



The term teen fatherhood is for me a new coinage from the existing studies on teen parenthood in family studies. In the last century, the etiology of teen fatherhood has been studied and documented in western literatures. But African and Caribbean bookstores and shelves are empty when it comes to the study of teen fatherhood. The reason is because little is known about men's involvement in adolescent pregnancies and parenthood. Instead of having a baby as a teen most African young men prefer to abort the child. Abortion so to speak does not make a teen mother un-pregnant. It rather makes you a mother of a dead baby. The consequence of being a mother or a father of a dead baby is a court date and dialogue before the divine magistrate who is the giver of life. Rochester's study found a high rate of teen fatherhood before they are 20. Other studies confirmed that some teens from industrial societies were younger at the birth of their first child. At 16-20years, young men (baby fathers) often had problems seeing themselves as fathers. Teenage pregnancies irrespective of the reasons are unplanned. Because they are unplanned, it not uncommon for young girls and their families to be unaware of it until the pregnancy is far advanced. The advancement of teenage pregnancy places both the teenage girl and fetus at risk.

Most teenage pregnancies and teen fatherhood (approximately two thirds) occur in the age range from 18 to 19. Although the rate of teen parenthood has been declining in the 1990s, study show that 11 percent of all girls aged 15-19, and 20 percent had sexual intercourse as teenagers (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1999; Henshaw, 1999). Perhaps, transition to parenthood is a process and not a sudden event. Since parenthood is a gradual process, then having babies as teen becomes a complex transition in which a wide variety of influences may be at work (Pollock, 2006). Many teenage fathers report that their early sexual experiences resulted from peer pressures, including efforts to sustain a particular relationship, that were not in fact as pleasurable as had been anticipated (Dodson, undated; Luker, 1996). Being born a teen mother, living with a single parent, early initiation to sexual activity, history of conduct disorder, and leaving school before 16 years increases the likelihood of being a father between the ages of 14 and 26 years (Katherine et al, 2005). Teenage parenting is a major issue to modern families and households. Most teenage mothers have trouble adjusting and coping with parenting and motherhood. Adjustment without parental skills is identified as major strain that exacerbate symptoms of post delivery experience. Other problems associated with adjustment to parenthood may include a diminished ability to comply with prenatal care, inability to plan realistically for the baby, increased risk of substance abuse during pregnancy, and poor nutrition. Teen boys and girls always feel bewildered and ambivalent about motherhood and



fatherhood and the kind of baby to have and nurture. This feeling is as a result of poverty or financial disposition.

Poverty has been found a debilitating factor that leads to teenage parenthood. In some culture, poverty is perceived as un-preparedness of the man to marry and raise children. Hispanics and African-American adolescents under 15 years have fallen victims to low birth weight infants than others do because they are not prepared and because they lack medical insurance. Other factors associated with low birth weight include socioeconomic status, lack of early and comprehensive prenatal care, poor nutrition, smoking, alcohol use, and poor maternal health (Social Work Speaks, 2003-2006). Studies revealed that teenagers in the United State who are teen parents are more likely to come from poor or low-income families (83%) than those who have abortions (61%) or teen in general (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1998, p.4). The deleterious health outcomes or low-income condition among teenagers who give birth may be related to poverty and a lack of prenatal care rather than just maternal age (Social Work Speaks, 2003-2006).

Teenagers who come from a low-income background and who lack financial responsibilities associated with child care always remain perpetually poor in early adulthood (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1998). And when they remain poor, their condition worsens which often times lead them to a risky sexual activity. Sometimes, poverty among teen can lead them to abuse drugs and involve themselves in crimes and other forms of delinquencies. In Europe and in most industrialized nations, teenage parents especially mothers live on welfare to sustain the family. While Aid to Families with dependent children was still in effect, only about 30 percent of teen fathers went on welfare (Wider Opportunities for women, 1994). Besides poverty, education is another factor that leads to teenage pregnancy. Boys and young adults who father children of teenage mothers, like the mothers themselves, usually are poor and have low educational achievement (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998). On one hand, young men and women who were least successful in high school are most likely to become pregnant (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1998). When this happens, the tendency to remain in school would be feasible. Also dropping out of school often precedes rather than follows a pregnancy. On the contrary, young people who remain in school respond positively to comprehensive school-based programs that support them in continuing their education, in obtaining health care for themselves and for their babies, and in their parenting (Blum & Rhinehart, 1998).

