

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON HOW BLACK AFRICAN
FATHERS UNDERSTAND AND USE PATERNITY LEAVE IN
GAUTENG, SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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Abstract

This research explored the experiences of employed Black African men in Gauteng regarding paternity leave. Grounded in the symbolic interactionist and liberal feminist theoretical frameworks, a qualitative research approach was used to collect data through in-depth interviews with six employed Black African men in Gauteng who have taken paternity leave. While the research emphasises the positive impact of paternity leave on fathers' involvement in caregiving and family dynamics, the study uncovers some obstacles they encounter. In addition, it examines the effects of the leave on their lives. Key findings highlight some challenges in accessing and embracing paternity leave and factors influencing fathers' decisions to take or give up this benefit. Barriers such as societal expectations and workplace culture hinder fathers from fully utilising paternity leave. Additionally, limited awareness and a lack of support systems contribute to the underutilisation of this leave. Recommendations underscore the need for policies to be modified to enable more utilisation of the leave. This involves increased awareness campaigns and tailored workplace support mechanisms, particularly for Black African men in Gauteng. Besides promoting a paradigm shift in societal norms for fathers, the study encourages a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture.

Keywords: Black-African fathers; employment benefits; employed fathers; fathering; gender equality; labour policy; parental involvement; parenting; paternity leave; work-life balance

List of Abbreviations

BAEF – Black African Employed Fathers

BCEA - Basic Conditions of Employment Act

GP – Gauteng Province

HSRC- Human Sciences Research Council

LRA - Labour Relations Law

SA - South Africa

SOSAF – State of South African Fathers

KZN - KwaZulu-Natal

UNICEF - United Nations Children’s Fund

UNISA – University of South Africa

ILO - International Labour Organisation

IPA – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

RSA - Republic of South Africa

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisations

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Table 1. - Research questions guide

Table 2. – Themes and sub-themes from quotations

Statement of Original Authorship

DECLARATION

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Title: An exploratory study on how Black African fathers understand and use paternity leave.

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

SIGNATURE:

DATE: February 2024



A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Diphoko-Phetla', is written over a faint, circular official stamp or watermark.

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Chapter One: Study introduction

1. Introduction

This research was motivated by the need to understand, using systematic methods, how Black fathers in Gauteng, South Africa (SA) know, understand, and use paternity leave. The provision for paternity leave is included in Section 25 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (No.10 of 2010), which provides a framework for labour laws in South Africa. The Act makes provisions that govern parental leave, in addition to family responsibility leave, annual leave, sick leave, and maternity leave. These new provisions were made possible by the Labour Relations Act (No 54 of 2018), a legal framework that regulates the organisational rights of trade unions to promote and facilitate collective bargaining at workplaces (Africa 1995:1). Section 25 allows employed fathers to take time off work to care for their children and support the mothers. Taking a social science perspective, this study attempts to examine and understand the implications of this policy on fatherhood dynamics within the SA context.

In exploring the experiences of Black fathers in Gauteng, the research aimed to shed light on their understanding and perceptions of paternity leave and how they navigate the challenges and opportunities it presents. The study aimed to contribute to the broader understanding of fatherhood studies within the South African society by investigating how Black African fathers utilise this leave and support mothers in child caring responsibilities.

By adopting a social science lens, this research delved into the lived experiences of fathers. It aimed to capture the social, cultural, and economic factors that shape the utilisation of paternity leave and the implications for Black African fathers, particularly, and their families. Through this approach, the study intended to provide a more in-depth understanding of paternity leave's complexities and contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender equality, family well-being, and social policies in SA.

The sub-sections of this chapter outline the background and context of the research and its purposes, followed by the objectives, research questions, and definitions of terms used, respectively. The chapter concludes with an outline of the remaining chapters of the dissertation.

1.1. Background and context

Fatherhood studies in SA have risen significantly since the dawn of democracy, the period following the end of apartheid on 27 April 1994. This may be attributed to the emergence of a “fatherless generation,” a generation said to have experienced a significant absence or lack of involved and present fathers in their lives as part of South African history. The absence of fathers could have been caused by various factors, including historical and social changes, economic challenges, migration patterns, and societal norms (Padi, Nduna, Khunou, & Kholopane 2014:45-47).

Many studies have explored different aspects of fatherhood and fathering, shedding light on various issues. A book by Richter and Morrell (2006) examines emerging debates surrounding manhood and fatherhood, such as reconstructing masculinity, fatherhood and responsibility, father absence, fatherhood, and gender equality, including fatherhood in diverse contexts with a particular emphasis on SA.

More research on the links of the fatherless generation to social ills is suggested in a scoping review protocol by Sikweyiya, Nduna, Khuzwayo, Mthombeni, and Mashamba-Thompson (2016). Ratele, Shefer, and Clowes (2012) critically analyse South Africans' constructions and experiences on fatherhood and fatherlessness. For example, Bhana and Nkani (2014) studied African teenage fathers and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), SA. They showed how understanding cultural and social circumstances may help address interventions for better prospects of gender equality. In their study, Morrell, Dunkle, Ibragimov and Jewkes (2016) identified South African caring and non-caring fathers and suggested a targeted approach to foster support for fathers' involvement in their children's lives.

These studies encompass the complexities of fatherhood studies, which necessitated the contribution of this study to the broader fatherhood studies field. Owing to the complexities of fatherhood and its association with social ills, existing literature represents the trajectory of fatherhood studies. However, the literature documents aspects such as domestic violence, gender-based violence, child abuse, and absent fathers, as explained by Marlize Rabe (2010) in Van den Berg and Makusha (2018:13). They point to the phenomenon of the fatherless generation and

expose the tensions of how Black African men navigate parental involvement and expectations associated with it.

As a response to the fatherless generation phenomenon, several studies have documented the importance of parental involvement in every family's life for optimal health, development, and well-being (Patel & Mavungu 2016; Groves, Hallfors, Iritani, Rennie, Odongo, Kwaro, Amek. & Luseno 2018; Petts & Knoester 2018). This also includes initiating programmes and policies that support family well-being, including work-family policies like the paternity leave policy, which was introduced in SA to encourage fathers to take part in childcare responsibilities.

A study was conducted by Heymann, Sprague, Nandi, Earle, Batra, Schickedanz, Chung, and Raub. (2017:6-11) points out three benefits of parental leave. First, it promotes gender equality. For example, when fathers participate in paternity leave, they share caregiving responsibilities, dispelling the notion that caregiving is the primary responsibility of mothers and that fathers are primary or financial providers. Second, the leave improves parental involvement; that is, fathers who are involved in their children's lives create lasting bonds that benefit children. Third, it improves family health. For example, ill children who spend more time with their fathers recover quickly and experience low levels of emotional stress. A family-friendly policy is one that helps balance and enhance work and family life and characteristically provides time, resources, and services to parents, caregivers, and children (UNICEF 2019).

Parental leave, where both parents share leave, is one of the family-friendly policies gradually introduced in many countries, such as Britain and Switzerland (Olivetti & Petrongolo 2017:207). In recent years, there has been interest in investigating family policies in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, resulting in more countries offering paternity or parental leave, although on varying terms (Eydal & Rostgaard 2018:4). For instance, Zuma (2016:2-30) points out how some countries use the "self-regulatory approach," where organisations are free to make their regulations about employees' work-family lives. In contrast, other countries regulate paternal leave using their laws. As a result of international obligations stemming from SA's membership of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the government introduced paternity benefits through amendments to the BCEA on 1 January 2020. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to

examine how Black fathers understand and use the paternity leave policy introduced in SA under the BCEA.

The trajectory of family-friendly policies like the paternity leave policy has transitioned, and there have been attempts to include men in family responsibilities on the one hand and promote inclusivity in the workplace for gender equality on the other hand (Behari 2020). Consequently, the adopted family policies' effects may result in issues like increased female-headed households, absent fathers, poverty, and housing problems (Mokomane 2014:59-63), which can be attributed to globalisation and, more specifically, the rural-urban migration which has threatened family life and more so African family household roles, where fathers who live in urban areas can no longer depend on African parenting as explained in Garcia, Pence, and Evans (2018:269). They posit that “in the traditional African context, a parent was anybody who performed the role of parents, that is, anybody who had taken over that responsibility” (Garcia, Pence, and Evans 2018). This concept is often referred to as social parenting.

Overall, understanding the impact paternity leave has on employed Black African fathers in the context of the evolving landscape of family-friendly policies like the paternity leave policy and the unique socio-economic context they live in is essential as it can provide insights and recommendations that can enhance the policy's implementation and ensure its alignment with the needs and realities of Black African fathers.

Fatherhood in SA, especially among Black South Africans, has a complex history intertwined with social, economic, and cultural factors (Richter & Morrell 2006). In SA, there is growing interest in labour-related policies that address the well-being of families and households. According to Moss (2013) and Koslowski, Blum, Dobrotic, Macht, and Moss (2019), family studies have revealed that childcare has, for many years, especially in Black South African families, been understood as a gender or women studies' terrain. Men have, on the other hand, been understood as dominant in the formal economy. Therefore, childcare focuses more on the economic or financial support they provide to their children and family than on the psychosocial care and support (Trivedi & Bose 2018).

Statistics have underscored a similar trajectory and were necessary for this study to contextualise the broader societal and gender dynamics that may shape fathers' experiences. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey for the second quarter of 2021, the SA labour market is tilted in favour of men. Regardless of ethnicity, men are more likely to be employed than women. However, women are more likely to be engaged in unpaid labour, while men are more likely than women to be employed. Men are also more likely than women to be in the labour force (men's labour force participation rate is more significant than women's, and men's unemployment rates are lower than women's. For example, in the second quarter of 2021, the unemployment rate for women was 36,8% and 32.4% for men.

While this research is not about race, in SA, race categories are a legacy of the apartheid era, which enforced racial segregation and discrimination through the classification of the population into four main groups: Black African, White, Coloured, and Indian or Asian. These categories, while officially dismantled after the end of apartheid in 1994, continue to influence social dynamics and are used for affirmative action policies aimed at redressing past inequalities. The racial classification system is a complex and contentious issue in contemporary South Africa, reflecting both the country's troubled history and ongoing efforts to address racial disparities and promote unity and equality. The four main race categories in South Africa are:

Black African: This category includes people indigenous to Africa and often referred to as "African" in the South African context. It is the largest racial group in the country, comprising various ethnic groups such as the Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Tswana, and others.

White: This category includes people of European descent, including Afrikaners (descendants of Dutch, German, and French settlers) and English-speaking South Africans.

Coloured: This category is a broad classification that includes people of mixed race, as well as those who are descendants of the Khoisan (Indigenous peoples of Southern Africa) and other groups. The term "Coloured" is unique to SA and refers to a diverse group with various ancestries.

Indian or Asian: This category includes people of South Asian descent, primarily from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and people of other Asian origins, such as Chinese.

The statistics below provide a background for understanding the environment in which Black African fathers seek to take paternity leave. Additionally, they offer valuable insights about the broader structural and societal norms in SA, which served as the foundation for the objective of this study: gaining insights into how Black African fathers in this particular setting perceive and use paternity leave. The table below shows the characteristics of the labour force by province, age range, and sex (fifteen to sixty-four years), Quarter 2 2021.

Population group	Male				
	Total	NEA	Economically active		
			Total	Employed	Unemployed
	Thousand	Thousand	Thousand	Thousand	Thousand
South Africa					
Black African	15,941	5,976	9,965	6,378	3,587
Coloured	1,705	640	1,065	774	291
Indian/ Asian	537	135	401	329	72
White	1,440	363	1,077	981	96
Total	19,623	7,114	12,508	8,462	4,047
Gauteng					
Black African	4,593	1,335	3,258	2,068	1,190
Coloured	140	33	108	62	45
Indian/ Asian	143	19	124	106	19
White	680	186	494	452	41

Total	5,557	1,573	3,983	2,688	1,296
NEA = Not Economically Active					

Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey

As the world develops and with more women entering the labour market, this phenomenon is gradually changing, as one sees more awareness and advocacy for male involvement through initiatives such as the development of paternity leave policies by researchers and civil society through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Lamb 2000; Morrell, Dunkle, Ibragimov & Jewkes 2016). This confirms the view that involvement in childcare is not only associated with economic or financial support but also psychosocial care and support.

The dual-earner phenomenon, brought about by industrialisation and shifts in legislation, may have added complexity to traditional gender roles and expectations regarding childcare. The presence of two earners challenges traditional norms where one partner, typically the mother, is primarily responsible for childcare. Instead, both partners may need to reassess and renegotiate their roles within the family to determine how childcare responsibilities are distributed. This re-evaluation may involve discussing sharing childcare duties more equally or finding alternative arrangements, such as outsourcing childcare or relying on extended family support. It may also require a shift in how men perceive their roles in childcare and their perception of the transition from primarily economic support, for instance, to a more balanced involvement in psychosocial care and support, as argued by Akinnusi, Oyewunmi and Sonubi (2018).

In light of these changes, SA first introduced paternity leave when it enacted the BCEA (No.75 of 1997). Following the introduction of paternity leave, amendments were made to this policy, resulting in Section 25 of the BCEA (No.10 of 2010) and the LRA Amendment Act (No. 54 of 2018), which introduced, among other benefits, paternity leave. This leave entitles working fathers to ten days of paid leave after the birth or adoption of a child.

The amendment in the BCEA (No.75 of 1997) entitled working fathers to three days of family responsibility leave, while the Amended BCEA (No.10 of 2010) and LRA Amendment (No 54 of

2018) grants working fathers ten days paternity leave. More days mean an increased period of fathers' involvement and enable them time to offer psychosocial support in childcare after birth. This change may reflect evolving societal attitudes towards gender roles, family dynamics, and the recognition of the importance of fathers' involvement in childcare. It also suggests that working fathers can share responsibilities such as baby care with their children's mothers and bond with them emotionally and socially. This then calls for fathers, especially Black African fathers, to find means to accommodate or endure the strain that comes with child-rearing responsibilities. This is necessary since research has shown that caring for children in SA, especially in Black African communities, is typically done by women (Hatch & Posel 2018).

Some literature on paternity leave focuses on its benefits, including the role of the father in a healthy pregnancy, maternal health and well-being, father and child bonding, and infant care and well-being (United States Department of Labour 2016; Petts & Knoester 2018; Petts, Carlson & Knoester 2020). Some research suggests that paternity leave has benefits, such as promoting maternal well-being, strengthening bonds between fathers and children, and encouraging long-term involvement of fathers in childcare. By examining fathers' experiences, we can gain insight into how these dynamics unfold within the cultural and societal contexts of Gauteng's Black African communities.

Many studies highlight the gender imbalances in the workplace concerning family responsibility leave. For instance, Motaung (2017) investigated the barriers to maternity and paternity leave that hinder career progression, pointing to the need for a more equitable approach to family-related leave policies. In the same way, Nkatane (2017) explored the perceptions and experiences of employed fathers in SA, shedding light on the unique challenges they face and recommended policies that promote parental involvement. Zuma (2016) studied the legal implications of having or not having a progressive paternity policy in SA. However, there appears to be a knowledge gap in unpacking Black South African fathers' experiences and understanding of paternity leave and how they utilise it.

1.2. Purposes

Given the limited existing knowledge on the subject, the study aimed to deepen our understanding of paternity leave and how employed Black African fathers use it. The primary focus was on understanding whether these fathers are aware of the paternity leave policy and if they use it for

its intended purposes. The study explored the knowledge, experiences, challenges, and potential enhancements related to paternity leave within this specific demographic in Gauteng. It is envisioned that this will be addressed through a systematic method. Investigating aspects surrounding paternity leave was important for creating more inclusive, supportive, and effective policies that contribute to family welfare, gender equality, workplace dynamics, and societal progress.

