherhood is still evolving, but fathers are indeed passive in their role of care in the home (MGLSD, 2018).

Uganda is a country with one of the youngest populations in the world. Youths aged 18 - 30 years account for 22.5% while children below 18 years constitute 55.1% of the population (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Sons must be helped to understand family values and the responsibilities that come with age. There is a need to safeguard the interests of the nation through protection of the family, which is where values, responsibilities and development originate and are nurtured (Government of Uganda, 1995). If Ugandan sons are not adequately prepared to take over family responsibilities, there could be an increase of alcohol and substance abuse, child abuse and neglect by parents, moral decadence, and an increase of crime and misconduct. This situation is associated with risk-taking behaviours that affect individual, community and national development. Neglecting to prioritise the transfer of good values and a sense of responsibility in the son may have far-reaching consequences, not only for the nation of Uganda, but particularly in the South-Western region. Prioritising this transfer of values is essential for fostering a responsible and principled future generation.

The absence of role models and formal instruction to sons on family responsibilities has brought about challenges for family stability (Wood & Brownhill, 2018). Furthermore, the changing family structures and challenges faced by families today have compounded the problem. Emotionally absent fathers may be physically available, but unsupportive, uninvolved, untrustworthy, unsympathetic, lack warmth in their interaction with children, and are insensitive (Peyper, 2013). On the other hand, involved fathers play a crucial role in bringing out the best in the lives of children (Long et al., 2014). Based on the above issues, there is limited information on fathers preparing sons for family responsibilities in South-Western Uganda. This article set out to ascertain fathers' perspectives on preparing sons for family responsibilities in response to the gap identified.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was implemented, complemented by phenomenological, exploratory, descriptive and contextual strategies to develop an in-depth understanding of how fathers prepare sons for taking on family responsibilities. To draw a sample from the larger population, a purposive non-probability sampling technique was utilised. Semi structured interviews were conducted with 20 participants who met the inclusion criteria of the study, after ethical approval had been received from the Social Work Departmental Research and Ethics Committee at the University of South Africa (UNISA). The inclusion criteria included fathers residing in Kabale, raising a son(s) of ages 18 – 30 years, should have been with the son(s) from birth and can

converse, read and write in any of the two languages (English and Rukiga). The exclusion criteria included maternal uncles or paternal uncles who did not raise a son.

The study population was the Bakiga tribe in Kabale District, in South-Western Uganda. The sample size was not determined from the outset, but it was guided by the principle of data saturation (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). Data saturation was reached when no new information emerged from the research participants (Garousi et al., 2019). The face-to-face interviews took between 30 and 60 minutes, and permission to record the interviews was sought prior to the start of the interview. The data were analysed following the six steps by Braun and Clarke (in Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). To ensure the accuracy of findings, the trustworthiness model including the four basic concepts (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) was utilised (Benjumea, 2015).

This article answers the following research questions:

- How do fathers in South-Western Uganda prepare sons for family responsibilities?
- What suggestions do you have for social workers to support fathers and sons?

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Ethical clearance was received from the University of South Africa (SWREC Reference #:2020-SWREC-61939315), Mildmay Research and Ethics Committee (MUREC, REC REF # 0104-2020), and Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (Ref No. SS491ES). The researcher was cleared by Kabale District Administration (Ref No. Edu 48/68/02), where the research took place. To comply with the ethical requirements, written informed consent from all the participants was received, after discussing the details of the research with participants and informed them of their rights (Hunt et al., 2021).

The signed consent form was written in English and translated into Rukiga, a local dialect, easily understood by the participants, and they were given sufficient time to consider whether or not to take part in the study (Manandhar & Joshi, 2020). Furthermore, the participants gave permission for the publication of the study findings. The study adhered to ethical standards such as anonymity, confidentiality and management of information.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results based on participants' stories are presented below.

Biographical profiles of the participants

This section presents the biographical profiles of 20 participants who met the inclusion criteria for the study. To preserve privacy and anonymity, numbers were allocated to participants. Their demographic profiles are based on age, marital status, number of children, household members, highest qualification and employment status. The details are given in Table 1.1 below. Of the 20 participants, the youngest was 27 years old, while the oldest was 76 years old, with the mean age being 51 years. The researchers followed the guidelines of the South African Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) Act 4 of 2013, which governs the handling of personal information (South Africa, 2013). The age and marital status of participants were significant

