



**DO FATHERS CARE? EXAMINING CARING EXPERIENCES  
OF TRANSNATIONAL UGANDAN FATHERS IN  
GOTHENBURG SWEDEN**

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**ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTER'S PROGRAMME IN SOCIAL WORK WITH  
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## **Abstract**

Title: Do fathers care? Examining caring experiences of Ugandan transnational fathers in Gothenburg Sweden.

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Key words; fatherhood, perceptions, transnational, caring, children

The purpose of the study is to explore caring experiences of transnational Ugandan fathers in Gothenburg Sweden based on their caring lived realities taking in account of their understanding of care. The aims of the study are to examine the perception and interpretation of childcaring by transnational fathers, analyse ways in which fathers were able to put their perceptions into practice and resource mechanisms that have facilitated their dealing with feelings of imperfection in child caring. The study employed an in-depth qualitative research design to gather data from seven transnational Ugandan fathers living in Gothenburg. Data was collected through use of in-depth qualitative interviews conducted in respondents' local languages and English. Interviews had aspects of observation. The study found out that respondents perceived childcaring in terms of frequent communication with the child, financial provision, guidance and emotional care. The study found out that guidance and emotional care is much dependent on communication and financial provision under transnational child caring. Interviewed fathers however never fulfilled their perceptions of a good father due to their inability to offer emotional care, guidance and protection to their children all the time when in a long distance.

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## List of acronyms

ACP Observatory on migration Africa Caribbean pacific observatory on migration

UNCRC United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

HIV/Aids  
deficiency syndrome human immune deficiency virus/ acquired immune

UNBS Uganda National Bureau of Statistics

UNHCR United Nations High Commission for Refugees

OVCs Orphans and other Vulnerable Children

GDP Gross Domestic Product

USDs United States dollars

EAC East African Community

IOM International Organisation for migration

MGSOG Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

UNFPA United Nations' Fund for Population Activities



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### **Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is organized in seven chapters. Chapter one contains introduction of the study, problem statement, study purpose, aims and research questions. Chapter two presents background information of the study beginning with location and social economic demography of Uganda, migrations in and out of Uganda, remittance in flow into the country, fathering and family life in Uganda. It also presents information about respondents' destination country (Sweden) presenting information about its location, migration policies and family life. Chapter three unpacks readings got from previous research in the field of transnational parenting and fatherhood. The theoretical framework that guided this paper and fatherhood as a concept are captured in chapter four. Chapter five presents the methodology of the study, with study findings and analysis covered in chapter 6. The thesis then shortly concludes with chapter seven providing the study's discussion, recommendations and implication for social work

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 Introduction.

This study intends to examine caring experiences of transnational fathers with a Ugandan background. The intention is to add on the existing knowledge about fatherhood and transnational parenting research.

According to article 18 of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC 1989), children have a right to be cared for by both parents. In accordance, young person's parents have the main responsibility for bringing up their children. They should both share responsibilities, both be concerned with the best interests of the child or young person in their care and if a child only lives with one parent, the other parent should provide them with support.

The form this support takes has to depend on what the young person's best interests are. It however clarifies that children shouldn't be discriminated against if their parents aren't married or never were (UNCRC 1989). In recognition of the social, political, cultural- historical and geographical factors in shaping parenting, childhood and development (Lamb 2010), responsibility was left upon member states to ensure its implementation in regards to country's context. In correspondence, Uganda has come up with laws against child neglect like the children's act chapter 59 and the orphan and other vulnerable children policy (OVC policy) (Children (Amendment) Act 2016). Child neglect is conceptualized to mean "failure to provide basic physical, emotional and developmental needs for a child in terms of health, education, emotional, development, nutrition shelter and safe living conditions which cause or have a high probability of causing impairment to a child's health or physical, mental spiritual, moral or social development" (Children (Amendment) Act 2016).