At all times, adolescent fatherhood has remained costly to members of their family and society.



Studies in Great Britain and other countries of the world excluding Africa indicate that boys who become fathers while in their teens were at greater risk for experiencing problems at home and at school. At home, they are less likely than older fathers to live with their mother or child and would hardly provide adequate financial support. Boys who leave school early are more likely to become fathers while in their teens (Marsiglio, 1986). They would have difficulty in parenting roles and may speed the transition out of parental homes. Most of them have high rates of adverse family experiences, poor school experiences, poor social functioning and poor relationships with parents. They may experience social disadvantages such as low level of parental education, large family size, not being raised by both birth parents and financial hardship.

Some teen fathers are link with poor psychological adjustment, antisocial behavior and low self-esteem. Since they lack proper adjustment, they are more likely to demonstrate aggressive, truant and non-traditional behaviors. Boys whose parents experienced marital breakdown are more likely to become fathers by the early 20s (Kiernan, 1992). Poor family environment and poor experiences such as divorce and domestic violence lend to poorer social functioning and to early and less protected sexual activity, lower commitment to the mother and the baby, and less involvement after the birth of the child. And when these young men fails to take responsibilities as fathers after a child is born, it results to serious consequences for the child's development, the mother's resources and social costs. In this regard, direct counsel and role models for boys can delay the onset of sexual activity that leads to effective use of birth control, and involve fathers in effective fatherhood practices (Social Work Speaks, 2003-2006). According to Dearden et al (1995) school absenteeism, counts of theft, destructive behavior and trouble with police and the law often trigger signs of aggression, anger and rebelliousness. Young fathers' involvements in the juvenile justice system are dominant barriers to their ability to develop positive relationship with children. These barriers provide striking evidence that early involvement in delinquency and drug use is highly correlated with subsequently becoming a teen. Beside early delinquency, the impact of becoming a teen father may in turn spur young adolescents to even demonstrate greater delinquency (Juvenile Justice Bulletin, 2000). Teenage fathers who experienced social dysfunction and delinquency need extra help in order to assume full successful parenting. Successful parenting guarantees family support and group social network in coping with birth of a child. In addition to delinquency, 70 percent of the high-frequency drug users are teen.

Sequel to delinquency and drug use are other factors such as: race, neighborhood



characteristics, parents' level of education, youth's standardized reading score, and early sexual activity. These factors are linked to involvement in deviant behavior such as: gang membership, criminal and anti-government activities, chronic involvement in violent behavior and disrespect to society. As a result, communities, government and school assistance can help implement programs which can help teens develop into caring and responsible fathers (Wendy, 1999). Independent or components programs should be designed for families, teen mothers or young men. Component programs, forum and initiatives of these kinds are essential to teenage fathers who need extra help to assume full successful parenthood. Studies found that young fathers who face family rejection, barriers to have contact with child/children and mother, a lack of ways to contribute financially, and an inability to envision future achievements enabling them to function effectively as father (Batten & Stowell, 1996; Knitzer & Bernard, 1997). Besides future achievement, lack of finance and future aspirations are forever complicated by the need to reconcile the contradictory roles of adolescent father who assumes family responsibilities as adults before they sufficiently mature (Kahn & Bolton, 1986). These forces affect young men from being involved in the lives of their children (Anderson et al, 2004). However, some youngsters do not want to be involved in the future life of their children and these young men just need to be given a chance to grow in their role as father. Study at UC San Francisco, reveal that "young fathers who are left without resources of social supports struggle to sustain a positive presence in their child's life (Flores-Sanchez, 2003).