demographic factors that reflect a range of experiences. For example, understanding the age profile of participants aids in framing their responses based on specific developmental stages. Additionally, marital status provides useful insights into the participants' social support systems, living arrangements, and lifestyle choices (Song, 2012). According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) (2014), age and gender shape an individual's role within the community and the socio-economic and political framework of society. This, in turn, affects where one resides, the size of their family, their quality of life, marital status, and their economic engagement in society. Eighteen participants were in monogamous marriages, while two were in a polygamous marriage, although one lost his first wife. All the participants had boy-children. All participants resided with families, except one who live at the workplace while his family stayed at the ancestral home. The participants' levels of education varied significantly, with the highest being a Master's degree while the lowest was Primary Four[1]. Sixteen participants were employed in various work settings: four were in the teaching profession, three served as police officers, two were managers of businesses, and two were building constructors. Among the participants were a religious leader, mechanic, farmer, two self-employed people, three unemployed, and a retiree.

Table 1.1: Demographic[2] profiles for the study participants

No	Age	Marital status	Children	Household members	Highest qualification	Employment
P1	27	M	2 (1 son, 1 daughter)	Wife and children	SR 6	Self-employed
P2	34	M	1 (son)	Wife and son	Certificate in bricklayer and building construction	Builder
P3	40	M	4 (2 sons, 2 daughters)	Wife and four children	BA in Theology	Assistant lecturer
P4	40	M	2 sons	Wife and children	Diploma (In Islam studies)	Religious leader
P5	45	M	4 (3 sons, 1 daughter)	Wife and children	BA in Business Administration	Unemployed
P6	45	M	6 (3 sons, 3 daughters)	Wife and children	BA in Education	Teacher
P7	47	M	4 (2 sons, 2 daughters)	Wife, a son, and daughters	Diploma in teaching	Teacher
P8	49	M (2 wives)	6 (4 sons, 2 daughters)	Polygamous marriage: wives live with their children separately.	PS 7; Certificate in motor vehicle mechanics	Motor vehicle mechanic
P9	51	M	5 (2 boys, 3 daughters)	Wife and four children	SR 6	Builder

[1] Uganda Education System consists of primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Primary level has Grades One to Seven (Nalusiba, 2010). Primary Four is the fourth level of primary education.
[2] KEY: Marital status: M – Married. Highest qualification: PS – Primary; SR – Senior; B.A – Bachelor of Arts; BSc (Eng) – Bachelor of Science; MEd – Master's in Education.

No	Age	Marital status	Children	Household members	Highest qualification	Employment
P10	52	M	5 (3 sons, 2 daughters	Wife (children at school)	SSR 4	Police officer
P11	53	M	5 (3 sons, 2 daughters)	Wife and children	MEd	Head teacher Secondary school
P12	53	M	5 (3 sons, 2 girls)	Wife (children at school)	SR 4	Police officer
P13	56	M	5 (3 sons, two daughters)	Wife and two children	SR 6	Police force
P14	57	M	2 sons	Wife and first son	BSc (Eng)	Self-employed
P15	57	M	6 (3 sons, 3 daughters)	Wife, 2 sons and daughter	BA in Business Administration	Unemployed
P16	57	M	7 (5 sons, 2 daughters)	Wife and children	PS 4	Caretaker of the home
P17	58	M	5 (4 sons, 1 daughter)	Wife and children (children working)	SR 4	Manager of petrol station
P18	60	M (First wife passed away)	13 (6 sons, 7 daughters)	Wife and one adult girl. Other children are independent.	PS 5	Unemployed
P19	68	M	4 (3 sons, 1 daughter)	Wife	Diploma in Health Promotion	Retired
P20	76	M	9 (7 sons, 2 daughters)	Wife and one child. Other children are independent.	SR 4	Farmer

Themes and subthemes

This paper presents two themes and eleven subthemes that emerged from findings.