When considering Esping-Andersen (1990), classification of welfare states, it should be noted that Uganda is a none welfare state lacking well organized state intervention regarding children's welfare. This gives parents sole responsibility in meeting children's needs with state intervention in only reported cases of extreme abuse and neglect (Twikirize 2014). Uganda is a patriarchal society where children follow the lineage of their fathers and child upbringing organized according to gender roles and responsibility (Taylor 2012). Women do the nurturing of children including domestic care, dressing, feeding or bathing while men do the breadwinning, providing the basic needs to the family including children's education, medication, food and other needs (Mehus, 2015). Child disciplining and upbringing is a responsibility for both parents though culturally prescribed as a man's responsibility (Taylor 2012 and Åsander, Rubensson, Munobwa, & Faxelid 2013).

Being the primary providers in a family, men as fathers and husbands are tasked to ensure availability of enough resources to meet daily needs of the family. However, due to unemployment, poverty and other undesirable social conditions in the country, some people have been forced to move looking for better employment opportunities elsewhere including parents in order to improve on their children's lives and that of their families. Some parents have ended up crossing the country's borders leaving their children behind thus creating transnational families. As noted by Pribilsky (2004) children have increasingly become a project with migration seen as having social-economic investment potential to generate resources to care and provide for children.

Transnational families are however complicated and built on migrant parent's ability to create meaningful communication and strong relationship with the left behind family and children. Transnational migrants' care-giving practices, quality of relationship with the left behind family members, communication and associated emotional experiences are heavily shaped by the structural conditions in host countries (Poeze 2019). Hindrances created by hostile attitudes towards immigrants, un certainty of their legal status and the social economic status of migrants are worthy noting in limiting transnational parents' capacity to care and to migrate with their children yet in actual sense no parent would desire to leave his/ her child behind (Menjívar, Carling, & Schmalzbauer 2012).

There has also been however a growing concern in families and communities about absent fathers. This has become one of the social work agender mainly among social workers working with families and children. This is due to the ever increasing number of children growing without fathers, increased cases of child neglect by fathers and low involvement of fathers in child nurturing (Ewart-Boyle, Manktelow, & Mccolgan, 2015). Mncanca, Okeke, and Fletcher (2016) identified two forms of absent fathers. One was fathers who do not live with their children for a long period of time and fathers who are physically with their children but emotionally absent. This paper is to examine how fathers have maintained their presence into children's lives through looking at their caring experiences.

This paper focuses on caring experiences of transnational Ugandan fathers in Sweden, based on their perception of care. It looks at resources accessed by transnational fathers while dealing with feelings of distress and imperfection in fulfilling their child caring responsibilities in order to add on the existing knowledge in the field of migration.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Migration has become one of the world's leading political, economic, social and religious issue. This is due to the debates it raises as whether to be seen as a human right or nation states to protect themselves and close their borders to immigrants(International Organisation for Migration(IMO) 2019). The world has witnessed an increase in international migration. It's estimated that around 3.5% (272 million) of the world's population are international immigrants, of which 52% are male and 48% female (ibid). That aside, IMO (2019) indicates that labour migrants constitute 74% of the world's international migration of which their contribution to both hosting and countries of origin cannot be underestimated. Migrants promote innovation and development in hosting countries in compulsion to natives. In 2018 for example, \$529 billion were remitted to developing countries (ibid).

Advances in technology like use of social media and internet has turned the world into a global village. Technologization has increased access to information and better means of transport bringing people in different geographical locations closer. Despite technological advances, still migrants are faced with lots of challenges in hosting countries (World Bank 2019). Kelly and Hedman (2016) indicate transnational fathers experience daily challenges of life as they fulfill their family responsibilities of care. These includes coping up with new cultures, financial stress and associated psychological- emotional and physical break down due to frustrations caused by un fulfilled dreams. Roni and Roer-Strier (2010) acknowledges that challenges faced by transnational fathers are related to depression, anxiety, and somatic symptom. Transnational