The lack of resources and social support can both cause teen fathers to feel dissatisfied in raising children. On one hand, resources can help teens move towards more socially inclusive lifestyles and behavior. The reason is because young men are struggling simultaneously to find their feet in society as well as learning to be responsible adults. Some of them have good intentions to be involved in the lives of their children, but are either inhibited by factors such as: lack of money, poor relationships with mother and families, incarceration, substance abuse, and their own lack of involved fathers (Social policy action, 2002). Ethnic and cultural differences play a big role in understanding the experiences of teens who are fathers. The U.S culture hardly makes it easy for adolescents to understand the structure of their families of birth. This single factor makes it increasingly difficult for teens to understand the influence of coming from diverse ethnic traditions that is prone to early sexual experiences. In Latino culture, Schwartz (1999) write that men are most responsive to warm, personal, informal contact and these factors helps them to consider whether an adequate family income before they embark on a traditional gender role of fathering a child. While this is the case, African-



American teen fathers may feel powerless based on past racial treatment of blacks in the U.S, and may mistrust both personal counseling and agents of authority (Kiselica, 1995). Canadian and European teens may choose to become teen parents and depend on the government for sustenance.

Illustrative Stories:

When Mc-Paul a Canadian youngster got married he was just 16. It was an age when he could not fully understand the whole concept of marriage and paternity. It was an age when he could not identify the demands of family life in Quebec and Ontario. He was forced into marriage because his girlfriend was pregnant. The second reason was because a baby was on the way between him and her girl friend. However, Mc-Paul never had the opportunity of having any formal education; neither did he have any vocational or parental skills. He lacked basic home training because he was raised in a single parent household. His father never considered it necessary educating him since he was in and out of job with little means of livelihood. Mc-Paul has no job of his own and the capacity to care for his new baby and wife became a hunting nightmare. Months after months they are faced with hunger and starvation. When the going gets tough, Mc-Paul would leave his girlfriend and child to stay with his Dad.

- Mohammed was born to an African Muslim polygamist and family. He was forced into marriage at the premature age of 14. During his first year in secondary school, his father arranged and married a girl of choice for him. After marriage, Mohammed never had the opportunity to complete his secondary education or developed skills in trade or craft. Mohammed was frustrated as head of the household. And his financial and personal needs were not met by his wife and Dad. His Dad diverted attention to his own wife and family. Consequently, Mohammed resorted to trading by hawking ice water on the streets of Agege Lagos. But his daily returns however were meager to feed and care for his wife and their new born baby. Mohammed now blames his Dad, his culture and religion for his plights. Studies show that traditional culture (Islam)/ religion often castigate Western education, seen largely as a form of corruption for girls. The belief is that if a girl is too exposed before marriage, no man may want to marry her, because she may be too bold for her husband. Another belief is that a child should marry early enough to bear children who will help in farm work and in the rearing of live stocks.

-Kemi an a South African teenager was 17 years when she got pregnant. She confessed that her getting pregnant was not deliberate. For her it was a mistake. Even when I knew I was pregnant, I tried all means to have abortion so that my parents would not know I was pregnant. The reason



was because I was still in school. But my Tommy would not come down, so it was like I just had to keep it by force and it had not been easy for me. I had missed attending classes; I had lost touch with my friends and all it takes to be a free girl. I don't want to be a mother at this age. I plan to return back to school after I deliver this baby. Sometimes, I feel ashamed of myself when people look at me and hiss! Kemi was in senior secondary three when she became pregnant, although she was lucky to have fairly understanding parents; the father of the baby she is expecting is still seeking admission to the local university.

These three stories illustrates that teen parenthood is a nightmare that exact a heavy toil on young fathers, adolescent mothers, and families. It showcases the consequences of establishing a family as a child; when one is not prepared; when one is not skilled in the family game. According to progress of Nations report from the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), the process of bringing new life into this world is a major cause of death and disability among young men and women in developing countries. This is the more reason while Bellamy (1997) UNICEF Executive director once noted that it is no exaggeration to say that this is one of the most neglected tragedies of our times, when 1,600 women some in their teens-die every day during pregnancy or childbirth and many of these deaths are deadly preventable.