1.3. Objectives

The study's objectives were to explore Black African fathers' perspectives and experiences in Gauteng regarding their understanding and utilisation of paternity leave. The following objectives guided this research:

- Exploring the understanding and knowledge about paternity leave by Black African employed fathers in Gauteng.
- Exploring the experiences and challenges employed Black African fathers have in utilising paternity leave.
- Exploring what needs to be done to assist Black African-employed fathers to utilise and realise the potential of paternity leave.
- Exploring whether the aims of the policy (advancing social justice) appear to have been met in the experiences of Black African employed fathers.
- Explaining whether available data on paternity leave at the disposal of participants of this study is appropriate in capturing the social interactionist meaning participants place on it.

1.4. Research questions

The main research question guiding this study was to explore whether Black African-employed fathers know the purpose of paternity leave and understand how they use it. The study addressed the following research questions:

- How do Black African-employed fathers understand and experience paternity leave?
- What challenges do Black African-employed fathers face in utilising paternity leave?
- How do Black African-employed fathers utilise paternity leave?

- What can be done to assist Black African-employed fathers in enhancing their paternity leave use?
- How does available data on paternity leave explain how Black African-employed fathers interact with policy?

1.5. Definition of terms

To ensure clarity, the following terms were defined in this research:

Absent fathers – fathers who live with their children and partners but do not demonstrate paternity care during paternity leave.

Employed fathers – fathers employed in an organisation in Gauteng, SA, who are married or living together with their spouses and are eligible for paternity leave. The term includes adoptive parents and commissioning parents, as defined in Section 25 of the BCEA (2018).

Paternity leave – Leave generally available to fathers only, usually taken soon after the birth of a child and intended to enable the father to spend time with his partner, new child, and older children (Moss 2013:2). The term is used interchangeably with “parental leave.”

Knowledge – familiarity, awareness, or understanding of paternity leave acquired through individual experiences.

Experiences – an individual’s practical knowledge, perception, and familiarity with paternity leave gained through direct social interactions.

Fatherhood – the state of being a father as defined in the Oxford Dictionary. In this research fatherhood is as defined in Erasmus, Carelse and Payne, (2020:7), as “*characterised by parenting being shared equally and also by the father taking on a mother type of caregiving role.*”

Use of leave – giving up work to engage in childcare responsibilities.

Workplace – a place where employees and employers gather to work, except members of the State Security Agency and unpaid volunteers working for an organisation with a charitable purpose as determined in the BCEA (2018).

Paternity care – in this study, the researcher defines it as “the demonstrated act by fathers of feeling concerned, showing interest, and providing what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of their children and live-in partners.”

1.6. Limitations

The research undertaken in this study encountered certain limitations that must be acknowledged. The small sample size and the geographical focus on Gauteng province primarily disqualify any generalisations. The insights derived are deeply relative and specific to the participants' experiences within this study. Consequently, it is important to clarify that the findings may not indicate broader trends across Gauteng or other regions of South Africa. They reflect solely on the individual experiences of the sampled Black African men in Gauteng who have taken paternity leave. This specificity underscores the need for caution when considering the study's conclusions' applicability beyond the sampled individuals' immediate context. Additionally, the qualitative methodology employed in this research introduced the possibility of subjectivity in data interpretation. A more comprehensive discussion of these limitations, along with strategies employed to mitigate their impact, is expanded upon in Chapter Six.

1.7. Summary of research process

This research explored the understanding and utilisation of paternity leave amongst employed South African Black African fathers in Gauteng. It took a qualitative, social science, interpretative phenomenological research approach to uncover the essence and meaning of participants' perspectives on paternity leave. It used in-depth interviews as a data collection method. Purposive sampling of Black African-employed fathers in Gauteng was used. The process ensured diversity regarding age, employment status, and socio-economic backgrounds of participants to capture a broad range of perspectives and maintain transparency and fairness in selecting participants. The researcher used an online flyer and referrals from community organisations like Fathers in Africa to recruit participants.

The steps to implement this research included:

- Articulating the objectives of the study;
- conducting an extensive review of existing literature on fatherhood studies, paternity leave, and related policies, particularly in SA and globally;

- obtaining ethical approvals and informed consent from participants;
- recruiting Black African-employed fathers in Gauteng who meet the study's eligibility criteria;
- conducting in-depth interviews to gather data on participants' experiences, and challenges related to the utilisation of paternity leave;
- analysing collected data using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns;
- interpreting the findings in the context of existing literature, proposing recommendations for enhancing paternity leave usage in Gauteng, SA, and
- compiling the research findings, analysis, and recommendations into a comprehensive research report.

Challenges experienced included the following:

- i) Identifying and recruiting participants who meet the criteria. This was a result of participants' work commitments and privacy concerns;
- ii) Time constraints – some participants were not available for interviews;
- iii) Sensitivity of the topic – the researcher was aware that cultural norms and expectations may influence the experiences of Black African fathers. As a result, cultural competency was needed to approach the interviews;
- iv) Risk of social desirability bias – participants may provide socially desirable responses, especially when discussing sensitive topics such as their role in childcare or challenges they face; and
- v) The complexity of data analysis – the process was complex and time-consuming since the researcher had to ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the analyses.

1.8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the introductory chapter set the foundation for the research by emphasising the critical need to investigate the experiences of South African Black fathers in Gauteng concerning their utilisation and understanding of paternity leave. It contextualised the study within legislative changes introducing paternity leave, underlining its implications for fatherhood dynamics in SA's sociocultural context. The evolving role of family-friendly policies and their impact on gender dynamics in the labour market were highlighted. It also addressed gaps in the literature regarding

Black South African fathers' experiences with paternity leave. Statistical data presented in this chapter offered insights into the challenges and opportunities these fathers may face, reflecting broader societal norms shaping their experiences.

Furthermore, the chapter outlined the research purposes and objectives to contribute to fatherhood studies and comprehend how Black African fathers in Gauteng perceive and utilise paternity leave. It also detailed and formulated research questions to address various facets of the fathers' knowledge, experiences, and challenges. Key terms were defined for clarity and precision. This chapter paved the way for subsequent sections to delve deeper into the methodology, findings, analysis, and recommendations, building upon the groundwork laid out in this chapter.

1.9. Outline of the research paper

The remaining chapters of this research are outlined as follows:

Chapter Two outlines the literature review process employed, the literature reviewed, and the selected theories underpinning this research.

Chapter Three describes the methodological approach and design adopted by this research to achieve the aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter Four presents the raw data as findings of this research, which are presented in themes guided by research questions.

Chapter Five presents a discussion of the implications of the findings. It explores whether they are consistent with previous studies and outlines how the data confirms or disputes previous research.

Chapter Six concludes the study. It summarises the overarching conclusions drawn from the study and provides recommendations for future research endeavors. Additionally, the chapter acknowledges the limitations inherent in the study and proposes practical recommendations derived from the findings.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2. Introduction

This chapter outlines the literature review process employed, the literature reviewed, and the selected theories underpinning this research. Building upon the introduction, the literature review delved into existing research and theories. The chapter provides a systematic literature search on existing literature related to the study, mainly focusing on paternity leave. The literature and research types included scholarly books, organisational reports, and articles from academic journals and newspapers. The literature was published from 2006 to 2021, reflecting the research's historical and temporal context. This also reflects the seminal and historical context relevant to understanding the evolution of family-friendly policies and societal norms related to fatherhood studies and paternity leave in SA. The chapter concludes by summarising the implications of the selected literature on this study.

Colonialism has had an impact on Black people's fatherhood in SA. Its influence has been profound and enduring, significantly shaping societal structures, disrupting familial dynamics, and imposing severe challenges on Black families, including fathers. During the colonial era, European ideologies and economic exploitation disrupted traditional family structures among Black communities, introducing labour systems that forcibly separated families and eroded the traditional roles of Black fathers as providers and protectors (Ratele, Shefer & Clowes 2012). Similarly, the apartheid regime exacerbated these challenges by creating widespread socioeconomic disparities and deliberately weakened familial bonds. It achieved this through forcibly removing and relocating men to distant labour centres, which denied Black fathers access to education, economic opportunities, and resources (Madhavan, Townsend & Garey 2008; Dawson 2023; McIsaac 2019). These historical injustices severely impacted Black fatherhood, as fathers were often unable to fulfill traditional roles due to systemic economic and social constraints, separation from families, lack of resources, and the erosion of cultural values (Madhavan & Roy 2011). The impact of colonialism and apartheid on Black fatherhood continues to echo in contemporary SA, compounding the challenges Black African fathers face. The historical disruption of family structures and systemic oppression continues to shape the experiences and challenges faced by

Black fathers in their roles within the family unit (Ratele *et al.*, 2012; Dawson 2023). The study of paternity leave among employed Black African fathers in Gauteng exists within this broader context, where the historical legacies of colonialism and apartheid continue to influence the experiences of Black fathers and the challenges they face (Ratele *et al.* 2012).

2.1. Literature review process employed

The systematic literature search for this study drew from various reputable sources and research papers, including studies on the first 1000 days of a child's life, parental involvement, and labour relations policy. The study also incorporated related literature from other countries to enhance the quality and depth of the research, particularly in understanding and addressing the paternity leave phenomenon. The importance of parental involvement, especially during the first 1000 days of a child's life, was highlighted, drawing from institutions, researchers, and writers working in this space, notably in SA. Additionally, the study was situated within the context of the LRA (Amendment No 54 of 2018), reflecting a comprehensive approach to understanding the impact of labour relations policy on parental involvement.

The literature search was instrumental in providing a foundation for the study, as it incorporated evidence from various reputable sources, including reports focusing on South Africa, such as *The State of South African Fathers (SOSAF) report*, and research from other countries. This approach allowed for comparing how different regions understand and address the paternity leave phenomenon, highlighting differences and similarities and drawing inspiration from best practices. Furthermore, the literature review aimed to explore and evaluate programme and policy effectiveness to make informed decisions and learn from other regions' experiences, reflecting a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to the research.

The references used in this study were carefully selected to ensure the relevance and quality of the literature incorporated. For instance, Cools, Fiva, and Kirkebøen (2015) provided evidence of the positive impact of paternity leave on children's school performance, aligning with the study's focus on parental involvement and the first 1000 days of a child's life. Similarly, Petts and Knoester (2018) highlighted the association between paternity leave and parental relationships, supporting the study's emphasis on understanding the impact of paternity leave on family dynamics. These references provided empirical evidence to support the study's focus on parental involvement and labour relations policy.

2.2. Literature reviewed

Literature for this study was carefully selected to establish the gap, locate this study, and obtain relevance to begin a meaningful engagement with literature that gave an essential basis for the research and thus demonstrated the contribution the study can bring to the field. Rocco and Plakhotnik (2009:22) list the five functions of the literature review, which are “to build a foundation, to demonstrate how a study advances knowledge, to conceptualise the study, to assess research design and instrumentation, and to provide a reference point for the interpretation of findings.” The last two points in the five functions are outlined in the following chapters. Additionally, Cronin, Ryan, and Coughlan (2008) emphasised the role of a literature review in developing conceptual or theoretical frameworks, which adds another dimension to the functions of a literature review.

These perspectives provide a broader view of the literature review process and its implications for this research. The literature discussed below delves into specific themes and has contributed to framing the research objectives, questions, and methodology, ensuring the study is well-informed and contextually applicable.

2.2.1 Understanding and knowledge about paternity leave

For fathers to understand paternity leave, they need to know at least what it is, how and when it is accessible, and how it is governed, as this provides the basis of engagement with the concept of paternity leave. This includes awareness of the laws and processes that may apply to paternity leave, including the different stakeholders involved.

To gain insight into the legislative framework of SA, Bendix (2010:28-29) highlights the importance of understanding the industrial relations system, which includes the various parties involved in labour relations. Valuable insights can be obtained regarding how fathers in this study engage with paternity leave policy. Understanding these structures will shed light on the dynamics of paternity leave usage and the factors that may influence Black African fathers’ perceptions and experiences when accessing and utilising paternity leave. Consequently, this exploration of the legislative framework will provide essential context and a solid foundation for the study’s examination of how paternity leave is understood and utilised by Black African fathers in SA.

Political parties, NGOs, and academic researchers have played an essential part in advocating for paternity leave legislation in SA. This is highlighted in a *Mail & Guardian* article by Grobler (2018), while other literature on men's involvement in families suggests a shortage of detailed data of surveys and surveillance systems, especially in poor countries and therefore calls for more research. Hosegood and Madhavan (2012:257-258) cite studies supporting advancing policy and intervention research on men, including paternity rights.

Despite insufficient data on this, available data suggests gaps in capturing the experiences and perceptions of black African fathers in SA on their understanding of the purpose of paternity leave and how they use it. Some literature has focused on social status, different practices, and discourses on manhood and fatherhood studies. A study by Ratele, Shefer, and Clowes (2012 :560-561) accounts for African fathers' experiences of being fathered and fathering. The study brings out the concept of social fathering as one that resonated with South African fathers, which may suggest that Black African fathers may be comfortable with other forms of parenting and caretaking of children other than through using paternity leave.

Mahati, Moore and Seekings (2016), on the other hand, pen a critical account of transnational fathers living in SA and their belief that work is necessary for fathers to be regarded as "good fathers" despite their physical absence from their children, which points out to challenges Black African fathers may encounter when prioritising paternity leave to work and risk being regarded as "good fathers." - the social and cultural risk referred to here is associated with the perceptions of fatherhood within certain communities. It highlights the dilemma faced by transnational fathers who believe that providing financially is a key aspect of being a "good father." This belief can lead to fathers prioritising work over taking paternity leave, which is a time meant for bonding with their newborn children.

In the context of South Africa, where this research is situated, this might pose a challenge for Black African fathers. The risk here is that by choosing to work instead of taking paternity leave, fathers might uphold the traditional provider role, but at the same time, they risk not being seen as "good fathers" due to their physical absence from their children's early lives. This reflects a broader societal issue where the role of fathers is often primarily seen as financial providers and less as caregivers, which can create a conflict between work obligations and family bonding. Richter,

Chikovore and Makusha (2010) write on the status of fathering and fatherhood in SA and the importance of strengthening practices that promote father involvement.

Several studies have shown that paternity leave is associated with increased father involvement in children and family livelihood (Petts, Carlson & Knoester 2020; Bakermans-Kranenburg, Lotz, Alyousefi-Van Dijk, & Van Ijzendoorn 2019; Petts 2018). A study in the United States of America (USA) analysed two indicators of father involvement associated with paternity leave. It showed that increased periods of paternity leave-taking and encouraging fathers to be committed enables them to gain parenting experience and maintain a higher level of engagement in their children's first few years of life (Petts & Knoester 2018:1159-1160).

While various studies have shown that paternity leave can increase father involvement in childcare and family life, there is no agreement on the best approach to manage paternity leave, with some studies advocating for father involvement in the first 1000 days of the child's life (Bakermans-Kranenburg *et al.* 2019). Some scholars, for example, Heymann, Sprague, Nandi, Earle, Batra, Schickedanz, Chung, and Raub (2017:2) emphasise the socioeconomic component. Their paper evaluates how paid parental leave may improve health and economic outcomes and advance gender and employment equity. A study by Patel and Mavungu (2016:35) emphasises the socio-cultural aspect, pointing out the importance of the welfare policy in engaging critically on fatherhood issues. At the same time, Nthambeleni (2018:8) stresses the importance of advocacy on paternity leave policy to increase paternity leave-taking.

To assist Black African employed fathers in utilising and realising the potential of paternity leave, this literature review suggests taking a holistic view of these studies to determine which one best explains Black African fathers' experiences in terms of policy and accessibility. This approach can enable policymakers to develop policies and measures tailored to Black African fathers' unique experiences and challenges in utilising and realising the potential of paternity leave.

Parental leave is primarily offered to promote a healthy family and workplace balance. Labour (2016:2) explains the benefits of parental leave to fathers and how it can promote parent-child bonding, improve outcomes for children, and even increase gender equity at home and at the workplace. A study conducted in 2017 by a programme to support pro-poor policy development reveals how more women than men receive Child Support Grants, a lifeline for children and

parents who are not employed (Patel, Knijn, Gorman-Smith, Hochfeld, Isserow, Garthe, Chiba, Moodley, & Kgaphola (2017).

