

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA



**EXPLORING PARENTING BEHAVIOURS AMONG TEENAGE FATHERS IN GHANA
(GREATER ACCRA REGION)**

BY

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed solely by me, under the joint supervision of Prof. Joseph Osafo and Prof Emmanuel Nii-Boye Quashie of the Department of Psychology, University of Ghana, Legon. All references have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that this thesis has neither been published nor presented to any academic institution for an academic award.

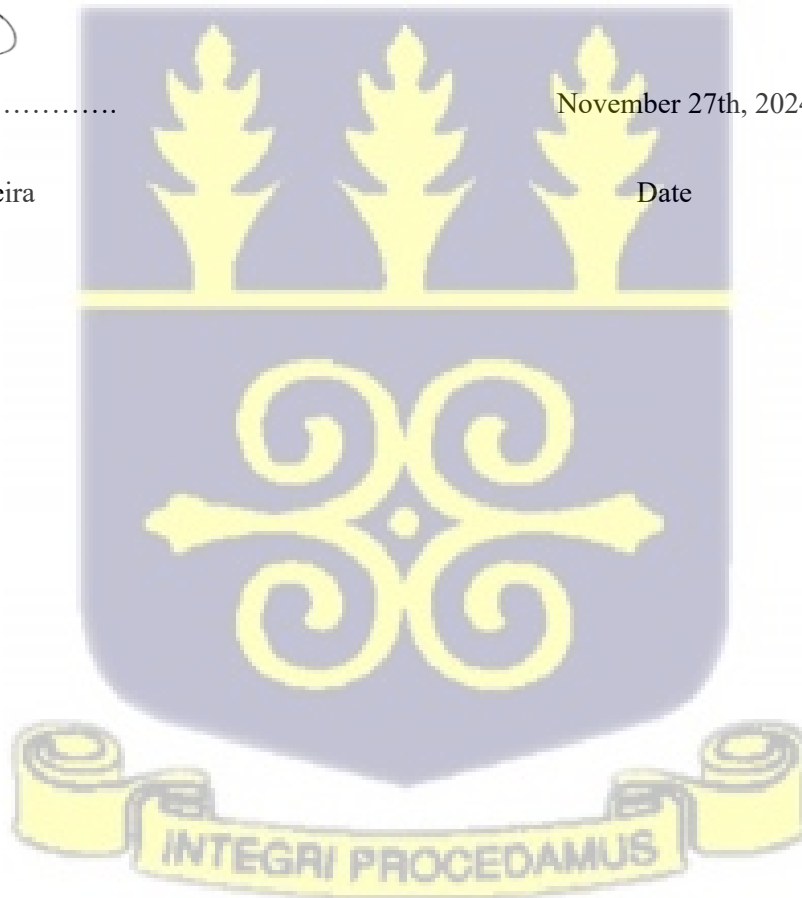


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CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this long essay was supervised in agreement with the procedural requirement set by the University of Ghana.



Prof. Joseph Osafo

November 27th, 2024

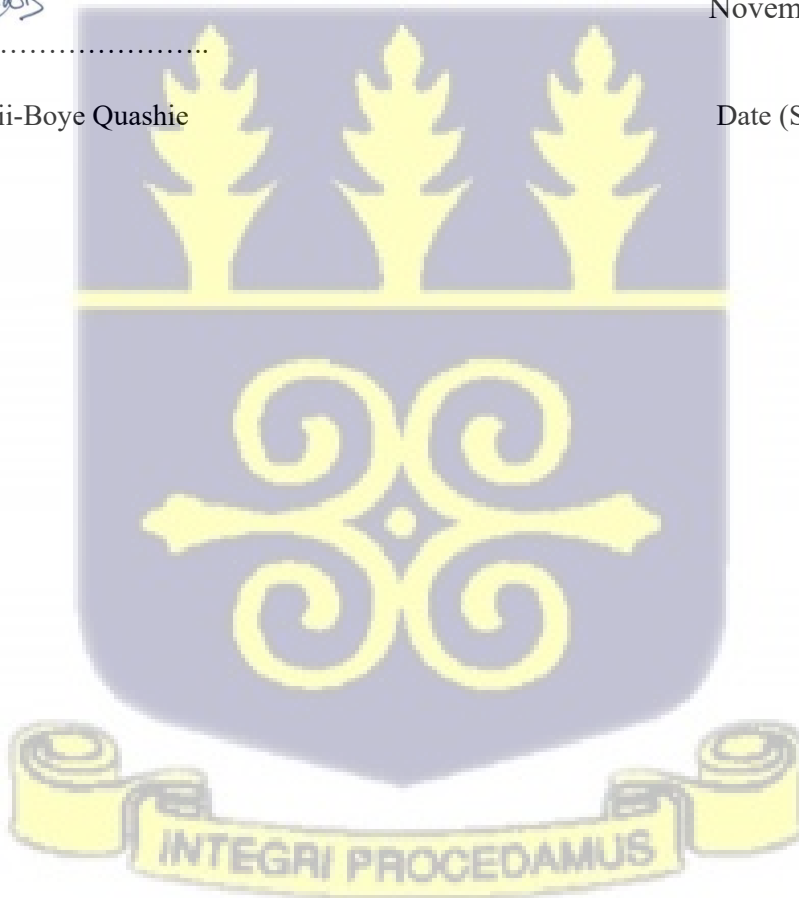
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty for His love and grace throughout my studies and the research process. I also dedicate this work to my husband Kwame Agyapong, my child; Kwabena Aboagye, to my siblings Emerald and Aniel finally my mother Ivy Florence for her encouragement.



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore parenting behaviours and experiences of teenage fathers in Ghana. The study used an Interpretative Phenomenological Approach of qualitative research design to capture the parenting behaviours and experiences of teenage fathers through semi-structured interviews. The study's population includes teenage fathers between 17 and 19 years living in Ghana. Purposive sampling was used to collect data from 10 participants, chosen based on the study's inclusion criteria. A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data on parenting behaviours and skills, cultural and socioeconomic barriers, relationships teenage fathers have with their children and partners, peer pressure, and other factors influencing their parenting behaviours. The study's data was analysed using an Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) to identify recurring patterns and themes. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were followed during data collection and analysis, ensuring the protection of participants' rights. The study identified 7 major themes and 18 sub-themes. The study's Themes include engaging in parenting behaviours and responsibilities, challenges with parenting such as work stress and financial constraints, the need for support such as parenting workshops and employment opportunities, and the need for emotional support and counselling. They also face challenges involving combining work with the upbringing of their children and financial instability. Recommendations of the study are that practitioners who work with teenage fathers, such as social workers and healthcare workers, should take into consideration the socio-economic background of these teenage fathers when working with them. In addition, policies aimed at supporting teenage fathers should focus on finding solutions tailored to the needs of the teenage fathers.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Parenting is a crucial aspect of child development that involves a range of responsibilities and skills essential for a child's growth and well-being (Wijaya, 2024). Among the key aspects of parenting is parenting behaviour, which refers to the specific actions, attitudes, and emotional expressions that parents use in raising their children (Ceulemans 2019; Li et al., 2024; Vasiou et al., 2023). Understanding parenting behaviours is important to know how parents including adolescent fathers, engage with their children and respond to the demands of parenthood.

While parenting is challenging for adults of any age, the transition to parenthood during the teenage years presents unique complexities (Gbogbo, 2021). Globally, researchers have highlighted that adolescent parenthood often represents a challenging and, at times, traumatic experience, introducing profound changes during a critical developmental stage (Campbell & Hart, 2019; Gbogbo, 2021). In Ghana, approximately 14% of adolescents aged 15–19 experience early parenting, reflecting a significant public health and social issue (Ghana Statistical Service & Ghana Health Service, 2018). The high prevalence of teenage parenting has far-reaching consequences, including increased school dropout rates, reduced literacy levels, and subsequent negative impacts on economic stability (Gbogbo, 2021). Particularly, for teenage fathers, however, the complexities of parenting are intensified by their youth, limited life experience, and a host of socio-economic and emotional challenges (Campbell & Hart, 2019).

Evidence from multiple contexts shows that teenage fathers often enter parenthood with apprehension, anxiety, and self-doubt, reflecting a lack of preparedness for the physical, emotional, and financial demands of raising a child (Corrêa et al., 2016; Tuffin et al., 2018). In developing countries, teenage fatherhood is associated with challenges such as poverty, limited education, and adverse health outcomes for both fathers and their children, highlighting the need for greater research attention (Terefe et al., 2024). In sub-Saharan Africa, adolescent fatherhood is intertwined with cultural and socio-economic factors (Madiba & Nsiki, 2017). Cultural expectations often emphasise financial provision as the primary role of fathers, which can undermine the importance of emotional and practical involvement in parenting. Teenage fathers may feel pressured to prioritise work and financial responsibilities over engaging in nurturing activities, further limiting their ability to provide adequate parenting (Cariño, 2023). These societal expectations can contribute to a parenting approach focusing more on economic support than emotional involvement (Cariño, 2023).

Studies in countries such as South Africa and Zimbabwe have documented how teenage fathers navigate their new roles amidst financial constraints, societal stigma, and limited access to education (Madiba & Nsiki, 2017; Bhatasara et al., 2013). Despite these challenges, many young fathers demonstrate resilience, drawing on familial support and their own determination to fulfill their roles (Sriyasak et al., 2018). These fathers often navigate their new roles by seeking assistance from parents or extended family in childcare, guidance from older male relatives, emotional support from partners, and encouragement from close friends. Others adjust their educational and work priorities, and gradually redefine their identity as providers and caregivers (Sriyasak et al.,

2018). However, the prospect of fatherhood can also serve as a transformative experience, motivating adolescent fathers to improve their lives and embrace their responsibilities (Eskandari et al., 2016; Uengwongsapat et al., 2018). For instance, some adolescent fathers report a heightened sense of self-worth and personal growth as they strive to provide love and care for their children (Tuffin et al., 2018).

In Ghana, these broader continental patterns intersect with specific local dynamics, particularly in the Greater Accra Region. As the country's most urbanised and densely populated area, Greater Accra presents young fathers with a combination of economic challenges such as unemployment, low income, and inadequate housing and a culturally diverse social environment (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). In many communities in the Ghanaian context, people believe that a father's main role is to provide money, while mothers are expected to take care of the children and give emotional support (Oppong & Agyei-Mensah, 2020). Because of this belief, teenage fathers often feel pressured to act like grown men and take financial responsibility, even when they are not ready. This can lead to fathers being absent or only involved in terms of money (Prah, 2016). Also, society expects men not to show weakness, so young fathers may avoid talking about their struggles or asking for help, which makes them feel more alone. In some religious and traditional communities, people look down on teenage fathers, seeing them as irresponsible or morally weak (Osei, 2020). All these cultural and social pressures affect how teenage fathers behave, how involved they are with their children, and how they see themselves as fathers.

Empirical work in Ghana has begun to shed light on these realities. For example, a study conducted specifically in the Hohoe Municipality, revealed that transitioning into early parenthood

significantly shaped the identities and coping mechanisms of adolescent parents (Gbogbo, 2021). Teenage parents emphasized the importance of familial and community support from extended family members and close friends in alleviating stress and fostering self-confidence (Gbogbo, 2021). The absence of supportive social structures and community resources makes it challenging for teenage fathers to balance parenting with other life responsibilities, such as completing their education or finding stable employment. The lack of a positive role model or guidance can further compound these difficulties, making it harder for teenage fathers to navigate the complexities of parenthood (Cariño, 2023). However, it is important to note that the study by Gbogbo (2021) was not exclusive to teenage fathers, as it included both teenage mothers and fathers. As such, there is a need for a more narrow study that specifically examines the parenting behaviours, challenges, and influences on teenage fathers, which is the primary aim of the current research.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Parenting behaviours, broadly defined, encompass a range of attitudes, emotions, and actions that parents use to raise their children (Vasiou et al., 2023). Teenage parenthood presents a unique set of challenges that can significantly shape how these behaviours manifest (Gbogbo, 2021). In Ghana, the phenomenon of teenage fatherhood remains substantially under-researched, with most studies focusing on teenage mothers. This creates a specific knowledge gap: lack of empirical evidence on the parenting practices, influencing factors, and support needs of teenage fathers in Greater Accra, despite their potential long-term implications for child development and family stability. (Madiba & Nsiki, 2017; Gbogbo, 2021). National data underscore the local relevance of this gap. In Ghana, approximately 14% of adolescents aged 15–19 are already parents (Ghana Statistical Service & Ghana Health Service, 2018), but statistics specific to adolescent fathers are

scarce. In Greater Accra, the most urbanised and densely populated region, youth unemployment stands at 32.8% and housing costs are among the highest nationally (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021), creating an environment where young fathers face acute socio-economic pressures.

Societal expectations rooted in patriarchal norms place a disproportionate burden on teenage fathers to perform the role of sole financial providers (Amoo et al., 2018; Pankhurst, 2020). This role pressure, coupled with low educational attainment and limited employment prospects (Bamishigbin et al., 2019), constrains their ability to be emotionally present and actively engaged in caregiving. The absence of targeted support interventions for adolescent fathers, unlike the more common programmes for adolescent mothers further perpetuates inadequate parenting behaviours, which may lead to inconsistent caregiving and increase developmental risks for children (Uengwongsapat et al., 2018). Systemic socio-economic barriers and cultural role expectations further limit the capacity of teenage fathers to balance financial provision with emotional involvement. This imbalance contributes to parenting behaviours that may undermine children's emotional regulation, social skills, and cognitive development (Wijaya, 2024).

While studies in Ghana have examined adolescent parenthood more generally (Gbogbo, 2021), researchers have not explored how the specific urban, economic, and cultural dynamics of Greater Accra shape the parenting behaviours of adolescent fathers. The core research problem is therefore the lack of empirical evidence on the parenting practices, influencing factors, and support needs of teenage fathers in Greater Accra region. This study therefore seeks to address these gaps by exploring the specific parenting behaviours of teenage fathers in Greater Accra, identifying the

factors that shape their behaviors, and examining the challenges they face, with the aim of informing targeted interventions to improve outcomes for both fathers and their entire family.

1.3. Rationale of the Study

The primary objective of the proposed study is to address the existing gap in research concerning teenage fatherhood in Ghana, with a specific focus on examining the parenting behaviours of teenage fathers in Greater Accra. This research aims to provide a thorough exploration of the challenges and experiences faced by teenage fathers as they navigate their parenting roles. By focusing on this demographic, the study seeks to uncover the factors that either facilitate or impede effective parenting among teenage fathers.

The findings from this study will offer valuable insights into the unique difficulties that teenage fathers encounter, including social, economic, and emotional challenges. Additionally, the research will shed light on the supportive factors that can enhance their parenting effectiveness. Understanding these dynamics will be instrumental in developing targeted interventions and support systems that address the specific needs of teenage fathers and their children in Ghana.

The relevance of this study is particularly pronounced within the Ghanaian context, where teenage fatherhood has not been extensively studied compared to teenage motherhood. By highlighting the experiences and needs of teenage fathers, the study will contribute to the development of culturally appropriate policies and interventions. This is essential for ensuring that the support provided to teenage fathers is aligned with their unique socio-cultural and economic circumstances.

Furthermore, the knowledge gained from this study will be crucial for informing policymaking and designing programs that effectively address the needs of teenage fathers. The research outcomes will guide the creation of interventions that are tailored to the specific challenges faced by this group, ultimately contributing to their well-being and the healthy development of their children. By filling this research gap, the study will provide a foundation for future research and policy efforts aimed at supporting teenage fathers in Ghana.

1.4. Aims and Objectives

The overarching aim of this study is to examine parenting behaviours among teenage fathers in Greater Accra in Ghana. This would be accomplished by accomplishing certain key objectives.

These objectives include:

1. To identify and describe the parenting behaviours exhibited by teenage fathers.
2. To examine the structural and contextual factors influencing parenting behaviours among teenage fathers, including socio-cultural norms, economic conditions, family support systems, and peer influences.
3. To explore lived experiences and the challenges faced by teenage fathers in fulfilling their parenting roles.

1.5. Research Questions

1. What parenting behaviors do teenage fathers exhibit in their interactions with their children?
2. How do cultural, socio-economic factors, family support, and peer pressure influence the parenting behaviors of teenage fathers?

3. What are the lived experiences and challenges faced by teenage fathers as they navigate their parenting roles?

1.6. Relevance of the Study

The study examining parenting behaviours among teenage fathers in Greater Accra, Ghana, represents a pivotal advancement in understanding adolescent fatherhood. Its implications span several important domains, including research, policy development, and practical application.

To start, this research will significantly enhance our understanding of the specific challenges that teenage fathers face in their roles as parents. By exploring how these young men navigate their responsibilities, the study will shed light on the various obstacles and strategies they employ. Given the relative lack of comprehensive research on teenage fatherhood in Ghana, this deeper insight is crucial. The findings will offer a more detailed picture of the experiences of adolescent fathers in Greater Accra, addressing gaps in the literature and highlighting the unique socio-cultural and economic factors that influence their parenting practices.