FATHER/CHILD INTERACTION IN THE FAMILY:

Every man is born differently and every family or household is wired differently. Sometimes, we want others to act and think like we do including our children. This will be difficult and impossible to do. For a healthy interaction to exist between a father and his son, the man must know his son's personality style. He must know what makes him tick and what makes him weak. If he is to understand and interact effectively, he must know how best to react, respond, and what tone of voice to use. Although studies have now examined the relationship between mother-child and sibling interaction, the role of fathers in the development of sibling relationships that is now noticeably absent (Brenda et al, 1992). In a situation where relationship exists, father-child conflict occurs on an average of 5 times an hour, with a large degree of variation in frequency of conflict (from five to 55 times a week) and the quality of conflict. For many years, the father-child relationship outside the larger context of the family as institution has received limited significance during the past decade. Father/children relationship can best be reflected in social paternity and biological introspection. Contrary, society does not see social paternity to inhere in biological paternity. According to family studies, biological (genetic) link between a man and a child maybe taken as evidence of the obligations (but not



necessarily the rights) of parental ownership even though no family relationship has been actualized socially.

The father/child relationship is always reflected, defined and recognized as a natural unit on the correlation of a larger family framework and network. Paternal over-involvement with the child, management, inappropriateness of paternal guidance and support of the child can be dangerous for the child (Bezirgaian et al, 1993). Since we love our children, understanding who they are will help create a stronger bond, undiminished love and transparent relationship at home. Father's involvement was a key factor in adolescent development by Vanderbilt university researchers. According to one academic account, father-daughter relationship is very crucial especially when girls enter puberty (Science News, 2008). Because of this factor, non-custodial fathers should make a special attempt to spend quality time in all daughters' families since research findings concludes that these households generally experience low father involvement in comparism to homes where a brother is present. Father's involvement with their daughters can be enhanced when they are provided assistance in planning low-cost, accessible, educational, and fun activities geared to the great outdoors. Again, extensions Saving Town Through Asset Revitalization (STAR) has a number of suggestions that are supportive to fathers bonding with children with a special emphasis on father-daughter relationships (Johnson, 2008).

Recent study conducted in two parent household reveal that father-child closeness and authoritative parenting practices may contribute to adolescent well-being. This particular study can be generalized to men in all families and cultures. Sequel to family generalization, adolescence closeness and independence take place out of mother-child relationship (King, et al 2000). King believes that the quality of mother-child relationship has stronger, more consistent effects on adolescent well-being than nonresident father-child relationship. A new study performed by Princeton University Psychological department found that the brains of male Marmoset Monkey changes with the experience of fatherhood. Compared with non-resident fathers, the, daddy Marmosets have a greater diversity of connections in the region of the brain believed to be involved in parental behavior and social bonding with children. Since Marmosets are unique within the mammalian hemisphere (world) for their strong involvement in social, emotional and interacting with children, creating a bond therefore with the young as a family is very common. Marmosets carry their children for greater than 50 percent of the time during their babies' first three months and beyond. The fact that the brain of these primates is more parental and bond-oriented with fatherhood experience seems to indicate something human daddies can lean from. It seems to indicate an indubitable lesson for human families. Eric-Jensen



(2008) a world leading trainer of educators in the field of brain based learning admitted that many parents simply don't have access to critical information, or they think already they know it. This factor affects father bonding and differentiates human parents from Marmosets. Sequel to social interaction and bond-orientation, there are other compelling reasons to promote involvement of fathers in the lives of children: the value of their positive presence that influence their effectiveness in increasing children's academic, and the importance of their financial support (Nord, et al, 1997). Despite financial support and bond-orientation, the impact of father involvement on children provides evidence that high level of parental participation tends to increase children's cognitive compliance, empathy and internal locus of control (Lamb et al, 1989).