This research may be necessary to understand if the socioeconomic well-being of fathers influences how they understand paternity leave through social policy. Toreraiy (2020:64) argues for equitable care-related leave provisions in SA. In SA, the Vodacom Group has made significant strides in this regard. Despite the recommended ten days paid leave per Section 25 of the BCEA (No.10 of 2010), it has been reported that Vodacom's new leave policy allows its employees to take sixteen weeks of fully paid parental leave regardless of their gender and sexual orientation (Janse van Rensburg 2020; Writer 2020), to endorse inclusivity and promote well-being, they argue.

2.2.2 Experiences and challenges in utilising paternity leave

Studies by Freeks (2017) and Law (2019) provide critical insights into the challenges around fatherhood in SA. On the one hand, Freeks' analysis focuses on father absence and fatherlessness, highlighting the need for a collective effort from individuals, families, communities, and policymakers to address this issue. The study emphasises that a father's absence is a complex social problem that requires a multifaceted approach. It highlights the role of policy interventions in addressing the structural factors contributing to the father's absence and the need for community-level efforts to promote responsible fatherhood. The paternity leave may serve as a catalyst for fathers involved in their children's lives, reducing the absent father pattern. On the other hand, Law's study focuses on the challenge's fathers face in contemporary SA. The article highlights the impact of economic pressures, social expectations, and the legacy of apartheid on fathers' ability to participate in their children's lives. It notes that fathers in SA face significant barriers to involvement, including limited access to paternity leave and flexible work arrangements. The study argues that addressing these challenges requires a broader shift in societal attitudes toward fatherhood and recognising the importance of fathers' involvement in children's lives.

These studies offer important insights into fathers' complex challenges in SA. They highlight the need for a multifaceted approach to promoting responsible fatherhood and addressing the structural factors contributing to father absence. These insights are particularly relevant to the current study,

as they inform our understanding of the social context within which paternity leave policies are implemented and the challenges fathers may face in accessing and utilising these policies.

Gender plays a crucial role in determining social identity, and it is through gendered social positions/identities that groups are granted a say or voice in society. In the context of paternity leave, this literature review focuses on the experiences of Black African-employed fathers and the measures needed to assist them in utilising and realising the potential of paternity leave. A study by Morison and Macleod (2015:144) focused on White, heterosexual men's paths to parenthood in SA, examining the construction of parental roles according to what they termed "cultural gender scripts." The study highlighted changes in gender norms and provided insights into how respondents in this study understood the purposes of paternity leave, particularly in terms of traditional and contemporary gender scripts.

Franklin (2009:130-132) emphasised how adhering to traditional male gender roles brings about a role strain to modern Black fathers' roles; the chapter discusses the role strain experienced by modern Black fathers, particularly in the context of adhering to traditional male gender roles. It does not specify a particular geographical location, but rather addresses the challenges Black fathers face. The strain is described as unique and mixed with race, gender, and psycho historical contexts that are central to understanding the world of Black men and the position of present Black fathers within it, asserting that it is vital to understand the experiences of Black men and their position in society. This literature provides a valuable context for understanding Black African fathers' experiences of parental roles and their attitudes toward paternity leave.

Baba – Men and Fatherhood in South Africa, a book by Richter and Morrell (2006), provides insights into men and fatherhood, their roles, and their societal contributions. This book is particularly relevant to this study because it discusses the new gender platforms, fatherhood, and the child's right to shared parenting in SA. Three chapters in the book account for different role players contributing to the trajectory of fatherhood studies in SA, including the law's intentions and its effects.

In chapter twenty-two of the book, "The New Gender Platforms and Fatherhood," Richter and Morrell (2006: 281-292) discuss how traditional gender roles are changing and how this affects

fatherhood in SA. They also highlight the importance of acknowledging and supporting the diversity of fatherhood experiences.

In the chapter “The Child’s Right to Shared Parenting,” Richter and Morrell (2006:293-305) discuss how fathers’ involvement in their children’s lives is essential for their development and well-being. The authors argue that children have the right to be cared for and nurtured by both parents and that shared parenting should be promoted. The final chapter, “Taking Forward Work with Men in Families,” discusses the importance of engaging men in discussions about fatherhood and family dynamics. The authors argue that men’s involvement in family life is crucial for achieving gender equality and that policies and programmes should be developed to support this involvement.

Overall, the insights Richter and Morrell (2006) provide help contextualise the current study within the broader landscape of fatherhood studies in SA. The book highlights the changing gender roles and the importance of involving men in discussions about fatherhood and family dynamics. These insights can inform policies and programmes that support employed Black African fathers in SA in utilising and realising the potential of paternity leave.

2.2.3 Assistance for Black African employed fathers to utilise paternity leave

A programme on men’s care and parental leave championed by Sonke Gender Justice has a position paper on paternity leave in SA that recommended introducing the current policy of ten days of paternity leave (Africa 2014; MenCare and Justice 2016). The whitepaper discusses paternity leave in SA and Sonke Gender Justice’s efforts to promote the implementation of paternity leave. It highlights the benefits of paternity leave for fathers, mothers, and children, which include increased bonding and support for breastfeeding. It also discusses the economic and social barriers, such as job insecurity and cultural attitudes, which prevent fathers from taking leave. The white paper concludes by calling for legislative and cultural changes to support paternity leave in SA, including extending leave entitlements and creating a culture of shared parenting.

SOSAF reports, Van den Berg and Makusha (2018), Van den Berg, Makusha, and Ratele (2021) and the General Household Survey (GHS) SA (2019) provide detailed data sets relevant and vital for the current research. The SOSAF reports are produced in partnership with Sonke Gender Justice, the MenCare 50-50 project, the Human Science Research Council (HSRC), and the

University of Stellenbosch. They are inspired by a global MenCare campaign to engage men in positive parenting and equitable caregiving. The data of interest to this study is the 2021 SOSAF report on the results of the South African Social Attitude Survey (SASAS), delayed in the press, where South African men and women agreed on the principle of paid parental leave but were skeptical that men would use the leave for childcare (Van den Berg *et al.* (2021:18-19). However, Van den Berg *et al.* (2021:18-19) reported that their survey revealed that the sampled fathers used their leave for childcare. In their sample of 1003 fathers, 346 lived in Gauteng, and 306 identified as Black. One hundred and forty-five answered “Yes” to the question: “Do you have access to paid parental leave?” A total of 163 of them had taken paid parental leave. These sub-groups, answered the following question: “How much of your paid parental leave time did you use for childcare?” Forty-four answered, “All of it,” fifty answered, “Most of it,” twenty-seven answered, “Some of it,” and twelve answered, “None of it” (Van den Berg *et al.* 2021:169). The data suggests that not all fathers utilise paternity leave, which necessitates this research to explore how Black African fathers may be helped to optimise how they use paternity leave.

2.2.4 Meeting the aims of advancing social justice in Black African employed fathers’ experiences

Richardson *et al.* (2019) conducted a study in the USA to understand how workers perceived and experienced paid parental leave policies. The study found significant differences in employees’ experiences adopting and implementing paid paternity leave policies. The study served as a comparative analysis for this study.

The comparative analysis of the literature of the study conducted in the USA and the current one the researcher is undertaking can provide valuable insights into workers’ experiences in different contexts. It may allow a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities in implementing paternity leave policies. By examining the similarities and differences between the two studies, policymakers can develop policies tailored to the unique experiences and challenges faced by Black fathers employed in SA.

2.2.5 Appropriate data for capturing social interactionist meaning of paternity leave

While this research’s main focus may not be on policy but on the experiences of Black African men concerning the paternity leave policy, a brief discussion of policy is necessary. A study by Plageron, Patel, Hochfeld, and Ulriksen (2018) provides a valuable insight into policy formation

and reform in SA; it may not necessarily address whether available data at the disposal of Black African fathers on paternity leave is appropriate in capturing the social interactionist meaning participants place on it. However, Hommes' (2018) working paper on behavioural and experimental macroeconomics and policy analysis may offer some alternative approaches to policy development that could be useful. Hommes' report emphasises the importance of considering individual behaviours and decision-making processes when designing policies. This approach, known as behavioural economics, recognises that individuals do not always make rational decisions and that social and psychological factors influence their behaviour. Therefore, my emphasis on policies, including the paternity leave policy, considers the social context in which they will be implemented and the behaviours and decision-making processes of the individuals affected by the policies.

This approach may be particularly relevant to understanding the social interactionist meaning participants place on paternity leave. By considering the social context in which paternity leave is used and the behaviours and decision-making processes of fathers who take paternity leave, policymakers may be able to design policies that better reflect the needs and experiences of these individuals. This, in turn, could lead to more effective policies that encourage fathers to take paternity leave and support them in their role as caregivers. For instance, in some African cultures, men are not allowed to be with their babies immediately or days after birth. These are the ten days when paternity leave is prescribed.

2.3 Theoretical review

This study is anchored in a nuanced exploration guided by two pivotal theoretical frameworks: symbolic interactionist theory and liberal feminism. These perspectives serve as conceptual lenses through which the dynamics surrounding Black African fathers' understanding and utilisation of paternity leave in Gauteng, SA, are examined.

2.3.1 Symbolic interactionist theory

The symbolic interactionist theory is a micro-level theory focusing on individual societal relationships. This theory views society as composed of symbols that people use to establish meaning, develop views about the world, and communicate with one another, including in family and relationships (Nilgun, Buket, Mufit, & Sumeyra 2009; Simpson 2014). In the case of Black African fathers in SA, their experiences and social history may significantly impact their

perceptions of the father's role in society. Historical factors, such as apartheid and its aftermath, may have influenced the roles and responsibilities assigned to fathers within their communities.

For example, one's understanding of the concept of a *father* carries a specific meaning based on interactions with it; the social interactionist meaning behind the concept and what it symbolises differs based on the family and society in which someone was brought up. People act according to how they interpret and understand social roles and situations. For example, cultural norms, family values, and societal expectations regarding fatherhood and caregiving roles shape how Black African-employed fathers understand paternity leave. The way fatherhood in SA is perceived has transitioned. Traditionally, a father has been regarded as a financial provider (a more masculine sense) but that has changed (Van den Berg *et al.* 2021:26-34). They are now regarded not only as financial providers, but also as providers of other resources, such as attentive time, care work, and educational and emotional support. For instance, urban settings may have different support systems, cultural expectations, and work demands that shape how SA Black African fathers understand and utilise paternity leave.

Symbolic interactionism also views human interaction and how it creates social constructions of roles and responsibilities in societies through meaningful interaction and symbolism with others, like how the understanding of a father and fatherhood is shaped by the lived experiences (socio-cultural and psychosocial) within different settings like urban areas. For example, cultural influences may make some employed Black African men in Gauteng view paternity leave as less essential than maternity leave or even associate it with weakness or a lack of commitment to work. Such perceptions might affect their willingness to use it.

The Symbolic Interaction Theory acknowledges the importance of family interactions in shaping individuals' perceptions and actions. Fathers' roles in the families and their level of involvement in childcare can influence how paternity leave is perceived. Supportive family members may encourage the use of paternity leave, while traditional gender roles might discourage it.

The theory also considers how formal and informal norms within organisations can impact individuals' behaviour. If employers promote a culture that supports work-life balance and recognise the importance of fathers' involvement in childcare, employed Black African men in Gauteng may feel more comfortable and encouraged to take paternity leave. The theory suggests

that individuals construct their identity based on their interactions with others and their social context. Employed Black African men in Gauteng may grapple with the tension between their traditional roles as breadwinners and societal expectations of active fatherhood. Their decision to take paternity leave may be influenced by how they perceive this decision's impact on their self-concept and identity.

This theory is appropriate in this study as it helps explain how participants (Black African-employed fathers) experience and perceive paternity leave through their social interaction with others. Symbolic interactionism highlights how human interaction creates social constructions of roles and responsibilities. This perspective is particularly relevant in exploring how Black African-employed fathers perceive and experience paternity leave. Their interactions with others, including family members, employers, co-workers, and broader societal norms, may shape their understanding of paternity leave and its significance.

2.3.2 Liberal feminism

Feminism, liberal feminism in particular, is used to explain “the unequal gendered division of labour in the home” (Lober 2010:5). This is where society expects the mother to be the only one who cares for the newly born baby instead of both parents sharing the responsibility (Hatch & Posel 2018:267). It also highlights how traditionally, men are perceived to be providers for the family and, therefore, not much involved in the upbringing of children, including taking paternity leave after the birth of a child. This suggests that men spend less time on unpaid work than women do.

Liberal feminism is a particular approach that aims to achieve equality between men and women. It emphasises the power of a person to alter discriminatory practices against women. Liberal feminists focus on policies that encourage greater equality within relationships and help women cope with the practicalities of daily life. For instance, they posit that increased flexibility in paid employment is needed to achieve true equality within relationships. This theory allowed the researcher to critically explore, through the gender lens, how the participants, Black African employed fathers, perceive their role around fatherhood and especially their understanding and utilisation of paternity leave.

Examples of how liberal feminism theory applies to this research include the following:

(i) Challenging gender norms: In Gauteng, as in many other modern societies, culturally, men may be expected to be the primary breadwinners and not be actively involved in childcare. By embracing paternity leave, Black African men challenge these norms and assert their right to be equal caregivers and nurturers in their families.

(ii) Work-life balance: Paternity leave allows men to balance their work and family responsibilities better. By supporting paternity leave, liberal feminism recognises that family life should be a shared responsibility between partners and that men should have the opportunity to be more involved in their children's lives.

(iii) Equal opportunity in the workplace: The perception that women are the ones solely responsible for family-related duties is dispelled when men take time off for childcare. This can go a long way in helping to combat gender discrimination and promoting equal opportunities for women in the workplace.

(iv) Breaking the "motherhood penalty": In many societies, women often face career setbacks and income differences due to motherhood, while men may not experience the same disadvantages. By encouraging paternity leave, liberal feminism aims to reduce the differential treatment between men and women in the workplace related to caregiving responsibilities.

(v) Promoting inclusivity and diversity: As a theory focused on equality, liberal feminism advocates for inclusivity and diversity in all aspects of life, including the workplace. Encouraging men, including Black African men in Gauteng, to take paternity leave supports a more diverse and inclusive work environment where all employees are treated fairly and equally.

(vi) Advocating for policy changes: Liberal feminism often calls for policy changes to promote gender equality. In the context of paternity leave, this may involve advocating for more comprehensive and flexible parental leave policies that encourage men to take time off for childcare without fear of repercussions or stigma.

Overall, liberal feminism can play a significant role in shaping the understanding and utilisation of paternity leave among employed Black African men in Gauteng. By challenging gender norms, promoting work-life balance, advocating for equal opportunities, and encouraging policy changes,

liberal feminist principles contribute to creating a more gender-equitable and inclusive society for everyone.

Both symbolic interactionist theory and feminist theory could contribute to a rich understanding of how Black African fathers understand and use paternity leave in Gauteng, SA. While symbolic interactionism may focus more on the individual experiences and meanings of paternity leave, feminist theory would likely pay more attention to the broader social, cultural, and structural factors that shape these experiences.

2.4 Conclusion

The literature review employed in this study set the stage for a comprehensive exploration, provided valuable insights from existing research, and highlighted gaps and areas of relevance for the current study of how Black African-employed fathers may experience and utilise paternity leave. By delving into specific themes within the literature, the literature has contributed to framing the research objectives, questions, and methodology, ensuring that the research is well-grounded and relevant within its context. The next chapter will explain methodological choices and research design, building upon the insights gathered from the rich landscape of existing scholarship. This ensures that the study is well-informed and contextually in harmony with the dynamics surrounding paternity leave among Black African-employed fathers in Gauteng.

