Transforming Fatherless Children through Faith as a Strength Perspective: Challenging Father-Absence as a Social ill in South African Society

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Abstract

The Children's Act, 38 of 2005, (South Africa) states that children in need of care and protection face social ills such as father absence and in addition some children abuse alcohol and drugs, among other things. The Act defines the essence of parental responsibilities and rights regarding children, and fatherhood in this context can be a notable trending topic. This research posits that fatherhood occurs predominantly within the context of families. Notwithstanding this, the nature of fatherhood is changing within an African context. Suspicion of attributing to men any positive aspect is evidenced within the social sciences, let alone appreciation of the role of men in families. The present project results show that transforming fatherless children and fatherhood can be ambiguous and challenging in a world dominated by men. Yet, this paper suggests and embraces faith as a strength perspective where God is seen as Father and parent apropos establishing his Fatherhood in the hearts of men, which characterizes the fatherhood of men, while it is life-giving in a world staggered by father absence. Father absence impedes children from receiving and giving love, and therefore, the manifest constant behavioural problems of children. Poor academic performance and self-perception are linked to father absence and children may suffer due to a lack of educational support and access to health care. Social workers try to collaborate with fathers and mothers to nurture a healthy relationship with their children. Unfortunately, these efforts fail in many instances and children become vulnerable due to a lack of care and love from both parents.

Introduction

In this paper, a solutional approach is proposed to father absence as a social ill so as to transform fatherless children through faith as a strength perspective. Therefore, the largest component of the literature in this paper analyses fatherhood, the detrimental consequences of father absence, including fatherless children, and the faith perspective. Fatherhood emanated from Scripture and not from a secular ideology, and this notion is central to the present paper. However, fatherhood is usually enmeshed in religious beliefs and practices (Wall, 2007). It is evident that due to negative societal influences emanating from mainly the West, the nature of fatherhood changed over time, but this crucial factor remains a particular cause of alarming dilemmas in family life. It alludes to the fact that men and their crucial role of being fathers have great responsibilities and accountabilities regarding children (McCarthy

& Edwards, 2011). Fatherhood is paramount, and fathers continue to play an essential and unique role in families and in society in general (Vaughan, 2010).

The fatherhood phenomenon was the pivot for numerous Western researchers and academics in the 1980s (Celik, 2020). Fatherhood is also an old myth, and it is not becoming truer as it ages (Schirrmacher, 2019). Still, the notion of fatherhood has prevailed for more than 200 centuries and is understood in different ways by various cultures, traditions, and religions worldwide (Meyer, 2018). Most understandings of fatherhood encompass a patriarchal stance: however, this paper is not an advocate of such a posture. Disappointingly, fatherhood is creating tension between feminism on the one hand, and, on the other, fatherhood feminist theories and gender equality in parenting. Some feminists are often in direct dispute with the discourses of fatherhood rights groups (Doucet & Lee, 2014). The main studies about fatherhood, especially in South Africa, tend to centre on gender, power, masculine control, paternal maintenance, family provision, and violence (Ratele et al., 2012). Moreover, in this country fatherhood tends to be connected with the notion of masculinity to a greater extent than most and is also based on socio-economic history (Richter et al., 2010). Leopeng and Langa (2017) further state that fatherhood is masculine and enjoys ample distinctive forms. In the sociological context, fatherhood is counted to be socially constructed because family and fatherhood are not viewed as entities but as social institutions (Thunstedt, 2017). Even so, *what is the essence of fatherhood?* Fatherhood is defined as the giving of main attention to the needs and problems of children by contributing physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional care (Makofane, 2015; Dowd, 2012).

Nevertheless, fatherhood changed over time, and the fact that innumerable families in the world are grappling with serious fatherhood challenges is devastating for them. The fatherhood phenomenon is concerning because families are being redefined and the father is not even present. Families are not only fading away, but they are losing God's plan, will, and purpose for their future (Freeks, 2020). Although research substantiates that fatherhood is elemental (Vaughan, 2010), it goes beyond gender, provision, and violence. It is centered on family, respect, discipline and obedience, responsibilities, accountabilities, and many more. Therefore, the key question in this paper is: *Is fatherhood still important in our current context?*

Abraham Lincoln affirmed the importance of fatherhood more than two centuries ago when he made the statement that the strength of a nation is constructed in the family where the father and mother function together (Family Life, 1998). Currently, father absence is the main social ill that dissuades the effective functioning of fatherhood in society. For example, African fatherhood was transformed and devalued, and innumerable men became absent providers (Makusha & Richter, 2014). Further, numerous fathers in South Africa neglected and rejected their families as a result of South Africa's unemployment predicament as encountered mostly in informal settlements and townships in urban and rural areas (Mahajan, 2014). For these reasons and many others, fractured families are inevitable in the South African society.