Sequel to the above assumptions, these children is characterized by reduced sex-stereotyped beliefs. A longitudinal study on early childhood relationship (2006) reveals that the father-child relationship is the defining factor of fatherhood role. A father-child relationship presupposes a strong relationship with wife; spending quality time with both wife and children with no expense on another. Children who experience significant father involvement tend to exhibit higher scores on assessment of cognitive development, enhanced social skills and fewer behavior problems (Opruett, Moore & Osaki, 2000). In the writings of modern family therapists and in the theories of conservative behavioral psychologists, the father-child interaction patterns have always affected children's social and emotional development. It has equally affected children's psychological growth and behavior. In a more general term, observations of father-child interaction have been documented in different cultures of the world with little or multiple differences. Father-child relationship in Mexican families reveals a number of reciprocal patterns of behavior (Bronstein, 1994). These reciprocal behaviors have been found to be instrumental in the development of self-esteem (Lecroy, 1988) in children till their adolescent age. Swerdlow-Freed (2006) believes that the father's role in a child's life has an influence on the child's self-image, capacity to form positive relationships and moral development. Evidence abound that fathers' participation in the life of a child is related to the cognitive competence of boys and not so much of girls. On the contrary, the absence of a father before the age of five has proved to produce negative impact on the intellectual functioning of young boys (Radin, 1976; Weinraub, 1978). Father/daughter relationship in African culture provides security for girls and the possibility of having suitors early in life and establishing their own families as the case maybe. On the contrarily, most African girls lack social, emotional and filial bond with their mothers. The reason while this happens baffles me. It baffles the mind if we compare that to how



Europeans, Asian and American girls hangs out and engage in fun activities with their own mom. In such a family bond and fun, parents as well as children bring something enduring and emotional in the relationship.

Other patterns that young adults bring into relationship with significant others are often developed in the relationships they have within the family of origin (Alymer, 1989). If men fail to instill healthy relationship in their children, the outcome would be that children would find it hard to act well in the outside society. When this happen, boys who have lost close ties with their fathers would attain lower levels of academic achievement as well as have difficulty developing a healthy masculine self-image. Such children would grow to demonstrate rebellious, aggressive and impulsive behavior. On the contrarily, girls would have difficulty towards establishing and maintaining healthy and satisfying love relationship with males. In situations where relations are lacking, girls would tend to become sexually active at a younger age and have more sexual partners than girls whose fathers remain actively involved in their lives. Father-child relationship can be enhanced through daily rituals such as reading the mail together, sharing a magazine article, talking to each other on the phone, or snuggling close during a favorite TV program. Such relations are great ways to stay connected (Duncan, 2007). Those who opt for a close, nurturing relationship with children must often learn new roles, change their circle of friends, and rebuild their social lives (Seibt, 1996). They must do what is right at all times.

MOTHER/CHILD INTERACTION IN THE FAMILY:

A human being's intimate bond is the mother-child relationship (Cardillo, 2007). On the other hand as well, the father/child relationship is also a bond of emotional nature. But the relationship between mother and child is unquestionably the most complex of all human bonds (Astro-centric report, 2008). As a result, Freud (1949) reasoned that a human being's first encounter with intimate behavior is with his or her mother during the act of breast-feeding. The act of breast-feeding otherwise "sucking" according to MdAdams (1989) is the most primitive manner of knowing self or another, and this act of knowing the other is nothing but sucking the other into one's innermost being. I intent here to discuss on those modern ways of knowing the other intimately and how it can take place between parents and children in the family. For Erich Fromm, mother-child relationship is paradoxical and in a sense, tragic. Because it is tragic, it requires the most intense love on the part of the mother, with the love that must help the child to develop, grow away from the mother, and become fully independent one day.