Chapter Three: Methodology and research design

3. Introduction

Following the literature review, the methodology chapter outlines the research design and approach employed in the study. This chapter describes the research methodology and design adopted by this research to achieve its aims and objectives, outlining the strategic blueprint and systematic process undertaken to delve into the perspectives and experiences of participants. It gives details about the participants in the study. It navigates through the considerations and rationale behind the selection criteria, all the instruments used in the study with their justifications, and the data analysis approach employed to distill, interpret, and draw meaningful conclusions from participants' responses. It also discusses the reliability and validity of the study to ensure the credibility and robustness of the findings, establishing the foundation for sound and dependable conclusions. Finally, it outlines the ethical considerations and navigates through the ethical compass guiding the study, ensuring the utmost respect, confidentiality, and integrity in participant engagement and data collection.

3.1 Methodology

An exploratory qualitative study was employed in this research. The method was chosen for its flexibility in narrative inquiries into the topic by conducting in-depth interviews. It is exploratory in that the research attempts to look at a familiar occurrence (family responsibility leave) in a new way (paternity leave). It will permit a new exploration into fathers' experiences on the new paternity leave phenomenon, give a sense of their understanding, and help establish if they will use the leave for its intended purposes. Kumar (2011:31) says an exploratory study is performed to explore a little-known topic or examine the viability of conducting a specific research investigation. The underlying logic of the qualitative research approach is that the social world is continually constructed and reconstructed by those who live in it; its emphasis is on meaning and action. It also helped the researcher to gain deeper insights and understanding of the experiences and perspectives of participants, that is, the subjective meaning and value black African-employed fathers attribute to their understanding and utilisation of paternity leave.

3.2 Research design

This study followed the phenomenology research design. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a method that is used to understand how individuals make sense of their lived

experiences in the context of their individual and social lives (Smith & Nizza 2022:3). Yüksel and Yıldırım (2016) assert that the primary purpose of phenomenological research is to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon through people's accounts or descriptions of their experiences and feelings. This approach is rooted in individuals' lived experiences and insights, and it recognises that humans are continually creating, interpreting, and attempting to rationalise their actions to acquire meaning through their lived experiences.

Groenewald (2004) posits that the phenomenology research design is a suitable method for exploring the experiences of others on a particular phenomenon and that the design assists in preventing the researchers' biases. Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that aims to understand the essence or nature of an experience as individuals perceive it. It involves exploring the meaning that participants attribute to their experiences and how they interpret and make sense of them.

In the context of the study on how Black African fathers understand and use paternity leave in Gauteng, the phenomenological study design involved conducting in-depth interviews with fathers who have taken paternity leave. These interviews aimed to have fathers describe their experiences and interactions with others around them during that time. This approach aimed to explore participants' social interactionist perspectives about paternity leave. For example, asking participants questions like "What support from work and home would optimise your overall role as a father?" is consistent with the phenomenological research design because it aims to explore the subjective experiences and perceptions of the participant and their role as a father.

The question was designed to gain insight into the lived experiences of these fathers, particularly concerning the types of support they require to fulfill their roles as fathers. This method assisted this research in comprehending and interpreting the subjective meaning that participants in this study attribute to their perceptions and understanding of paternity leave and how they utilise it.

3.3 Population of study and sampling

The study population consisted of Black African fathers who agreed to participate in the study. They were employed, married, or living with their partners and children in Gauteng. Purposive sampling was used to identify the study participants. In a non-probability sampling approach known as "purposeful sampling," participants are chosen for the study based on the researcher's

assessment of which ones will be most helpful for their research (Babbie 2013; Groenewald 2004). According to Taherdoost (2016), the researcher recruited the participants from sources believed to have data or participants that fit the inclusion criteria: Black African-employed fathers living and working in Gauteng. The respondents were married or living with their partners and children and eligible to apply for paternity leave or had taken paternity leave. Fathers who did not meet the inclusion criteria, for example, those whose ancestry was not Black African, those who did not live with both their partners and children, and those who were not employed in Gauteng, were excluded because the information gathered from them might distort the study's results.

After receiving ethical clearance (refer to Annexure 1), a permission letter to partner with Fathers in Africa was written and signed off (refer to Annexure 2). Other organisations were asked to distribute the invitations through their networks. Once a response of interest was received, an information sheet about the study and consent form was sent to the prospective participant, and a booking was confirmed on receipt of a signed consent form (refer to Annexure 3).

An invitation to participate in the study was distributed through the identified organisations and social networks, particularly Facebook (refer to Annexure 4). The researcher created a Google form where interested and eligible participants could register to participate and book an interview appointment with the researcher. Participants could consent on the Google form, and the researcher received responses with their contact details online. All responses were saved on a spreadsheet (refer to Annexure 5).

These fathers were recruited through social media spaces of recognised organisations working with fathers and with the assistance of local NGOs. The organisations include Fathers in Africa, Sonke Gender Justice, and Dads in the Picture. These organisations collaborate with families and communities to advance gender equality in various aspects such as economics, politics, and social dynamics. Collaborating with these organisations, the researcher aimed to recruit and interview participants through credible networks in a safe and protected environment. The collaboration approach involved leveraging the organisations' networks and resources to source participants for the study. The participants were employed Black African fathers. They were already fathers, married or living with their partners.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and following UNISA guidelines for conducting research during COVID-19, the researcher proposed that the interviews be conducted through four virtual platforms: WhatsApp, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meets. The researcher was allowed to meet the participants in person while adhering to COVID-19 protocols. The interviews were conducted through platforms chosen by the participants. Only one interview was face-to-face, and the other five were online via Microsoft Teams. All interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and an hour, and they were recorded and transcribed using Otter Transcription software for the face-to-face interview and the other five through Microsoft encrypted transcription.

3.4 Research instrument

In-depth interviews were conducted with participants at a mutually agreed safe and convenient place to ensure comfort and safety for all parties. Both parties agreed to the day and time and were guided by the researcher's work plan and participants' schedules. A semi-structured interview guide was developed to explore participants' perceptions of the father's views on the topic and the research questions. Given the small number of participants who participated in the study and to address the possibility of not reaching data saturation, a robust interview strategy was employed, which involved using a semi-structured interview guide to facilitate comprehensive and flexible discussions and in-depth questioning to ensure all aspects of the objectives of the research were thoroughly dealt with. The researcher also planned for follow-up interviews if the initial analysis suggested that certain areas required further exploration. This iterative process allowed for revisiting participants to delve deeper into emerging themes, ensuring a thorough understanding of the research topic.

Open-ended and probing questions were used for kindling dialogue, helping interaction between participants and the researcher, and boosting participant disclosure without unjustifiably influencing or leading responses. For example, asking participants, "Do you believe paternity leave is important and why?" encourages them to reflect on their beliefs and articulate them. It prompts participants to consider the broader significance of paternity leave, fostering insightful responses, unlike asking, "Don't you think paternity leave is crucial for all fathers, considering its numerous benefits?" This question subtly suggests that paternity leave is essential and has several benefits. It may lead the participant to agree, even if they hold a different perspective, as it presupposes the benefits without allowing for an open, unbiased response.

Smith and Nizza (2022:20) propose that research questions asked to participants must not be posed directly but formulated in a more abstract way that does not direct participants to leading responses. Careful measures were taken to follow the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) research design guide in asking participants questions that would uncover their rich beliefs, interpretations, and lived experiences in relation to paternity leave.

Overall, the research interview process adhered to guidelines for asking questions that uncover participants' beliefs, interpretations, and lived experiences regarding paternity leave, aligning with the IPA approach. It demonstrates a methodical approach, balancing various platforms for accessibility, ensuring safety during the pandemic, and employing techniques to elicit genuine, unbiased participant responses in exploring perceptions of fathers regarding paternity leave.

The table below outlines the questions each participant was asked and the expected objective the questions were expected to achieve.

Table 1: Research questions guide

Interview questions	Expected objective to be achieved by the question
1. Please take me through what you understand paternity leave is about.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the understanding and knowledge about paternity leave by Black African-employed fathers in Gauteng. (Objective 1)
2. Why did you apply for paternity leave?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore whether the aims of the policy (advancing social justice) appear to have been met in the experiences of Black African-employed fathers. (Objective 4)
3. Do you believe paternity leave is important, and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore whether the aims of the policy (advancing social justice) appear to have

	<p>been met in the experiences of Black African-employed fathers. (Objective 4)</p>
<p>4. What do you believe its purpose is? (Why do you think it is offered?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain whether available data on paternity leave at the disposal of participants of this study is appropriate in capturing the social interactionist meaning participants place on it. (Objective 5)
<p>5. Talk me through what you believe the benefits of paternity leave are.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore whether the aims of the policy (advancing social justice) appear to have been met in the experiences of Black African-employed fathers. (Objective 4)
<p>6. Would you recommend all fathers to take paternity leave?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore what needs to be done to assist Black African-employed fathers to utilise and realise the potential of paternity leave. (Objective 3)
<p>7. What are the disadvantages of the leave policy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the experiences of the fathers and the challenges they have faced in utilising paternity leave. (Objective 2)
<p>8. How long was your leave and what did you do during the leave days?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore what needs to be done to assist Black African-employed fathers to utilise and realise the potential of paternity leave. (Objective 3)

<p>9. In your opinion what would enhance the use of paternity leave? / What motivated you to take paternity leave?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore what needs to be done to assist Black African-employed fathers to utilise and realise the potential of paternity leave. (Objective 3)
<p>10. What support from work and home would optimise your overall role as a father?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain whether available data on paternity leave at the disposal of participants of this study is appropriate in capturing the social interactionist meaning participants place on the leave. (Objective 5)
<p>11. Is there anything else you would like to add that will benefit this research?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage more engagement, establish a deeper understanding of the leave, and search for additional data available research might have missed. (All objectives)

3.5 Analysis approach employed

Thematic analysis was used in this study. Thematic analysis refers to the method of identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes found within collected data (Attride-Stirling 2001). This analysis allowed the researcher to identify similar themes within the data that respond to the research questions and code them accordingly. Further thematic analysis was done to identify sub-themes and emerging themes that were still within the purpose and objectives of the study. The theme findings were then summarised, and appropriate quotations were used to enhance the validity of the findings. A final analysis was conducted to integrate supportive evidence from the literature review and selected theories to improve the credibility and transferability of the research findings.

The study used Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis framework to analyse and interpret data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, the data analysis process followed the six steps explained below:

The first step involved the researcher familiarising herself with the data, which entailed actively reading the data repeatedly while searching for meanings and patterns. During transcription, the researcher became acquainted with the data by listening to the recordings. This allowed the researcher to understand the discussions and identify patterns or recurring themes across the audio recordings of the interviews or discussions. Furthermore, the researcher became acquainted with the data by reading the transcripts several times. Links between the discussions were established because the researcher knew the data.

In the second step, the researcher started developing initial codes. This step involves developing preliminary codes containing significant information relevant to answering the research question and attaching and organising the codes across the dataset. Throughout the dataset, the researcher used different coloured highlighters. Quotations for each participant were coded: Para, Parb, Parc, Pard, Pare, and Parf. These codes represented participants one to six, respectively). Furthermore, notes were written near the highlighted sections, and references to where similar information can be found across all six transcripts were made.

With initial codes in place, the third step searched for themes: the step involved looking for themes by scrutinising the codes and organised data to identify broader patterns of meaning that emerged from the participant's responses.

Step four involved reviewing the themes. In this stage, the researcher combined all the codes from the previous stage to create themes that described and comprised all the codes.

Examining the codes followed in step five: this step examined codes that shared similarities and answered the same question. These codes were combined to form themes and sub-themes (refer to Table 2 in Chapter five).

The final step six involved creating a report that weaves the analytic narrative and data segments together. The report writing process enabled the researcher to share the study's findings and address the study's research question and objectives. Furthermore, writing the report entailed providing an account of the data within and across themes. The researcher included themes and sub-themes in the report to give a clear understanding of the data in an organised manner. Six themes and forty-four sub-themes emerged from the data.

3.6 Authenticity and trustworthiness of the study

Issues of authenticity and trustworthiness refer to rigor efforts applied in the study. In this study, the Lincoln and Guba Framework and process of ensuring reliability and validity were applied. This process ensures credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of data (Lincoln & Guba 1982:3). The study used the framework to ensure its trustworthiness.

Credibility refers to the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation and representation of participants' views or data. The interpretation must be trustworthy and inspire belief. The researcher used face-to-face interviews as a data collection method in this study. This method ensured the credibility of the findings, allowing the researcher to capture participants' emotions and behaviours. As a result, it yielded more in-depth and credible information. For example, when a participant expressed the emotional toll of sleepless nights. The interaction allowed the researcher to gauge the sincerity and depth of these emotions, which enhanced the credibility of the findings.

Transferability refers to external validity, which means individuals outside of the study must be able to understand its results and identify with it through their judgments. In this research, the researcher provided lengthy descriptions of the study's background and aimed to give a clear understanding of its applicability and relevance beyond the specific group studied. Readers from different backgrounds can contextualise the findings as the study described, for instance, the cultural and social norms surrounding Gauteng fathers.

Dependability refers to a study's reliability. The research methodology of the study was described comprehensively to ensure that it meets research aims and that its data is stable over time and conditions. Using standardised interview questions and systematic data analysis techniques ensured that the study is dependable. Other researchers can replicate the study under similar conditions and assess if consistent results are obtained.

Confirmability refers to a study's objectivity. To ensure confirmability (accuracy, relevance, meaning), the study findings were analysed with reference to existing research. The study analysis was grounded in existing research. For instance, the discussion on paternity leave benefits for fathers drew on existing literature to confirm and support these findings.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations refer to what is legitimate to do or what a “morally right” research procedure is and often involve a balance between the pursuit of knowledge and the rights of those being studied (Cypress 2017). Before starting the research, the researcher applied for and obtained low-risk ethical approval from the College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee before entering the field. The ethics clearance reference number is: 56674198_CRECHS_2021. Ethical considerations entailed voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity, informed consent, harm/risk, and protection, including debriefing of participants.

To ensure voluntary participation, participants joined the study voluntarily after reviewing the Informed Consent Letter, which comprehensively detailed the purpose, objectives, research process, and ethical considerations (See Annexure 4). They were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without facing any negative consequences. Throughout the interview process, participants were encouraged to ask questions to ensure they fully understood the process, which fostered an environment where their autonomy and comfort were prioritised.

Confidentiality refers to ensuring that a participant will be kept secret or private, while anonymity means the participants will not be named. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher coded all participants who participated in this study using pseudonyms. The codes Para, Parb, Parc, Pard, Pare and Parf, which refer to participants one to six, respectively, were used. This safeguarded their identities. Anonymity was upheld by not disclosing participants’ real names, ensuring their privacy and confidentiality.

Informed consent refers to permission granted after knowing of possible risks and benefits of participating in a study. After possible participants for the study were recruited, they were informed of all aspects of the study (refer to Annexure 6). Prospective participants were informed of all study aspects, including purpose, objectives, research steps, recruitment, and selection criteria. The informed consent process involved verbal explanation and reading the consent information during each interview. Participants were required to sign consent forms only when completely satisfied and willing to participate.

To protect participants from harm/risk as research may be uncomfortable to participants, researchers are expected to protect the participants and avoid unnecessary harm like discomfort, stigma, and isolation directed at the research participants. There were minimum possible risks to participants who participated in this study. The researcher undertook to respect the rights and dignity of all participants throughout interactions with them and applied for ethical clearance before doing interviews with participants.

For the debriefing of participants, since the study presented minimal risks, formal debriefing or counselling was not anticipated. However, participants were given the researcher's and supervisor's contact details in case they needed additional information or wanted to ask for a copy of the research report. In addition, contacts of organisations working with men, such as Sonke Gender Justice, were also available for people who need psychosocial support.

3.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter's detailed research methodology and design laid the foundation for understanding the study's strategic approach and systematic processes. It clarified the process from participant selection considerations, instrumental choices, data analysis methodologies, and the assurance of the study's reliability and validity. Furthermore, it sheds light on the ethical compass guiding every research step, ensuring the highest standards of respect, confidentiality, and integrity in engaging with participants and collecting data.