fathers however often do not tell their children and family members about the situation they are going through due to fear of worrying children and sometimes children being of not such an understanding age (Poeze 2019). This makes their experiences unappreciated as family members are unaware of them. As noted by Souralová and Fialová (2017), migration studies have often been concerned with women's experiences of migration, while experiences of male migrants have been neglected. Research studies which have prevalently focused on men, have however been done by examining migrant men's experiences yet with limited focus on gendered dimensions of men's experiences. Important aspect of male migrants' caring lived realities have been given less attention whereby transnational fatherhood is far less studied as a socio cultural phenomenon than transnational motherhood, transnational fatherhood does not reconstruct but rather abides by the 'normative gender behavior (Souralová & Fialová 2017). Some studies have sometimes been faced with biased approaches about male migrants and transnational fathers.

In her study about transnational parenting of paperless/ undocumented Nepalese in Portugal, Budal( 2018), its only transnational mothers presented as suffering from emotional breakdown as a result of separation from their children. When it came to fathers, migration and transnational parenting was associated with economic prosperity and pride (ibid). In the same paper, though both transnational mothers and fathers do send remittances and gifts to children, remittances sent back home by transnational fathers is only interpreted for purposes of breadwinning in the family while that of mothers is interpreted in terms of care and emotional attachment to their children (ibid). Such interpretations and studies might not only lead to exclusion of transnational fathers' views but also have likelihoods of denying transnational fathers about the existing knowledge of caring for their transnational families and an effect of reinforcing the construction of male migrants as independent, non- caring, authoritative and non-relational ( Kilkey, Plomien, & Perrons 2014).

Transnational fathers have been also portrayed to maintain male dominance, authority and control through provision of directions and guidance to children and those back home when they migrate unlike when it comes to transnational mothering (Mummert 2005). However, providing direction and guidance to children back home has also been found to be a feature of transnational mothering. In their research with undocumented Zimbabwean mothers in the UK Madziva & Zontini (2012), some mothers decided not to leave their children with family members and placed them into care of friends and other trusted people. When one mother discovered that her sons were using drugs, she decided to stop sending money directly to the children (ibid). This was interpreted in terms of intimacy, guidance and disciplining of children ( Madziva & Zontini 2012) unlike under transnational fathering studies where such actions have been interpreted in terms of power, authority and expression of dominance (Budal 2018,Okeke-ihejirika & Salami 2018, Grassi 2014 andMenjívar et al. 2012).

This research offers an exploration of the caring experiences of transnational fathers' living in Gothenburg-Sweden using a qualitative methodology. Emphasis is on transnational fathers' understanding of care, experiences in fulfilling their perception of a good father considering challenges encountered and support resource mechanism in coping with challenges experienced. The study summaries with strategies and recommendations for intervention based on the findings for helping transnational fathers, left behind family members, practitioners and policy makers involved in family work.

## **1.3 purpose and aim**

### ***1.3.1 Purpose***

The purpose of the study is to explore caring experiences of transnational Ugandan fathers in Gothenburg Sweden based on their caring lived realities taking in account of their perception of care.

### ***1.3.2 Aim***

- 1) To examine the perception and interpretation of childcaring by transnational fathers.
- 2) To analyze the ways in which transnational fathers integrate their perception and interpretation of childcaring into their daily lives when meeting the needs of their children.
- 3) To explore supporting resource mechanisms that facilitates transnational fathers in handling distress and feelings of imperfection in relation to transnational childcaring.

## **1.4 Research questions**

- 1) How do transnational fathers perceive and understand childcaring?
- 2) How do transnational fathers put their perceptions about childcaring into practice and how do their practices relate to their ideas of what constitutes a “good father”?
- 3) What resources are available for transnational fathers in dealing with feelings of distress and imperfections in relation to being a father from distance?