Theme 1: Preparation of sons for family responsibilities

Scholars (Abubakar et al., 2017; Ceka & Murati, 2016) have shared findings on how children (sons) should be prepared for family responsibilities. Family responsibility preparation involves building on the prevailing values of family unity, parental equality, recognition of the mothers' role, and promotion of positive father-child relationships (Meyer, 2018). It was pointed out that sons imitate their parents. For instance, a healthy marital relationship teaches healthy ways of doing things (Hurt et al., 2017). In the absence of fathers, some younger fathers are taught to be responsible fathers by grandparents, maternal gatekeepers and other co-parents in their lives (Roy, 2014). A summary of how the participants were prepared for family responsibilities is given in Figure 1.1 below.
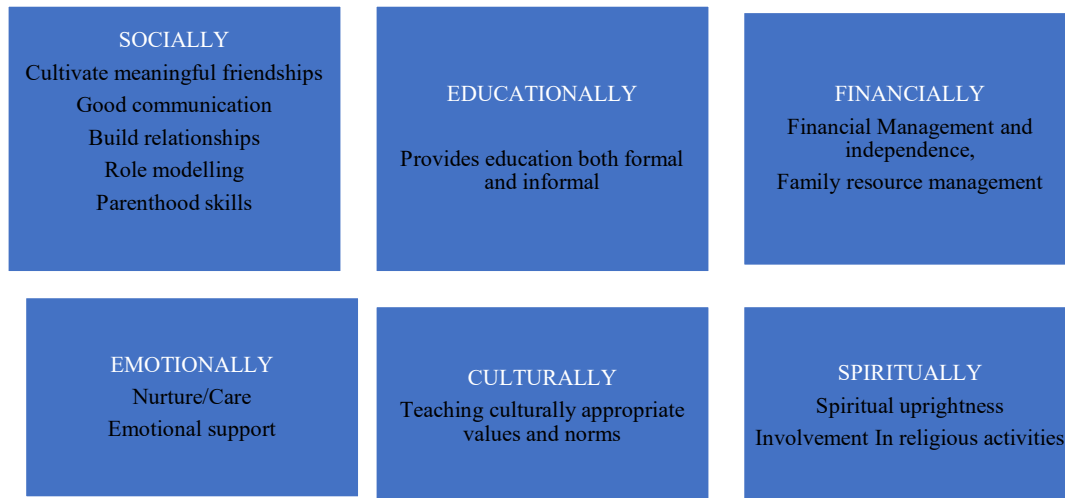
SOCIALLY Cultivate meaningful friendships Good communication Build relationships Role modelling Parenthood skills	**EDUCATIONALLY** Provides education both formal and informal	**FINANCIALLY** Financial Management and independence, Family resource management
EMOTIONALLY Nurture/Care Emotional support	**CULTURALLY** Teaching culturally appropriate values and norms	**SPIRITUALLY** Spiritual uprightness Involvement In religious activities

Figure 1.1: **Preparation of sons for family responsibilities encompassing key dimensions of life.**

Sub-theme 1.1: Build a close relationship and cultivate friendship with sons

Another way the participants plan to prepare sons for family responsibilities is by building a close relationship and cultivating friendship with sons that allows good father-son communication (Ito & Izumi-Taylor, 2013). Close relationships create an environment conducive to the nurturing of trust, mutual understanding, opportunities for positive criticism and correction (Brannen et al., 2012; Long et al., 2014;).

To create friendship with my children. (P10)

I have a friend; he is my neighbour. He has a closer relationship with his father, he is the only one I have met who has that kind of relationship with his father. They usually go out to watch soccer together. They have a common interest, soccer… whenever they go out to watch, they talk, like friends, buddies…What I want is to be so close to my son. I want to know him, I want to ask him what he likes, I want to experience life with him. … because when I get to know him, then I can give help wherever he needs it. (P3)

I think I will always have to spare some time for my son and talk to him the way my father does. Another thing, I will make sure my son is not scared of me. (P7)

Sons are interested in having fathers as friends, teachers and role models, because they prefer to have close relationships with them (MacBeth & Sibbel, 2012). Sons who have supportive relationships with fathers are more likely to be involved with their own children (Brown et al., 2018). A son who did not know his father asserts that there is no excuse for not being responsible for a child that one has fathered (Ide et al., 2018). When a child is given good, early childcare, it "significantly improves the level of adult parenting" (Kyomuhendo, 2021, p. 52). To be able to influence a son's behaviour positively, fathers get to know who their sons are on a personal level and forge close relationships. In life, fathers demonstrate to sons the importance of being trustworthy, polite, forgiving, kind and honest in business and in family relationships.

The findings show that a father's commitment to work far from home may limit his availability and communication with his children (Profe & Wild, 2017). A father who is not living with his family on a regular basis can still make an effort to be fully present for the short time he is available and can enhance communication through modern information communication technologies (Aure, 2018). Fathers who endeavour to keep communication open irrespective of being physically available or not, make their contribution and availability appreciated. Fathers tend to meet their sons' basic needs as their fathers did for them, and good communication between fathers and sons makes raising responsible sons easily attainable (Ide et al., 2018).