In addition, the study's findings will have significant implications for policy development in child and adolescent health and social welfare. The evidence gathered will inform the creation of targeted policies and programs designed to address the specific needs of teenage fathers. Effective policy interventions could include tailored support services, educational programs, and financial assistance to improve the well-being of both adolescent fathers and their children. By addressing the identified challenges, such policies could contribute to a more supportive environment for teenage fathers, fostering their ability to full fill their parenting roles effectively and enhancing their overall quality of life.

Furthermore, this study will provide valuable insights for practitioners such as social workers, community leaders, and educators who are directly involved with teenage fathers and their families. By understanding the unique difficulties faced by adolescent fathers, these professionals can develop and implement more nuanced and effective support strategies. This might involve creating educational initiatives on child development, offering guidance on positive communication and parenting skills, and providing emotional and practical support to help teenage fathers overcome their specific challenges. The knowledge gained from this research will enable practitioners to address teenage fathers' needs better and improve the available resources.

Finally, the study will be crucial in advancing future research on teenage fatherhood. This study will serve as a foundational reference for subsequent research efforts by filling a significant gap in the current literature. Future studies can build on these findings to explore additional aspects of teenage fatherhood, such as the long-term effects on child development, the impact of different support systems, and comparative studies between various regions or demographic groups. This research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of teenage fatherhood and inform strategies to support these young fathers effectively.

1.7 Scope and Organization of the Study

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the parenting behaviours of teenage fathers in Greater Accra, Ghana, using in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method. Participants will be selected through purposive sampling, ensuring that those with relevant experiences and insights into teenage fatherhood are included. The data will be analyzed using an

Interpretative Phenomenological Approach, which will allow for the identification and examination of recurring themes and patterns, offering a nuanced understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by teenage fathers.

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction to the study, outlining the background, research objectives, and the significance of exploring the parenting behaviours of teenage fathers in Greater Accra. Chapter two presents a comprehensive review of relevant literature and theories, examining existing research on teenage fatherhood, including the challenges, support systems, and socio-cultural factors that influence their parenting behaviours. Chapter three details the research methodology used in carrying out the research. Chapter four presents the findings from the interviews, analyzing the data to identify key themes and patterns related to the experiences and challenges of teenage fathers in the region. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings, integrating them with the existing literature to highlight key insights and implications. It concludes with a summary of the main findings, followed by recommendations for policy, practice, and further research aimed at supporting teenage fathers in their parenting roles.

1.8. Operational Definition of Terms

The following operational definitions were used in the context of this study.

Parenting behaviours: The observable actions, attitudes, and beliefs of fathers and mothers about the care, upbringing, and socialisation of their children (Vasiou et al., 2023).

Teenage fathers: Male individuals aged 13 to 19 years who have fathered a child in Greater Accra.

Communication and discipline: The strategies and techniques fathers and mothers use to interact with their children, including verbal or physical punishment and praise or reward systems.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the literature related to the study's topic. It aims to establish the study's theoretical foundation, review related studies and theoretical issues, explain the rationale behind the study, and define key terms used in the study.

2.1. Theoretical framework

Studying parenting behaviours among teenage fathers is a complex issue that demands a theoretical framework to guide research and understanding. Three theoretical frameworks, namely; social exchange theory, family systems theory and hegemonic masculinity theory have been identified as relevant in understanding parenting behaviours among teenage fathers in Greater Accra in Ghana. This section will discuss the three theories and their applicability in understanding the issues related to parenting behaviours among teenage fathers.

2.1.1 Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET), pioneered by George Homans and Peter Blau, offers a valuable framework for analysing how individuals make decisions based on the perceived rewards and costs associated with their interactions. This theoretical approach is instrumental in understanding the dynamics of teenage fatherhood, as it provides insights into how young fathers assess their roles and responsibilities through a cost-benefit analysis (Homans, 1974; Blau, 2017). SET posits that individuals engage in social interactions and relationships by evaluating the potential rewards and costs involved. Rewards, which can include emotional satisfaction, social recognition, and personal fulfillment, are weighed against the costs such as financial strain, time commitments, and

emotional labour (Cook et al., 2013). This evaluation process influences their decisions and behaviors, guiding their choices and level of engagement in various roles (Emerson, 1976).

For teenage fathers, social exchange theory serves as a valuable lens through which they can understand how they navigate the complexities of parenting. These young fathers often weigh the rewards of bonding with their children, experiencing the joy of fatherhood, and receiving social recognition against the substantial costs such as financial pressures, limited time, and social stigma (Gordon et al., 2013). Their involvement in parenting is primarily determined by the perceive the rewards as outweighing the costs (Emerson, 1976). Teenage fathers' perceptions of their parenting roles are shaped by their past experiences and societal expectations. If their actual experiences align with or exceed their initial expectations, they will likely remain committed and actively involved in parenting (Cook et al., 2013). Conversely, if the perceived costs of parenting, such as financial difficulties or social disapproval, are more significant than anticipated, it might lead to reduced involvement or disengagement.

Moreover, teenage fathers often consider other avenues for personal growth, such as pursuing higher education or advancing their careers. If they perceive that these alternatives offer greater rewards or lower costs than parenting, their commitment to fatherhood might be affected (Blau, 2017). For instance, the opportunity to gain a higher education or secure a stable job may be viewed as more rewarding or less costly in the long run, potentially influencing their level of involvement in their child's life. The concept of fairness is also significant in the application of SET to teenage fatherhood. Teenage fathers assess whether they share parenting responsibilities with their partners or peers equitably. Perceived inequities, such as unequal parenting duties or lack of support, can

impact their engagement and satisfaction with their parenting role (Walster et al., 1978). If they feel that the distribution of responsibilities is unfair or that their efforts must be adequately recognised, their commitment and involvement may be affected. Support systems play a crucial role in modifying the cost-benefit balance for teenage fathers. Programs that provide financial aid, parenting education, and social support can help reduce the perceived costs associated with parenting and enhance the rewards. By addressing financial challenges, offering educational resources, and fostering a supportive environment, these systems can encourage greater involvement and commitment from teenage fathers (Cook et al., 2013).

However, while SET provides useful insights into the cost-benefit decisions influencing parenting behaviours, it tends to frame parenting primarily as a rational, transactional process. This may oversimplify the deeply emotional, cultural, and identity-based aspects of fatherhood, especially in non-Western contexts like Ghana. SET does not fully capture the influence of societal expectations, cultural norms, and structural inequalities that limit the options available to teenage fathers, regardless of perceived benefits. In the context of this study, which seeks to explore the factors shaping parenting behaviours and the challenges experienced by teenage fathers SET may fall short in explaining how deeply embedded cultural beliefs and systemic barriers constrain their choices.

2.1.2 Family Systems Theory

Family Systems Theory, developed by Murray Bowen in the mid-20th century, offers a profound lens through which to understand the intricate dynamics of familial relationships. This theory fundamentally shifts our perspective from viewing individuals in isolation to considering them

within the context of their entire family system. According to Bowen (1978), individuals cannot be fully understood without acknowledging their interconnectedness with family members, as each person's behaviour, emotions, and psychological states are deeply intertwined with the family's overall functioning.

At the heart of Family Systems Theory is the concept of the family as a complex, interconnected system rather than a mere collection of individuals. Each member's actions and emotions are not isolated; instead, they influence and are influenced by others within the system (Nichols & Schwartz, 2021). This interconnectedness means that any change in one member's behaviour can lead to changes in the behaviours of other family members. For example, a significant shift in one member's emotional state, such as the onset of depression, can ripple through the family, altering roles, communication patterns, and overall dynamics (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2013).

Families also strive for equilibrium or homeostasis, maintaining balance through established patterns of behaviour and communication (Minuchin & Fishman, 1981). When disruptions occur, such as a significant life event or conflict, families often attempt to restore balance by reverting to old patterns or adapting new ones. This constant search for equilibrium helps families manage stress and maintain stability, even facing challenges (Bowen, 1978). Integral to the theory is that each family member occupies specific roles and adheres to implicit or explicit rules governing interactions. These regulations and roles contribute significantly to how the family system functions (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Petry, 2008). For instance, one member might assume a caregiving role, while another might adopt a more passive stance. These established roles and rules

influence how members relate to one another and handle stress, shaping the overall family dynamic (Minuchin & Fishman, 1981).

Family Systems Theory also emphasises circular causality, highlighting the reciprocal nature of family interactions (Bertalanffy, 1968). Unlike linear causality, which suggests a direct cause-and-effect relationship, circular causality focuses on how behaviours are mutually reinforcing. For example, a child's misbehaviour might lead to parental frustration, which, in turn, exacerbates the child's behaviour. This circular pattern underscores the complexity of family interactions, where behaviours perpetuate and influence each other. Family Systems Theory provides a framework for understanding and addressing family dynamics in therapeutic settings. Therapists who employ this approach focus on the family rather than isolating individual issues (Nichols & Schwartz, 2021). Techniques such as constructing genograms—a visual representation of family relationships and history—help therapists and clients identify behaviour patterns, emotional connections, and intergenerational influences (McGoldrick et al., 2008). By analyzing these patterns, therapists can uncover underlying issues and work towards resolving those (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2013).

Family Systems Theory offers invaluable insights into the complexities of family dynamics and interpersonal relationships. It underscores the importance of considering the family context when addressing individual issues, recognising that problems are often rooted in broader relational patterns (Bowen, 1978). This perspective enhances our understanding of family dynamics and informs more effective therapeutic interventions, promoting healthier and more balanced relationships. When there is a supportive and communicative relationship with their partner, teenage fathers are more likely to engage in positive parenting behaviours (Efron, 2011)

Applying insights from the family systems theory highlights the significance of addressing systemic issues rather than solely focusing on personal behaviour, offering a holistic approach to fostering healthier family relationships (Minuchin & Fishman, 1981).

A critical appraisal of scholarly insights on the family systems theory reveals some limitations when applied to the specific context of teenage fatherhood in Ghana. The theory presumes a relatively stable family unit where parenting is shared and capable of sustaining interactional patterns over time. This assumption may not hold in the context of the current study. Teenage fathers in the Greater Accra region of Ghana may experience fractured or non-traditional family arrangements, including absence from the child's household, strained relations with the child's mother, or limited support from extended kin networks. This raises critical questions about how effectively the theory captures the lived realities of young fathers navigating parenthood with limited support and disrupted systems.

2.1.3 Hegemonic Masculinity Theory

Hegemonic Masculinity Theory, introduced by R.W. Connell (1995), provides a powerful framework for understanding how societal expectations around masculinity shape the behaviours of men, particularly young fathers. The theory suggests that a culturally dominant form of masculinity, referred to as hegemonic masculinity, is considered the ideal in many societies. This ideal often values traits such as emotional toughness, authority, financial provision, and independence. For teenage fathers in contexts like Ghana, these expectations can influence how they define fatherhood and how they choose to engage in parenting. Connell and Messerschmidt

(2005) later expanded this theory to emphasise how hegemonic masculinity not only reflects dominant gender roles but also maintains power imbalances between men and women. Messerschmidt (2019) argues that this concept remains central to understanding how young men navigate gendered expectations, particularly in settings where masculinity is tied to power and social recognition. In the context of teenage fatherhood these pressures can be particularly intense. Teenage fathers often feel the need to “prove” their manhood by adopting the role of the provider, even when they lack the financial resources or emotional readiness to do so (Dery and Ganle, 2020). Some may avoid caregiving roles altogether, seeing them as unmanly, while others might disengage from parenting due to the fear of appearing weak or dependent (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Bhana and Nkani (2014), in their study on teenage fathers in South Africa, observed similar patterns where young men expressed a genuine desire to care for their children, but cultural pressures and economic hardship reinforced traditional provider roles. These young fathers struggled to balance emotional involvement with the masculine ideal of being financially in control. Moreover, Makusha (2024), in a study among young fathers in South Africa, found that hegemonic masculinity interacts with structural challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and substance abuse, which compound the difficulties teenage fathers face. These young men often internalise societal expectations of dominance and control but are simultaneously disempowered by their environment, leading to a fractured sense of identity and inconsistent parenting involvement. In Ghana, similar tensions exist. Dery and Ganle (2020), in their research on young men in the Northern Region, found that youth are under constant pressure to maintain dominance and fulfil social expectations of masculinity, often resulting in exaggerated behaviours to avoid

being perceived as weak. These social pressures shape not just how young men act in public but also how they perceive their responsibilities in private, including parenting. Dery et al. (2025) further highlight that while many young men do conform to dominant masculine norms, others also challenge and reinterpret these roles. Their study shows that young men are not passive recipients of gender norms but are capable of resisting and reshaping them an insight that is vital for designing interventions that promote gender-equitable fatherhood.

Hegemonic Masculinity Theory is particularly relevant to this study as it directly supports exploring factors influencing parenting behaviours and exploring the challenges teenage fathers experience. Understanding how cultural expectations of masculinity shape fatherhood experiences allows for deeper insight into why some teenage fathers may struggle with emotional involvement, feel disempowered, or disengage entirely. It also highlights the potential for change, as some young men are already beginning to question and redefine what it means to be a father. These findings suggest that promoting gender-equitable attitudes and challenging harmful masculine norms could play a vital role in improving parenting behaviours among teenage fathers in Ghana.

2.2 Understanding the Concept of Parenting Behaviours

Parenting behaviours refer to the specific actions, attitudes, and emotional expressions that parents use while raising their children. These behaviours directly shape a child's development and well-being. According to Vasiou et al. (2023), parenting behaviours include control, maturity demands, clarity of communication, and nurturance. These dimensions reflect how parents guide, communicate with, and emotionally support their children. Kuppens and Ceulemans (2019) explain that parenting behaviours, also known as parenting practices, are observable actions. They

group these practices into two major dimensions: support (warmth) and control, which together form broader parenting styles. Li et al. (2024) adds that parenting style also includes nonverbal behaviours like tone of voice and body posture, and it is shaped by attitudes and beliefs. The main dimensions they highlight are rejection, emotional warmth, and overprotection. In the context of teenage fatherhood, these parenting behaviours often appear in limited or unbalanced ways due to the many challenges young fathers face (Sriyasak et al., 2018). The review of existing scholarly works suggests that parenting behaviours are shaped by personal, cultural, and socio-economic factors (Amoo et al., 2018; Pankhurst, 2020).

2.2 Concept of Teenage Parenthood

Teenage parenthood is a complex social phenomenon with significant implications for both the young parents and their children. The term refers to individuals, typically aged 13 to 19, who become parents during adolescence, a phase of life marked by substantial physical, emotional, and cognitive development (Terefe et al., 2024). The responsibilities of parenthood during this stage can be overwhelming, especially in regions like Ghana and other African countries, where socio-economic and cultural factors often intersect, further complicating the lives of teenage parents (Gbogbo, 2021).

The challenges faced by teenage parents are manifold and often have long-lasting consequences on their personal development and future opportunities. One of the most significant challenges is the disruption of education, as teenage mothers often drop out of school due to pregnancy and childcare responsibilities, which limits their future employment opportunities and perpetuates cycles of poverty (Harden et al., 2009). Financial instability is another major issue, as teenage

parents, particularly unmarried ones, struggle to provide for their children with limited income and support (Hoffman & Maynard, 2008). Additionally, social stigma and discrimination can lead to feelings of shame and isolation, making it more difficult for teenage parents to seek the support they need to navigate the challenges of parenthood (Bellingham-Young & Odejimi, 2016). These social pressures can also affect their mental health, contributing to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Gbogbo, 2021).

Teenage parenthood not only affects the parents but also has significant implications for their children. Research indicates that children born to adolescent parents are at a higher risk of health problems, developmental delays, and behavioral issues due to the limited resources and support available to the parents (Sanders & Turner, 2018). Family dynamics can also be strained, as teenage parents often face conflict between fulfilling their roles as caregivers and managing their own developmental needs (Gbogbo, 2021). While extended families may provide crucial support, this can lead to dependency and further strain family relationships (Bynner & Parsons, 2002). The societal implications of teenage parenthood are profound, particularly in regions with high rates of adolescent pregnancies. The economic impact is considerable, contributing to cycles of poverty and placing additional strain on social services and healthcare systems (Gbogbo, 2021).

2.3 Teenage Fatherhood and Teenage Motherhood

Teenage parenthood is often discussed with a focus on teenage mothers, but it is important to recognize the unique experiences and challenges faced by teenage fathers. Historically, teenage fatherhood has been underexplored, and much of the research on adolescent parenthood has focused on teenage mothers (Gbogbo, 2021). However, understanding the dynamics of teenage

fatherhood is essential, as adolescent fathers face distinct challenges, including the pressures of fulfilling traditional gender roles, financial instability, and strained relationships with their partners.