## Chapter 2: Background

### 2.0 Introductions

This chapter presents background information of the study. First section provides information about Uganda the respondents' country of origin, summarized in the location and social economic demography of the country. It proceeds to migration in-flows and out-flows registered in the country, remittances and their contribution to household and national development. It also addresses fathering and family life in Uganda. The last section of the chapter provides a brief overview of the location, migration policies and migrant conditions in Sweden while concluding with the family life and parenting in Sweden.

### 2.1 Location and social economic demography of Uganda

Uganda is found in the Eastern region of the African continent, located 800kms inland from the Indian Ocean, along the equator (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2017). This has enabled her to enjoy an equatorial type of climate blessed with sunshine throughout the year. The country receives plenty of rains though the northeastern part of the country is a semi-arid area. Uganda covers a total area of 241,551 square kilometers (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2014). The country has a population of about 40.9 million people with Kampala as her capital city (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2019). Unemployment rate of the active working population is at 9.4%, over 64% of the population is engaged in subsistence farming and about 1.5% of the working population engaged in "bodaboda" riding (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2017). According to UNFPA (2017), unemployment rate among people aged 18-35 years was at 78% in 2016 and early 2017, while fertility rate was 5.4 children per women. The labour market is mainly occupied by men though women are also picking up in regards to participation in the labour market mainly in the informal sector (Taylor 2012 and Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2017). The country's population is composed of mainly young people where children less than 13 years of age constitute about 46% of the country's population. This has generated a high dependence burden partly contributing to high poverty rates in the country, with over 10% of the country's population living in absolute poverty found mainly among the populations engaged in subsistence farming (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2017). Poverty and increased unemployment have led to increased inward and outward migrations and rampant rates of child neglect. In the year 2017 for example, 10,021 cases of child neglect were registered while in regard to communication, only 6% of the population access and use the internet, 68% of the people above 18 years owned a phone individually, 5% jointly and 27% had no phone (ibid).

### 2.2 Immigration and emigration in Uganda

The country has been a major destination for refugees within the African region hosting more than 1.2 million refugees mainly from Somalia, southern Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and other neighboring countries (International Organisation for Migration (IMO) 2019). When it comes to emigration that is Ugandans moving from Uganda to other countries, there is no reliable data on the actual number of migration out flows from the country. The government has embraced labour externalization and diasporas engagement since early 2000s. As a result of labour externalization framework, around 40,000 Ugandans had sought work abroad by 2013 (International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2014). According to Maastricht Graduate School of Governance (MGSOG) (2017), only 2% of the country's population is living abroad. The major destination countries are Kenya, South Sudan, Rwanda, United Kingdom, United States, Canada as

well as other African countries. The formation of the East African Community (EAC) has enabled free movement of Ugandans within the region without any restrictions. Provisions of the EAC treaty and the Common Market Protocol offers citizens of EAC partner states freedom of movement, residence and employment within the community. The EAC is composed of countries categorized as the African great lakes region that is Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and South Sudan which have been the major destination countries for Ugandans (International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2014). However, given the current daily outflows of Ugandans into Arab countries, her porous borders and the free movements in the EAC region, no reliable information about Ugandans living abroad do exist. A high level of youth unemployment and under employment, coupled with high population growth has been one of the major push factors for migration from the country. This has forced people to look for better employment opportunities in other countries as Uganda has enjoyed a period of maximum political stability in relation to other countries in the same region despite the lord resistance army movement in the northern part of the country until 2016 (MGSOG 2017).

### 2.3 Remittances to Uganda and their contribution to national development

For the past years there has been a considerable benefit derived from receiving of remittances towards national development in Uganda. In the year 2005, the country received \$322 million as remittances, followed by a tremendous increase in 2010 to \$771 million , \$1,166 million in 2017 and \$1.2 billion in 2018 and it was expected to have reached \$1.5 billion by the end of 2019 (world bank 2019). The largest source of remittances is believed to come from within the EAC countries. Majority of remittances sent into the country from the region however goes un tracked as it's always sent through informal means like friends, taxies, buses, trucks and lorries sent from neighboring countries (The Global Economy 2020).