Research Question and Purpose

My understanding and review were steered by the research question, "What critical tool can be used to decrease the incidence of father absence and limit the occurrence of fatherless children to the minimum in the South African context?" The purpose of this paper was to review the available literature on father absence and fatherless children relevant to the South African society.

The Concern of Fatherless Children and Fractured Families in the South African Society

Part of the main aim of this paper is the concern around fatherless children, fractured families, and the increasing number of absent fathers, which is detrimental to society. Numerous

children are at the receiving end of the detrimental effects of father absence (Salami & Okeke, 2018). It is indicated in notable research that 1 in 5 children in South Africa experience difficulties with mental health and this leads to problems such as aggressive behavior and anxiety disorders (Parchment & Small, 2022). In another study, research was conducted on the impact of father absence on children, and in this research, the results showed that more girls than boys are negatively affected in all spheres of life due to father absence (Casetter, 2020). The girls of this study also indicated that they felt incomplete as individuals, and some of the key reasons were divorce, incarceration of the father, or death (Casetter, 2020).

Father absence causes fractured families, which in turn leads to unhealthy relationships within the family unit. These families affected have often experienced divorce and situations where various family members are in conflict and even estranged from each other. Fractured families can negatively disturb all domains of a child's development: however, it depends on innumerable elements such as the age of the child at the time of the parent's separation, personality, and family relationships. Infants and young children experience few negative developmental effects. Teenagers and older children experience issues in their educational, emotional, and social functioning. Mayowa (2021) indicates the view that fatherless children and fractured families are remote to the African family structure: however, fractured families are increasing in the world. He also mentions that fractured families have been identified as un-African, and these have further been treated as un-ideal, exceptional cases, and prohibited situations (Mayowa, 2021). He further argues that fractured families are regarded as households in which only one parent lives with a child or children (Mayowa, 2021).

Saika (2017), however, adds that fractured families are not strange and clear-cut phenomena: they are rather common. She says that a fractured family can be described as one that is in a crisis, where problems cause separation of members, divorce of parents, destruction of sons and daughters, and promote detrimental factors such as misunderstanding, mistreatment, mis-acceptance, misconception, and so on. Saika also says that the main causes of fractured families are divorce, separation, death, misconceptions among family members, unconditional administration, parental or friends' influence, problems faced by the children of fractured families, fractured homes, emotional problems, educational problems, social problems, family dynamics, behavior and learning problems, parent-child disagreements, parent-child interactions, and adjustment problems (2017).

Owing to this content, Fengu (2020) found calamitous consequences in a study done among 20 000 teachers at 1 380 schools across South African society. This research was commissioned by the South African Council for Educators (SACE) and supported by LeadAfrican Consulting (Pty) Ltd. Numerous fractured families and a fatherless generation of children are present in South African society. Children are arrogant in classrooms and think that they own the classroom. Disappointingly for teachers, most children lack discipline, and most of them do not value education. Learners no longer respect teachers, and they are verbally, emotionally, physically, and directly and indirectly, abusing teachers. Hollywood and mainly the American 'culture' exacerbated this situation further. For example, entertainment can influence minds and hearts, and this generates cultural change. It is not surprising that America is at a crucial tipping point in education and that is the reason why teachers were contemplating leaving the profession entirely. Understaffing for example has afflicted schools for years, and it is reaching now monumental magnitudes. Teachers are stressed out, overworked, and exhausted. This conduct causes a deep mark on the self-esteem and self-confidence of teachers. Several teachers feel discouraged and disheartened due to this. The study reveals further that violence against teachers in South African schools is alarming and a major societal concern. The study indicated that 20% of South African teachers commented that schools are violent places and learners are armed. And although security measures and checks are in place, learners still manage to commit violence and inappropriate behaviour. About 17% of teachers reported the dilemma of physical fights which involve various weapons