The following chapter will detail the narratives gathered from in-depth interviews with Black African-employed fathers in Gauteng, South Africa, delving into their perspectives and lived experiences concerning paternity leave. Their stories and perceptions will paint a vivid picture of the multifaceted dynamics surrounding paternity leave and its utilisation, shedding light on the social, household, and cultural implications embedded within these experiences.

Chapter Four: Findings

4. Introduction

Building on the methodology discussed in the previous Chapter Three, this chapter presents collected data. It commences with a demographic account of the six participants who participated in the study and then delves into the authentic and resonant voices of the participants. The responses are expressed in the words of the participants, and they form the bedrock of the subsequent analysis and discussion chapter (full transcripts available on request). The structured questions provide a focused lens through which to interpret and appreciate different participants' responses. The questions are aligned with the study's objectives, which include exploring participants' understanding of paternity leave, assessing the policy's impact on social justice, understanding experiences and challenges, and identifying areas that need improvement.

4.1 Demographic profile of participants

The demographic profile of the participants in the study, as per the inclusion criteria previously explained, is as follows:

All six participants were employed Black African males (as defined in the list of defined terms in the first chapter).

Their marital status is as follows: Participant 1 (Para), Participant 2 (Parb), Participant 3 (Parc), Participant 5 (Pare), and Participant 6 (Parf) are married, while Participant 4 (Pard) is unmarried but living with a partner.

They all reside and work in Gauteng, South Africa.

4.2 Findings

The findings presented below delves into the participants' responses to a series of questions regarding their understanding, experiences, and perceptions of paternity leave. The participants' direct quotations provide a rich tapestry of insights, reflecting both consensus and divergence on various aspects of paternity leave. The findings capture the participants' perspectives on the importance, purposes, benefits, and challenges of paternity leave, as well as their recommendations for its enhancement and the support they require from work and home. The

participants' final thoughts underscore the significance of the research and its potential, reflecting a diverse range of suggestions for improving the study and its implications for paternity leave policies. The findings provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the participants' views on paternity leave, setting the stage for a deeper analysis of the themes that emerged from their responses.

4.2.1 Question: Please take me through what you understand paternity leave is about

When participants were asked about their understanding of paternity leave. A unanimous thread ran through the participants' understanding of paternity leave, as captured by Participant 1 (Para), who describes it as "*the time where after both parents have had a baby to be there for the newly born baby.*" This sentiment is echoed by Participant 2 (Parb), who emphasised the recognition of fathers as primary caregivers, stating, "*Paternity leave is about remembering and recognising a person as a parent.*" However, a cloud of uncertainty loomed over this consensus, as expressed by Participant 5 (Pare) "*I was not aware that we have the so-called paternity leave for men to take.*", who expressed confusion about the specific entitlements and duration of paternity leave.

4.2.2 Question: Why did you apply for paternity leave?

The question that asked participants on their primary motivation for applying for paternity leave was clear among the participants. As Participant 4 (Pard) articulates, "*So, my wife was pregnant, and she was giving birth. So, I applied so that I be there for her as well.*" This desire to be present and support their partners during childbirth was a common denominator. Yet, the narrative expands to include additional reasons such as family responsibility leave for a sick child, as mentioned by Participant 3 (Parc), or being informed by a supervisor "*I didn't know anything about it. My supervisor at work told me about it that I can apply and I did so.*", as shared by Participant 6 (Parf).

4.2.3 Question: Do you believe paternity leave is important and why?

The importance of paternity leave question revealed an unambiguous agreement among the participants. Participant 1 (Para) passionately argued, "*Look, it takes a father, a mother and father to raise a child,*" while Participant 2 (Parb) underscores the emotional significance, saying, "*I truly believe that it's important in a sense that one gets to have that opportunity to bond...to experience the first-time bond with a child.*" However, the level of importance varies,

with some participants placing more emphasis on the emotional connection and others on the practical support it provides.

4.2.4 Question: What do you believe its purposes are? (Why do you think it is offered?)

Participants concur that paternity leave serves to support the mother and child, provide a bonding experience for fathers, and assists with postnatal care. Participant 1 (Para) explains the primary purpose as being "*about principle that come with having a baby...both parents have to take responsibility and support each other in bringing up this newborn baby.*," while Participant 2 (Parb) sees it as an opportunity for fathers to "*focus his energies.*" The extent to which the purpose is for the father to focus on the family or to provide practical support is a point of discussion among the participants. There is a difference in emphasis on whether the primary purpose is for the father to focus on the family or to provide practical support. Participant 4 (Pard) said: "*For me, I would think that the purpose it's for a father now to be there at the birth of their child.*"

4.2.5 Question: Talk me through what you believe the benefits of paternity leave are?

The benefits of paternity leave are seen as extending to the entire family, as Participant 1 (Para) highlights the developmental stages of a newborn baby by saying, "*One benefits that come with paternity leave is the very early developmental stages of a newborn baby...it benefits both you know.*", and Participant 2 (Parb) spoke of the emotional connection with the new baby. Participant 4 (Pard) said: "*Through paternity leave, some of the benefits are that it afforded me time to bond a bit with my son without now worrying about work.*" However, the extent of these benefits and who between (father, mother, or child) they primarily benefit was a topic of varied opinions among the participants.

4.2.6 Question: Would you recommend all fathers to take paternity leave? Why?

When asked about recommendations for fathers to take paternity leave, there was a universal endorsement among the participants. Participant 1 (Para) was insistent with "*Definitely, definitely,*" and Participant 2 (Parb) echoes this with "*Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely.*" However, the reasons for this recommendation are as diverse as the participants themselves, with some focusing on the father's recognition and others on the practical support it provides to the family. Participant 3 (Parc) said: "*Definitely I would recommend because mothers must not feel like they are alone.*". All participants recommend all fathers to take paternity leave.

4.2.7 Question: What are the disadvantages of the leave policy?

The participants agree that the duration of paternity leave is too short and advocate for its extension. Participant 2 (Parb) laments, "*The disadvantage is time, you know, in relation to days, it must be extended to more days.*" However, there is a divergence in opinion on whether paternity leave should be as long as maternity leave and whether it should be paid. As Participant 4 (Pard) said: "*For me, the disadvantage is the number of days allocated to paternity leave and that it's not paid leave.*"

4.2.8 Question: How long was your leave, and what did you do during the leave days?

On duration of the leave taken and activities during leave. The participants engaged in various activities during paternity leave, such as supporting their partners and caring for their children. Participant 1 (Para) outlined his role as "*primarily to support my wife and to be there for the child.*" Participant 4 (Pard) said: "*During the leave days, I was part of the delivery, taking care of my firstborn, preparing him for school, and taking care of my wife.*" The sufficiency of the standard ten days is a point of contention, with some participants finding it adequate and others desiring a longer leave. Participant 3 (Parc) said: "*For me, I think the ten days that they have given us is not enough.*"

4.2.9 Question: In your opinion, what would enhance the use of paternity leave? What motivated you to take paternity leave?

On enhancing the use of paternity leave. Education on the role of fathers during paternity leave and more support from employers and extended family are seen as enhancers of paternity leave utilisation. Participant 1 (Para) points to cultural stereotypes as a barrier "*I think cultural stereotypes have to be confronted, they are the elephant in the room.*", while Participant 2 (Parb) calls for a relook at policy sufficiency. The specific forms this education and support should take are a subject of varied opinions among the participants, with Participant 3 (Parc) saying: "*Maybe there should be some sort of training where you go attend something during the 10 days.*"

4.2.10 Question: What support from work and home would optimise your overall role as a father?

The necessity of support from both work and home is a point of agreement among the participants. Participant 1 (Para) said: "*We just need to balance each other and set out roles and*

responsibilities.” and also envisions workshops from employers. At the same time, Participant 2 (Parb) emphasised the importance of listening to the father's perspective at home. Participant 4 (Pard) said: “*The support an employer can give is affording me enough time to adjust to the new role of a parent.*” The type of support needed, whether it be time off or emotional support, is a topic of discussion among the participants.

4.2.11 Question: Is there any other thing you'd like to add that you believe will benefit this research? (to encourage more discussions on what the researcher may have missed and is important for fathers)

The participants' final thoughts underscore the importance of the research and its potential to reach more fathers. Participant 1 (Para) wishes the research “*can reach as many males as possible,*” and Participant 6 (Parf) offers to help others who are unaware of paternity leave. Participant 2 (Parb) said: “*This research can be built or edited in conjunction with the problem statement for example, with family planning.*” The specific suggestions for improving the research and its implications for paternity leave policies are as diverse as the participants themselves.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief but comprehensive outline of the study's findings, beginning with a demographic overview of the six participants. The methodical approach of presenting participants' responses, expressed in their own words, facilitates a nuanced understanding of their views on paternity leave and enables a direct correlation with the overarching research objectives listed in Table 1. The subsequent analysis chapter will further dissect and interpret themes from this data, deepening understanding and contributing to the broader discourse on paternity leave within the study's focus.

Chapter Five: Data analysis and discussion

5. Introduction

Using the foundation laid out in the previous chapter, this chapter delves into a comprehensive analysis of the gathered data using themes and sub-themes that emerged from participants' responses. The themes presented in Table 2 serve as a structured framework for understanding Black African-employed fathers' multifaceted perspectives and experiences regarding paternity leave. To reinforce the alignment between the research goals and the findings, a recap of the study objectives and research questions asked to answer those objectives follows the table of themes and sub-themes.

The subsequent analysis and discussion centres on distinct themes and sub-themes that emerged from participants' responses. The analysis provides an in-depth understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of paternity leave perspectives, including theoretical implications. Through this thorough analysis, Chapter Five aims to disentangle the complexities surrounding paternity leave from the perspective of Black African-employed fathers, contributing valuable insights to the broader discourse on work-family dynamics and social policies.

The table below depicts themes and sub-themes that came from participants' responses.

Table 2: Themes and sub-themes from quotations:

Objectives	Sub-themes
Perceptions of what paternity leave is for BAEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness and knowledge of paternity leave• Benefits and drawbacks of taking paternity leave• Workplace culture and policies related to paternity leave• Social and cultural norms related to fatherhood and parenting

<p>Challenges BAEF have in utilising paternity leave</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misuse of paternity leave for non-family-related activities • Need for an amendment in the policy to extend the number of days available to fathers • Loss of productivity as a potential disadvantage • The number of days allocated for paternity leave being a disadvantage • Lack of information regarding paternity leave provided by employers • Emotional toll of sleepless nights and difficulty in seeing a child cry as potential disadvantages
<p>Aims of policy in meeting experiences of BAEF</p>	<p>Sub-themes from recommendations for paternity leave:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of fathers taking their roles and responsibilities seriously • Paternity leave to support mothers and ensure fathers are present • All men should take paternity leave and be involved in supporting their families • Recommendation for paternity leave from a mentor <p>Sub-themes for paternity leave duration and its uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varying duration of paternity leave taken by participants

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses of paternity leave include assisting with chores, taking care of siblings, and accompanying partner to the hospital. • Current paternity leave duration may not be sufficient for many families. <p>Sub-themes for what could enhance the use of paternity leave:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confronting cultural stereotypes to enhance the use of paternity leave. • Personal motivation for taking paternity leave to support the partner and be involved in the child’s life. • Providing training or orientation for fathers during paternity leave. • Taking responsibility for being a father and being present during the birth and early stages of a child’s life. • Importance of orientation and support for fathers during paternity leave to help them feel engaged and connected to their families.
<p>What can be done to assist BAEF to realise the potential of paternity leave?</p>	<p>Sub-theme on reasons for applying for paternity leave:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes in legislation • excitement about the upcoming birth of their child • family responsibility and personal events

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One participant was not able to take paternity leave due to specific period requirements. <p>Sub-theme on the importance of paternity leave</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The equal responsibilities of spouses • The opportunity to bond with the baby • Dispelling doubts about paternity • Adjusting to the demands of a new family member • It is also seen as a valuable opportunity for fathers to participate in the care of their children and support their families during an important time of transition. <p>Sub-theme on benefits of paternity leave</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional and practical benefits for fathers, mothers, and the entire family. Emotional benefits include developing a bond with the newborn, learning about oneself and the child, and reducing work-related stress. • Practical benefits include assisting with household needs, preparing for the needs of the mother and baby, and ensuring that all needs are met. • Having both parents present can improve the well-being of the mother and baby and help reduce cases of absent fathers and gender-based violence.
<p>Is available data enough to capture the thoughts and</p>	<p>For: Purposes of paternity leave:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared responsibility

<p>feelings of BAEF on paternity leave?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family bonding • Assisting with postnatal care • Shared experience <p>For: Support needed to enhance fathers' role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work support (knowledge and workshops, flexible schedules, equal opportunities) • Home support (emotional support, clear communication about roles and responsibilities) • Importance of family customs and values • The role of the mother in teaching children about customs and values
<p>Any other perspectives of BAEF about paternity leave.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gratitude for the opportunity to participate • Education on family planning

5.1 Recap of objectives and questions asked to answer research objectives

Objective one: Exploring the understanding and knowledge about paternity leave by Black African-employed fathers in Gauteng. One question was asked to explore this objective: Please take me through what you understand paternity leave is about?

Objective two: Exploring the experiences and challenges these Black African-employed fathers have in utilising paternity leave. One question to achieve this objective was asked: What are the disadvantages of the paternity leave policy?

Objective three: Exploring what needs to be done to assist Black African-employed fathers to utilise and realise paternity leave's potential. Three questions were asked to explore this objective:

- i) Would you recommend that all fathers take paternity leave?
- ii) How long was your leave and what did you do during the leave days? and
- iii) In your opinion what would enhance the use of paternity leave? / What motivated you to take paternity leave?

Objective four: Exploring whether the aims of the policy (advancing social justice) appear to have been met in the experiences of Black African-employed fathers. This objective was explored by asking three questions.

- i) Why did you apply for paternity leave?
- ii) Do you believe paternity leave is important, and why?
- iii) Talk me through what you believe the benefits of paternity leave are?

Objective five: Explain whether available data on paternity leave at the disposal of participants of this study is appropriate in capturing the social interactionist meaning participants place on it. Two questions were asked to explore this objective:

- i) What do you believe its purposes are? Why do you think it is offered?
- ii) What support from work and home would optimise your overall role as a father?

A final open-ended question was asked to explore other views participants had on paternity leave. This question was asked to explore anything that could emerge from all objectives of the study, and the question was: Is there any other thing you would like to add that you believe will benefit this research?

5.1.1 Perceptions of what paternity leave is

Paternity leave is a policy designed to promote gender equality and encourage fathers to be involved in childcare and family responsibilities (Heymann *et al.* 2017:6-11). However, despite the benefits of paternity leave, there are often differences in how it is used, particularly among marginalised groups such as Black African-employed fathers (Van den Berg *et al.* 2021:169). Not

all fathers who had taken paternity leave used it for its “intended purposes,” that is, childcare. To analyse the understanding and knowledge of paternity leave among Black African employed fathers in Gauteng, it was necessary to examine factors such as their awareness and knowledge of the policy. Additionally, their perceptions about the benefits and drawbacks of taking paternity leave, workplace culture and procedures related to paternity leave, and their social and cultural norms related to fatherhood and parenting were investigated.

The researcher examined participants’ perceptions/ views on paternity leave by analysing their responses and found that all six participants identified it as a type of leave related to the birth of a child. While the participants differed in their comprehension and familiarity with the concept, they all shared some understanding of what paternity leave meant.

5.1.1a Leave associated with the birth of a child

Para seemed to suggest that both parents should be present for the newborn baby, while Parb suggests paternity leave is important for recognising a father as a parent and an important figure in the child’s life. Parc and Pard acknowledge that paternity leave is linked to the birth of a child and emphasise that its the father who should take the leave.