*Table 1 indicating remittances received in the country (in million USDs) as from 2010- 2019*

Year / period of time	Amount in USDs
2010	771
2011	816
2012	913
2013	941
2014	888
2015	902
2016	1146
2017	1166
2018	1245
2019	1507

Source : (world bank 2019)

*Table 2 indicating remittances received (in million USDs) as per country of origin in 2016*

Country	Amount
United Kingdom	275
South Sudan	202
Rwanda	180
United States	98



Kenya	57
Canada	56
Tanzania	34
Sweden	17
South Africa	16

Source : (The Global Economy 2020)

Remittances have been of great value towards national development in the country as its contribution towards national resource basket cannot be underestimated. In the year 2018, it's believed that remittances contributed approximately to 4.48% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (The Global Economy 2020). According to the 2016/2017 national household survey (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2017), 18 % of the households received remittances, out of which 7% had remittances as their major source of earning. Though the largest percentage of the recipients reside in urban area, it's contribution is of stake on livelihoods in such a country with over 10% of the country's population living in absolute poverty (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2017)

#### 2.4 Fathering and family life in Uganda.

Uganda is a patrilineal family society through marital engagements. Marriage is often monogamous though culturally polygamous marriages are allowed and even in other religions like Islam (Nankunda 2017 and Taylor 2012). The family plays a big role in child protection and welfare through its child rearing functions. It gives a sense of identity, belonging and culture transmission between generations through socialization with customary laws giving men sole responsibility over children in case of divorce (Mehus 2015 and Nankunda 2017). A father is believed to be the family head playing all the family administrative role of providing, disciplining of children, protection as well as defense(Taylor 2012). In a study conducted on fathers in the northern Uganda (Mehus 2015), men perceived a father as someone who must teach his children how to behave, relate as well as teaching children skills of survival in life. As a teacher, a father is believed to be a living example to his children, telling them what to do and how to do it through affective communication. From a Ugandan cultural perspective, fathers have a responsibility of investing into the children's future as well as creating a stable family environment in that peace prevails between members of the family (Mehus 2015). Family instability and children's misbehavior is an indication of a father's incapability to manage and administer his family.

Families are organized and administered in a communal setting through extended families commonly referred to as *ubuntu* where members cherish togetherness and community cohesion. Extended family setting in Uganda offers children additional support in case of parental inadequacy to meet the children needs and at the same time act as substitutes in absence of parental care. *Ubuntu* makes child upbringing and care as a community responsibility (Taylor 2012). Increased economic hardships and the effects of wars and HIV/AIDs in the country have strained the traditional family and child support networks like the extended family and community(Mehus 2015, Nankunda 2017 and Twikirize 2014). This has left civil society organizations to cover the gap in areas affected by wars and those facing different kinds of hardships mainly to OVCs (Twikirize 2014). Aside with the changes in tradition, there has been change in the family setting seeing the rise of child and women headed families. This is contrarily to the traditional family setting where men were the household heads. There were always mechanisms created to accommodate single mothers and other vulnerable children in the absence of a male figure in the

family (Twikirize 2014). In the previous 2016/2017 national household survey, child headed families were at 0.3%, 31% headed by females and 69% headed by males (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2017). This is attributed to the negative effects of globalization, migration and urbanization leading to breakdown of extended family support networks which could take on such children and women in the absence of a male figure. It could however be credited to the feminist movement which has tried to reduce male dominance in the family by granting women some powers (Nankunda 2017).

Urbanization and the shift from agriculture to industrialization and service sector have increased the needs in the family. This has made the father's role of provision to overtake other perceived responsibilities of fathers in the family. In Ugandan family setting currently, a man who moves away from his family for work is cherished as a good father while one who remains at home is criticized for putting his family at a risk of lacking basics of life (Mehus 2015). This has ended up normalizing both internal and external migration of fathers in the country, with a large number of children growing without both parents.