2.3.1 Teenage Motherhood

Teenage motherhood is often discussed in the context of socio-economic disadvantages and the challenges of balancing motherhood with the demands of education and personal growth. Teenage mothers are often forced to navigate a combination of emotional, social, and financial challenges, which can include social stigma, financial instability, and the disruption of their education (Harden et al., 2009). In many cases, teenage mothers may feel unsupported by their families, which can lead to isolation and depression (Miller, 2002). The societal expectations placed on teenage mothers to fulfill traditional gender roles, such as being the primary caregiver, can further exacerbate these challenges. Moreover, the lack of access to comprehensive sexual education and family planning services in many regions increases the likelihood of teenage pregnancies, contributing to the challenges of teenage motherhood (Kirby, 2007).

2.3.2 Teenage Fatherhood

Teenage fatherhood, while less discussed in the literature, presents a distinct set of challenges for young men. Terefe et al. (2024), citing earlier studies (Amoo, 2012 and Foster 2004) describes adolescent father as a young man under the age of 24 who assumes parental responsibility for a child, regardless of the mother's age. According to Amoo (2012), the term “adolescent father” typically refers to young men who become fathers during their teenage years, often defined as ages 13 to 19. Labeling individuals up to age 23 as adolescents may not be universally accepted, as this

stage is more accurately described as “youth” or “emerging adulthood.” This phase of life is often marked by uncertainty, anxiety, and a sense of unpreparedness, as adolescent fathers are typically not emotionally or financially prepared for the responsibilities of parenthood. Many adolescent fathers experience a sense of devastation upon learning of their impending fatherhood, as they struggle to reconcile their adolescent identity with the role of a parent (Gbogbo, 2021). This emotional reaction is often compounded by the pressures of balancing their role as a father with the pursuit of their own personal goals, such as completing their education and securing stable employment (Madiba & Nsiki, 2017).

Adolescent fathers often experience significant anxiety and stress during their transition into fatherhood, largely due to their lack of preparedness and the societal expectations placed on them (Matlakala et al., 2018). In a study conducted by Jaime et al. (2015), adolescent fathers reported that the birth of their child marked a transformative phase, prompting them to reflect on their own upbringing and strive to be better fathers than their own parents had been. This is particularly true for those whose fathers were absent or uninvolved in their lives, as these young men seek to use their own fatherhood as an opportunity to rectify the mistakes of the past and form stronger bonds with their own children. This finding highlights the potential for positive transformation among adolescent fathers, despite the challenges they face (Jaime et al., 2015).

However, the involvement of adolescent fathers in child-rearing often depends on the relationship they have with the mother of their child. Studies by Lau Clayton (2016) and Bhana & Nkani (2014) suggest that adolescent fathers who maintain a positive relationship with the mother of their child are more likely to be involved in their child’s upbringing. Conversely, when there is discord

between the parents, adolescent fathers may become disengaged, further complicating their role as fathers (Uengwongsapat et al., 2018). The interplay of societal expectations, gender roles, and family dynamics significantly influences the parenting behaviors of adolescent fathers, as they strive to navigate the complexities of their new role.

Adolescent fatherhood is also influenced by patriarchal norms, which often place pressure on men to fulfill the role of provider, even at a young age (Amoo et al., 2018). These gendered expectations shape the behavior of adolescent fathers, often leading to struggles with balancing their roles as fathers and their desire to meet societal expectations of manhood. As Pankhurst (2020) notes, adolescent fatherhood intersects with patriarchal norms, which reinforce traditional gender roles and power dynamics within families. Understanding these influences is crucial for addressing the challenges faced by adolescent fathers and supporting them in fulfilling their fatherly responsibilities.

2.4 Parenting Behaviors among Teenage Fathers

Teenage fatherhood, an often-overlooked aspect of adolescent life, presents a variety of challenges for young men. One of the most consistent findings in the literature is that teenage fathers often prioritize their role as providers. They feel an intense responsibility to earn income to support their child, which can sometimes be their main focus (Sriyasak et al., 2018). This financial pressure can, unfortunately, lead to a lack of involvement in other important aspects of parenting, such as emotional engagement and nurturing care. In many cases, adolescent fathers may feel that their primary duty is to bring in money, leaving them less active in day-to-day caregiving tasks. This behavior often stems from societal expectations of men as primary breadwinners, which places

additional stress on young fathers and limits their ability to engage emotionally with their children (Pankhurst, 2020).

The idea of "being the provider" is deeply rooted in patriarchal norms that emphasize male financial responsibility and neglect the importance of emotional bonding and caregiving. In some societies, men are expected to show their love and care through material support, which might result in a diminished focus on parenting behaviors that require emotional presence and nurturing (Amoo et al., 2018). These traditional gender norms can make it harder for adolescent fathers to develop a well-rounded parenting style that includes both emotional and financial contributions. This gap in emotional involvement can affect the quality of their relationship with their children, as research shows that children benefit greatly from a father's active participation in their emotional and developmental well-being (Tuffin et al., 2018).

Moreover, adolescent fathers often lack the parenting knowledge and skills needed to take care of their children properly. As Fontoura-Matias et al. (2024) found, teenage fathers often do not have enough experience with child-rearing and lack formal education on parenting. They also struggle with managing stress, especially when dealing with challenges like dropping out of school, low income, and limited support. Similarly, Makusha (2024) noted that young fathers in South Africa face serious structural problems such as poverty, low education, and high levels of crime and substance abuse in their communities, which make it harder for them to be involved and responsible parents. Research by Bamishigbin et al. (2019) suggests that the lack of adequate parenting skills is a significant barrier for adolescent fathers in fulfilling their role as caregivers. This knowledge gap further compounds the difficulties they face, as they may struggle to provide

the kind of care that is essential for the child's development. Research in Ghana also supports these findings. Dery and Ganle (2020) showed that young men often feel pressure to act in ways that show strength and dominance in order to gain respect among their peers, which may not align with the caring and nurturing roles expected of fathers. These ideas about what it means to be a man can prevent adolescent fathers from fully embracing their role as caregivers. Dery et al. (2025) further explained that although some young men do challenge traditional gender roles, many still struggle with conflicting ideas about masculinity and fatherhood. Thus, in order to help young fathers become more involved and capable, we need to support them with education, resources, and programs that also challenge harmful gender expectations.

Despite these challenges, some adolescent fathers develop adaptive coping strategies. For instance, they may lean on their family members for support, especially the maternal side of their family, which is often more involved in caregiving (Gbogbo, 2021). Extended family members, such as mothers or grandmothers, often step in to provide emotional and practical support to adolescent fathers. In some cases, adolescent fathers may develop positive relationships with their children over time, particularly if they have a supportive partner or family members who assist them in managing the stresses of fatherhood (Madiba & Nsiki, 2017). This family support system can help mitigate some of the challenges of early parenthood by providing the young father with both emotional and logistical resources.

2.5 Challenges Associated with Teenage Fatherhood

Teenage fathers face numerous challenges, with financial instability being one of the most pressing. Many adolescent fathers struggle to meet the economic demands of parenthood,

particularly as they often lack steady income or sufficient resources (Henry et al., 2020). Despite this, they are under significant pressure to provide for their children, even though they may still be in school or pursuing other forms of training (Madiba & Nsiki, 2017). As a result, many young fathers experience feelings of guilt, anxiety, and inadequacy, particularly when they are unable to fulfill societal expectations of being a provider (Bhana and Nkani; 2014 and Makusha, 2024). This financial instability can significantly exacerbate stress and emotional distress, leading some young fathers to prioritize work over emotional involvement with their children (Terefe et al., 2024). The challenge of balancing work, education, and caregiving responsibilities adds another layer of difficulty for teenage fathers. For those still in school, the need to earn an income while meeting the demands of parenthood can feel overwhelming (Madiba & Nsiki, 2017). The financial pressure to support their child may lead them to abandon their education or delay career development, which can further limit their long-term prospects for providing a stable environment for their children (Terefe et al., 2024).

In addition to financial struggles, emotional readiness is a significant hurdle for many adolescent fathers. Adolescence is itself a time of rapid physical, emotional, and psychological change, and the sudden responsibility of fatherhood can place considerable strain on young men who may not yet be fully equipped to handle such a life-altering transition (Terefe et al., 2024). Studies have shown that many adolescent fathers feel unprepared and anxious upon learning that they are going to become parents (Matlakala et al., 2018). This sense of unpreparedness often triggers extreme emotions such as distress, denial, doubt, and confusion, making it evident that the emotional turmoil associated with fatherhood is a major challenge for young fathers. Madiba and Nsiki (2017) further emphasize that the news of an impending pregnancy can trigger significant

emotional reactions, including feelings of helplessness, as these young men often realize they are not emotionally ready to assume the responsibilities of fatherhood.

Another major challenge that teenage fathers face is societal stigma. These societal attitudes contribute to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem, making it difficult for young fathers to assume their parental roles with confidence (Tuffin et al., 2018). The negative portrayal of teenage fathers as “absent” or “incompetent” further compounds their struggles, reinforcing feelings of isolation and inadequacy (Lau Clayton, 2016). This stigma can prevent many young fathers from seeking help or fully engaging in their roles as parents, as they may feel judged by society for their perceived shortcomings. The societal stigma surrounding teenage fathers is made worse by the lack of support and resources available to them (Lau Clayton, 2016). Many adolescent fathers report feeling isolated, as there are few platforms for them to voice their struggles or access the guidance they need. Nkwemu et al. (2019) highlight the absence of support systems specifically designed for teenage fathers, which further exacerbates their feelings of alienation. This lack of social support can prevent young fathers from developing the skills needed to become effective parents.

2.6 Support Systems for Teenage Fathers

Support systems play a critical role in shaping the experiences of teenage fathers and helping them navigate the challenges of early parenthood. Social support from family, peers, and the community can significantly reduce the difficulties associated with being a young father (Gbogbo, 2021). For many teenage fathers, family support, particularly from their own parents, provides practical

assistance and emotional comfort. This support helps them manage their new responsibilities and fosters resilience and well-being (Campbell & Hart, 2019).

Teenage fathers often benefit from informal support networks, including friends and extended family members. These networks provide emotional encouragement and help with caregiving responsibilities, though the availability and structure of such support can vary based on factors like age, education, and living arrangements (Gbogbo, 2021). Research suggests that teenage fathers who receive consistent and adequate support are more likely to develop a positive outlook on fatherhood and become more engaged in their parenting roles (Copeland, 2017).

The broader social context also plays an important role in shaping how teenage fathers cope with the demands of parenthood. Social support, particularly informal support, is recognized as a powerful safeguard against stress and anxiety. For adolescent parents, adequate support reduces feelings of frustration and other negative emotions that often accompany early parenthood (Gbogbo, 2021). This is particularly important for teenage fathers from underprivileged backgrounds, who face greater challenges and may need more support to manage their transition into parenthood (Hadley & Ingham, 2018; Lau Clayton, 2016).

Studies have shown that adequate social support not only reduces stress but also helps teenage fathers build self-confidence and a sense of satisfaction in their parenting roles. Biaggi et al. (2016) found that supportive systems lower stress and depression among adolescent parents. When teenage fathers feel supported during their transition to parenthood, their self-esteem and overall

life satisfaction improve. This positive effect can have long-term benefits for their mental health and well-being (Masselink et al., 2018).

However, many teenage fathers report feeling rejected, stigmatized, or unprepared for parenthood. This sense of isolation often stems from a lack of support and societal judgment, which can lead to feelings of regret and dissatisfaction (Corrêa et al., 2016; Erfina et al., 2019). On the other hand, teenage fathers who receive strong social support tend to experience greater self-efficacy and optimism about their parenting abilities, which increases their satisfaction as fathers (Gbogbo, 2021). Family support is particularly significant for teenage fathers. It provides a stable foundation and reassurance, helping them manage the demands of early fatherhood. Yurdakul (2018) found that families often play a key role in encouraging young fathers to fully embrace their roles. In her study, while adolescent parents perceived low levels of peer support, they reported receiving the highest levels of support from their families. This strong family support often compensates for the lack of connection with peers or community members.

Peers and community members can also provide valuable support, but teenage fathers often report lower levels of support from these sources. This may be due to their limited interaction with community networks or a lack of understanding among peers about the challenges of teenage fatherhood (Yurdakul, 2018). Despite this, research highlights the importance of building stronger peer and community support systems to help teenage fathers feel less isolated and more equipped to handle their parenting responsibilities. The emotional benefits of social support are clear. Copeland (2017) found that teenage fathers without significant parental support often experience feelings of shame, anxiety, and dissatisfaction. In contrast, those who receive strong support tend

to report more positive emotions and reduced anxiety. This highlights the critical role of support systems in fostering emotional well-being among young fathers.

2.7. Review of Related Studies

The scant literature on parenting behaviours among teenage fathers highlights some significant challenges that impact their ability to parent effectively. This section will review the available literature, focusing on their unique challenges and the factors influencing their parenting behaviours.

Recto and Lesser (2020) conducted a study that revealed adolescent fathers often live with their mothers and rely on them for support, as their fathers are frequently absent. This reliance impacts the parenting behaviors of teenage fathers, who learn caregiving practices from their maternal figures. The study aligns with this research's objective of identifying parenting behaviors through observation and highlights the influence of family dynamics on the roles teenage fathers adopt. Similarly, Jaime et al. (2015) found that the birth of a child serves as a transformative moment for adolescent fathers, motivating them to develop stronger emotional connections with their children and take active parenting roles. This finding supports the exploration of emotional support and involvement among teenage fathers, as identified in the study objectives.

A study by Bhana and Nkani (2014) indicated that adolescent fathers are more likely to engage in caregiving and provide emotional and financial support when they maintain a positive relationship with the child's mother. This finding underscores the importance of communication and mutual cooperation between parents in fostering active involvement, which directly aligns with the objective of evaluating teenage fatherhood on parenting behaviors. Jessee and Adamsons (2018)

further emphasized that teenage fathers who share a good relationship with the mother of their child devote more time to caregiving and child-related responsibilities. These findings support the idea that positive interpersonal relationships enhance the quality and consistency of fatherly involvement, a critical aspect of the current study.

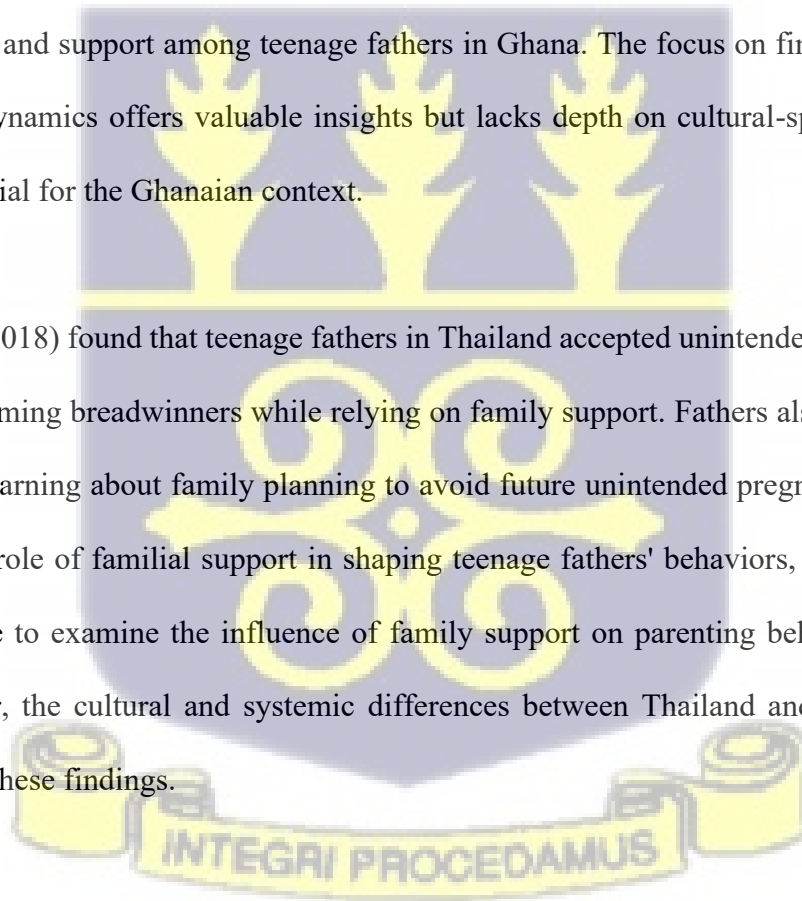
Bamishigbin et al. (2019) conducted a systematic review indicating that adolescent fathers often come from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, including single-parent households and low socioeconomic status. These fathers are also associated with lower academic competence, higher delinquent behavior, and exposure to anti-social peer influences. Similarly, Madiba and Nsiki (2017) found that adolescent fathers in South Africa often face financial challenges and social stigma, which impact their ability to provide for their children and actively engage in parenting. These findings are relevant to this study's aim of understanding cultural and socioeconomic factors influencing parenting behaviors among teenage fathers in the Greater Accra region.

Lau Clayton (2016) observed that the quality of the father's relationship with the child's mother significantly influences the level of involvement in parenting activities. Fathers who experienced strained relationships were less likely to be involved in caregiving. This supports the study's objective of identifying factors influencing parenting behaviors, particularly interpersonal dynamics. Tuffin et al. (2018) identified early fatherhood as a potential catalyst for personal growth and transformation among adolescent fathers. Their study highlights the importance of interventions that foster self-awareness and maturity, which align with this study's objective of recommending strategies to enhance parental skills and promote positive norms. Bhana and Nkani (2014) suggested that structured support systems, including family and community-based

interventions, can improve the parenting behaviors of teenage fathers. This aligns with the goal of enhancing access to resources and building supportive environments for teenage fathers in Ghana.