> *I will tell them the facts about how things are done and about the future, there is a way you are preparing them for the life ahead.* (P14)

> *A month should not end without sitting with my son to nurture him and guide him. That is what we have been talking about, communication. ... If you could manage giving your son two days, or two hours and you talk, you analyse how you have been seeing him that month. I think this would help him, because we children are taken away by small things, but parents are experienced and know much about us. You are the people to guide us, and we go in a straight line.* (P5)

> *As he grows up, I will be sitting with him, I give him time, we sit, talk. Father-son friendship must be established through that when I give him time, I will tell him some things he needs to know as he is growing up so that he is prepared ... when they happen, he will know that dad told me many times to be prepared.* (P1)

> *He must become free with me, and when he does, I will try and study him and where he goes wrong, I talk to him, I tell him son; this was wrong.* (P7)

Some fathers spend time with sons and doing age-appropriate activities with them because sons delight in having them as role models (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2018). When fathers engage sons according to appropriate ages, it makes them appreciate the help, guidance and encouragement they receive regarding various aspects of their lives (Brannen et al., 2012).

Sub-theme 1.2: Respectful behaviour

Many parents pass on their own beliefs and values to children in the hope that, as adults, they will subscribe to them too (Brighouse & Adam, 2014). One of the important values a parent can transmit to sons is being respectful to the elders and others, as this ensures moral development.

> *The values that promote sons to become men and responsible fathers is to respect the elders. They have to be welcoming in their homes, to know that if you are the head of the family, then you have to sit with family members, discuss together ... and build one another.* (P2)

> *They ...give a word of encouragement, and when they are at home, a parent must have a conversation with the child. ... Children can learn a lot from peers but when they are taught in a practical way at home, they will pick it, for example, a child is taught to greet people in the morning and say good night every night, and welcome parents' home. The child who*

is given the right words to say, like good night daddy, I love you, will behave better than the one who is not taught, and is more likely to pass it to their own children. (P9)

The findings of the study show that whenever parents support children in acquiring a positive attitude towards relationships, they become respectful, and parents are encouraged to meet their basic physiological needs (Serinkan, 2012). This is mainly because fathers are custodians of culture; hence they protect the good elements of culture from disappearing and ensure the future generation benefits from this (Tata & Prasad, 2015). As seen in attachment theory, close relationships between biological fathers and their children increase the likelihood of better development for the children (Brown et al., 2018). Guiding sons to cultivate a positive attitude towards relationships is crucial in preserving meaningful traditions and values that contribute to the sustainability and healthy growth of culture. A good value system plays a central role in shaping sons, who in turn, grow into principled and committed fathers.

Sub-theme 1.3: Teaching the qualities of a responsible son

The participants further indicated that fathers should teach the sons good qualities of a responsible father. Being a good father goes beyond the home. It involves being a good citizen in the community (Boothby et al*., 2017*), providing for their family (Payleitner, 2010), and preparing for the family by putting in place requirements (Hurt, 2014). Specific to this article, the requirements involve constructing a house, ensuring there is food for the family, a source of income and preparing for the children's upkeep. Furthermore, fathers give information and guidance (Sandberg, et al., 2022), provide an inheritance in terms of land, property, or an income-generating activity (Boothby et al*., 2017*), encourage sons to marry, be independent and resilient (Wood & Brownhill, 2018).

> *You* [fathers] *should always encourage your sons and daughters to do good things in the community; love one another, love working, education and without forgetting God. God should be first.* (P10)

> *When your son grows, you should tell him whatever you know about fatherhood... if you have given your son a small property that he can use to take care of himself and his family, you are in a way making him independent. ... He is supposed to move out of your home like I moved out of my father's home, ...Your son should move in your footsteps, handling others the way he was handled.* (P11)

> *If you are starting a family, you prepare, and plan how you will handle each and everything...you prepare everything. I prepared the shelter* [built a house]*, food, I was ready.* (P10)

> *It* [getting married] *needs when you are prepared, and if not prepared, you should not think about getting married. You prepare yourself first, then the shelter, you should be in position to take care of your children including taking your children to hospital if they fall sick, provide food for them ... that is when you will have a good family and raise responsible children with your wife.* (P18)

Parents transform society through constant interaction with their children, and the transmission of rules, values and cultural expectations to them (Bova & Arcidiacono, 2015). According to Freeks et al. (2015), a fathers' love is pure and an investment in the lives of their children. Failure to find love at home may lead children to look for it elsewhere. Fathers are significant in children's lives (Wood & Brownhill, 2018). Furthermore, in Africa, being a male is equated with "being a hardworking provider for your family" (Baloyi & Manala, 2018, p. 3), and sons need to learn that meeting the expectations of the family forms part of responsible fatherhood.