Pare admits he did not know about paternity leave before but has now learned that it is a leave that fathers can take after their child is born. Similarly, Parf did not know about the leave until he and his wife had a child. Their responses indicate that they both have a limited understanding of the concept. They only know it is a leave for men about to have a child. The following is a brief discussion of sub-themes that emerged from the theme:

Awareness and knowledge of paternity leave: The participants highlighted the need to explore the level of awareness and knowledge about paternity leave among employed Black African fathers in Gauteng. This was expressed in statements like “*I was not aware that we have the so-called paternity leave for men to take.*” [5:3 ¶ 11 in Pare](#) .*fl thought paternity oh yeah maternity is for the woman.*” [5:4 ¶ 12 in Pare](#). This could include examining factors that contribute to the lack of awareness and knowledge, such as limited access to information, language barriers, and cultural norms.

Benefits and drawbacks of taking paternity leave: The findings suggest that employed Black African fathers in Gauteng may have varying perceptions about the benefits as shown in this

response: *“I applied for it, because, you know, what, I was losing it with excitement, it’s about happiness, the happiness, what drives you? It’s the happiness to experience, you know, the birth of your child, you know, so that is why I applied for it. It’s just about like, you know, what? The excitement driven, you know, thing that actually wanted me to, to be okay.”* [2:3 ¶ 6 in Parb.](#)

The drawbacks of taking paternity leave were indicated by this participant: *“No, I don’t remember. I didn’t take paternity leave and I think the reason was that time was due to workload from my side.”* [5:7 ¶ 30 in Pare.](#) The respondent also said, *“And then I wanted to take it there after and they said no, you have to take it within this specific period this and that. But I didn’t take it actually.”* [5:8 ¶ 33 in Pare](#) . This could include exploring factors that influence their decision to take or not take paternity leave, such as financial implications, job security, and cultural expectations.

Workplace culture and policies related to paternity leave: The findings highlight the need to examine the workplace culture and policies related to paternity leave. This could include exploring factors that contribute to the disparities in taking paternity leave, such as the lack of supportive workplace policies and practices, discrimination, and stigmatisation, as expressed by Pare.

Social and cultural norms related to fatherhood and parenting: The findings highlight the need to explore social and cultural norms related to fatherhood and parenting among employed Black African fathers in Gauteng. This could include examining factors that influence their perceptions and expectations of fatherhood, such as traditional gender roles, cultural beliefs, and societal expectations.

Overall, participants reflected different levels of understanding paternity leave as a concept. Some showed that they recognised its importance to fathers, while others were learning about it for the first time. The findings confirm the research by Van den Berg *et al.* (2021:18-19), which reveals that fathers are familiar with paternity leave, and many of them are aware of its importance despite its related challenges.

5.1.2 Exploring experiences and challenges Black African employed fathers have in utilising paternity leave

To explore the challenges fathers face in using paternity leave, the participants were asked about its disadvantages. The analyses below explore the potential impact of paternity leave on fathers’ involvement in childcare and family responsibilities, their relationship with their partners, and the

well-being of their children. This can provide insights into the potential benefits of paternity leave and its role in promoting gender equality and supporting families. Research evidence suggests that paternity leave-taking is associated with higher levels of father involvement, and lengths of paternity leave are positively associated with trajectories of fathers' engagement, particularly among socioeconomically disadvantaged fathers (Petts & Knoester 2018).

5.1.2a Disadvantages of paternity leave

Para stated that he did not see any disadvantages in taking paternity leave. However, he noted that the only possible disadvantage could be if someone misused the leave for non-family-related activities. He believed that being present for his children was more important than any financial considerations. Parb thought that the policy regarding paternity leave needed to be amended to extend the number of days available to fathers. Parc acknowledged that taking paternity leave might result in some loss of productivity, even though most companies supported it. Pard noted that the number of days allocated for paternity leave and the fact that it was often unpaid were disadvantages. Pare expressed uncertainty about the specifics of paternity leave, suggesting that employers should provide more information to their employees. Finally, Parf mentioned the emotional toll of sleepless nights and the difficulty of seeing their child cry as potential disadvantages. However, he believed that these were worth it in the end. Below is a discussion of sub-themes that came from quotations on what participants perceived were the disadvantages of paternity leave. It attempts to explore the challenges they faced in utilising the leave.

The discussion on perceived disadvantages of paternity leave among participants revealed several prominent sub-themes that shed light on their challenges in utilising the leave. The analysis highlighted various concerns voiced by participants. One notable sub-theme emphasised the misuse of paternity leave for non-family-related activities, potentially undermining the intended purpose of the leave, like when Para said *“I would say that the only disadvantage would be if that paternity leave is misused, you know, where someone says that they’re taking paternity leave, but they’re going to spend the whole day mingling with their friends out there....”* Participants also expressed the need for policy amendments to extend the number of days available for fathers, suggesting that the current duration might not adequately meet his family’s needs.

Concerns regarding the potential loss of productivity because of taking paternity leave and the limitation posed by the allocated number of days were also evident in the discussions, as indicated

in this quote: *“I’m obviously it’s, it will relate to sometime loss. I know that it is supported by the government, and most companies, so most probably, you won’t be losing any income, but the time lost is the production will be lost, you see.”* [3:7 ¶ 58 in Parc](#). Moreover, participants noted a lack of information provided by employers about paternity leave, indicating a potential barrier to its use. Additionally, the emotional toll arising from sleepless nights and the difficulty in coping with a child’s distress, such as witnessing their crying, were cited as potential disadvantages, underscoring the emotional challenges fathers might face while on paternity leave. These sub-themes collectively explain the multifaceted challenges participants encountered in leveraging paternity leave, as well as the surrounding administrative, emotional, and structural limitations that affected their utilisation and enjoyment of this benefit.

Overall, the participants identified some potential disadvantages of paternity leave, such as loss of productivity or number of days provided for leave, the emotional toll associated with caring for children, and lack of information from employers, but generally believed that being present for their children outweighed any drawbacks. These findings speak to the support fathers may require, as advocated for in the Africa (2014) whitepaper that calls for legislative and cultural changes to support paternity leave in SA against a backdrop of economic and social barriers that prevent fathers from taking leave, including job insecurity and cultural attitudes.

5.1.3 What needs to be done to assist Black African employed fathers to utilise and realise the potential of paternity leave

The analysis of this theme is focused on exploring what needs to be done to assist Black African-employed fathers to utilise and realise the potential of paternity leave. Ultimately, the analysis seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform policy and practice in supporting Black African-employed fathers in utilising and realising the potential of paternity leave.

5.1.3a Recommendations for paternity leave

Para responded to the question with a definite “yes” without wanting to be drawn to elaborating further. Parb emphasised the importance of fathers taking their roles and responsibilities seriously, stating that fathers who neglect their children may contribute to adverse outcomes, such as homelessness. Parc recommended paternity leave as a way to support mothers and ensure that fathers are present to provide additional support to their families. He suggested that all men should take paternity leave and be involved in supporting their families. Pard, like Para simply agreed that

paternity leave was important, without providing additional details. Pare expressed strong support for paternity leave and recommended that it be emphasised. He suggested that husbands should have at least one week of leave before their wives give birth to provide additional support. Finally, Parf mentioned that they had received a recommendation for paternity leave from a mentor and were willing to pass on the same advice to others who may not be aware of its benefits.

Overall, the participants strongly recommended paternity leave as a way to support families and ensure that fathers are present and involved in their children's lives. This is in line with studies conducted by Petts *et al.* (2020), Bakermans-Kranenburg *et al.* (2019), and Petts (2018), which have demonstrated that taking paternity leave is associated with increased father involvement in children and family livelihoods.

5.1.3b Paternity leave duration and its uses

Para could not remember the duration of the paternity leave he took in 2014 when it was considered a family responsibility leave. He used the leave to assist his child's mother with chores and found out about the leave through a circular at work. Parb believes that five days of paternity leave is not enough, especially when considering complications that may arise during childbirth, as indicated in utterances like: *"I would start here, I even feel that the ten days that they have given us is not enough, given how many days women get, 40 days or so, if I'm not mistaken. Look, it takes a father, a mother and father to raise a child. And we are living in the 21st century, where both men and women work..."* Parc - took two to three days of paternity leave, which he believes is enough to take his partner to and from the hospital. He also mentioned that current economic conditions do not allow for the government to pay for more days. Pard took ten days of paternity leave but wishes it could have been a month. He used the leave to assist with taking his partner to and from the hospital, caring for other siblings, and performing daily chores like cooking.

Pare did not take paternity leave because of the type of work he does but wishes it could be at least a month or even a week before the birth in case there are complications. He would use the leave to assist with house chores, especially when the extended family cannot assist. Parf took two weeks of paternity leave and used it to take his partner to the hospital and look after the baby. Unlike Parc who said, *"I think it was just, I think it was two days, or three days. I took two days. Yes. Two days for both of my children. Yeah. Yes."* [3:11 ¶ 82 in Parc](#). The similarities and differences in responses

highlight the nuanced perspectives on the duration and uses of paternity leave among the participants, reflecting diverse experiences and opinions within the study.

5.1.3c What could enhance the use of paternity leave

The participants provided various perspectives on what could enhance the use of paternity leave and what motivated them to take it. Participant One highlighted the importance of confronting cultural stereotypes, which could enhance the use of paternity leave. He said, *“Yeah, I would think that culture, there are still cultural stereotypes, if they were to be confronted, that’s where the use of paternity leave would be enhanced in my view.”* The participant believes that many people take paternity leave for their reasons, but society’s expectation on mothers to take care of children and household chores can still create pressure and stigmatisation for fathers. He suggested that confronting these stereotypes could help normalise and encourage the use of paternity leave.

Participant Two highlighted the short duration of paternity leave, emphasising that it is insufficient. This sentiment is expressed through phrases like *“the time given from the policies perspective, it’s not sufficient”* and *“your leave is over and done with, it’s over, gone, boom.”* He extended the discussion beyond the individual experience to consider broader family dynamics. He noted that family situations vary, and not everyone has the same support structures in place, such as grandparents or nannies. This lack of external support intensifies the father’s duties, making the experience more challenging. Cultural aspects were brought into the discussion. These include the performance of African rituals for the baby, such as drying and taking off the umbilical cord. Both Participants One and Two agreed that cultural stereotypes have an impact. Para suggested that confronting cultural stereotypes would enhance the use of paternity leave, while Parb did not explicitly mention confronting stereotypes, but acknowledged the need for serious enhancements.

Participant Three suggested that providing training or orientation for fathers during paternity leave could enhance its usefulness. He said, *“Maybe, there should be some sort of training where you go attend something during the ten days. Out of love for the baby. How to bathe the baby and all that?”* They propose a programme where fathers and mothers could learn practical skills like bathing and changing diapers together. Such training could help fathers feel more confident and comfortable in their role as caregivers and partners.

Participants Five and Six emphasised the importance of taking responsibility for being a father and being present for the birth and early stages of their child's life. Pard states, "*I'm the father. I have to be there.*" Pare expresses, "*That obligation of being a parent.*" Parf reinforced the sense of responsibility by asserting, "*It's my responsibility now. No one else's responsibility.*" He viewed it as a moral obligation and a matter of personal motivation rather than something that he was obliged to do by his employers or society. Below are sub-themes that emerged from the discussions on recommendations for paternity leave, paternity leave duration, its uses, and what could enhance its use.

Respondents pointed out the importance of fathers earnestly embracing their roles and responsibilities in recommending paternity leave. This emerged as a fundamental aspect. The need for paternity leave to not only support mothers but also ensure the active presence of fathers in their children's lives was highlighted. Furthermore, encouraging all men to take paternity leave and contribute significantly to their families was also emphasised, including the recommendation for implementing a paternity leave policy by someone who serves as a mentor or influential figure.

Discussions also revolved around the varying durations of leave taken by participants. Instances of paternity leave being utilised for tasks like assisting with household chores, caring for a child's siblings, and accompanying partners to hospitals were cited. There was a general sense that the current duration might not be adequate for many families' needs.

In exploring ways to enhance the use of paternity leave, confronting cultural stereotypes was a crucial aspect highlighted. Personal motivation, such as supporting one's partner and actively engaging in the child's life, was seen as a significant driver for taking paternity leave. Suggestions were made to train or orient fathers on what to do during their paternity leave. This would help them assume their roles responsibly. Additionally, the importance of being present during childbirth and the early stages of a child's life and the need for orientation and support for fathers to foster a sense of engagement and connection with their families were also discussed.

Regarding recommendations for paternity leave, the participants strongly recommended paternity leave to support families and ensure that fathers are present and involved in their children's lives. This is in line with research by Petts *et al.* (2020), Bakermans-Kranenburg *et al.* (2019), and Petts

(2018), which demonstrated that taking paternity leave is associated with increased father involvement in children and family livelihoods.

The data on paternity leave duration and its uses shows that the uses of paternity leave vary from person to person. Still, many participants used the leave to assist their partner with daily chores, taking care of siblings, and taking their partner to and from the hospital. These responses suggest that the current paternity leave duration (ten days) provided by the government may not be sufficient for many families, and a longer duration may be more beneficial for both the father and the family as a whole. This data also confirms the support needed as advocated for in the Africa (2014) whitepaper, which calls for paid paternity leave. It also shows that more needs to be done at home during the time the fathers are on paternity leave in terms of support.

On what could enhance the use of paternity leave, most participants highlighted the importance of orientation and support for fathers during paternity leave. This suggests that some fathers may not know what is expected of them or how to support their partners during this time. Providing information and guidance could help fathers feel more engaged and connected to their families during paternity leave. These findings confirm what the Liberal Feminism theory advocates for inclusivity and diversity in all aspects of life, including the workplace, but also the need to scale up support given to fathers in their roles as fathers and caregivers.

5.1.4 Exploring whether the aims of the policy (advancing social justice) appear to have been met in the experiences of Black African-employed fathers

To analyse whether the policy has achieved its aims, it was necessary to examine the experiences of Black African-employed fathers, how they interact with the policy, and how it has affected them. By considering the perspectives of these fathers, it is possible to identify gaps and challenges in the policy's implementation and develop strategies to address them. This approach aligns with the qualitative research methodology, which emphasises understanding individuals' lived experiences and perspectives to gain insights into complex social phenomena.

5.1.4a Reasons for applying for paternity leave

The respondents offered various reasons for applying for leave. Para mentioned that he applied for paternity leave because of the changes in legislation and his desire to take time off to be with his newborn child. Parb indicated that he applied for leave because he was excited about the pending birth of his child and wanted to be there for the experience. Parc said that he took family

responsibility leave because his child was sick and needed to go to the hospital. Pard applied for leave to be present during the birth of his child and to support his spouse during the postpartum period.

Interestingly, Pare split his response into two parts. In the first part, the respondent did not remember why he did not take paternity leave. In the second part, he mentioned that he could not take it within the specific period required. Parf applied for leave because he was informed about it by his supervisor and did not know about it before.

5.1.4b Importance of paternity leave

All six participants expressed that they believe paternity leave is important. The reasons given for its importance include that it ensures that, in the 21st century, responsibilities are shared equally between spouses. It also offers an opportunity to bond with the baby, dispel doubts about paternity, and enables the new mother to rest and relax. One respondent emphasised the importance of fathers having a first-hand experience at the birth of their child, while another pointed out the challenges of not having extended family support.

While there are no evident disagreements in the stated perspectives, the nuances within each participant's emphasis on specific aspects of paternity leave's importance could contribute to a richer understanding of the diverse reasons individuals find paternity leave crucial. The common ground shared by participants reflects a societal shift towards recognising and valuing the active involvement of fathers in the early stages of children's lives.

5.1.4c Benefits of paternity leave

The participants provided several perspectives on the benefits of paternity leave. One participant focused on the importance of having both parents involved in the early developmental stages of a newborn baby. The participant believed that it is crucial for the father to be present, as it can help reduce cases of gender-based violence and absent fathers. The participant also mentioned that fathers can benefit emotionally from spending time with their newborns and that they can learn about themselves and their children.