Madiba and Nsiki (2017) explored teenage fatherhood in South Africa, finding that the news of impending fatherhood was often met with shock, denial, and fear. Despite these initial reactions, many fathers experienced a positive transformation, aspiring to be good providers and planning to complete education and gain employment. However, the study identified significant barriers to involvement, including financial constraints and strained relationships with the child's mother. These findings align with this study's objectives of evaluating levels of involvement, communication, and support among teenage fathers in Ghana. The focus on financial constraints and relational dynamics offers valuable insights but lacks depth on cultural-specific influences, which are essential for the Ghanaian context.

Sriyasak et al. (2018) found that teenage fathers in Thailand accepted unintended pregnancies and focused on becoming breadwinners while relying on family support. Fathers also emphasized the importance of learning about family planning to avoid future unintended pregnancies. The study emphasizes the role of familial support in shaping teenage fathers' behaviors, aligning with this study's objective to examine the influence of family support on parenting behaviors in Greater Accra. However, the cultural and systemic differences between Thailand and Ghana limit the applicability of these findings.



2.7.1 Review of Related Studies in Ghana

There is very little empirical research in Ghana that focuses specifically on adolescent fatherhood. Most studies on young parenting have concentrated on mothers, with fathers' experiences often overlooked. This gap means that much of what is known about fatherhood in Ghana comes from studies on fatherhood in general, not necessarily from the perspective of teenage fathers.

Bowen and colleagues (2022) carried out a mixed-method study in three different parts of Ghana, Ada, Kumasi, and Sunyani. They found that fathers who felt more stressed also reported lower levels of well-being. To put it simply, when stress went up, fathers' overall life satisfaction went down. This stress came mainly from money problems such as finding work or paying for food, school, and healthcare. It also came from social pressures linked to cultural expectations of what a father should be, and from mental strain caused by parenting responsibilities, relationships, and discipline. The findings of the study, though not specifically from adolescent fathers does inform how these issues may play out for younger men who are still growing into adulthood.

Amoo et al. (2018) examined how Ghana's patriarchal culture shapes fatherhood. They found that, compared to mothers, young men often face fewer consequences when they become parents during their teenage years. For example, while a girl might be forced to leave school if she becomes pregnant, a boy who fathers a child may even be praised within the family. This finding is important for understanding why adolescent fatherhood might be more socially accepted in some contexts. However, the study mainly described cultural norms and did not look closely at how these norms affect fathers' actual parenting behaviours.

Ampim et al. (2020) explored fatherhood and masculinity in Ghana by talking to fathers from both rural and urban areas. They found that although many men still saw themselves mainly as providers and valued traditional masculinity linked to breadwinning and sexual potency, there were signs of change. Some men were starting to embrace a more “involved fatherhood,” where emotional support and active participation in child-rearing were valued alongside providing financially. This shift is encouraging, but the study did not focus on teenagers, so it is unclear whether these new ideals are being adopted by younger fathers.

In northern Ghana, Dery and Ganle (2020) looked at how young men construct their masculine identity. They found that keeping a good reputation and avoiding shame were key motivators. In some cases, this led to exaggerated displays of dominance and even violence. While the study did not focus directly on fatherhood, it helps explain how cultural expectations of masculinity could influence how young fathers behave and how they approach their parenting role.

More recently, Dery et al. (2025) found that young men are not always passive followers of cultural norms. Instead, they can challenge and reshape traditional ideas about masculinity. Some rejected harmful practices and embraced more equal gender roles. This is an important finding for programs that aim to encourage positive fatherhood, but again, the study was not specifically about teenage fathers, so its insights must be applied carefully.

2.8 Research Gaps

The reviewed empirical studies offer diverse insights into adolescent fatherhood and parenting behaviors, emphasizing factors such as socioeconomic background, familial support, and personal

transformation. However, most studies are conducted outside Ghana or the African context, limiting their direct applicability to Accra. While they provide a foundational understanding, the studies often generalize findings without addressing local cultural and socioeconomic nuances. Moreover, many studies focus on fathers' challenges rather than the strategies and adaptive behaviors they adopt to navigate fatherhood. Addressing this gap, the proposed study in Accra seeks to provide a localized understanding of teenage fathers' parenting behaviors, emphasizing not only barriers but also culturally specific factors and coping strategies. By bridging these gaps, the study aims to contribute actionable recommendations tailored to the Greater Accra context.

While the global literature on teenage fatherhood has explored various challenges, including financial instability, emotional readiness, and societal stigma, there are notable gaps in the local context of Ghana. Most studies on adolescent parenthood, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, have focused predominantly on teenage mothers, often sidelining the experiences and perspectives of adolescent fathers (Nkwemu et al., 2019; Gbogbo, 2021). This neglect creates a significant gap in understanding the unique challenges and coping mechanisms of young fathers in Ghana, where cultural norms, socioeconomic conditions, and family structures may differ from those in other regions.

The need for the current study is therefore evident. By addressing these research gaps, this study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of teenage fatherhood in Ghana. It seeks to explore the unique challenges faced by young fathers in the local context, including their emotional, financial, and social struggles, as well as the coping strategies they employ. Furthermore, the study will examine the support systems available to teenage fathers in Ghana and

identify areas for intervention to improve their parenting outcomes and overall well-being. This research will provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and community leaders, paving the way for more inclusive programs and policies that address the needs of adolescent fathers in Ghana.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to explore the parenting behaviours of teenage fathers in Greater Accra, Ghana. The study adopts a qualitative approach, using an Interpretative phenomenological approach as the design framework to delve into teenage fathers' lived experiences and parenting behaviours. This section will explain the research approach, the study population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, organisation of research instruments, data analysis strategy, credibility measures, and ethical considerations.

3.2. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative design, which adopts an interpretative phenomenological approach. The research design was used to explore the lived experiences of teenage fathers in Accra. The decision to use Interpretative phenomenological approach was based on its capacity to provide a deep, nuanced understanding of the participants' experiences and viewpoints (Noon, 2018). Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research allowed for an in-depth exploration of the personal and subjective aspects of the participants' lives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

By utilizing qualitative methods, the study aimed to capture the rich, detailed narratives of teenage fathers, offering insights into their unique challenges, coping strategies, and experiences in their parenting roles. This approach proved particularly valuable for understanding the complex social

and emotional factors that influenced teenage fatherhood, which were not easily quantifiable but crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

The data collection involved in-depth interviews with teenage fathers, which enabled them to share their stories and perspectives in their own words. This method allowed the researcher to explore themes such as social stigma, support systems, and the impact of socio-economic factors on their parenting behaviours. The qualitative data gathered was rich and contextual, providing a deeper understanding of how teenage fathers navigated their roles and the specific barriers and facilitators they encountered.

The qualitative approach facilitated exploring previously unstudied aspects of teenage fatherhood, providing insights that informed the development of targeted interventions and support programs. The phenomenological approach of the interview data helped identify critical patterns and themes, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of teenage fathers. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was adopted to analyse the qualitative data, emphasizing participants' subjective interpretations viewpoints (Noon, 2018).

3.3 Study Population

The population for this study comprised teenage fathers residing in Greater Accra, a designated area of interest due to its specific socio-economic and cultural context. The study focused on adolescent fathers within this locality to gain relevant and contextually relevant insights into the region. The inclusion criteria for the study were as follows: participants needed to be teenage fathers aged between 17 and 19 years. This age range was selected to encompass individuals in their teenage years who are still navigating the developmental and social challenges typical of

adolescence while assuming the responsibilities of fatherhood. Younger adolescent fathers below age 17 were excluded because they are less likely to possess the maturity, communication skills, and lived experiences necessary to effectively articulate and share their parenting experiences during data collection. The study therefore focused on teenage fathers aged 17 to 19 who could both communicate clearly and provide in-depth insights into their parenting behaviours.

Additionally, participants had to be currently residing in the Greater Accra community. This criterion was essential to ensure that the findings reflected the experiences of those living within the specific geographical and socio-cultural environment of Greater Accra. By focusing on residents of this community, the study aimed to capture local nuances and challenges that might be unique to the area. By defining these criteria, the study aimed to create a well-defined participant group that would provide relevant and actionable insights into the experiences and perspectives of teenage fathers in Greater Accra. This approach allowed for a focused examination of their challenges, the available support systems, and the factors influencing their parenting behaviours within their specific community context.

3.4 Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study was determined using purposive sampling and snowballing, a method chosen for its effectiveness in selecting participants who met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Purposive sampling allowed for the intentional selection of individuals with particular characteristics or experiences central to the study, specifically teenage fathers residing in Greater Accra. In this case, the sample consisted of adolescent fathers who were

actively involved in the upbringing of their children. The selection was based on their age, location (Greater Accra), and willingness to participate in the study.

3.5 Sample and Sample Size

A total of 10 teenage fathers were included in the study. The sample size of 10 participants was deemed appropriate based on the principle of data saturation, where no new themes or significant information emerged from additional interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2021). In qualitative research, particularly studies employing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), smaller sample sizes are acceptable because the approach prioritises an in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences rather than broad generalisation (Antoniadou, 2025). The inclusion criteria for participants were: (1) teenage fathers aged 17 to 19 years, (2) residing in the Greater Accra region, and (3) actively involved in their child's upbringing. Fathers who were not involved in their child's life were excluded, as the study focused on parenting behaviours and involvement. Exclusion criteria also included fathers over 19 years old or those not residing in the study area.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

A semi-structured interview guide was utilised to collect data. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to allow teenage fathers to share their experiences and perspectives on fatherhood in a detailed and nuanced manner. This format was chosen to provide flexibility in the interviews while ensuring that critical topics relevant to the research objectives were covered. The research objectives and questions guided the development of the interview guide, ensuring that it addressed the specific areas of interest related to teenage fatherhood. The supervisor

carefully reviewed the guide to ensure its relevance, clarity, and effectiveness in eliciting meaningful responses from participants.

Using a semi-structured approach, the study aimed to create a conversational yet focused interview process, enabling participants to discuss their personal experiences and challenges while allowing the researcher to explore specific themes and issues as they emerged during the interviews. This approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives and contributed to the overall richness of the data collected.

Each interview lasted between 20 to 25 minutes and was conducted face-to-face to build rapport with participants and ensure a comfortable atmosphere for open discussion. Audio recordings were made with the consent of participants to ensure accurate transcription for analysis.

3.7 Procedure for data collection:

The data collection procedure for this study involved a series of systematic steps to ensure the gathering of high-quality and reliable data. The process began with recruiting participants who met the study's criteria. This involved identifying and reaching out to teenage fathers in Greater Accra aged between 17 and 19 who resided within the region. Recruitment was conducted through local networks, community organisations, and direct outreach to ensure a representative sample.

Once participants were successfully recruited, arrangements were made to set up a suitable time and place for conducting the interviews. Scheduling was done flexibly to accommodate participants' availability, ensuring that each interview was conducted at a convenient time and conducive to their participation. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview

guide, which consisted of open-ended questions tailored to explore the participants' experiences and perspectives on fatherhood. This guide was designed to provide a framework for the interviews while allowing flexibility for participants to express their thoughts in their own words. The semi-structured format facilitated a comprehensive exploration of relevant themes and enabled the interviewer to probe deeper into emerging topics.

Participants were given ample time to answer each question thoroughly. The interviewer encouraged open dialogue and ensured participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences. This approach helped gather detailed and nuanced responses critical to the study's objectives. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's consent to ensure accurate data collection. The recording of the interviews allowed for precise transcription and translation (as some of the audios were recorded in Ga) and detailed analysis of the participants' responses. The audio recordings were made in settings where participants felt most at ease, such as community centres or their homes. These environments were chosen to minimise stress and maximise the participants' comfort, which was essential for obtaining honest and reflective answers. This procedure aimed to create a supportive and nonintrusive interviewing environment, foster open communication, and ensure that the collected data was rich, comprehensive, and reflective of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

3.8 Data Analysis Using Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative method designed to explore how individuals make sense of their personal and social worlds (Noon, 2018) was employed for data analysis. Although some elements of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic process (e.g.,

familiarisation, coding, theme review) share procedural similarities with IPA, this study was firmly grounded in the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis framework (Smith and Fieldsend, 2021). The analysis followed a systematic process involving verbatim transcription, multiple readings for deep familiarisation, initial coding, theme development within individual cases, and cross-case analysis (Smith and Fieldsend, 2021). The detailed description of the steps employed by the researcher to analyse the data is described below:

The first step involved transcribing the interviews verbatim. This process ensured that the data retained its richness and nuance. Following transcription, the transcripts were read multiple times to immerse get familiarised with the data. This initial familiarisation stage allowed me to grasp the participants' narratives and begin identifying significant experiences and expressions of meaning.

Next, initial coding was performed by highlighting critical statements that reflected the teenage fathers' perceptions of their roles, responsibilities, and challenges. Each participant's experience was treated individually, and codes were developed based on the specific narratives that emerged. These codes covered a range of personal and social experiences, including emotional reactions to fatherhood, financial struggles, social stigma, and relationship dynamics with their children and partners.

After coding each participant's data, the researcher began developing themes and sub-themes. Each individual's codes were grouped into broader themes that captured critical aspects of their lived experiences. For example, themes such as “struggles with financial stability,” “emotional connection with child,” “co-parenting challenges,” and “support from family and community”

were identified. Sub-themes were also developed to capture more specific aspects of these broader themes, such as the type of financial instability (e.g., unemployment or low-paying jobs) or the particular ways teenage fathers expressed love and care for their children (e.g., spending time, providing basic needs).

Once the individual themes were established, the researcher moved on to identifying common themes across participants. This stage involved comparing the individual themes to find similarities in how different teenage fathers experienced and understood their roles. For instance, many participants reported emotional conflict when they first learned they were going to be fathers, leading to the development of a common theme around "initial emotional reactions" to fatherhood. Similarly, most participants cited financial struggles as a significant challenge, which led to a shared theme on "economic challenges and the role of employment."

By identifying these common themes, the researcher developed ordinate themes which are broad categories that represented recurring issues faced by teenage fathers in Greater Accra. Sub-themes were retained under each ordinate theme to provide a more nuanced understanding of how different aspects of the experiences were interrelated. For instance, the ordinate theme "parenting challenges" included sub-themes such as financial instability, balancing work and fatherhood, and limited knowledge of child care.

The final phase of analysis involved interpreting the findings about existing literature on teenage fatherhood while also considering Ghana's unique socio-cultural context. This interpretative stage allowed for a deeper understanding of how these young fathers made sense of their roles within

their specific environments, emphasising the interplay between individual experience and broader societal factors such as poverty, traditional gender roles, and limited access to support systems.

3.9 Credibility of the Study

Ensuring the credibility of qualitative research is essential for establishing the trustworthiness of the findings. Several strategies were employed in this study to enhance these aspects:

Cross-participant comparison: The researcher sought to corroborate findings by comparing data from multiple participants and incorporating existing literature to support interpretations. This approach strengthened the validity of the findings by providing a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

Audio Clarity and Quality: The researcher ensured that all the audio recorded was crisp and clear, allowing for a good translation and transcription of the audio data collected.

Translator and Transcriber Credibility: the researcher ensured that she used qualified translators and transcribers to ensure the study's credibility.

Rich Descriptions: Detailed descriptions of the research context and participants were provided to allow readers to understand the study's applicability and relevance. This transparency enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings.

Reflexivity: Throughout the study, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal to reflect on personal biases and experiences that could influence the research process. This practice facilitated self-awareness and helped mitigate potential biases in data interpretation.

3.10 Ethical Issues

The ethical integrity of the study was carefully considered and ensured at every stage. Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee for Humanities at the University of Ghana (ECH-UG) with ethical clearance number ECH 242 23-24, ensuring that the research adhered to the highest ethical standards.