Sub-theme 1.4: Father's promotion of son's education

Closely related to fathers' availability is fathers' promotion of their sons' education, and eventual employment of children, which motivates their preparedness for family responsibilities. The participants observe that fathers' involvement in their sons' education paves the way for their sons to become independent, self-sufficient and responsible men or fathers. Furthermore, several participants suggest that planning for a good career for sons and coaching them in different areas of work enables them to get better opportunities to choose from and acquire positive attitudes towards life.

> *… the eldest son at one time had become slow at his studies, so I had to intervene. As a teacher … I would contact teachers and talk. He was almost failing but I am glad he later picked up.* (P1)

> *I also teach my sons some of the other things that I do, I often go with my sons to* [show them] *what I am working on, sometimes I also take them to see my businesses with the intention of teaching them something new. The boys must learn the business you do, as you show them how things are done.* (P15)

> *Even before I got married, I always planned that when I had a son, I would work hard, get money, and educate him to the highest level possible, a university degree at least. Unfortunately, this has not been possible. I have been able to educate my son to senior four, because I did not have enough money.* (P4)

> *I passionately want to train my child so that he may avoid such bad behaviour* [smoking, alcohol and stealing] *and badly behaved peers. I will work hard to provide, educate so that my son becomes brilliant, I will train him with many skills so that he becomes responsible… be independent.* (P8)

Educating children begins at home, where parents provide a safe and healthy setting, suitable learning practices, and support, among others (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). The same authors point out that sons can succeed in life if they get good careers and well-paying jobs. Similar experiences are reported in a study of students at St. Catherine University, where it is revealed that better educational outcomes for children are associated with positive parent-son relationships (Costello, 2014). Fathers therefore encourage sons to pursue higher education without being diverted from achieving their educational goals (Saenz et al., 2017). Since the ecological theory encourages interaction between two or more systems (Turner, 2017), a father's time with his sons may be an opportunity to engage by teaching them the value of education and how to prevent bad associations.

Sub-theme 1.5: Financial management skills

The participants indicated that good financial management skills are necessary for sons, if they are to become responsible fathers. Such skills include making money, saving money, spending responsibly, planning to provide for the family.

> *I have tried to teach my son how to save ... for instance, money from construction sites, he is having a bank account. He saves but I monitor his passbook so that he does not unnecessarily withdraw the money that helps the family. ... Once you get that money, if you buy a phone, we will allow you, but that phone you hand over to us before you go to school. On that account, he will grow knowing how to use financial institutions, it will not be by surprise, that once he starts earning, to open a bank account and how to save little by little with his salary in future.* (P3)

> *I normally tell them, to prepare, I normally tell my sons that you know that you will have a responsibility of heading a family, so you should know how to save, how to plan for your future children and your wife, so I tell them.* (P1)

> *I just bought land for them, I gave them school fees, which is all.* (P19)

Understanding the dynamics of acquiring, handling and utilising money is very important for the family (Lauer & Yodanis, 2014). Since inadequate finances are a barrier to sons' starting a family of their own, sufficient resources are required for upkeep, paying fees and ensuring the family's survival (Hurt, 2014). One individual affirms that whoever wants to take on family responsibilities should be self-sufficient and socio-economically stable (Özyiğit, 2017). Lack of financial stability may affect the social functioning of a family. If the teaching of planning and saving for the family is not effective, part of the fathers' agenda to teach sons how to sustain their own families may be unsuccessful.

Sub-theme 1.6: Prepare sons emotionally and mentally for family responsibilities

By being mentally prepared, sons' confidence increases while panic and anxiety are minimised. It further ensures that they understand the benefits and consequences of any life decision made before it is applied. It requires a level of maturity, understanding, tolerance and continuous learning as expressed in the comments below.

> *...emotionally, you should tell them not to become quarrelsome, you must be reserved, you must accept realities, those things you must tell them.* (P1)

> *Preparing someone emotionally. Yes, you talk about it, ...you tell him that there are some challenges in marriage sometimes, don't be specific, ...see, not all married people are necessarily happy, but you need to be understanding, tolerate each other. ... Saying that when you become married, that you have arrived* [believe that you have everything you need in life]. *No, you keep on learning. ... Much as we also are not conversant with it, we are not perfect, we keep on sharing with them the little we know.* (P2)

For emotional maturity is a personal trait in which an individual can control his emotions and act wisely after evaluating the situation. To become emotionally mature, sons must appreciate

the reality, manage their emotions well, and avoid stress (Sabu, & Majeed, 2022).). It has been observed by a South African scholar that emotional stability is associated with marital satisfaction, success in life and social stability (Nduna, 2014). The need to teach sons to work towards emotional maturity is an absolute requirement.