Another participant echoed the emotional benefits for the father, as he noted that being present for his children helped him develop an emotional connection with them. Additionally, he believed that being a parent can teach one about oneself and the child. Participant Three focused more on the

practical benefits of paternity leave, such as avoiding work-related stress and preparing for the needs of the mother and baby. The participant also believed that paternity leave could provide time for fathers to assist with household needs and to determine if additional help is needed.

Participant Four emphasised the benefits of paternity leave for the whole family, as having the father present can assist the mother with recovery and ensure that all needs are met. The participant also noted that paternity leave is short, and he might require additional assistance from family or friends. Participant Five was more self-centred, admitting that he took paternity leave to benefit himself as a government employee. However, he also noted that he assisted his wife during this time.

Below is a discussion of sub-themes derived from the analysis of participants' responses on exploring whether the aims of the policy (advancing social justice) appear to have been met in the experiences of Black African-employed fathers.

The analysis of responses from all participants shed light on several sub-themes concerning the exploration of whether the policy's aims, particularly in advancing social justice, were achieved. Under the first sub-theme, regarding reasons for applying for paternity leave, participants cited various factors such as changes in legislation, anticipation and excitement about the impending birth of their child, fulfilling family responsibilities, and personal events. Notably, one participant highlighted their inability to take paternity leave due to specific period requirements. As expressed in this quote: *"No, I don't remember. I didn't take paternity leave and I think the reason was that time was due to workload from my side. And then I wanted to take it there after and they said no, you have to take it within this specific period this and that. But I didn't take it actually."* [5:8 ¶ 33 in Pare](#)

The second sub-theme emphasised the importance of paternity leave, highlighting aspects such as the equitable distribution of responsibilities between spouses, like Para put it *"So it is in that same vein that, we carry the same responsibilities, and you no longer have a woman that stays at home, or a stay-at-home mom these days."* It also presents an opportunity for fathers to bond with their newborns, dispelling doubts about paternity. One participant said, *"I truly believe that it's important in the sense that one gets to have that opportunity. You choose to bond you know, to experience the first-time bond with a child, you know, it dispels those theories and theories that*

hey, I do not know, whether the child is mine and all those stupid theories that actually, you know are heard of others.” All participants acknowledged paternity leave as a crucial period for fathers to actively engage in caring for their children and supporting their families during this significant transitional phase.

Lastly, the third sub-theme highlighted the benefits of paternity leave, encompassing both emotional and practical dimensions for fathers, mothers, and the entire family unit. Emotional benefits included developing a bond with the newborn, self-discovery in the context of parenthood, and mitigating work-related stress. Practical benefits involved assisting with household chores, preparing for the needs of both mother and baby, and ensuring all family needs were met. Moreover, having both parents present during this crucial period was seen as conducive to the well-being of the mother and baby, potentially reducing instances of absent fathers and mitigating gender-based violence within the family dynamic. One participant articulately said, *“One, benefits that come with paternity leave. The very development early developmental stages of a newborn baby. It has scientifically been proven that a baby needs both parents. For them to develop in all areas. So, I would think that it is very important for both parents, especially the father, to be there. And it doesn’t benefit the baby. Given the gender-based violence that we experience and including the child related abuse and violence that we see in this country...”*

Overall, the reasons for applying for leave mentioned by participants are related to family responsibilities, personal events, and changes in legislation. Organisations need to have policies and procedures in place that support employees taking leave for such reasons. The interesting thing about this data is that it calls for flexibility, especially with the paternity leave policy. According to Section 25 of the BCEA (No.10 of 2010), the leave must be taken within ten days from the day the child is born. This explains the challenge Pare had as he could not take the leave within the specified period because of work commitments.

On the importance of paternity leave, the responses to the question: “Do you believe paternity leave is important and why?” suggest that paternity leave is seen as a valuable opportunity for fathers to care for their children and support their families during an important time of transition. This data also explains the value fathers place on paternity leave and the opportunity for equal responsibility for partners as that parental leave “can promote parent-child bonding, improve

outcomes for children, and even increase gender equity at home and the workplace” (Labour 2016:2).

On the benefits of paternity leave, the participants suggested that paternity leave has both emotional and practical benefits for fathers, mothers, and the entire family. It can provide time for fathers to develop a bond with their newborns, relieve work-related stress, and assist with household needs. Additionally, having both parents present can improve the well-being of the mother and baby and help reduce cases of absent fathers. This data aligns with the proposition by Heymann *et al.* (2017) that taking paternity leave has lasting benefits for children and promotes gender equality and improved family health.

5.1.5 Explain whether available data on paternity leave at the disposal of participants of this study is appropriate in capturing the social interactionist meaning participants place on it

In this analysis, the focus is on evaluating the appropriateness of the available data on paternity leave in capturing the social interactionist meaning that participants attribute to it. The analysis unveils a rich tapestry of viewpoints derived from participant quotations. Through an exploration of participant quotes, the analysis sheds light on the multifaceted meanings that individuals attribute to paternity leave, offering insights into its broader social implications and the roles fathers play within the family-work context.

5.1.5a Purposes of paternity leave

From the quotations provided, it is evident that there are different perspectives on the purposes of paternity leave. However, many of the quotes emphasise the importance of fathers being involved in the upbringing of their children and supporting their partners during the postnatal period. Some of the main purposes highlighted include:

Shared responsibility: One of the primary purposes of paternity leave is to recognise that both parents should take responsibility for the care of their newborn; as noted in Participant One’s quote, *“The primary purpose has to do with principle that comes with having a baby. It’s, I believe, that is something that I cannot be left to a mother alone, you know, so both parents have to take responsibility and support each other in bringing up this newborn, baby”* ...[1:5 ¶ 20 in Para.](#)

Family bonding: Another purpose of paternity leave is to enable fathers to focus their energy on their family, as noted in Participant Two's quote: *"I think that's the purpose of paternity leave, you know, to make your father aware of what's very, very, key and central to his progression in life, or that is to make a family you know, to start whether it's a start or, or growing the family, I think it actually provides that, opportunity to want to focus on."* [2:5 ¶ 10 in Parb](#). Spending time with their children and partners helps fathers build stronger bonds with their family members and contributes to the family's emotional well-being.

Assisting with postnatal care: The postnatal period can be challenging for both mothers and fathers, and paternity leave can help fathers provide much-needed support to their partners. As noted in Participants Three's and Five's quotes, a father plays an important role: *"Yeah, as I've also indicated to say to my understanding, is that paternity leave is for the husband to go. And I see if they can assist the wife. She's still living in labor pains and everything. Somewhere, someone she could not manage to do some other things, she needed a husband to come on board to assist with necessary. Yes."* [5:19 ¶ 68 in Pare](#). Fathers can assist with tasks such as caring for the baby, running errands, and managing household chores, allowing the mother to recover from childbirth and avoid postnatal depression.

Shared experience: Paternity leave also offers fathers an opportunity to share in the experience of childbirth and early parenting, as noted in Participant Six's quote: *"I think it's for fathers to experience such moments and yes, assist their partners and share the birthing experience."* [6:6 ¶ 25 in Parf](#). Spending time with the baby can help fathers understand the challenges and joys of early parenthood, which can have long-term benefits for both the father and the child.

5.1.5b Support needed to enhance fathers' role

In these quotations on the question – "what support from work and home would optimise your overall role as a father?" various perspectives were provided on what support from work and home would optimise a father's role. In Para's view, workshops and knowledge about paternity leave are crucial forms of support that employers can provide to their employees. He suggests that it is not enough to provide paternity leave but rather to ensure that employees understand its importance and how to use it effectively. Para emphasised the importance of emotional support from one's spouse and clear communication about roles and responsibilities in the home.

In contrast, Para suggests that support from extended family members is unnecessary and that the couple must plan the financial aspect of paternity leave. Similarly, in Parc's view, the primary support for a father comes from the mother, who should listen to the father's perspectives, cultural and religious values, and opinions. Parc emphasised the importance of following family customs and values and noted that the mother plays a crucial role in teaching the children about them.

Parf provided a perspective on how support from work can optimise a father's role, emphasising the importance of the family and the message that family is important. He (Parf) also shared an example of a boss who encouraged him to leave work early to spend time with his children, which he suggests is a message that workplaces should support family time. Parf also suggested that workplaces must create environments that support fathers by providing equal opportunities for both men and women to take paternity leave and by allowing parents to bring their children to work. Below is a discussion of sub-themes related to the purposes of paternity leave and the support needed to enhance the father's role.

The analysis conducted revealed distinct sub-themes related to the purposes of paternity leave and the necessary support to bolster fathers' roles. Under the category of purposes of paternity leave, several key themes emerged. Participants highlighted the importance of paternity leave in fostering shared responsibility between parents, enabling fathers to actively participate in family bonding during the crucial early stages of a child's life, assisting with postnatal care, and providing an avenue for shared experiences between the father and the child, as expressed in this quotation: *"I think it's for fathers to experience such moments and yes, assist their partners and share the birthing experience."* [6:6 ¶ 25 in Parf](#)

In exploring the support needed to enhance fathers' roles, discussions centred on multifaceted aspects. Work-related support encompassed the necessity for knowledge dissemination and workshops, advocating for flexible work schedules, and ensuring equal opportunities in the workplace. One participant said, *"In my view, what from work? Yeah. People who are managers serving in managerial capacities. And even employers themselves, I would say the best support that they could give their employees is in the form of workshops, you know, before the people can even apply for paternity leave. Because knowledge is the best form of support, if people can understand the importance of paternity leave, and what's needed of them. And the best way to use*

it effectively...,” while another said “...However, you know, once they give you that support, you’re able to focus, you’re still able to give you, you know, full, performance, better performance, being productive at work as such, and as well as, you know, splitting perhaps even this paternity leave into other smaller days, you know, whereby I was at work, and then you, you can also take your, you know, let’s say during those check-ups, where there’s maybe a child needs immunisation and things like that, you know, allocate that time off to say, you know, these are the things that it’s part of the not specially, but potentially because it’s about a child,, it’s going to be confused or mixed with education, registration, or municipality issued electricity or when they get past those, especially these type of things, or in this burial and things like that. This all stems from paternity.”

[2:12 ¶ 26 in Parb.](#) This suggests a flexible paternity leave provision.

Emotional support and clear communication at home about roles and responsibilities were mentioned as crucial elements. One participant said, *“Okay, if there’s any support from home is to get as much assistance as possible to help with the child. You see with us, my mother was there to help us with the baby and show my wife what to do...”* Another participant emphasised the significance of family customs and values in shaping the father’s role, highlighting how these cultural aspects play a pivotal role in shaping family dynamics. *“Let’s start from home, home, it’s where the heart is. It’s where the whole nation is built. Okay? So, a dad is someone who needs to be listened to. Whether it’s from the direction, perspective, obviously, it’s from the mother herself, that’s the support you need from her. Listen to the man from them, you know, directives point their perspectives, cultural perspectives, religious perspectives, you know, and, you know, his opinions need to be taken heed off. And remember, we always happen and happen to come from different, maybe families, that has different characters and all those...”* Additionally, the role of the mother in teaching children about these customs and values was acknowledged as an influential factor in the overall upbringing and nurturing of family traditions, thus contributing to the enhancement of the father’s role within the family unit.

On support needed to enhance fathers’ roles, these quotations suggest that optimising a father’s role requires support from both work and home. At work, this support can come in the form of imparting knowledge, information, skills or expertise, workshops, flexible schedules, and granting equal opportunities to both men and women. At home, emotional support from one’s spouse and

clear communication about roles and responsibilities are crucial. The importance of family customs and values is also emphasised, with the mother playing a crucial role in teaching children about them. The data confirms yet again the significance of all-round support from the government (through policies, programmes, and initiatives implemented by the government to promote and facilitate fathers' involvement in their families), workplaces, and homes as advocated by Africa (2014) whitepaper.

5.1.6 Any other views by participants

One participant acknowledged the importance of the research and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate. The participant also indicated that he would reach out should he think of anything else. Another participant suggested that the research could be expanded to include education on family planning, particularly on the financial responsibilities of raising children. The participant also emphasised the benefits of such education in terms of curbing dissatisfaction and improving motivation at work.

Another participant expressed opposition to the provision of ten days of paternity leave, arguing that it is unnecessary and that other types of leave exist. *“And then why are you having ten days? So that one, I think it should be scrapped. Ten days, it should never be a provision because there are other types of leaves, which are there. But you have a paternity leave of ten days solely because.”* [3:21 ¶ 160 in Parc](#). The participant suggested that the provision should be scrapped unless there is a genuine need for it, while another participant speculated on the origins of the provision for ten days of paternity leave and suggested that other fathers may have pushed for its implementation.

One more participant noted that some organisations offer parental leave rather than paternity leave, *“Yes, some organisations are offering it not as paternity leave but as parental leave your laces that’s”* [4:21 ¶ 188 in Pard](#). The assertion indicates that the participant perceives a difference between the two. Another expressed uncertainty about the applicability of the different types of leave which suggests that the participant does not see any particular benefit to him personally. He said, *“Just my thinking, you know... This is the huddle they needed. Because, I mean, if you don’t breastfeed, and you don’t show people how to give birth to the baby. You don’t need to. And then why are you having ten days? So that one, I think, it should be scrapped. Ten days, it should never be a provision because there are other types of leaves, which are there. But you have a paternity*

leave of ten days solely because” 3:21 ¶ 160 in Parc. The last respondent expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the research and acknowledged the importance of paternity leave for fathers. The participant indicated that he had nothing else to add but might contact the researcher in the future.

Below is a discussion of sub-themes that emerged from other views held by participants in the study.

Gratitude for the opportunity to participate: One participant expressed appreciation for being able to participate in the research and suggested they may reach out in the future if they have anything else to contribute.

Education on family planning: One participant suggested expanding the research to include education on family planning, specifically the financial responsibilities of raising children. The participant believed such education would improve motivation and curb dissatisfaction at work.

Opposition to the provision of paternity leave: One participant opposed the provision of ten days of paternity leave, arguing it is unnecessary and redundant with other types of leave. Another participant speculated on the origins of the provision and suggested that other fathers may have pushed for its implementation.

Perception of difference between paternity leave and parental leave: One participant noted that some organisations offer parental leave instead of paternity leave, indicating a perceived difference between the two. Another participant expressed uncertainty about the applicability of different types of leave, suggesting they did not personally see any particular benefit to them.

Overall, these sub-themes suggest varying perspectives on the perceptions of paternity leave, with some participants expressing gratitude and support for it, while others expressed opposition or uncertainty. Expanding education on family planning as part of the research also emerged as a potential area for further exploration.

5.2 Theoretical implications

The theoretical implications of this study are significant in that they provide insights into the experiences and understanding of employed Black African-employed in Gauteng regarding paternity leave. While the theoretical implications of this study are multifaceted, they are rooted

in the participants' responses and experiences, aligning with Symbolic Interaction Theory, feminist perspectives, and phenomenological research design.

Using Symbolic Interaction Theory, the study highlights the role of social interactions and communication in shaping fathers' understanding and experiences of paternity leave. Quotations like, "*I found out about the leave through a circular at work*" underscore the role of social interactions and communication channels, validating the study's application of the Symbolic Interaction Theory. It emphasises that awareness and understanding of paternity leave are shaped through communication within the social context of the workplace. The findings can inform policies and programmes that promote effective communication and support among fathers, families, and workplaces.

Using feminist perspectives, the study drew attention to power relations and gender roles in society and how they affect fathers' utilisation of paternity leave. Quotations like, "*Look, it takes a father, a mother, and father to raise a child. And we are living in the 21st century, where both men and women work...*" highlight power relations and challenge traditional gender roles, aligning with feminist perspectives. The study can inform policies and programmes that promote gender equality by challenging traditional gender roles and promoting equal participation of fathers in family and work life.