### **2.5 Location, migration policies and migrants' conditions in Sweden.**

Little research studies and information is written about Ugandans living in Sweden. Sweden is located in the northern Europe on the Scandinavian Peninsula, with a population of 10,319,601 persons of which 932,266 are immigrants, including 1772 immigrants with a Ugandan background (statistics sweden 2019). Immigrants have been a major contributor to its population increase (ibid). The country is praised for its friendly and generous social democratic welfare regime that caters for the well-being of its people through state provision of universal social services (Borevi 2015). In regards to migration, the social democratic welfare model has rendered the country generous towards immigrants as compared to other countries in the region, with relaxed policies towards family migration though a bit strict on asylum seekers and refugees rendering others undocumented (Sager 2018 and Borevi 2015). Despite the generous Swedish migration policies, migrants even after securing legal status in the country experience a lot of challenges. In regards to employment, they are often discriminated in the labour market as many employers desire Swedish background due to cultural differences (Kelly & Hedman 2016). Migrants unemployment is much higher than the Swedish average, concentrated at the lower end of the labour market, performing the least desirable jobs, segregated by language requirements while their education from countries of origin is undervalued (ibid).

As a result of the numerous challenges, many immigrants are caught amidst the net of opportunities and challenges as the reality faced is totally different from their expectations while taking the decision to migrate. This has rendered many migrant fathers to continue keeping their families in the home countries as they struggle through with the daily challenges of life. This has given birth to and sustained transnational parenting, as migrants are required to be economically supportive, having a stable employment with a minimum amount in order to bring their family members in Sweden (Borevi 2015).

### **2.6 Family life and parenting in Sweden**

According to Esping-Andersen (2016), the Swedish welfare regime is characterized by gender equality. Men and women are said to have equal rights in the family while children are treated as independent members in the family with their own defined rights (ibid). Both parents are expected to perform domestic work inclusive of childcare responsibility and both parents being entitled to parental leaves in regard to caring for their children (ibid). The Swedish social democratic regime

as defined by Esping-Andersen(1990), provides comprehensive, generous, and redistributive benefits and welfare services that are universal in the sense that they are intended for the whole population and not only for particularly vulnerable groups. In Sweden few if any requirements are imposed on the migration sponsor. Joining family members are entitled to acquire an equal rights status either immediately or 2 years after admission and believed to comply with the Swedish laws including those governing families and children (Borevi 2015). Family migration policies only require the sponsor to have income capable of sustaining himself and not the entire family which is above minimum income( Bech, Borevi, & Mouritsen 2017).

### **Chapter3: Literature review**

### 3.1 Introduction

Transnational parenting has of recently become an area of interest in the field of migration as many researchers and organizations try to look into the effect of migration on families (ACP Observatory on Migration 2012). The area of transnational fatherhood has however been given less attention.

As the paper focuses on caring experiences of transnational fathers based on their perception, key terms in the study are fatherhood, transnational care practices and perceptions about fathering. These were mainly accessed through university of Stavanger library, university institute of Lisbon library and university of Gothenburg library. This was either directly through the university online library search services or with the help of the different search data bases accessed through university of Gothenburg library.

I also used proquest online provided by the university of Gothenburg database where I chose social sciences and put in the search terms. Scopus was another data base used in the search whereby I chose the field of social sciences and typed in the search terms. Search terms were joined using AND and OR, while sometimes terms were put into brackets and inverted comas/quotations. Reviewed materials and results were mainly limited to only scholarly, full text, peer reviewed, English language, academic, articles, books, book chapters, journals, reports with statistics, dissertation and thesis. Materials were evaluated into the field of social sciences, sociology, psychology and social work. It's after limiting and reading the abstracts, key words as well as fields of publications of the material got during the search process that I chose the materials I used in this study.