Sub-theme 1.7: Spiritual uprightness

Some participants point out that one's spiritual uprightness contributes to one becoming responsible. They illustrate that this can be done through teaching sons to know God and involving the children in religious activities while they are still young. The participants' perspectives are supported by a Kiga proverb: "Akati kainikwa kakiri kabisi". It means that a plant is straightened out while still young and tender; the message implies that sons must be taught discipline, good and moral behaviour when they are still young and are able to change, before forming their own belief system.

> *I raised that boy to know and love God. I raised him to respect and to listen all people older than him, and to take seriously whatever advice the elders give him.* (P13)

> *We usually have fellowship in the evening hours of the day, every evening between 8 to 9 and we rotate, from me to the mother, first son and so on, they lead the fellowship, even the youngest ... so that we become united, and we normally emphasise discipline, and moral uprightness.* (P1)

> *...spiritually, let us put them in God's hands because we have many children who have turned out to be irresponsible despite the parent's effort to care and provide. Many sons have become rebellious, yet the parent was caring...I think that if we involve God, and we care, and involve the child in religious activities, he may avoid taking of drugs, disturbing people, and doing all sorts of bad behaviour. ... religion tells us that a ... a child should be taught what you want them to be in future from the time they are still young ...as the Kiga saying goes, "Akati kainikwa kakiri kabisi.* (P15)

When children understand God's character, they become effective in their community (Kim & Quek, 2013). Furthermore, fathers play a positive role by teaching sons godly values, because fathers are leaders of the family, and are responsible for spiritual wellbeing in the home (Allen, 2016; Freeks, et al., 2015). Fathers prefer to be known as the earthly fathers, while God is the heavenly father as directed by religion (Freeks, 2017). Nevertheless, maturity is evident when a person is being guided by religious principles (Shaw, 2016). The examples of people whose behaviour has improved because of spiritual uprightness attracts other sons to want to live better lives.

Sub-theme 1.8: Imparting cultural beliefs

Cultural values are passed on from one generation to another (Arewa & Dundes, 1964). Every society passes on its values of "what is good, right and acceptable" to others, because values occupy a central place in people's culture (Ikechukwu & Ogbo, 2019, p. 24-25). The same authors affirm that the values in culture are closely related, including "social, moral, religious, political, aesthetic and economic values of a culture'. Some of the participants in this study

pass on the value of their cultural heritage to their sons through sharing stories on how they were brought up. Some fathers specified that teaching children good behaviour should start when sons are young, so that good behaviour is embedded in their way of life.

> *Fathers should teach sons how to behave starting from childhood, when they are still young until they are adults. Sons should listen and obey their fathers, and if I send him anywhere, he should not hesitate but obey and go there.* (P8)

> *Normally when we are doing work, I start telling them stories and explaining how we grew up and how we were prepared. Then I tell them how I grew up in a family of peasantry, it was rich in our sense, because we had abundant food, and it is from this food that I was able to go to* [name of high school] *to study, an expensive school by that time but we worked tirelessly.* (P1)

> *They have learnt my way of doing things. I took care of them very well, I cared for my father and my mother, I have endeavoured to teach them to take care of their homes, the way I have taken care of mine. I expect them to do as they have observed me. I have behaved well all my life, I have taken care of my parents, I can see them already taking care of me as their parent.* (P13)

Fathers play a significant role in shaping their sons' growth and development (Gibbons & Woodside, 2014) by teaching them discipline and independence (Rachmawati & Listiana, 2019). In various cultures, values are passed through generations using methods such as discussions, observation and external influences such as schools (Drani et al., 2011). In the Acholi community in Uganda, values are learned at an early age from parents, grandparents, elders and religious leaders (Oruru et al., 2021). By incorporating the ecological theory in social work interventions, (Hepworth et al., 2013), this will allow social workers to establish the various environmental factors such as cultural beliefs affecting their social functioning.

Theme 2: Participants' suggestions for social workers in support of fathers and sons

This section presents suggestions by fathers for social workers in support of fathers and sons. The suggestions include equipping fathers with skills on how to prepare sons for family responsibilities; affording sons an opportunity to participate in activities that promote responsible fatherhood; importance of fathers as role models; active involvement of fathers in sons' lives; and equipping sons with a solid foundation for positive fatherhood. Each suggestion is presented with the support of participants' storylines.