Finally, by using phenomenological research design, the study highlights the subjective experiences and perceptions of Black African-employed fathers regarding paternity leave, as expressed in quotations like "*I took two days. Yes. Two days for both of my children.*" This quote, detailing the participant's subjective paternity leave experience, aligns with the phenomenological research design. It emphasises the study's focus on capturing Black African employed fathers' lived experiences and perceptions, contributing to a nuanced understanding of paternity leave within their cultural and social context. This understanding can inform policies and programmes that recognise the cultural and social context of fathers and their families and provide the support that is tailored to their needs.

Overall, the theoretical implications of this study contribute to a better and broader understanding of paternity leave and its role in promoting gender equality and family well-being. The findings can inform policies and programmes that promote effective communication, gender equality, and

cultural sensitivity, and support the utilisation and potential of paternity leave among Black African-employed fathers in Gauteng.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, data analysis from the study reveals several important insights. It is clear that perceptions of paternity leave vary widely, with awareness levels differing among participants. Most participants recognised the benefits of paternity leave are well recognised by most participants. There are also some concerns about potential drawbacks that were highlighted. Challenges in utilising paternity leave included the need for policy amendments and addressing cultural stereotypes.

In addition, the study highlights the importance of paternity leave policies and some participants recommended that a father must support the mother of his child as this can help in dispelling doubts about the paternity of the newborn baby. Moreover, it is evident that the current duration of paternity leave may not be sufficient for many families.

To assist Black African fathers in realising the full potential of paternity leave, changing legislation and providing motivation to fathers to embrace and utilise the leave is essential. Work and home support, as well as respecting family customs and values, were revealed as critical factors. Finally, the study participants expressed the importance of training with regard to paternity leave expectations and education on family planning.

Overall, the chapter has shed light on the multifaceted nature of paternity leave experiences and the potential for policy improvements to better support Black African fathers in their roles as fathers and partners. The following chapter discusses the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and recommendations

6. Introduction

Following a detailed analysis and discussion of findings in the previous chapter, this chapter concludes the research by outlining a summary of key findings from the research, discussing the study's limitations, and giving recommendations drawn from the study's analysis. Recommendations are classified according to policy level, programme level, social support level, further research level, and individual level, respectively. The chapter briefly reflects on the study and concludes by calling for legislative and cultural changes to support paternity leave in SA, including extending leave entitlements and creating a culture of shared parenting.

6.1 Summary of key findings

Based on the analyses of responses that emerged from the questions participants in the study responded to, the following is a summarised breakdown of the key findings derived from the data. The study's analyses yielded a comprehensive breakdown of key findings collected from participants' responses, encompassing diverse facets related to paternity leave among Black African-employed fathers. Perceptions regarding paternity leave revealed limited awareness and knowledge about the leave among the fathers. In their responses, they acknowledged its benefits, such as emotional bonding and practical assistance the father can give to the child's mother and highlighted the challenges like productivity loss, emotional strain, and leave misuse.

Workplace culture and policies, including insufficient information dissemination by employers and the necessity for policy amendments, emerged as critical issues. Challenges hindering paternity leave utilisation comprised misuse of the leave, inadequate duration, lack of employer-provided information, and emotional hurdles like sleepless nights. Aligning policy aims with fathers' experiences underscored the importance of embracing fatherhood seriously, supporting mothers, and advocating for longer leave durations.

Strategies to enhance paternity leave usage involved challenging cultural stereotypes, fostering personal motivation, providing training during leave, and assuming responsibility in fatherhood.

Insights revealed reasons for applying for leave, including legislative changes and family responsibilities, emphasising its significance in ensuring that responsibilities are shared equally, bonding, and adapting to new family dynamics. The benefits of taking paternity leave include emotional bonding and stress reduction, alongside practical advantages such as household assistance and meeting family needs.

Additionally, the study captured perspectives on the purposes of leave, shared responsibility, and family bonding. It highlighted necessary support encompassing both work and home while recognising the importance of family customs. Furthermore, participants expressed gratitude for participating in the paternity leave research and articulated a desire for increased education on family planning, underscoring the multifaceted nature of perspectives among BAEF concerning paternity leave.

Overall, these findings highlight the need for increased awareness, policy amendments, cultural shifts, and better support structures to optimise the utilisation and benefits of paternity leave among Black African-employed fathers in Gauteng.

6.2 Limitations of the study

In the pursuit of a comprehensive exploration of the understanding and utilisation of paternity leave among Black African-employed fathers in Gauteng, the research journey encountered challenges that could have implications for the study's scope and depth. These challenges, explained in this section, include difficulties encountered while attempting to do a pilot study, recruiting participants, and potential biases in participant responses. It is important to note that while these challenges posed inherent limitations to the study, they also provide valuable insights into the complexities of researching a topic that involves personal experiences and societal dynamics. Further explanation of these challenges and their impact on the research process will be explored in the subsequent section 6.4 "Researcher's Personal Reflection on the study."

The first unanticipated challenge was that the researcher hoped to do a pilot study with at least two fathers the researcher knew fit the inclusion criteria. However, this did not materialise as the fathers ended up not participating in the study even after numerous requests by the researcher for them to participate. It is unclear why this happened although the assumption is that the participants may have felt uncomfortable sharing their experiences with the researcher they know. However, the researcher kept the invitation to participate open.

Another challenge, which may be related to the first, was getting participants for the study. Although the researcher hoped to interview more participants, only six participants responded to the call to participate. It is unclear why only this number responded, even though the participation call was widely distributed. Irrespective of the low number of respondents, the researcher was satisfied with the data collected from the participants, as similar or related responses were coming from the participants, reaching a saturation point. Mwita (2022: 415) says data saturation is reached when the researcher is beginning to get the same information from participants.

Another limitation was that participants may have given socially desirable answers to the researcher, that is, answers they believed would please the researcher or not make them look bad. To minimise this, the researcher probed further and asked similar questions in different ways during the interviews to ensure that the responses were consistent and reflected what the participants felt and experienced.

6.3 Study recommendations

The pursuit of equitable and supportive environments for Black African-employed fathers in accessing and embracing paternity leave demands a multifaceted approach. The researcher's recommendations span various levels, recognising the need for policy reform, programme implementation, societal support, individual empowerment, and avenues for further exploration. By addressing these critical facets, an inclusive landscape where fathers are empowered to participate fully in their children's lives without compromising their professional or personal well-being can be realised.

6.3.1 Policy level

At the policy level, targeted information campaigns tailored for Black African-employed fathers can enhance their understanding of paternity leave. Amendments to existing policies, such as extending the duration of paternity leave, can be an essential step in accommodating family needs. The provision of paid paternity leave is essential to alleviate financial burdens, contributing to a more equitable and supportive work environment. Furthermore, challenging gender norms and expectations through educational campaigns can foster an atmosphere of gender equality.

6.3.2 Programme level

Initiatives at the programme level include providing resources and training to employers, enabling the effective implementation of paternity leave policies. Ensuring clear and comprehensive information dissemination to employees is crucial for informed decision-making. Addressing potential loss of productivity through support mechanisms, such as flexible work arrangements, can further incentivise fathers to avail themselves for paternity leave.

6.3.3 Social support level

At a social support level, confronting cultural stereotypes and normalising and encouraging paternity leave use despite cultural expectations is imperative. Promoting emotional well-being by allowing fathers to be present during early stages of children's lives can significantly impact their mental health. Providing training and orientation programmes can enhance fathers' confidence in caregiving roles.

6.3.4 Further research level

In terms of further research, expanding the sample size to ensure more representative findings is essential. Exploring the workplace impact of paternity leave policies and identifying best practices across different organisations can contribute to evidence-based policy development. Considering cultural and societal factors that influence taking paternity leave will provide a nuanced understanding of the dynamics involved.

6.3.5 Individual level

On the individual level, emphasising personal responsibility and encouraging a moral obligation to be present in a child's life is crucial. Suggestions for longer paternity leave durations to enhance family support should be considered. Recognising and respecting family customs and values, coupled with workshops and education on the effective use of paternity leave, are essential components. Offering flexible work schedules, emotional support, and ensuring gender equality through equal opportunities for both parents contribute to fostering a supportive environment. Recognising and appreciating fathers' willingness to participate in research not only boosts the credibility and standing of the research itself but also motivates other fathers to engage in similar studies in the future. Expanding the scope to family planning education addresses concerns related to financial responsibilities. Clear communication on the benefits of the ten-day paternity leave, exploring its origins, differentiating parental and paternity leave, and conducting follow-ups with participants for continuous improvement are critical components of an effective strategy.

Overall, these recommendations underscore the importance of a holistic approach towards reshaping the landscape of paternity leave. By advocating for policy revisions, empowering programmes, societal shifts, individual empowerment, and continued research, we can cultivate an environment where paternity leave is not merely a provision but a celebrated and integral part of work, family, and societal well-being. When undertaken collectively, these recommendations can herald a new era of equality, support, and fulfillment for Black African-employed fathers and their families.

6.4 Researcher's reflection on the study

The study presented a very interesting, yet challenging experience for the researcher. In reflecting on the exploratory study on how Black African fathers understand and utilise paternity leave in Gauteng, SA, several key aspects came to the fore, encompassing the researcher's positionality as a female studying male participants, the methodology employed, the identified limitations, and the collected results.

As a female researcher who explored the intricacies of paternity leave among Black African fathers, I acknowledge the unique lens through which I viewed this topic. My gender and background as a woman might have influenced my interactions with male participants and shaped my interpretation of their experiences. Despite not sharing the same gender identity as my participants, I strove to approach this study with sensitivity and an open mind, ensuring that their voices and perspectives were accurately represented.

My interest in labor policy and the coincidental focus on paternity leave led me to this research gap. While my positionality could have introduced certain biases, I was committed to reflexivity, constantly examining how my identity impacted the research process. I aimed to mitigate any potential biases through transparent methodological choices and by fostering an environment where participants felt comfortable sharing their honest experiences.

I reflected on how my positionality as a woman might have influenced the research findings, particularly through this exploration of understanding how Black African fathers perceived and utilised paternity leave, I hoped to contribute meaningfully to the discourse on paternity leave policies and their impact on the workplace and families.

The choice of an exploratory study design proved instrumental in delving into the nuanced perceptions and practices surrounding paternity leave among Black African fathers, considering the limited studies on this topic. Utilising qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews allowed for a rich exploration of individual experiences, beliefs, and challenges. The open-ended nature of the questions facilitated a deeper understanding of the social and cultural contexts that influence the utilisation of paternity leave.

Despite the valuable insights gained, the study has its limitations. The sample size, while sufficient for an exploratory study, may not capture the diversity of experiences among Black African fathers comprehensively. Additionally, the focus on Gauteng may limit the generalisability of findings to other regions in SA that have distinct cultural traits. Moreover, the nature of qualitative research also introduces the possibility of subjectivity in data interpretation. The researcher made efforts to mitigate this by employing rigorous analysis techniques, incorporating multiple perspectives, and seeking feedback from colleagues or experts in the field.

The study revealed a multifaceted landscape of understanding and utilisation of paternity leave among Black African fathers in Gauteng. Various factors, including cultural norms, workplace policies, and personal motivations, were identified as influential in shaping individuals' decisions to take paternity leave.

Notably, the results underscored the importance of tailoring policies and support mechanisms to the specific needs and challenges Black African fathers face. The findings provide a foundation for further research and offer insights that can inform workplace policies, societal perceptions, and advocacy initiatives aimed at promoting a more inclusive and supportive environment for fathers.

In conclusion, the researcher's reflection on the study emphasises the significance of the exploratory approach in uncovering the complexity of Black African fathers' engagement with paternity leave. Acknowledging the limitations and staying attuned to the dynamic interplay of cultural, social, and individual factors is imperative in refining future research and fostering a more comprehensive understanding of this critical aspect of family-work dynamics in SA.

6.5 Conclusion

Overall, this study can contribute to our understanding of how paternity leave is perceived and experienced by Black African-employed fathers in Gauteng, and how it can be used to promote

gender equality, social justice, and child development. These recommendations could be helpful for policymakers, employers, and other stakeholders interested in promoting paternity leave and supporting fathers' involvement in childcare. The study concludes by calling for legislative and cultural changes to support paternity leave in SA, including extending leave entitlements and creating a culture of shared parenting.

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Annexures

Annexure 1: Amanda Diphoko-Phetla - Ethics certificate



COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

29 October 2021

Dear Mrs. Amanda Diphoko-Phetla

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 29 October
2021 to 29 October 2024

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # :
56674198_CREC_CHS_2021

Researcher(s): Name: Mrs. Amanda Diphoko-Phetla
Contact details: 56674198@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s): Name: Mr. L. Roets
Contact details: carnefr@unisa.ac.za

Title: An exploratory study on how Black African fathers understand and use paternity leave in Gauteng, South Africa.

Degree Purpose: MA

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The *low risk application* was reviewed by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the



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PERMISSION LETTER

Dear, potential partner: Fathers in Africa,

I, the undersigned, request for permission to conduct research in partnership with your organization on a research study titled:

An exploratory study on how Black African fathers understand and use paternity leave in Gauteng, South Africa.

This letter serves as a request for your organization to partner with and assist me in securing participants to participate in the abovenamed research study:

I am a Master's (MA) student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the *COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES*, Unisa. Reference no's: **NHREC Registration #: Rec-240816-062 CREC Reference #: 56674198_CREC_CHS_2021**. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

Please note your involvement in this study only requires you to refer me to participants that fit the inclusion criteria for the study, i.e., Black African, first time and already fathers who are married or living together. The fathers must be employed in any organization/company in Gauteng and have taken paternity leave. The sample size of participants is 14 participants. Your consent for referral in the study is voluntary and there is no reward for consent or penalty for non-consent.

Note that this study is independent of you as an organization and any information you will provide will not be shared with anyone.

All data collected through the interviews with the participants will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. Your organization will be kept anonymous (if you wish so), and all transcript and reports will be appropriately coded to ensure that anonymity is fully respected. You will also be provided with the research report if requested.

The results of the research will be submitted as part of the requirement for a master's Dissertation to obtain a Master's Degree in Sociology.



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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Ethics clearance reference number: 56674198_CREC_CHS_2021

Research permission reference number (if applicable):

Title: An exploratory study on how Black African fathers understand and use paternity leave in Gauteng, South Africa.

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Amanda Diphoko-Phetla and I am doing research with Mr. Leon Roets, supervisor of studies in the Department of Sociology, in partnership with Fathers in Africa, towards a MA (Sociology), at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: **An exploratory study on how Black African fathers understand and use paternity leave in Gauteng, South Africa.**

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

I am conducting this research to explore the perceptions of Black African employed fathers about their understanding of the purpose of paternity leave and how it can be utilised.

This study is expected to collect important information that could assist policy makers, employers, and society with reforms around legislation that govern family and employment relations.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

Please note your involvement in this study only requires you to fit the inclusion criteria for the study, i.e., Black African, first time and already fathers who are married or living together. The fathers must be employed in any organization/company in Gauteng and have taken paternity



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Annexure 4: Participants invite flyer

We are conducting : An exploratory study on how Black African fathers understand and use paternity leave in Gauteng, South Africa.. This research is designed to better understand the experiences of men towards paternity and paternity rights.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- Black African, first time and already fathers who are married or living together.
- The fathers must be employed in any organization/company in Gauteng and have taken paternity leave.



INTERESTED?
[Please click here to register](#) for details of the study and book an online interview appointment.

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY.

Researcher: Ms. Amanda Diphoko-Phetla
MA Student (UNISA)

Contact email: 56674198@mvlife.unisa.ac.za

Ethics clearance reference:
56674198_CREC_CHS_2021

FATHERS IN AFRICA  **UNISA** 

Annexure 5: Study Participants Online Consent (Responses)

Timestamp	Name	Surname	Email
2/7/2022 14:00:47	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
3/31/2022 14:22:43	Wayne David	Ngweni	ngwenid@unisa.ac.za
6/15/2022 12:06:23	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
7/8/2022 14:37:34	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
7/11/2022 11:50:33	MABELA	SHONGO	[REDACTED]
7/28/2022 16:10:59	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