at school including knives and guns. Almost 13% of teachers believed that gangs were operating on the school premises.
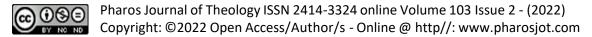
The study indicated further that these learners were seen as heroes among other learners, and this broke the entire system of discipline, respect, behavior, and obedience down even further. The study also found that teachers were doing the work of parents and other experts such as psychologists, counselors, and social workers. In addition, the study mentioned that prevalent violence was correlated with teacher absenteeism, sicknesses such as depression, resignation, early retirement, and hatred against the teaching profession. The violence was mainly the result of fractured families and father absence. School violence, then, is a social ill, negative in nature, and destructive, because it affects both those learners who are directly victimized and those who saw the violence that occurred. It creates then an atmosphere of fear, anxiety, worry, and uneasiness which interferes with the children's ability to study and perform at school.

Despite this dire situation, the author is convinced that faith is a strength perspective, which means that God can restore fractured families through his infallible Word. Significantly, the Fatherhood of God, Christianity, and the Bible can transform and restore men and fathers, especially to be integrated with their families – to be involved, present, and available. The family is God's institution in society, and he yearns to transform fractured families within society. However, there are destructive elements, such as the increase in the number of absent fathers within society and the unforeseen and remarkable social trend, namely the deterioration of fatherhood (Popenoe, 1996). Nevertheless, a relationship with Jesus Christ as the Son of God and also the sufferings if we are to be Christlike, gives one the privileges we have as Christians. We are the 'sons' of God, and God is the Father of us all. Thus, God is the ideal answer for fractured families with dilemmas of father absence and fatherless children (Gerstenberger, 2009).

The Father-absence Issue in the South African Society

Father absence is a serious social issue in society, as indicated, and a stark reality all over the world, as in South Africa (Mavungu, 2013). It generates devastating problems such as fractured families, as mentioned above, aggressive behavior among children, financial problems, social ills, and poverty. South Africa has and continues to experience rapid changes, including shifts in family composition. It is estimated that the country has the second highest rate of father absence in Africa (Khan, 2018; Richter et al., 2010). Although father absence is not unique to the South African context, it is one of the country's greatest dilemmas (Freeks, 2020; Mc Gee, 1993). It is currently experiencing great shifts in family composition, resulting in many fractured relationships. This has led to the noticeable prevalence of father absence (Kesebonye & P'Olak, 2020). Also, numerous families are challenged by father absence in South African society (Freeks, 2021c). This social ill is a negative factor in family arrangements, specifically where the absent father is associated with poor success in children, and a life without a father leads to poor or diminished academic performance in children (Radl et al., 2017). Furthermore, sociological research has shown that father absence is a key factor in the negative social-emotional and economic well-being of children (McLanahan et al., 2014). Today, it would not be surprising if South Africa is rated as the country with the highest figure of father absence.

What is father absence in reality? Father absence can be defined as the financial, physical, and emotional absence of a biological father over the lifespan of his child(ren) due to the breakdown of a parental relationship (Meyer, 2018). It also entails situations where fathers do not interact with their children regularly and do not play a crucial role in their development (Makofane, 2015). Many children in South African society are desolated due to father absence (Mabusela, 2014). In some cases, fathers do not live in the same home as their biological children (Richter et al., 2010) and, in others, there is no father at all (Richter & Maskusha,

2018). Countless children from fatherless homes are bullied or shamed for being fatherless, and this creates in them a sense of loss and confusion (Richter et al., 2010). Instances of child abuse and child neglect are linked to father absence and are evident in family life (Londt et al, 2017). Many families, mainly children, are hurt due to father absence, and they do not know where to turn for abetment (Freeks, 2021c). Thus, it is evident that father absence is a key contributory factor to child neglect and abuse and a key cause of disrupted and unstable families.

Various reasons for the absent father figure have been cited, including unemployment, divorce, poor socio-economic circumstances, cultural beliefs, and so forth (Eddy et al., 2013). Meyer (2018) states that a considerable number of reasons contributed to the immense number of fathers being absent from the lives of their children either financially, emotionally, or physically: unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, and so on. The emotional effect of father absence is more hurtful due to withdrawal and various forms of abuse (Morse, 2016).