Search terms/words used were; transnational, parenting, fatherhood, migrant, fathering, experiences, challenges, breadwinning, perceptions, child, children, care, practices, Uganda, Sweden and Africa which were used to locate the literature.

Google scholar was also used to access reading materials mainly about fatherhood from an African perspective.

IOM, World Bank and United Nations high commission for refugees' (UNHCR) websites were used to get information on migration. Statistics Sweden (scb.se) was used to obtain statistics in Sweden while Uganda national bureau of statistics (UNBS) website was used to get statistics about the situation in Uganda where information was got from the national population census and national household surveys conducted by UNBS. Upon reading of the documents, relevant information was discovered and selected.

Some materials on fatherhood and migration were however referred to me by professors from the different university of Gothenburg and university institute of Lisbon.

## **3.2 Definition of key terms**

### ***3.2.1 Transnational families***

Transnational family literally mean a family where its members either parents or children stay in different countries (Poeze 2019). This therefore means family settings where either parents or children migrate to another country leaving one of their children and or their parents behind in the country of origin but still play, maintain their contact and irrespective of meeting or not parental responsibility with/over children. Families live some or most of the time separated from one another, yet hold together and create something seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, called ‘family hood’ even across national boundaries (ACP Observatory on Migration 2012)

### ***3.2.2 Migration***

Refers to the spatial movement of people from one place to another which can be either internal or across national borders (ibid). The causes however vary and the distinction of migration that is internal and external migrants, voluntary, forced migrants, temporary or permanent migrants.

### ***3.2.3 Children***

Are persons under the age of 18 years (UNCRC 1989). From the African perspective however, someone remains a child as long as his or her parent is still alive.

### ***3.2.4 Remittances***

In the study, the term remittance is used to mean money sent from a foreign country to migrants’ country of origin.

### ***3.2.5 Direct and indirect care***

Direct care refers to any form of interaction and support provided to children by parents involving physical contacts. This includes for example changing the child’s diapers, taking the child to school and for leisure while indirect care refers to forms of care provided to children by parents that excludes physical contact (Pleck 2010b).

### ***3.2.6 Perceptions about caring***

Perceptions about caring refers to attitudes, beliefs and behavior held about how children should be raised and what the role of parents are (Mehus 2015). In the study, focus will be on perceptions held about fathering and what a good father, as it’s these perceptions that determine how parents will behave though sometimes there are discrepancies between parental perceptions of care and what they actually do for their children (Mehus, 2015).

## **3.3 Transnational parenthood**

Transnational parenthood occurs in a circumstance when one or both the parents migrate thus leaving their children behind but still remain in their children’s lives and meeting their needs and contact which may either be directly or indirectly (Poeze 2019 and Menjívar et al. 2012). Indirect care by fathers through extended family members and the child’s mother has been recognized in many transnational parent caring studies. Such social networks have been a great resource to fathers in fostering child’s education in his absence like attending school meetings and medical appointments, purchasing of goods and services, arranging of birthday parties for the children as well as attending to the daily needs of the child (Poeze 2019, Dávalos 2020 and Budal 2018).

In transnational parenting studies, migration is said to alter traditional family roles, divisions of labour and meaningful categories of gender construction. Male migrants take charge of their own domestic lives and come to assume many traditionally female roles, while women left behind with children adopt tasks once carried out by their husbands in the family and in the event when women migrate, fathers play the mother role in the family (Pribilsky 2004)