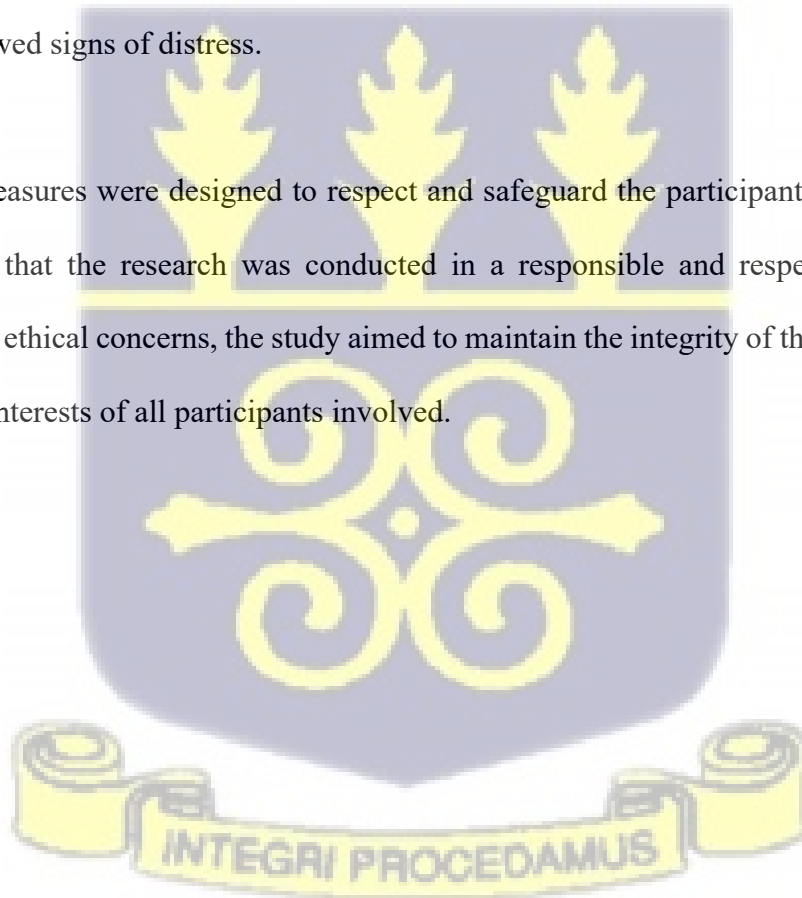
Confidentiality: This study's central concern was ensuring participants' confidentiality. To address this, participants were assured that all personal information would be kept confidential. The data collected from the interviews was anonymised during the transcription and analysis. Identifiable information was removed, and data was coded and aggregated to prevent the identification of individual participants in the final presentation of results. This approach ensured that participants' identities remained protected throughout the research.

Informed Consent: Obtaining informed consent was a crucial step in the ethical conduct of this study. Before participating, all individuals were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study without penalty. Written consent was obtained from each participant, affirming their understanding and agreement to

participate in the study. For participants under 18, parental or guardian consent was also secured to comply with ethical standards and legal requirements.

Protection of Vulnerable Participants: The study involved teenage fathers, a potentially vulnerable group, so additional ethical considerations were implemented to ensure their protection. Special attention was given to the sensitivity of the topics discussed during the interviews. Participants were encouraged to share only what they felt comfortable discussing, and they were provided with support resources if needed. The research team was trained to handle sensitive information with care and to offer emotional support or referrals to counseling services if participants showed signs of distress.

These ethical measures were designed to respect and safeguard the participants' rights and well-being, ensuring that the research was conducted in a responsible and respectful manner. By addressing these ethical concerns, the study aimed to maintain the integrity of the research process and protect the interests of all participants involved.



CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This section highlights the major themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis based on the research questions, supported by relevant quotations. The data analysis revealed eight major themes and eleven sub-themes. Each major theme is described and supported by quotes from the interviews. The following section discusses the emerging themes, which are also summarized in Table 2.

4.2 Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants

The demographic data summarised in Table 1 provide a detailed snapshot of the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants in this study. This section delves into these characteristics, discussing key aspects such as age, education, employment, religious affiliation, marital status, living arrangements, family structures, and reproductive history.

The participants in this study are all relatively young, ranging between 18 and 19 years old. This indicates that the survey predominantly focuses on adolescents or young adults in the transitional phase from adolescence to early adulthood.

In terms of educational attainment, most participants have completed junior high school (JHS) or senior high school (SHS), with one individual having reached tertiary education. Four participants listed SHS as their highest level of education, while three had completed only JHS, and one was currently pursuing tertiary education. Employment status and occupation are crucial indicators of socio-economic well-being. In the case of this study, the participants have a mixed employment profile. Four of the participants are employed, while the other six are unemployed. Among those

employed, a diverse range of jobs is represented, including a sculptor, footballer, lotto agent, electrician, shop attendant, and washing bay attendant. These occupations are primarily informal and typically fall under low-income categories, suggesting that these individuals may not have substantial or stable incomes. Additionally, some participants, such as those engaged in manual labour, like washing bay attendants, rely on seasonal or inconsistent work, which could lead to financial instability.

Religious affiliation is another important socio-demographic characteristic that provides insights into the participants' cultural backgrounds. All participants in this study identify as Christians. Although all participants have children, none are married, and some do not have partners.

The living arrangements of the participants show that many still reside with their parents, while a few live independently in rented apartments. For instance, five participants lived with their mothers or parents, while four lived in rented apartments or single rooms. All participants in the study have children, and most are first-time parents. Additionally, most participants have siblings, with family sizes ranging from one sibling to as many as seven siblings. The children of the participants are all relatively young, with most being around one or two years old. This indicates that these young parents are in the early stages of parenthood, still adjusting to the responsibilities of raising children.

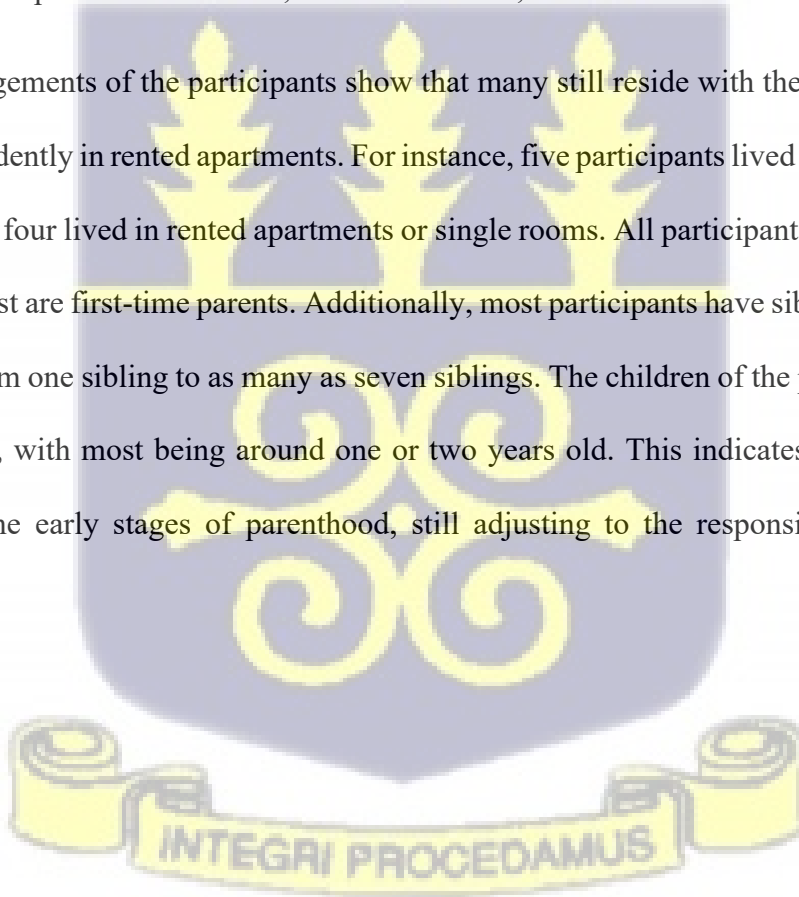


Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

Category	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
AGE	18	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	18	19
Education	JHS	SHS	SHS	SHS	SHS	SHS	SHS	Tertiary	JHS	JHS
Employment	Unemployed	employed	Employed	employed	employed	employed	employed	employed	employed	employed
Occupation	None	Sculptor	Footballer	Lotto agent	None	Electrician	Shop attendant	None	Washing bay attendant	None
Religious	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian
Marital status	Not married	Not married	Not married	Not married	Not married	Not married	Not married	Not married	Not married	Not married
Living arrangement	With mother	Rented room	Rented room	With mother	With parents	Rented room	Rented room	With parents	Rented room	With mother
Number of children	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Siblings	3	None	2	2	3	1	7	1	3	1
First to have child	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Partner age	18	16	18	18	19	16	19	18	16	17
Partner education	JHS	JHS	SHS	JHS	SHS	SHS	SHS	SHS	JHS	JHS
Partner still in school?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Child Gender	Male	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female	male	Female	Female	female
Child age	1yr	2yrs	1yr	1yr	2yrs	1yr	1yr	1yr	7monts	7monts
Child in school	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

4.3 Results

This section highlights the major themes and sub-themes from the analysis, supported by relevant quotations. The study of the data revealed seven (7) major themes and eighteen (18) sub-themes. Each central theme is described and supported by quotes from the interviews. The following section discusses the emerging themes, which are also summarised in

Table 2: Major Themes and Subthemes

ORDINATE THEMES	SUB-ORDINATE THEMES	QUOTATION
Disrupted Transitions to Fatherhood	Initial Shock and Unpreparedness	I was shocked (P2) I didn't expect to be a father so soon; it was overwhelming. (P2)
	Mixed feeling	It was a mixed feeling. I was excited but not too excited because I haven't gone through such an experience like that. (P1) In the beginning when I was told that she's pregnant I felt bad. (P3)
Parenting behaviours and roles	Emotional engagement in parenting	"I try to make sure my child knows I love him." (P1) "I want my child to feel secure and loved at all times." (P5)
	Responsibilities in parenting	"It's my duty to make sure there's always food on the table and that my child never goes without school fees or materials." (P3)
Discipline Approaches	Scolding	"I talk to him. But if he doesn't stop then I grab him and discipline him by lashing him." (P5)

	Warning	"I just sit him down and then I talk to him." P2 "If you do this it's not good. Next time if you do that I'll beat you." P4
	Non-Physical discipline	"I just sit him down, and then I talk to him" (P2)
Factors influencing parenting	Upbringing	"The way my parents raised me influences how I want to raise my child." (P1) "My upbringing shapes my views on discipline." (P2) "I learned the importance of respect from my parents." (P4)
Support Systems for Parents	Support from partners	Sometimes she...she does well. She does well. She takes care of the child any day any time. P2 "The truth of the matter is we both look after the child." P1
	Support from parents and extended family	I can tell you that my dad has help me sometimes." (P2) " My family is always there to help me when I need it." (P3)
	Support from Community	"Neighbours sometimes check in on us and offer help." (P5)
	Lack of Support	I don't have much help from my family; it's hard." (4)
Challenges in parenting	Work and Time Demands	"I have to manage my time well between work and spending time with my child." (P5) "Balancing work and being a father is tough." (P1)
	Financial instability	Finance. When you're not financially stable you find it difficult." (P2)

"Money is always a concern for me." (P1)

Lack of employment "Honestly, there isn't much work for me." (P1)
"Finding stable work is really hard." (P3)

Interventions for Strengthening Parenting Capacity	Access to parenting workshops	"I think parenting workshops would be beneficial for young fathers like me." (P3) "If there were programs to help us find jobs, it would make things easier." (P1)
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Educational and job training programs.	"If there were programs to help us find jobs, it would make things easier." (P1) "I would love to learn new skills that can help me provide better for my child." (P2)
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Counselling services	"Counselling services would help us deal with the stress of being a father." (P2) "Having someone to talk to about parenting challenges would be helpful." (P3)
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4.4 Discussion of Themes

Fatherhood is a life-changing experience that brings about many emotions, challenges, and opportunities for personal growth. In analysing the interviews with teenage fathers, several key themes emerged regarding their experiences, challenges, and roles as fathers. These themes capture early parenthood's emotional, psychological, and socio-economic challenges. A more nuanced understanding of their journeys can be gleaned by identifying ordinate themes and their corresponding sub-ordinate themes. This discussion will explore fathers' reactions upon learning

of their impending fatherhood, their co-parenting experiences, the support systems they rely on, and the challenges they face. The discussion below explores these themes in detail, supplemented with participant quotations.

4.4.1 Theme 1. Disrupted Transitions to Fatherhood

Becoming a father often comes as a moment of great personal realisation, and the men in the study reported a wide range of initial reactions to this significant life event. These reactions were complex and varied between individuals, influenced by their circumstances, expectations, and preparedness for the role. They are understood here as part of a broader process of identity disruption and reformation.

4.4.1.1 Initial Shock and Unpreparedness

A common initial reaction was shock, often rooted in feelings of unpreparedness. These emotions reflected a sudden confrontation with adult responsibilities before participants felt ready. The surprise of such a life-changing event brings an overwhelming sense of responsibility, uncertainty, and sometimes fear. These feelings are compounded when the pregnancy is unplanned or occurs earlier than anticipated. Many participants reported being taken by surprise at the news of impending fatherhood. For instance, Participant 2 (P2) expressed, *“I was shocked,”*

For some, the news of fatherhood initially brought disappointment, often because they felt unprepared or too young for such a responsibility. Another person said; *“I didn’t expect to be a father so soon; it was overwhelming.”* (P2)

These opinions underscore the societal and personal expectations placed on men, many of whom may not feel ready to embrace fatherhood, especially when it happens earlier than expected.

This reflects the emotional struggle some fathers face when they are not yet ready for the role, causing feelings of frustration, fear, or inadequacy. Here, shock is not merely surprise. It represents a rupture in the anticipated life course, requiring rapid re-negotiation of personal goals and identity

4.4.1.2 Mixed Feelings

While shock was a predominant reaction, others expressed a more complex emotional response, oscillating between excitement and anxiety. The transition to fatherhood is significant and laden with positive and negative emotions.

Some fathers revealed more complex emotional reactions, with joy mixed with uncertainty or apprehension. Participant 1 (P1) admitted, *"It was a mixed feeling. I was excited but not too excited because I haven't gone through such an experience like that."*

This reflects the dual nature of anticipation and fear often accompanying significant life changes like fatherhood.

Here, the participant acknowledges both the excitement of becoming a father and the uncertainty due to the unfamiliarity of the experience. The mixed emotions highlight fathers' internal conflict as they come to terms with their new roles.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Parenting Behaviors and Roles

Parenting behaviours among the teenage fathers in this study reflected both emotional and practical aspects of fatherhood. For many participants, being a parent was not simply about providing food,

shelter, and other basic needs; it was also about ensuring that their children felt loved, secure, and valued. Within this broader theme, two interrelated dimensions emerged namely emotional engagement and responsibility in parenting. These dimensions illustrate how teenage fathers navigate the dual demands of emotional connection and practical caregiving in the context of their personal circumstances and socio-cultural environment.

4.4.2.1 Emotional Engagement in Parenting

Fathers spoke about their efforts to be present in their children's lives, ensuring they felt loved and supported. This emotional engagement is central to modern conceptions of fatherhood, prioritising emotional presence as much as financial provision.

Fathers demonstrated a strong desire to be involved in their children's lives. Participant 1 (P1) emphasised his emotional engagement, saying, *"I try to make sure my child knows I love him."* Participant 5 (P5) reiterated this commitment, adding, *"Everything was cool although there were some difficulties."* These statements underscore the importance fathers place on showing love and care, despite challenges. Fathers are often keenly aware of the importance of emotional support, which contrasts with traditional notions of fatherhood that emphasize discipline and authority.

From an interpretative perspective, these expressions of love and affection can be seen as strategies for identity-building. Their words suggest an awareness that their children's well-being depends not only on meeting material needs but also on fostering emotional security. Thus, while parenting can be challenging, teenage fathers are willing to face these difficulties head-on in order to provide their children with a stable and loving environment.

4.4.2.2 Responsibilities in Parenting

The theme of parenting roles and responsibilities delves into how teenage fathers perceive and manage their duties as caregivers and providers. The participants frequently express a strong sense of responsibility towards their children, reflecting an understanding that parenthood entails both emotional and practical obligations.

One participant explained, *“It’s my duty to make sure there’s always food on the table and that my child never goes without school fees or materials. (P 3)”* This highlights the centrality of provision in their role as fathers, particularly in meeting the tangible needs of their children. Others framed responsibility in terms of guidance and moral upbringing. For example, one father noted, *“Part of my role is to teach my child what’s right and wrong, even when it means being firm. (P6)”*

These accounts reveal that love and responsibility were seen as inseparable as participant 5 (P5) explained, *“I want my child to feel secure and loved at all times.”*

Teenage fathers in the study saw themselves as protectors, role models, and providers, but their narratives suggest they balanced these roles with an understanding that emotional warmth is equally a parental duty. The integration of emotional engagement and responsibility within the single theme of parenting behaviours underscores a shift towards a more holistic understanding of fatherhood among teenage fathers in the Greater Accra region. Rather than seeing provision and emotional care as separate domains, participants appeared to view them as intertwined obligations.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Discipline Methods

Discipline is a critical aspect of parenting, and the methods used by teenage fathers reveal much about their values, upbringing, and aspirations for their children. The subordinate theme of

discipline methods encompasses young fathers' approaches to instil values and manage behaviour in their children.

4.4.3.1 Scolding and Warning

Participant 5 (P5) explained his approach, "If he doesn't stop, then I grab him and discipline him by lashing him," reflecting a more traditional approach to discipline. Conversely, Participant 2 (P2) prefers gentler, saying, *"I just sit him down, and then I talk to him."*

These variations in discipline reveal the influence of personal upbringing and societal norms on parenting styles.