The widespread and tenacious nature of father absence in South Africa is exacerbated by undisclosed fatherhood, denial of the responsibility of fatherhood, dissolution of households, and divorce (Albert et al., 2021). The absent father figure hurts the overall development of their children (Pougnet et al., 2011). Smit et al. (2014) state that father absence in a child's life is associated with adverse psychological effects such as lower self-esteem, lower self-perception, poor academic performance, and lack of good interpersonal relationships with the opposite sex. It is further associated with poor self-perception (Magqamfana & Bazana, 2020). Children exposed to it furthermore frequently suffer the consequences of mood disruptions and less access to health and educational support services (Holborn & Eddy, 2011).

Moreover, families without fathers are associated with child abuse and behavioral problems (Amato, 2010). Father absence creates a vicious cycle of poverty in many households, and many children suffer as a result (Mutegi, 2015; Carstens, 2014). According to Jeremiah 31:29, *'the fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge.'* This scripture shows the dominion of the father as the crucial support, assistance, and authority of the family. The phrase is an emendation of the proverbial saying that *fathers shall pay the forfeit of the sins of their fathers* (Freeks, 2021a).

As indicated, father absence is detrimental for most children in South Africa and globally. Uninvolved and absent fathers are negligent parents who respond to little or no demands from their children. They also have little emotional involvement with their children and only provide basic needs such as shelter and food. One should understand that the lack of a father figure means that the child has no positive male role model in the home. This social ill ultimately causes children to become vulnerable to abuse, as indicated. It also contributes to the great number of child-headed households in South Africa (Freeks, 2021b).

Furthermore, children become vulnerable when they do not receive the care and love of both parents. They may struggle with basic skills such as how to handle emotions, how to trust others, and how to navigate interpersonal relationships. Father absence contributes to the risk of children being harmed as well as self-harm, suicidal thoughts, and risky behaviour. Also, children who experience father absence are at a higher risk of becoming the victims of risky sexual involvement, acquiring human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), drug and alcohol abuse, crime, and violence (Makusha & Richter, 2015; Gould & Ward, 2015). Popenoe (1996) indicates that father absence may lead to premature engagement in sex, early pregnancy, depression, poverty, and substance abuse among children. These problems are devastating to most families, and the family then often blames God for the ills and misfortunes in their lives. Salami and Okeke (2018) describe father absence as societal malice that challenges nations at the hearts of their communities and holds enormous risks and danger for children of all ages.

In summary, the current literature indicates that there is a link between father absence and the development of children (Pougnet et al., 2011). Father absence leads to changes in the family structure, family roles, and the financial circumstances of the family. This hurts the socio-economic state of the family and the socio-emotional state of the fatherless child, often leading to behavioral problems in children (Gray & Anderson, 2016; Mncanca et al., 2016).

Faith as Strength Perspective: The Fatherhood of God

God's Fatherhood According to Scripture

The references to God's Fatherhood in Scripture are explicit (Deuteronomy 32:6; 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalms 68:6; Isaiah. 63:16; Jeremiah 3:19; Micah 2:10). The narratives in the Old Testament indicated that God is a Father to Israel, especially through his imperative roles as Creator, Protector, and Savior (Dobbs, 2013). The first reference to God as Father can be found in Deuteronomy 32:6, where Moses witnesses that God is the Father who created all of humanity. God is the Father of all flesh, including humans (Jeremiah 32:27; Job 12:10). This stipulates that God presents a type of father image to all people (Is 64:8; Numbers 16:22; Micah 2:10). God is the ancient Father who honors his Fatherhood and expects that humans should honor and respect him as their primeval Father (Micah 1:6; 2:10-11). That same honor and respect should be shown to earthly fathers. Moreover, God is illustrated as the Father of his creative work, including human beings. His Fatherhood should be demonstrated so that earthly parenthood can flow from it (Deuteronomy 32:6, 15, 18). Earthly fatherhood and parenthood and their origin thus derive from the Fatherhood of God (Steensma, 1995). The Fatherhood of God is a pivotal concept in the Bible and knowing God as Father lies at the heart of the Christian Gospel (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5-6). This notion can be understood better by making Jesus Christ the focal point of earthly fatherhood and parenthood (Hoepfner, 2009). God the Son is subordinate to God the Father (John 14:28), and God elevates his Word above his Name (Jesus). It is therefore imperative for parents (both father and mother) to take a stand in the Word of God because the Fatherhood of God was demonstrated in his creation of the human race, and the image of God is characterized by both genders (Genesis 1:27; 2:18, 22-25; 5:2).