Sub-theme 2.1: Equip fathers with skills on how to prepare sons for family responsibilities

Several participants suggested offering regular training sessions to equip fathers with skills to prepare sons for family responsibilities. This could be done by social workers through teaching fathers good communication skills, correct child discipline, family leadership skills and interpersonal skills.

> *They should go deep, they should go and train the parents, especially fathers, to know how to participate in disciplining children and being good examples to them.* (P1)

In Kiga culture, we have a tendency of keeping quiet, saying that they will get to learn [belief that somebody else will prepare sons]. *They will learn from the teachers; they will learn from their uncles. ... .* (P3)

Research has shown that programmes to promote role modelling for sons are essential (Atif et al., 2022). Social workers assert that fathers can contribute to their children's lives in a healthy manner by providing emotional, educational and financial support (Acklin, 2016). The ecological theory affirms that there is an increased engagement in the relationship between humans and their environment, emphasising that learning is affected by the environmental impact (Suppes & Wells, 2013). An environment conducive to such engagement therefore encourages fathers to learn what is needed to prepare sons for family responsibilities in the modern world.

Subtheme 2.2: Afford sons an opportunity to participate in activities that promote family responsibilities

Several participants suggest that sons should be actively involved in activities that teach them what it means to be responsible. Such activities include being taught to recognise available resources to meet family needs, managing challenges and learning what is ethically and morally right, and training sons to participate in household chores. The participants highlighted that a parent should promote teamwork and treat all children the same.

I think it helps because the struggling in terms of getting jobs, making ends meet, fending for their family, for their future family, so you must know that there is always a need to work harder, and to struggle .... as of the moral and ethical side, and behavioural, it is very important that we keep talking to them, putting them in the right path. (P2)

*Social workers should support parents to continue to train handling of house chores to both boys and girl, such that boys grow up knowing the need to help in housework...you see my wife normally teaches the children to work together. They rotate in washing dishes and all other housework. When the children grow up knowing that they are supposed to do those activities and that it is not a punishment, once the young man has grown and has brought a wife, he will not overburden her. When the wife is not well, he will do those activities easily. Then, sexual education should continue, and parents should teach their children about sexuality, so that they can be prepared for the responsibility that comes with fatherhood. (*P1)

Parenting significantly impacts on both men and women, altering attitudes and specifically here masculine identities (Lee & Lee, 2018). Social workers are encouraged to support sons in becoming responsible men, actively involved, and disciplined. Engaging fathers in social work practice is crucial, as their participation has significant family implications (Ewart-Boyle et al., 2015).

Subtheme 2.3: Equip sons with a solid foundation for positive parenting

The participants indicated that a solid foundation for sons would enable them to be grounded in upholding the family responsibilities expected of them. Firm foundations are best taught to

children when they are still young, a time when they are still receptive to whatever they are taught. Some sons get distracted by several things, leading to several social problems that would require solving before new ideologies are introduced.

> *I think that the social workers will also find a big challenge. The sons do not have a good foundation and by the time the social workers get involved, the boys are spoilt. I equate it to the church that preaches salvation to a hungry man, whereas the man would want to change their behaviour, his focus is on the problem disturbing him. It is very difficult to attract people with unresolved problems.* (P20)

> *As long as you start early, with children who go to nursery school. If they begin to teach them their roles, if they begin to challenge them right at the age 4, they get to learn the values. The things that children learn early remain with them as values, they don't forget them. For those that are already grown, we could start them at their level, but the best to cause impact is to start early*. (P1)

The notion of building a firm foundation for the sons resonates with the Kiga adage: "Omuyembe tigukagwa hare nekiti kyagwe", which literally means that a "mango does not fall far from its tree" and it teaches that "it is up to the parent to direct and teach sons the right ways", because they are more likely to behave like their parents (Okubo, 2016, p. 23). Social workers support families to lay a foundation that builds a functional family structure, hence making it operational (Makofane & Mogoane, 2012). For some fathers, parenting skills were learnt when they participated in taking care of the younger siblings while growing up (Ito & Izumi-Taylor, 2013; Lee & Lee, 2018). The outcome of inculcating values, norms and beliefs in sons becomes evident in the sons' ways of handling family responsibilities in their adulthood.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Preparation for family responsibilities is essential for sons, and it should begin at an appropriate early age. In Uganda fathers tend to parent their children similarly to how they were raised themselves, shaping their children's future behaviours and parenting styles (Kyomuhendo, 2021). Fathers prepare sons for family responsibilities holistically, focusing on social, financial, academic, emotional, cultural and spiritual aspects. This preparation lays the foundation for a healthy father-son relationship and influences the way that sons will interact with their own children. Sons are taught not only to pursue a fulfilling career, but also to contribute to their family and society's economic development. Through narratives, fathers tell stories integrating past experiences into meaningful lessons for their sons (Oruru et al., 2021).