The participants' reflections on discipline methods reveal a complex interplay between their upbringing, personal experiences, and societal influences. Many of the young fathers indicated that their approaches to discipline were shaped by their upbringing, with a notable emphasis on physical punishment. This raises important questions about how these methods may perpetuate cycles of behaviour and influence their children's perceptions of authority and discipline.

4.4.3.2 Non-Physical Discipline Methods.

Some teenage fathers preferred to discipline their children without using physical punishment. Instead, they focused on talking to the child, *explaining what was wrong, and guiding them toward better choices. For example, Participant 2 (P2) said, "I just sit him down, and then I talk to him."*

This approach shows a belief that children can learn from discussion and reasoning, not just from punishment. Choosing to talk instead of hitting may also help build trust and strengthen the parent–child relationship. It reflects a growing awareness among some young fathers that discipline is not

only about correcting bad behaviour but also about teaching, understanding, and supporting their children's emotional development.

4.4.4 Theme 4: Factors Influencing Parenting Behaviour

The influence of upbringing on parenting styles is a significant theme emerging from the experiences of teenage fathers. Participants frequently reflected on how their childhood experiences shaped their perspectives and approaches to parenting. This subordinate theme highlights the connections between past experiences and current behaviours, illustrating how familial backgrounds inform the values that young fathers bring into their parenting.

4.4.4.1 Upbringing

Participant 1 (P1) noted, "How my parents raised me influences how I want to raise my child."

This statement underscores the idea that parenting is often learned behaviour, where young fathers draw from their own experiences to inform their roles. Acknowledging parental influence suggests that many teenage fathers aspire to emulate or diverge from the parenting styles they experienced growing up. Participant 2 (P2) elaborated on this influence by stating, *"My upbringing shapes my views on discipline."*

This quote indicates that the values instilled during childhood directly impact how these young men approach discipline and child-rearing. The recognition of this influence demonstrates a level of self-awareness, as participants grapple with the legacy of their own upbringing while attempting to forge their paths as fathers. And Participant 4 (P4) reflected on the importance of respect, saying, *"I learned the importance of respect from my parents."*

This acknowledgment highlights how values such as respect play a critical role in shaping the expectations that teenage fathers have for their children. By emphasizing respect, P4 indicates a desire to instill similar values in his child, suggesting that he recognizes the significance of teaching moral principles.

However, the influence of upbringing can be both positive and negative. While some participants sought to replicate positive aspects of their parents' styles, others struggled with the shadows of negative experiences. This tension illustrates the internal conflicts that can arise as young fathers navigate their identities and responsibilities.

4.4.5 Theme 5: Support Systems for Parents

Support from family members, partners, and the broader community plays a vital role in helping young fathers navigate the demands of parenting. For many teenage fathers in the Greater Accra region, these networks provide emotional reassurance, practical help, and financial assistance. However, the availability and quality of such support varies widely, influencing the fathers' experiences and capacity to fulfil their roles effectively. Where strong support exists, it shapes a more positive, empowered fatherhood identity; where it is lacking, fathers often internalise feelings of isolation and greater personal burden.

4.4.5.1 Supportive Partner

Co-parenting is a significant aspect of fatherhood, particularly in modern families where parents often share the responsibilities of raising a child. Participants frequently mentioned the role of a supportive partner, emphasising how essential the mothers of their children were in making the

parenting process more manageable. This theme reflects the collaborative nature of parenting, where both partners contribute to the care and upbringing of the child.

For example, Participant 2 (P2) acknowledged, *“She does well. She takes care of the child any day, any time,”* while Participant 3 (P3) noted, *“She helps me in so many ways.”*

These testimonies demonstrate that many fathers recognise and appreciate their partners’ roles in parenting.

These statements illustrate many fathers' reliance on their partners and their deep appreciation for their contributions. Fathers often recognise their partners' hard work and effort, acknowledging that co-parenting is a shared responsibility. A partner who actively participates in caregiving helps to lighten the load for the father, creating a more balanced approach to parenting. Acknowledging the partner’s efforts reflects the collaborative nature of their relationship, which is crucial in navigating the challenges of parenthood. The role of a supportive partner extends beyond mere participation; it encompasses emotional stability and reassurance during challenging times. Knowing that there is someone who shares the responsibility can alleviate some of the stress that comes with being a young father. This support system can also encourage fathers to be more engaged in their children’s lives, as they feel empowered to take an active role in caregiving.

4.4.5.2 Supportive Parents and Extended Family

In addition to their partners, fathers often relied on other family members, especially their parents, for advice and help with parenting. This support network was crucial for many fathers as they navigated the challenges of raising a child, particularly when they were still learning the ropes of fatherhood.

Some participants cited the guidance they received from their fathers. Participant 2 (P2) shared, *"My father's advice has always guided me, even now."* Similarly, Participant 3 (P3) noted: *"My family is always there to help me when I need it."*

This suggests that intergenerational support is crucial in shaping these young fathers' views and decisions. Fathers often seek guidance from their parents, drawing on generational knowledge and experience to inform their parenting strategies. This quote highlights the continuity of parental influence across generations, where fathers often rely on their parents or external family members to help them become better parents themselves.

4.4.5.3 Community Support

Support was not limited to family alone; neighbours and community members sometimes stepped in to help. Participant 5 (P5) stated: *"Neighbours sometimes check in on us and offer help."*

Such informal community assistance provided practical relief and fostered a sense of belonging. For some fathers, knowing that others were willing to help reduced feelings of isolation and created a shared responsibility for child wellbeing. IPA interpretation reveals that these moments of support can reshape fathers' perceptions of fatherhood from being a solitary struggle to being part of a collective care network.

4.4.5.4 Absence of Support

However, it is essential to recognise that not all teenage fathers can access supportive family structures. Some may come from backgrounds lacking familial support or where relationships are strained. Participant 4 (P4) mentioned, "I don't have much help from my family; it's hard."

This quote illustrates the potential challenges faced by young fathers who do not have a reliable support system. The absence of family support can exacerbate feelings of isolation and increase the burden of responsibility on these fathers.

This sentiment illustrates the emotional relief of connecting with others who share similar experiences. The sense of community can help young fathers feel less isolated and more empowered in their parenting journey.

4.4.6 Theme 6: Challenges with Parenting

However, these young fathers also face significant challenges in fulfilling their roles. Many expressed feelings of being overwhelmed by the expectations placed on them, both from themselves and society. Parenting is often fraught with challenges, and the fathers in this study were no different. Many reported difficulties balancing work and family life, managing finances, and dealing with the demands of raising a child. These challenges were compounded by societal expectations and personal limitations, which created significant stress for many fathers.

4.4.6.1 Work and Time Demands

Balancing work with the responsibilities of fatherhood is a common struggle. Fathers expressed difficulty managing their time between earning a living and being present for their children, especially in cases where financial stability was a concern.

Fathers often spoke about the difficulty of balancing work and family life. Participant 1 (P1) reflected on this struggle, explaining, *"Balancing work and being a father is tough."* Similarly, Participant 5 (P5) emphasised the challenge of managing time between work and childcare: *"I have to manage my time well between work and spending time with my child."*

These narratives highlight how external pressures, particularly from work, can interfere with fathers' availability for their children. They reflect the reality of many fathers who must juggle work demands with their desire to participate actively in their children's lives. Financial responsibilities often pull fathers away from their families, adding emotional strain to the challenges of fatherhood. Work-life balance remains a persistent issue, and fathers in the study acknowledge the strain this dual responsibility places on their ability to be fully engaged parents.

4.4.6.2 Financial Instability

For many fathers in the study, financial instability was not just an occasional setback but a constant presence shaping their parenting experience. Even when they had some form of income, it was often irregular or insufficient to meet the daily needs of their children. This left fathers feeling anxious and under pressure, knowing that their ability to provide for essentials such as food, school fees, and clothing depended on resources that could run out at any moment.

Participant 2 (P2) expressed this reality in simple but powerful terms: *"Finance. When you're not financially stable you find it difficult."* Participant 1 (P1) echoed this concern: *"Money is always a concern for me."*

These statements reflect more than just a lack of cash. They reveal the mental and emotional toll that financial instability brings. The inability to guarantee consistent provision for a child can leave fathers feeling like they are failing in one of their most important roles. For some, this pressure was linked to guilt or self-doubt, particularly in a cultural context where providing materially is seen as a core marker of responsible fatherhood.

4.4.6.3 Unemployment

While some fathers struggled with irregular or insufficient income, others faced the deeper challenge of unemployment. For them, the problem was not simply about managing finances, but about the absence of opportunities to earn in the first place. Without steady work, the pathway to stability, for both themselves and their children seemed uncertain.

Participant 1 (P1) explained his situation bluntly: *"Honestly, there isn't much work for me."*

Participant 3 (P3) shared a similar experience: *"Finding stable work is really hard."*

These statements reveal frustration and resignation, suggesting that the challenge goes beyond personal effort and is tied to broader structural issues such as limited job opportunities, low demand for labour, or lack of access to skills training. For young fathers, this absence of work creates a double bind: they are expected to provide for their children, but without employment, this expectation becomes a heavy emotional burden.

The combined challenges of work demands, financial instability, and unemployment create a complex environment for teenage fathers in the Greater Accra region. Their narratives show that fatherhood, for them, is not only about emotional engagement and care but also about constant problem-solving to meet practical needs. While these challenges can lead to feelings of stress and inadequacy, the fathers' accounts also reveal resilience which is a determination to meet their children's needs despite systemic and personal barriers.

4.4.7 Theme 7: Interventions for Strengthening Parenting Capacity

The need for support structures and resources is a recurring theme among teenage fathers. Their desire to access parenting workshops reflects their recognition that education and guidance can

play a vital role in their development as parents. This subordinate theme emphasizes the importance of providing young fathers with the tools and knowledge to navigate their roles effectively.

4.4.7.1 Access to Parenting Workshops

Several fathers felt that more support services could make a meaningful difference. Participant 1 (P1) remarked, *"If there were programs to help us find jobs, it would make things easier,"* while Participant 2 (P2) added, *"Counseling services would help us deal with the stress of being a father."*

These comments suggest a need for both emotional and practical support services to help fathers manage their responsibilities.

However, for many participants, lack of access to resources and support can be a significant barrier. Participant 4 (P4) noted, *"There isn't much available for us."*

This acknowledgement underscores the challenges faced by young fathers in finding programs that cater specifically to their needs. The absence of accessible resources can leave these young men feeling unprepared and overwhelmed in their parental roles.

4.4.7.2 Educational and Job Training Programs

Along with parenting workshops, the need for educational and job training programs emerges as a critical theme among teenage fathers. Many participants expressed a desire for opportunities to help them secure stable employment and improve their skills, ultimately benefiting themselves and their children.

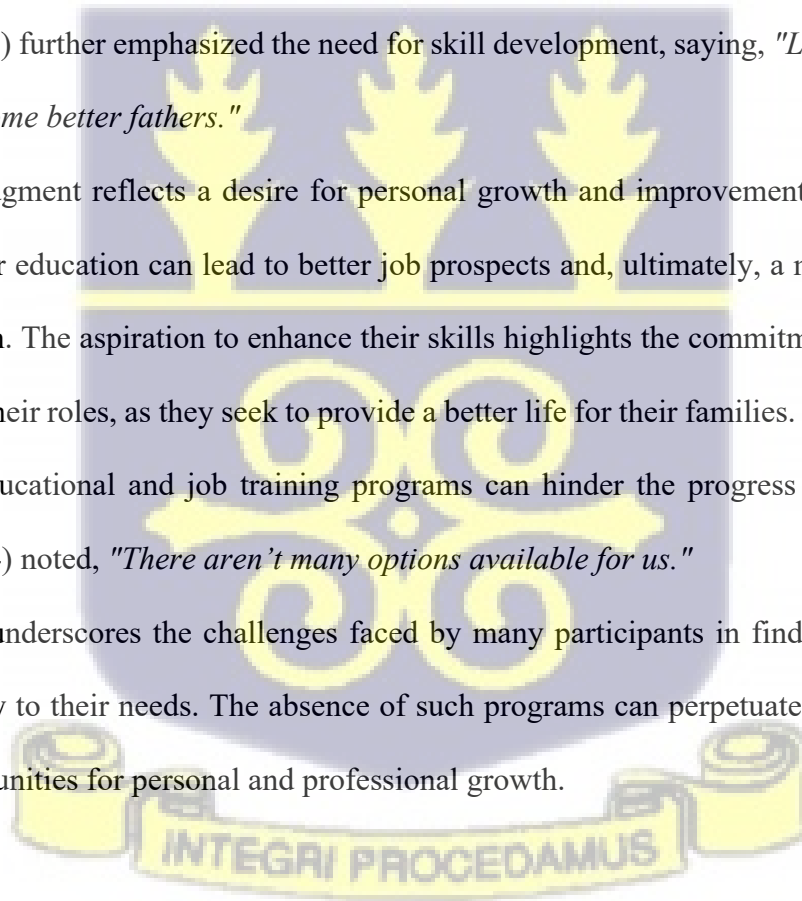
Participant 1 (P1) articulated the importance of job training, stating, *"If there were programs to help us find jobs, it would make things easier."*

This quote underscores the connection between financial stability and effective parenting. Participants recognize that access to job training can alleviate some financial pressures, allowing them to focus more on their parenting roles. Participant 2 (P2) echoed this sentiment when he said, *"I want to be able to provide for my child, and having a job would help me do that."*

This statement highlights the understanding that stable employment is essential for fulfilling their responsibilities as fathers. By emphasizing the need for job opportunities, participants demonstrate a proactive approach to seeking solutions that can enhance their ability to provide for their families. Participant 3 (P3) further emphasized the need for skill development, saying, *"Learning new skills can help us become better fathers."*

This acknowledgment reflects a desire for personal growth and improvement, recognizing that investing in their education can lead to better job prospects and, ultimately, a more secure future for their children. The aspiration to enhance their skills highlights the commitment many teenage fathers have to their roles, as they seek to provide a better life for their families. However, the lack of accessible educational and job training programs can hinder the progress of young fathers. Participant 4 (P4) noted, *"There aren't many options available for us."*

This statement underscores the challenges faced by many participants in finding resources that cater specifically to their needs. The absence of such programs can perpetuate cycles of poverty and limit opportunities for personal and professional growth.



4.471.3 Emotional Support and Counseling

The need for emotional support and counselling services is an important theme that emerges from the experiences of teenage fathers. Many participants expressed a desire for access to counselling as a means of navigating the emotional challenges that come with parenthood.

Participant 2 (P2) articulated this need clearly: *"Counseling services would help us deal with the stress of being a father."*

This statement underscores the recognition that the emotional toll of parenting can be significant. The pressures of financial instability, societal expectations, and personal challenges can accumulate, leading to stress and anxiety. Access to counselling can provide young fathers with a safe space to process their feelings, gain insights, and develop coping strategies. Participant 3 (P3) echoed this sentiment: *"Having someone to talk to about parenting challenges would be helpful."*

This quote emphasises the importance of supportive resources, allowing young fathers to share their experiences and seek guidance. By facilitating open dialogue about their challenges, counseling can help mitigate feelings of isolation and provide a sense of community. Participant 1 (P1) mentioned the connection between mental health and effective parenting, noting, *"If I'm not feeling good mentally, it affects how I interact with my child."*

This statement illustrates the understanding that emotional well-being is crucial for positive parenting. When young fathers experience mental health challenges, it can impact their ability to engage with their children, potentially leading to strained relationships. Counselling can serve as a valuable resource for addressing these issues and promoting emotional stability. The recognition of the need for counselling also reflects a broader understanding of mental health within the context of fatherhood. Participant 4 (P4) remarked, *"Mental health is important, but sometimes it feels like there's no help for us."*

This quote highlights the barriers that young fathers may face in accessing mental health resources. The stigma surrounding mental health, lack of availability, and financial constraints can limit their opportunities for support, further exacerbating their challenges.

Fatherhood, as experienced by the participants in this study, is an intricate journey filled with moments of joy, challenges, and a deep sense of responsibility. The ordinate themes of reactions to fatherhood, co-parenting, parenting behaviours, and challenges are enriched by sub-ordinate themes such as shock, support systems, engagement in parenting, and work demands. These themes reveal the complexities of fatherhood, where emotions, societal pressures, and personal expectations intersect. The fathers' quotations illustrate a shared sense of duty and love for their children despite the hurdles they face. The need for additional support services, including financial assistance, job training, and emotional counselling, was a common refrain throughout the discussions.



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the research process, the key findings, the conclusions drawn from the study, and its contributions to research, practice, and policy. It also discusses the study's limitations and recommendations for future research and practical implementation.

5.2 Discussion of findings

The current study explored teenage fathers' parenting behaviours and experiences in Greater Accra, Ghana. The specific objectives were to examine the parenting behaviours of adolescent fathers and their experiences, to identify the challenges they face regarding fatherhood, to explore the coping strategies they employ to address these challenges, and to identify areas for enhancing father-child care practices. The study identified 11 main themes and 20 sub-themes, providing comprehensive insights into the parenting journey of these young fathers. This discussion critically examines the findings about the review of related studies, highlighting whether the current findings are consistent with existing literature.