Thus, Christian families have to believe that God is faithful and that he can empower and transform them through his Spirit to restore difficulties that may occur in their lives. The revelation by Scripture of God as Father through his son Jesus Christ and his saving grace do not only provide knowledge and information but basic help, advice, and meaningful insight into fatherhood in this challenging time and era of father absence. If Jesus Christ speaks to believers, they can know and accept that God the Father is speaking to them through his Son (John 14:16; Matthew 11:27; Hebrews 1:1). Hence, a relationship with Jesus Christ point toward an appropriate solution for father absence and fractured families (Gerstenberger, 2009).

Over and above this, the Fatherhood image of God can be presented analogically, where the man is the head, leader, mentor, teacher, and role model of the family as Jesus Christ is the head of the church, according to Ephesians 5:23. The Fatherhood of God is proclaimed in Jesus Christ seeing that Jesus called God his Father and the Father of all (John 5:18-47; 8:19; 25- 30; 10:29-30). Christ claimed in John 8:41 that God is the only Father that all humans have, and they are his true children (John 17:3).

What the earthly father can do is fulfill his role as a figure of authority, teacher, mentor, role model, etc., which is called on by God. Calling God Father, Christians need to know that they are adopted by love into his family to become God's sons and daughters (Gupta, 2016). God showed his love as a Father through Jesus, and this implies that the earthly father can place his trust in God to help secure a hopeful future for him and his family (Hoepfner, 2009). On these grounds, the biblical analogy between the human father and God the Father proposes

a view of human fatherhood that requires the man to be transformed into biblical fatherhood. To my mind, this good biblical way of giving expression to fatherhood has declined and phased out, and therefore the urgent call to re-emphasize the Fatherhood of God in this paper. Part of this urgent call is the critical role of the church. The church is supposed to keep people informed on biblical fatherhood, biblical parenting, and the essence of biblical values with in the home domain, and receptive and to provide a cornerstone of faith. It has to answer to a social ill such as father absence and fatherless children. Further, the church should be involved in the lives of families and live up to its true calling, which is meeting the needs of people (Freeks, 2019; Freeks, 2021c). Along with the church, organisations, and institutions such as FAMSA (Families South Africa) can contribute immensely to the lives of families, especially where there are children without fathers (FAMSA, 2015).

Transforming Fatherless Children and Families through the Fatherhood of God

Primary in this discussion is the notion that fatherhood derives from the Fatherhood of God, which is more far-reaching and significant than father absence as social ill in society. As indicated, fatherhood stems from the Bible and that means that the flawless solution to fatherless children and fractured families lies in the Triune God (God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the guidance of the Holy Spirit) to deal with fractured families and father absence as a social ill in society (Freeks, 2020).

The Fatherhood of God is perhaps his most overlooked attribute in the Christian world. Christians worldwide pray to God by uttering the familiar words, "Our Father who art in heaven." "Father" is the most familiar term for God in the Christian tradition, and perhaps the most theologically significant title for God in all of Scripture (Kelly, 1996). God presents himself as a Father throughout the Bible. Jesus makes more than 150 references to God as a Father, and he invites families to address God as their Father in heaven (Fry, 2016; Matthew 6:9). It is also through the work of Christ on the Cross that people are adopted into this family relationship (Ephesians 1:5). God the Father is not distant, and not an impersonal ruler, but a warm and welcoming figure and restorer of families. He is best understood as a loving and intimate father according to Scripture. The Bible indicates in Psalms 68:5 that God is the Father to the fatherless and the protector of widows. This truth is relevant to all families, whether fractured, destroyed, dysfunctional, or confronted with the cycle of father absence. All families should realize that true hope is only found in God the Father. And this hope is also there for orphans, widows, and lonely people; they are not excluded from God, but rather included in his hope.