Despite the fact that this relationship is tragic and paradoxical, family inquirers have long been interested on how maternal control and warmth influence mother-child relationship (Jungmeen, 2004). In parental relationship, children need a loving and secure environment for their optimum growth and development. At the same time, their physical needs must be met as well as their emotional and psychological needs too. Children need love, care, attention and guidance in order to develop stable, well-adjusted and sociable human beings (WHO, 1997). Therefore, the Mother-Child relationship (maternal responsiveness and shared affective positivism) observed in naturalistic interactions and child fearfulness is a common pertain in human relation. Today, this relationship has been associated with mixed outcomes. If a mother lacks feeling for her young one, it may lead the child to act in an ambivalent way. An “ambivalent infant represents an individual who has difficulty relating to others as a result of inconsistent responsiveness or availability on the part of the mother or care giver (Rothbard et al 1994). Ambivalent parents breed ambivalent household and children. Ambivalent households are unresponsive to the outside world.

Contrarily to the above, maternal responsiveness in family interactions has huge ramifications for early child development, as well as school advancement and success during adolescence, says Dr. Mendelsohn from the New York University School of Medicine. The responsiveness of mothers toward children, and other members of the family lead to social bonding. Family bonding is paramount in family relationship, in social interaction and in cultural integration. A child’s family and cultural development through bonding encompasses many aspects including physical, social, emotional, cognitive and mental. For a child to develop in these aspects, the child must have the support of her mother and father and support from his/her environment. Sometimes, support must come from the mother which must begin after the child is born. Bonding otherwise the development of trust between a mother and her child begins from the moment the two are brought together (Kids Development, 2008).

Bonding between mother and child must be strong despite personality differences. Personality differences can be identified by capacities to form intimate relationships characterized by commitment, depth and partner individuation based on interactions of early life (Prager, 1995). Despite personality difference, a mother is a primary individual who meets the needs of a child when he is a toddler. When the child realizes this, trust of the mother takes place. The second stage of bonding can be established through affection that the mom and child share for each other. At this time, the mother and the child must have developed a lasting attachment. John Bowlby writes that this form of attachment becomes the template of all relationships that the



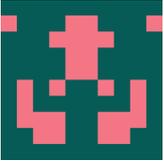
child goes on and develops throughout his or her life. Children who are highly active and who had difficulty controlling their behavior had more affection to their mothers than less active children who could not control their behavior. Highly active children and those who frequently and intensely experienced negative emotions had less constructive conflict with their mothers (less resolution, less justification, more aggression) than children without these traits. These traits are formed as adaptive measures necessary for coping with adjustments and transitions. Children seek to cope and develop autonomy while maintaining the ability to retreat to their caregiver for support (Baldwin, 1992). This fact makes mother-child relationship differs depending on ethnicity and nationality. For European American families, maternal intrusiveness at 15th months of the child always relates to later poorer mother-child relationship quality on all three measures (higher child negativity with mothers, lower dyadic mutuality).

Among Hispanic and African cultures, maternal intrusiveness after childbirth relates to later stronger mother-child relationship quality in adulthood. Among European and African American families', maternal intrusiveness was related only to child negativity where mothers displayed low levels of warmth (Ispa et al, 2004). In pragmatic societies, parental intrusiveness in the family results in higher child negativity and lower dyadic mutuality with lower child engagement. This is the more reason why children with bad temperaments tend to have more frequent and less constructive conflict with their mothers. On one hand, high quality relationships between mothers and children were associated with more constructive conflict between mothers and child. But in conservative and secure family relationship however, both the mother and her children would seem committed to maintaining relational harmony by resolving conflict; compromising and justifying their side on an issue (Deborah, 2008). Therefore, it is imperative that parents show love to their children, so that family conflicts and behavioral issues can be resolved without much difficulty. On one hand, it is important for children to have stable and loving relationships with parents or caregivers. Parental love and affection invariably would help children learn more about themselves and caregiver and subsequently develop trust. Studies show that infants who are abandoned and separated from their mother become unhappy and depressed, sometimes to the point of panic. According to International Children Development Program, children who receive early stimulation and social enrichment experience dramatic psychological development. When this happens, the caregivers gradually develop strong emotional attachment to children which again strengthen sensitivity to their needs and initiatives (ICDP, 1997).

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