Participants shared their suggestions for social work support, which include developing programmes to equip fathers with the skills necessary to raise and prepare sons for fatherhood. Additionally, the suggestions involve providing opportunities for sons to engage in activities that promote and prepare them for family responsibilities. By using the ecological systems theory, social workers aim to address the environmental factors that impact on wellbeing and identify root causes of problems to improve family situations. Social workers need to remind

fathers of their essential role in childcare to ensure they feel recognised and acknowledged in society (Nkwake, 2011; Teater, 2010).

To foster a supportive learning environment for young boys in communities, social workers should work in partnership with religious institutions, community leaders, relevant government departments, and traditional authorities to establish a structured role-modelling and parenting programme, accompanied by certification. This initiative can involve recruiting social father figures—such as unemployed uncles, retired educators, and religious elders—to mentor and educate boys whose fathers are absent due to various circumstances, including incarceration, passing away, work-related commitments, or other unknown reasons. Additionally, policymakers are encouraged to collaborate with social workers in the development and revision of family policies. This collaboration provides social workers with the platform to propose potential interventions for fathers and sons. In addition to the existing theoretical frameworks utilised in the provision of psychosocial support, social workers should consider integrating ecological and empowerment theories to better address the specific needs of fathers and sons. Importantly, social workers should also involve sons in developing a technological application model for disseminating messages on family responsibilities and helpful resourceful lists on peer support, mentorship, and coaching.

To preserve the cultural heritage of families, social workers should establish a partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development as well as community elders to promote safe gatherings for sons where indigenous knowledge, wisdom, cultural norms and expectations informing family responsibilities are shared. The emphasis should be placed on programmes that support and promote an Afrocentric contribution towards family upbringing and include culturally sensitive practices that add more value and dignity in parenting the boy-child. The example of a *lekgotla*[3] in South Africa may be adopted where elder men of good standing promote village team spirit by handling issues affecting father-son relationships. Partnership with the departments of family and culture, education, police, families and communities through the utilisation of an empowerment approach should be explored. To reinforce empowerment of the boy-child, existing programmes offered by faith-based organisations (FBOs) must be strengthened through marketing and conducting outreach programmes that reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families in rural villages. Moreover, if found relevant and effective through piloting, such programmes may be replicated in other villages by FBOs.

Since mothers' contribution in preparing sons for family responsibilities is appreciated, their perspectives and those of their daughters on how sons should be prepared for family responsibilities should also be sought. The authors are conscious of how parenting is affected by the constant changes in today's culture. Raising awareness that girls too require proper father-child rearing in the rapidly evolving social landscape is imperative. Changing family structures and destabilisation of the parenting role have been observed in families that have experienced divorce, separations, death of parents, and polygamous families; hence, the

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[3] Lekgotla is a "*meeting place for village assemblies, traditional court cases, and meetings of village leaders*" (Kumalo, 2020, p. 24) to promote village team spirit, handling issues of family responsibilities.

increase in dysfunctional families often contributes to irresponsible behaviour amongst sons, as limited opportunities hinder their preparation for family responsibilities. Furthermore, with the constant changing of gender roles, many fathers rethink the meaning of family responsibilities away from the traditional and parenting expectations (Kabatanya & Vagli, 2021). The shift from the known traditional masculine gender roles to more involvement in child care responsibilities calls for flexibility among fathers (Gottzén & Kremer-Sadlik, 2012).

LIMITATIONS

This article represents a part of the research findings based on a doctoral thesis. Furthermore, owing to the scope and nature of the research, only the Bakiga fathers could be studied. Since qualitative research was employed, the findings cannot be generalised.

CONCLUSION

The paper presents fathers' perspectives on the preparation of sons for family responsibilities. The participants emphasise that sons must be prepared holistically if they are to become responsible adults. A fathers' availability and active involvement in sons' life is central to effective preparation of sons for undertaking family responsibilities. Passing on the values and cultural heritage to sons is central to the process of preparing sons for family responsibilities. Positive handling of family responsibilities revolves around adherence to sound cultural norms, beliefs and values.

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