Fry (2016) proposes that God is the literal Father to families and lists five remarkable truths that paint a profound picture of the heavenly Father. Firstly, God is the source of life. Earthly fathers play a key part in contributing to and providing for the life of children, but God the Father is the source of life. He makes it possible for the earthly father to provide for his family. God's plan for families is the path to abundant life (John 10:10), but families need to recognize him and integrate him into their earthly affairs. Secondly, God lovingly corrects us. God always offers his discipline and correction out of love (Hebrews 12:3–11). Earthly fathers should help their children to recognize how God's Spirit corrects them in their everyday decisions and interactions with others. Thirdly, God provides for our needs: Father God provides for the needs of the family according to Matthew 7:7–11. The earthly father should show his children how God provides for their needs. Fourthly, God the Father gives wisdom. The earthly father should help his children learn life skills, and he should encourage them around develop their talents and gifts. He should also help them see that truth, wisdom, and knowledge; insights come from the heavenly Father, and his inspired Word is the ultimate source of this wisdom and truth (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Fifthly, God always welcomes his people back when they move away from him. God is the ultimate model of forgiveness. All people have sinned and are still doing wrong, but God the Father is constantly on the watch for his people to return to him. He runs towards them with joy when they return to his family (Luke 15:11–32).

In addition, God showed his Fatherhood to people in a direct manner by creating all things and establishing man and by establishing a covenant with his offspring. God also shows his Fatherhood in an indirect or mediated manner. Humanity is truly to know itself and its place by knowing God. A man should know God and his Fatherhood before he can fulfill his role as a father to his family and the world. For instance, Adam had the task to be a father to the world. He generated his kind, and he was given a wife as a life partner to assist him in work and produce other "fathers" to fulfill the cultural mandate that God had given to his children. God mediated his Fatherhood through Adam and reflected his Fatherhood to the world through the mediated divine order of his creation. The term *father* is a significant term. In the Old Testament, the word for 'father' in Hebrew is *ab*, *Abba*, which means 'daddy,' and in the New Testament, the Greek word for father is *pater*. Furthermore, in the Greek language, the term for father means *nourisher*, *protector,* or *upholder* (Munroe, 2008). Therefore, Scripture presents the concept of fatherhood in unique ways such as headship which is generating and establishing a household or family, nourishing, or protecting his offspring or generation, and upholding that which he (the father) established (Kelly, 1996).

Fatherhood centers on phenomenal measures and protocols that attest to the uniqueness of God as Father while accentuating the significance of human fathers in a family entity. Hence, if anyone wants to understand the notion of fatherhood, God must be first seen and acknowledged as Father God in all spheres of life (Freeks, 2020; Smail, 1980).

Finally, the Fatherhood of God is a great faith strength that can help us address the father absence issue in society and to families. However, becoming an effective, available, present, and involved father to a family is not an easy task and is most definitely not automatically accomplished. It takes time and effort. Hence, God should be a great part of the efforts to enable fathers to make the crucial choice toward good fatherhood (Huerta, 2020).

Recommendations

Since the issue of father absence can have such a decisive effect and ample negative consequences, especially on children and their negative experience of fatherhood, including the transforming Fatherhood of God, the following recommendations can be made:

- The church as a faith institution is obligated to provide spiritual guidance for men and fathers (and women and mothers) in order for them to play a significant and prominent role in their families so that children can be safe and live on the advantaged edge of society.

- The church as a faith institution can arrange, organize, and plan fatherhood workshops and seminars so that fathers can be trained, equipped, and empowered in terms of their fundamental roles in the family context as centered on availability, commitments, presence, provision, and so on.

- Collaboration with local organizations such as FAMSA (Families South Africa) and other family institutions are central to the restoration of fractured families.

- It is crucial to equip families with biblical truth on parenthood and fatherhood where children are the focal point.

- Church programmes should be adapted and made available to both fathers and mothers.

- Community-based programs with a biblical focus on fatherhood and motherhood should be urgently considered.

- A needs analysis can be done in communities to identify specific needs to be addressed when it comes to fatherless children and father absence as social ill in numerous families.

Concluding Thoughts

A fatherless child who is mainly the result of father absence is in need of care and protection in any society and family. Father absence is not only a great concern in the world but a devastating social ill. This phenomenon is a considerable source of social problems such as child abuse, child neglect, fractured families, and others. The inference that can be made is that father absence can give rise to the identified problems, especially for fatherless children in need of care and protection.

This paper emphasized the serious consequences of father absence in families and society. And in particular, it sought to lay the foundation for an approach namely faith as a strength perspective which is based on the Fatherhood of God, to offer solutions to the problem of father absence in the South African society. Furthermore, this paper points out that God calls fathers to live out their crucial roles within the context of the family and society to intercept father absence and lessen the growing number of fatherless children. Efforts to train, equip and empower fathers can help numerous families in South Africa who are facing this growing social ill.

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