5.2.1 Parenting Behaviours Exhibited by Teenage Fathers in Greater Accra

The findings on teenage fathers' reactions to becoming fathers reveal a range of emotional responses, from shock to disappointment and mixed feelings. These reactions align with earlier studies indicating that the unplanned nature of adolescent fatherhood often triggers emotional disturbance (Corrêa et al., 2016; Tuffin et al., 2018). Shock, as expressed by many participants, echoes findings by Madiba and Nsiki (2017), who noted that adolescent fathers often experience

feelings of disbelief and anxiety when faced with the reality of fatherhood. This reaction is unsurprising, as teenage fathers are frequently unprepared, both emotionally and financially, for the responsibilities of parenting. Mixed feelings of excitement and anxiety, as described by participants, also align with research by Matlakala et al. (2018), who observed that while some adolescent fathers express joy at the prospect of fatherhood, it is often tempered by fears of inadequacy and unpreparedness. From the lens of Social Exchange Theory, these emotional responses can be seen as part of the young fathers' ongoing evaluation of the "costs" and "rewards" of parenting, thus balancing the joy and social recognition against financial strain, social stigma, and lifestyle changes (Homans, 1974; Blau, 2017). This emotional duality reflects the complex interplay of personal aspirations, societal expectations, and the immediate reality of becoming a parent. Disappointment and feelings of being overwhelmed, as highlighted in the findings, mirror observations by Lau Clayton (2016), who found that societal pressure to be a provider exacerbates feelings of inadequacy in young fathers, particularly when they perceive themselves as unready for the role. This is consistent with Hegemonic Masculinity Theory (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), which emphasises that dominant masculine ideals such as being a financial provider and emotionally tough, can heighten stress when teenage fathers cannot meet these expectations due to limited resources, as also observed in Ghanaian contexts by Dery and Ganle (2020).

The study's findings highlight the importance of co-parenting in shaping teenage fathers' experiences. Many participants acknowledged the supportive roles of their partners, emphasizing the collaborative nature of parenting. This finding is consistent with Campbell and Hart (2019), who stress the critical role of a supportive partner in reducing stress and enhancing parenting

outcomes. The reliance on partners for caregiving, as expressed by participants, reflects a shift from traditional notions of fatherhood, which often focus solely on financial provision. Instead, teenage fathers in this study appear to embrace shared responsibilities, which enhances their engagement in their children's lives. The challenges and successes of co-parenting are further illuminated by Gbogbo (2021), who argues that a supportive partner not only helps with the practical aspects of parenting but also contributes to emotional stability for young fathers. This emotional support often empowers fathers to navigate their parenting roles more effectively, fostering a positive family environment. Similarly, Ampim et al. (2020) observed that in Ghana, there is an emerging ideal of emotionally involved fatherhood alongside the traditional breadwinning role. This suggests that even within a patriarchal system, young fathers may be negotiating space for caregiving in ways that challenge aspects of hegemonic masculinity.

The findings on parenting behaviors demonstrate that teenage fathers place a strong emphasis on emotional engagement with their children, prioritizing love and presence over traditional roles of authority and discipline. This shift aligns with modern conceptions of fatherhood, which emphasize emotional involvement as a cornerstone of good parenting (Matlakala et al., 2018). Participants' commitment to showing love and care reflects a rejection of traditional, authoritarian parenting models and highlights their efforts to create a nurturing environment for their children (Amoo et al., 2018; Pankhurst, 2020). This can also be understood through the lens of Dery et al. (2025), who found that young Ghanaian men are not passive recipients of gender norms but can reinterpret masculinity to include nurturing and supportive roles, thereby resisting the hegemonic expectation of emotional detachment. Despite challenges, participants expressed a strong desire to be involved in their children's lives, a sentiment echoed by Gadsden et al. (2016), who argue that

young fathers who actively engage with their children tend to experience greater parenting satisfaction. Participants' emphasis on ensuring their children feel loved and secure aligns with research by Masselink et al. (2018), who highlight the critical role of emotional security in child development. By focusing on love and emotional warmth, these fathers challenge stereotypes of adolescent fathers as absent or disengaged, showcasing a more positive narrative of teenage fatherhood.

The study also revealed a spectrum of discipline methods used by teenage fathers, reflecting their values, upbringing, and societal influences. Some participants, such as Participant 5, adhered to traditional disciplinary practices, saying, *"If he doesn't stop, then I grab him and discipline him by lashing him."* This approach aligns with findings by Soenens et al. (2019), who noted that physical discipline is often rooted in cultural norms and intergenerational practices. Conversely, Participant 2 described a gentler approach, stating, *"I just sit him down, and then I talk to him."* This preference for communication over physical punishment suggests a shift toward more progressive parenting styles. From a Family Systems Theory perspective, these discipline choices influence the overall family dynamic, where patterns of communication, emotional expression, and conflict resolution either reinforce traditional authoritarian cycles or foster healthier, more collaborative relationships (McGoldrick et al., 2008). Such variations in discipline methods underscore the influence of upbringing on parenting behaviors, as noted by Bamishigbin et al. (2019), who argued that parenting approaches are often a reflection of childhood experiences. The emphasis on physical punishment by some participants reflects cultural norms where physical discipline is perceived as an effective way to instill respect and authority (Grusec, 2022). However, this approach raises questions about its long-term impact on children's perceptions of discipline

and authority. As Gaydos (2017) observed, harsh disciplinary methods can perpetuate cycles of authoritarian parenting, potentially affecting the child's emotional development. The contrasting use of communication-based discipline by other participants reflects an alternative masculine identity that prioritises emotional intelligence over dominance, echoing Dery et al.'s (2025) findings that young men can actively reshape gender norms.

5.2.2 Factors Influencing Parenting Behaviours Among Teenage Fathers in Greater Accra.

Participants' reflections on their childhood experiences, which often shape their parenting perspectives, resonate with earlier research on intergenerational parenting patterns. Terefe et al. (2024) emphasized the significant role of familial environments in shaping young fathers' parenting behaviours, noting that positive or negative experiences during childhood can profoundly influence how they approach fatherhood. Furthermore, participants' acknowledgment that their upbringing shaped their parenting choices aligns with studies by Worku et al. (2021), which underscore the importance of early familial environments in forming attitudes toward discipline, respect, and caregiving. For instance, Participant 1's statement, "*How my parents raised me influences how I want to raise my child,*" illustrates the learned nature of parenting. This observation supports the argument by Bamishigbin et al. (2019) that parenting behaviours are often a reflection of generational transmission, with young fathers either replicating or deliberately diverging from their experiences.

The role of respect, as highlighted by participants in this study further emphasizes the transmission of cultural values through parenting. Respect, a core value in many Ghanaian households, shapes the moral expectations fathers have for their children. Soenens et al. (2019) similarly observed that

cultural norms and values significantly inform parenting practices, particularly in collectivist societies, where communal and familial expectations are paramount. In the Ghanaian context, these norms operate within a patriarchal framework in which male authority in the household is deeply embedded (Amoo et al., 2018). This can result in fathers seeing themselves primarily as disciplinarians and providers, aligning with the hegemonic masculine ideal. Thus, parenting behaviours of teenage fathers are embedded within the broader family system. The reciprocal influences between parents, children, and extended family members, as posited by Bowen (1978), mean that the fathers' current approaches are not simply individual choices but the product of ongoing systemic interactions. For instance, the support or conflict they experience within their family of origin can either reinforce or challenge their parenting practices, contributing to stability or change within the family unit. While many participants sought to emulate positive aspects of their parents' styles, others grappled with the negative legacies of their upbringing. This duality reflects findings by Gaydos (2017), who noted that young fathers from stable, nurturing homes were more likely to engage positively with their children, whereas those from neglectful or abusive backgrounds often struggled with their roles.

The socio-economic conditions surrounding these young fathers also play a critical role in shaping their parenting behaviors. Studies by Terefe et al. (2024) and Worku et al. (2021) highlight that poverty, limited education, and early exposure to parenting responsibilities often compound the challenges faced by teenage fathers. Participants' narratives demonstrate an awareness of these challenges, with many striving to provide emotional and financial stability despite their socio-economic constraints. Participant 5's desire to foster security and love in his child illustrates an aspirational approach to parenting, which mirrors findings that early fatherhood can serve as a

catalyst for personal growth and resilience (Terefe et al., 2024). This aligns with Social Exchange Theory (SET), which suggests that teenage fathers weigh the perceived rewards of emotional bonds, social recognition, and personal fulfilment against the costs of financial strain, time pressures, and social stigma (Homans, 1974; Blau, 2017). When the rewards outweigh the costs, as in cases where fathers receive emotional affirmation from their children or community, they are more motivated to remain actively engaged. However, within the hegemonic masculinity framework (Connell, 1995), such aspirations may be overshadowed by the pressure to perform traditional breadwinner roles, often leading to tension between cultural ideals of masculinity and the realities of adolescent fatherhood in Greater Accra.

The findings illustrate that teenage fathers' parenting styles are deeply rooted in their childhood experiences, shaped by a combination of familial, cultural, and socio-economic factors. While many participants sought to replicate positive aspects of their upbringing, others faced the challenge of overcoming negative legacies.

5.2.3 Challenges Experienced Among Teenage Fathers in Greater Accra

The difficulty of balancing work and family responsibilities emerged as a significant challenge for the teenage fathers in this study. Participants expressed feelings of being overwhelmed, echoing findings by Terefe et al. (2024), who emphasized that young fathers often prioritize financial responsibilities at the expense of emotional engagement with their children. For example, Participant 1 shared, "*Balancing work and being a father is tough,*" which aligns with Henry et al.'s (2020) observation that financial instability is a critical stressor for adolescent fathers. The struggle to manage time and finances often compels young fathers to choose work over caregiving,

a dynamic that Madiba and Nsiki (2017) argue may hinder their ability to build strong emotional connections with their children. This dual responsibility exacerbates stress and limits opportunities for teenage fathers to be present in their children's lives, a phenomenon also noted by Lau Clayton (2016). This prioritisation of financial provision over emotional involvement is consistent with hegemonic masculinity ideals (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), which define "successful" fatherhood in terms of breadwinning capacity. In Ghana's patriarchal context, where men's social status is closely linked to their ability to provide (Amoo et al., 2018; Dery & Ganle, 2020), adolescent fathers may experience heightened stress when they cannot meet these expectations. Similarly, from a Social Exchange Theory perspective, these choices can be understood as young fathers conducting an implicit cost-benefit analysis (Homans, 1974; Blau, 2017). Young fathers in this study are prioritizing paid work (a perceived high reward in terms of financial stability and social recognition) over hands-on caregiving (which, though emotionally rewarding, may be seen as costly in terms of lost income and time).

Financial instability compounds the challenges of parenting for teenage fathers. Many lack steady income or resources, as they are often still in school or early in their careers. This economic pressure can lead to feelings of inadequacy and emotional distress (Madiba & Nsiki, 2017). Terefe et al. (2024) emphasized that these financial constraints often force young fathers to delay educational or career pursuits, further limiting their long-term ability to provide stability for their families. Family Systems Theory helps explain how these pressures affect not only the father but also the wider family unit. When a young father's financial or emotional stress disrupts his role, the strain can ripple through the family system, affecting co-parenting relationships, extended family support patterns, and even the child's well-being (Bowen, 1978). Adolescent fathers frequently report feeling unprepared for the demands of parenting. The rapid transition from

adolescence to fatherhood, marked by emotional and psychological changes, can be overwhelming (Matlakala et al., 2018). This was evident in the study's findings, where participants expressed anxiety and self-doubt about fulfilling societal expectations. Such feelings reflect broader trends observed by Madiba and Nsiki (2017), who found that news of an impending pregnancy often triggers distress, denial, and confusion among teenage fathers. Furthermore, anxieties are exacerbated by masculine norms that discourage men from expressing vulnerability, meaning that adolescent fathers may suppress emotional struggles to maintain an image of strength (Messerschmidt, 2019).

Societal attitudes toward teenage fathers further exacerbate their struggles. Participants in this study noted the pressure of societal expectations, which aligns with Tuffin et al.'s (2018) finding that societal stigma often undermines young fathers' self-esteem and confidence. The portrayal of teenage fathers as absent or incompetent adds to their sense of isolation (Lau Clayton, 2016). This stigma not only reinforces feelings of inadequacy but also discourages them from seeking help or engaging in their roles as parents. The lack of targeted support systems for teenage fathers, highlighted by Nkwemu et al. (2019), leaves many feeling alienated. Without adequate guidance, they struggle to navigate the demands of fatherhood, further perpetuating cycles of disengagement and emotional strain. However, as Dery et al. (2025) note, some young men actively resist dominant masculine norms and seek to redefine fatherhood in more equitable and emotionally engaged terms. Recognising and supporting such alternative masculinities could help shift cultural perceptions and provide teenage fathers with socially acceptable pathways to be both providers and caregivers.

5.2.4 Strategies for Improving Parenting Behaviours Among Teenage Fathers

The findings from individual interviews in relation to objective 1 and objective 2 informed several strategies for improving parenting behaviours among teenage fathers. Support systems play a vital role in helping teenage fathers navigate the challenges of parenthood. The findings indicate that many young fathers rely heavily on their families, particularly their parents, for emotional, financial, and practical assistance. The findings revealed the value of intergenerational support, highlighting how fathers draw on the wisdom and experience of their own parents to inform their parenting strategies. This aligns with findings by Bamishigbin et al. (2019), who noted that parental influence often shapes young fathers' approaches to child-rearing, providing a foundation of knowledge and guidance. Similarly, the support offered by mothers was a recurring theme. This is consistent with Nkwemu et al. (2019), who emphasized that family networks often serve as a lifeline for teenage fathers, particularly when they face economic or emotional strain. However, the lack of family support, as expressed by one participant, *"I don't have much help from my family; it's hard,"* highlights the vulnerability of young fathers who are isolated from such resources. Lau Clayton (2016) similarly noted that the absence of familial or community support can exacerbate feelings of isolation and increase the challenges of fatherhood. Community support also emerged as a critical resource for some fathers. Such support can mitigate the burdens faced by teenage fathers and foster a sense of belonging and community, as noted by Tuffin et al. (2018). However, community support was not universally accessible, further underscoring the disparities in resources available to young fathers. Consistent with Dery et al. (2025), community-driven interventions that encourage gender-equitable fatherhood could help shift norms so that emotional involvement is valued alongside financial provision, enabling young fathers to construct more flexible masculine identities.

Emotional support and counseling services are another critical area of need for teenage fathers. Participant 2 articulated this clearly, stating, “*Counseling services would help us deal with the stress of being a father.*” This echoes findings by Matlakala et al. (2018), who noted that the psychological burden of fatherhood can lead to significant stress, anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy. Access to counseling can provide young fathers with a safe space to process these emotions, develop coping strategies, and gain confidence in their roles. From a gender theory perspective, such services could also help teenage fathers navigate the tension between hegemonic masculine ideals such as emotional toughness, independence, and emerging Ghanaian ideals of nurturing fatherhood (Ampim et al., 2020). As Tuffin et al. (2018) observed, mental health challenges can undermine young fathers’ ability to engage meaningfully with their children, potentially leading to strained relationships. Counseling services can address these issues, promoting emotional well-being and positive parenting practices.

5.3 Contribution of the Study – Research, Practice, and Policy

This study explored teenage fathers' parenting behaviours and experiences in Greater Accra, Ghana, identifying 11 main themes and 20 sub-themes. The findings significantly contributed to the body of knowledge in various ways:

5.3.1 Contribution to Research

The study filled a research gap by providing empirical data on the often-overlooked experiences of teenage fathers in Ghana. Previous research on fatherhood has predominantly focused on older, more economically stable men or explored fatherhood through the lens of mothers and family

dynamics in Western contexts. This study, therefore, offered a fresh perspective by centring teenage fathers, particularly within a non-Western context, and examining their experiences through the lens of financial instability, emotional involvement, co-parenting, and support systems. Furthermore, the study expanded our understanding of how sociocultural factors in Ghana, such as extended family networks and traditional disciplinary practices, shape fatherhood, thereby contributing to a more nuanced global understanding of father involvement in early childhood.

5.3.2 Contribution to Practice

The findings of this study provided valuable insights for practitioners working in child welfare, family services, and community organisations. The study revealed that teenage fathers in Ghana often face multiple challenges, including financial instability, lack of access to job opportunities, and work-family conflict. However, many adolescent fathers remained emotionally committed to their children despite these barriers and actively sought to engage in parenting roles. This highlighted the importance of engaging adolescent fathers in parenting programs and support services. Practitioners could design interventions to enhance father-child engagement, especially for young fathers struggling with financial pressures and role expectations. The study also underscored the need for culturally relevant programs that consider the prevalent social support systems, such as the role of extended families, in Ghana.

5.3.3 Contribution to Policy

The findings of this study have several implications for policy development, particularly in family welfare, employment, and education. The study emphasised the critical role of financial stability in supporting father engagement, suggesting that policy efforts should focus on creating

employment opportunities and providing economic support for young fathers. Policies to support teenage fathers could include job training programs, financial counselling, and parenting workshops. Additionally, the study's findings pointed to the importance of incorporating counselling services into public health programs to support young fathers' emotional and psychological well-being. This could be instrumental in reducing the stigma and stress associated with teenage fatherhood, thereby promoting healthier family dynamics.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

Although this study provided valuable insights, it had limitations. Firstly, the study focused exclusively on teenage fathers in the Greater Accra region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the other areas in Ghana or different cultural contexts. For instance, teenage fathers' experiences in rural areas may differ significantly due to variations in access to resources, cultural practices, and community support systems. Secondly, the sample size was relatively small, and the qualitative nature of the study means that the findings are context-specific and based on subjective experiences. As a result, the findings may not represent all teenage fathers' experiences. Furthermore, the study relied heavily on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias, where participants may have presented themselves in a more favourable light regarding their parenting behaviours.

Another area for improvement was the need for a comparative group. The study did not include data from teenage mothers or older fathers, which could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of parenting behaviours across different demographics. Moreover, the study did not address certain socio-political factors, such as governmental policies on teenage parenthood or the

influence of religious institutions, which could have further enriched the analysis of the challenges faced by adolescent fathers.

5.5 Recommendations – Research, Practice and Policy

5.5.1 Recommendations for Research

Given the limitations identified in this study, future research should aim to address several key areas to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teenage fatherhood. First, future studies should include a more extensive and diverse sample of adolescent fathers, covering both urban and rural areas, to explore geographic differences in parenting behaviors and experiences. Second, longitudinal studies that track teenage fathers over time would be valuable in understanding how their parenting involvement evolves as their children age and the fathers mature.

There is also a need for comparative research that includes data from teenage mothers and older fathers, as this would provide a more holistic view of the gendered and age-related dynamics of parenting. Additionally, future research should investigate the impact of socio-political and religious factors on teenage fatherhood, exploring how governmental policies and community organisations can support or hinder young fathers in their parenting roles. Finally, mixed-method research designs, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data, could provide more robust findings and enhance the generalizability of the results.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Practice

Considering the unique challenges shared by adolescent fathers in this study, practice-based interventions should include preventive measures to reduce teenage fatherhood in the first place.

This could involve developing youth-targeted sexual and reproductive health programmes in schools, churches, mosques, and community centres. Peer-education models, where trained young men engage other boys in discussions about masculinity, relationships, and contraception, can challenge harmful gender norms and promote responsible decision-making. Practitioners should also collaborate with parents, guardians, and local leaders to encourage open conversations with adolescents about sexual health, thereby reducing misinformation and stigma around contraception use.

Practitioners working with young fathers, particularly social workers, community organisers, and healthcare providers, should consider the unique socio-cultural context in which these fathers operate. The findings indicated that many teenage fathers rely on their extended family for support, suggesting that interventions should involve these networks to ensure a holistic approach to fatherhood. Programs that focus on financial literacy, job training, and employment support would be instrumental in addressing the economic barriers that teenage fathers face. Parenting workshops in partnership with NGOs, faith-based organisations, and local leaders, targeting teenage fathers could also be developed to enhance their parenting skills, emotional engagement, and co-parenting dynamics. Mental health support and counselling services should also be incorporated into these programs to address the emotional and psychological challenges that young fathers face.

Given the traditional disciplinary practices identified in the study, practitioners should promote positive parenting techniques that reduce reliance on corporal punishment and encourage more communicative forms of discipline. Engaging fathers in conversations about alternative discipline

methods within the context of their cultural norms could promote more positive and constructive parenting behaviours.

5.5.3 Recommendations for Policy

Policies to support teenage fathers should focus on improving access to education, employment, and healthcare. Job training and educational programs tailored to the needs of adolescent fathers would provide them with the necessary skills to secure stable jobs, thereby improving their financial situation and capacity to support their families. Such initiatives could be prioritised for short-to-medium-term implementation, as they are more achievable through local government–NGO partnerships and existing skills development schemes. Policymakers should also consider implementing targeted welfare programs that financially assist teenage parents, ensuring that both the father and mother receive adequate support. While desirable, this may require significant budgetary allocation and sustained political commitment, making it a longer-term goal rather than an immediate intervention.

Additionally, the study emphasised the need for policies that promote father-friendly work environments. Flexible work hours and parental leave policies could help teenage fathers more effectively balance their work and family responsibilities. Public health policies should also include mental health services for adolescent fathers, providing them with the resources to cope with the psychological pressures of parenthood. Initial efforts could focus on integrating basic mental health screening and support into existing primary healthcare and community outreach services. Finally, policymakers should invest in community-based parenting programs that engage

fathers and mothers, emphasising the importance of co-parenting and shared responsibilities in raising children.

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provided valuable insights into teenage fathers' parenting behaviours and experiences in Greater Accra, Ghana. The study identified 7 main themes and 18 sub-themes, revealing adolescent fathers' challenges, support systems, and the role of socio-cultural factors in shaping their parenting experiences. The findings showed that young fathers actively engage with their children in ways that express love, care, and responsibility, even in the face of significant challenges. They demonstrated emotional involvement, took on practical caregiving duties, and made decisions about discipline based on both personal values and lessons learned from their own upbringing. The results also revealed that parenting behaviours are strongly shaped by structural and contextual factors such as financial instability, lack of employment opportunities, time pressures from work, and the presence or absence of family, partner, and community support. The lived experiences of participants highlighted the multiple pressures teenage fathers face, from balancing work and childcare to coping with limited resources. Many described the importance of having supportive partners, parents, and community members, while others expressed the difficulties of raising a child without such support. The implication of these findings is that policymakers, community-based organizations, and social service providers should prioritize developing integrated support systems that combine skill-building opportunities, employment facilitation, and psychosocial counselling to strengthen parenting capacity of young fathers. While the study had limitations, including a narrow geographic focus and small sample size, it provided a foundation for future research to explore teenage fatherhood's complexities further. By

expanding the understanding of adolescent fathers' experiences, this study contributed to the growing knowledge of father involvement and highlighted the importance of supporting young fathers in their parenting journeys.



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APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FORM



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES

(ECH)

P. O. Box LG 74, Legon, Accra, Ghana

My Ref. No: ECH 242/ 23-24

June 05, 2024

Eilee Ayivor-Vieira
Department Of Psychology
University of Ghana
Legon

ETHICAL CLEARANCE (ECH 242/ 23-24)

The Ethics Committee for the Humanities (ECH) conducted a full-board review and approved your protocol titled:

EXPLORING PARENTING BEHAVIOURS AMONG TEENAGE FATHERS IN GHANA

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **EILEEN AYIVOR-VIEIRA**

Please note that the final review report must be submitted to the Committee at the completion of the study. Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation. Any modification of this research project must be submitted to ECH for review and approval prior to implementation.

Please report all serious adverse events related to this study to ECH within seven (7) days verbally and in writing within fourteen (14) days.

This certificate is valid until June 04, 2025. You are required to submit annual reports for continuing review.

Please accept my congratulations.

Yours Sincerely,



Professor C. Charles Mate-Kole
ECH Chair

Cc: Professor Adote Anum, Department of Psychology, UG Professor
Joseph Osafo, Department of Psychology, UG

Dr. Emmanuel Nii-Boye Quarshie, Department of Psychology, UG

Tel: +233-303933866

Email: ech@ug.edu.gh



APPENDIX II: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM



OFFICE OF RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
Ethics Committee for the Humanities (ECH)

PROTOCOL CONSENT FORM

Section A- BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Title of Study:	EXPLORING PARENTING BEHAVIOURS AMONG TEENAGE FATHERS IN GHANA (GREATER ACCRA)
Principal Investigator:	EILEEN AYIVOR –VIEIRA

Section B– CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

General Information about Research

The purpose of this study is to explore the parenting behaviors and experiences of teenage fathers in Ghana. Using a qualitative research design, the study aims to identify recurring patterns and themes through one-on-one interviews with teenage fathers between from 17-19 years. The study will examine factors influencing their parenting behaviors, including cultural and socioeconomic factors, family support, and peer pressure. The study's outcomes are expected to contribute to the body of knowledge on teenage fatherhood in Accra, Ghana, specifically recommendations for interventions that promote positive parenting behaviors.

The duration required of each participant will be approximately 50 minutes to an hour, depending on the depth and breadth of their experiences and perspectives. Each participant will undertake one session only. The researcher will ensure that the interview sessions are conducted at the participants' convenience, and they will schedule the sessions at a time that is convenient for them.

There will be no experimental procedures involved in this study. Participant's role is to share their experiences and perspectives during the interview.

BENEFITS/RISKS OF THE STUDY

Benefits of the study

There will be no direct benefits of the study to participants. However, the study seeks to provide:

Improved understanding: The study will contribute to a better understanding of parenting behaviors among teenage fathers in Ghana, which is an understudied area.

Policy implications: The study's results will inform policymakers and stakeholders regarding the development of interventions and policies that promote positive parenting behaviors among teenage fathers.

Holistic approach: The study's qualitative research method will enable a holistic approach to understand the challenges and experiences of teenage fathers, offering rich data that will inform future interventions and programs.

Cultural sensitivity: Understanding the unique cultural values and beliefs that shape parenting experiences among teenage fathers, the study can provide input that is culturally sensitive for interventions and address their specific needs.

Risks of the study:

Confidentiality: Participants may feel uncomfortable disclosing sensitive information during the interview. However, the researcher will ensure that participants' confidentiality is maintained, and their identities will not be disclosed in any reports or publication related to the study.

Emotional distress: Talking about personal circumstances may cause emotional stress among participants. Researcher will provide a safe and supportive environment for participants where they can feel comfortable discussing their personal circumstances. Researcher would encourage participants to express their feelings and thoughts freely. Researcher will provide a emotional support to participants, such as referring them to a mental health professional or a support group.

Informed consent: Ensuring that participants understand the ethical implications of their participation may be a challenge, given their age and socio-economic status.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of participants' records in this study will be maintained to protect their privacy rights. To ensure confidentiality, the following measures will be taken:

Data storage: All records identifying the participants will be stored in a secured location, accessible only to the researcher. Electronic data will be stored on password-protected computers, and the data will be encrypted for additional security.

Participant identity: All participants in this study will be assigned a unique identifier code, which will replace their names in all research records to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Limited access to records: Access to the research records will be limited to the researcher, research assistants, and authorized personnel involved in the study. Data will be kept confidential, and all participants will be informed of the researcher's commitment to confidentiality.

Consent forms: By signing or thumbprinting a written consent form, the participant or their representative will authorize access to the research records for the researcher, research assistants, and authorized personnel involved in the study. However, the participant's authentic identity will not be disclosed in any publication or presentation resulting from the study.

Data retention: The research records will be kept confidential for up to five years after the study's completion, after which the data will be permanently destroyed.

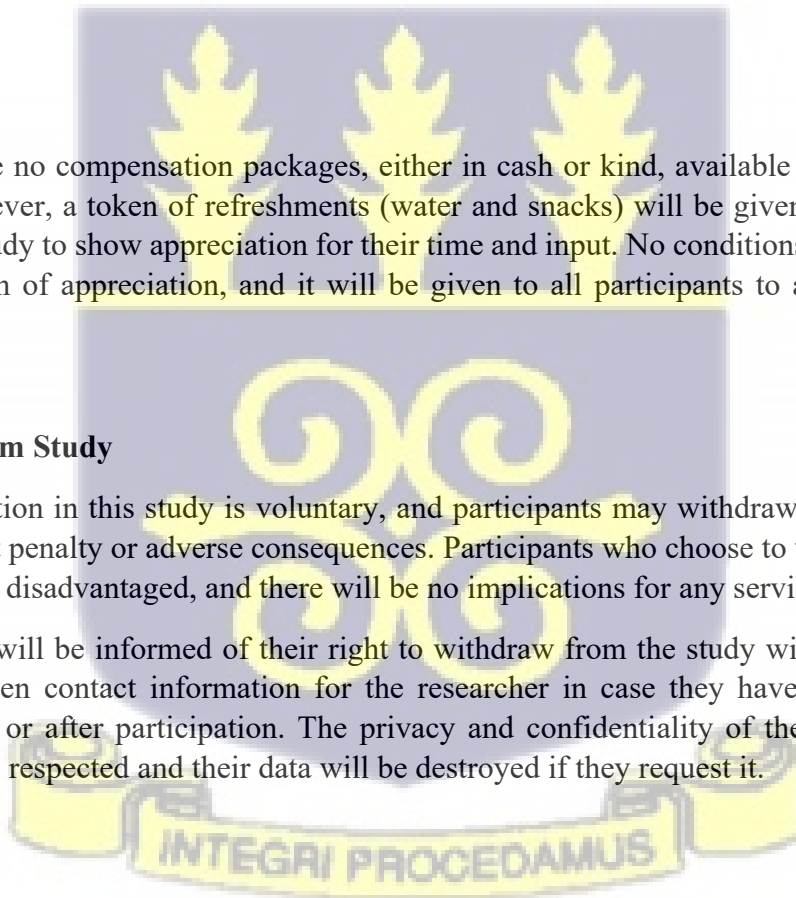
Compensation

There are no compensation packages, either in cash or kind, available for participants in this study. However, a token of refreshments (water and snacks) will be given to participants at the end of the study to show appreciation for their time and input. No conditions need to be met to receive the token of appreciation, and it will be given to all participants to acknowledge their contribution.

Withdrawal from Study

Participation in this study is voluntary, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or adverse consequences. Participants who choose to withdraw from the study will not be disadvantaged, and there will be no implications for any services they receive.

All participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study without penalty, and they will be given contact information for the researcher in case they have any questions or concerns during or after participation. The privacy and confidentiality of the participants who withdraw will be respected and their data will be destroyed if they request it.



Contact for Additional Information

Kindly Contact EILEEN AYIVOR-VIEIRA, University of Ghana at eileenvieira123@gmail.com or : 0545720397, if you have any questions or clarifications about the research

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study you may contact the Administrator of the Ethics Committee for Humanities, ISSER, University of Ghana at ech@ug.edu.gh or 00233- 303-294-0531.

Section C- PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

There will be no experimental procedures involved in this study. Participant's role is to share their experiences and perspectives during the interview. Semi-structured interview guide will be used to collect data from participants. And confidentiality records of the data will maintain to protect participants privacy rights. All records identifying the participants will be stored in a secured location, accessible only to the researcher. Electronic data will be stored on password-protected computers, and the data will be encrypted for additional security. Again, access to the research records will be limited to the researcher, research assistants, and authorized personnel involved in the study. Data will be kept confidential, and all participants will be informed of the researcher's commitment to confidentiality

"I have read or have had someone read all of the above, asked questions, received answers regarding participation in this study, and am willing to give consent for me, my child/ward to participate in this study. I will not have waived any of my rights by signing this consent form. Upon signing this consent form, I will receive a copy for my personal records."

Name of Participant

Signature or mark of Participant

Date

If participant can neither read nor understand the form themselves, a witness must sign here:

I was present while the benefits, risks, and procedures were read to the volunteer. All questions were answered and the volunteer has agreed to take part in the research.

Name of witness

Signature of witness / Mark

Date

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

Name of Person who Obtained Consent

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

Date





OFFICE OF RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
Ethics Committee for the Humanities (ECH)

GUARDIAN /PARENTAL PROTOCOL CONSENT FORM

Section A- BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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Compensation

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Name of witness

Signature of witness / Mark

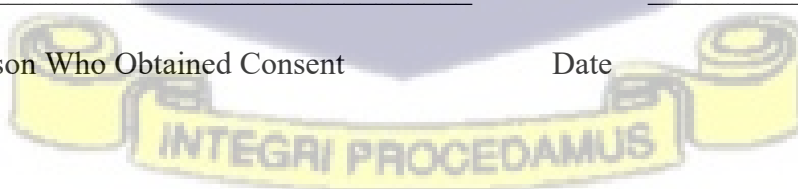
Date

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

Name of Person who Obtained Consent

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

Date



APPENDI III: INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

1. Can you tell me about your experience as a teenage father?
2. How did you react when you found out you were going to be a father?
3. How involved do you feel you are in your child's life?
4. How do you provide emotional support to your child?
5. What role do you play in co-parenting with the mother of your child?
6. What financial do you have to support your child, and how do you go about obtaining these resources?
7. How do others expectations and beliefs about fatherhood affect your parenting behaviors?
8. What motivated you to become a teenage father?
9. What are the barriers to positive parenting of teenage fathers?
10. What kind of support have you received from your family and community?
11. What do you think are the most important qualities of being a good father?
12. What support services do you think would benefit teenage fathers in your community?
13. What advice would you give to other teenage fathers who are just starting their parenting journey? What do you think are the most important qualities of being a good father?
14. What support services do you think would benefit teenage fathers in your community?
15. What advice would you give to other teenage fathers who are just starting their parenting journey?
16. How do you discipline your child when they misbehave? What are your expectations for their behaviour.