### *3.3.1 Remittances in transnational parenting*

Studies on transnational parenting have indicated that transnational fathers financially care for their children through regular sending of remittances to their children and family members. These remittances are used to meet children's basic needs, cater for education and medical bills as well as organizing and arranging of special events and celebrations like birthdays and Christmas for children (Dávalos 2020, Poeze 2019 and Budal 2018). Studies have also indicated father's economic ability and capacity to provide for the family as part of his relationship with his children (Souralová & Fialová 2017 and Hershberg & Lykes 2019). According to Poeze (2019) in his study about transnational Ghanaian parents living in the Netherlands, all interviewed fathers cited enhanced earning to provide schooling and a better life for their children as their main objectives for migrating to the Netherlands. Migration is perceived as a means towards more economic stability and social mobility for the family. This makes provision as a cherished aspect of fathering to fulfill responsibilities including feeding, medical bills, clothing of children, and school fees while daily direct care for children is left to women who remain back home. This therefore normalizes fathers' migration and transnational parenting as sending of remittances enhances provision of basic needs which is cherished than other roles of fathers.

Migration offers fathers with opportunity to fulfill their family role of financial provision. On a comparative study conducted between African transnational families and nontransnational families, migrant families tended to thrive more economically in comparison with the none migrant families (Caarls, Haagsman, Kraus, & Mazzucato, 2018). Transnational families are able to fulfill all their family and children's needs given the resource accessibility opportunities created by migration. This has been supported by Pribilsky (2004) indicating that child caring has increasingly become a project with migration seen as an investment for generating resources to facilitate child caring. Migration however is said to interfere with family stability thus nontransnational families are more intact than transnational families with proper family cohesion (Caarls et al., 2018).

### *3.3.2 Transnational fathering and offering of directions to children*

Transnational fathers have also been indicated as being involved in the guidance of their children (Souralová & Fialová 2017 and Dávalos 2020). Goodman's (2018) study conducted about nonresident fathers' caring experiences, fathers were moral teachers, disciplinarians, accessible to their children, guide them, love, support them, teach them right from wrong and a good role model. This differs from some studies which have indicated migrant men's exhibition of powers, control, dominance and authority in the family as well as a way of maintaining masculinity (Åsander et al. 2013, Mummert 2005, Pribilsky 2004 and Miller 2011). However, some research findings have proved that providing direction and guidance to children back home has also been found to be a feature of transnational mothering (Madziva & Zontini 2012 and Souralová & Fialová 2017), with some researchers expounding that continuously under rating paternal care risks excluding migrant fathers from being able to meet their social norms with respect to parenting (Kilkey et al. 2014). Transnational fathers believe need to offer direction to their children in terms of dealing with challenges of life and how to succeed despite the formal knowledge offered to children from school. The physical absence of transnational fathers in their children's lives however comes with

challenges of fulfilling other role of care. This will therefore help to examine the form of guidance that Ugandan transnational fathers have been able to offer to their children.

### *3.3.3 Maintaining contacts with the left behind children*

The physical distance between transnational parents and the left behind children/family members is only covered by the migrant's ability to maintain communication and visits. Physical absence comes with associated effects of missing to spend time with their children physically, worries about lack of knowledge of their children's welfare, fears about being forgotten by their children as well as their inability to offer guidance to children (Budal 2018 and Poeze 2019).

According to Poeze (2019) migrants' contact and closeness with their children is enabled through regular phone calls, messaging, social media and annual visits. Fathers use calls to morally guide their children by informing them on how to behave as well as conducting themselves, maintaining emotional bonds with children determined by the quantity and quality of contact through long-distance communication and return visits.

The improvement in technology has availed transnational parents with variety of opportunities and options to communicate through regular contact over the phone, internet and visits (Kilkey et al. 2014). Communication has been supported by Dávalos (2020), to maintain strong social connections between transnational fathers with the left behind family members. In the study (ibid), fathers used communication as an opportunity to actually improve their relationships with their children by inquiring about their children's daily lives, participation in their studies as well as offering of guidance to children. Transnational fathers' regular communication with their children helps to build more emotionally expressive relationships though migrant men often indicate emotions of pain and guilt for being away from their children (Dávalos 2020).

Migrant parent's inability to maintain visits and communication consistently with their life partner and children, might be perceived as lacking or absence of care and sometimes even abandonment (Budal 2018). Research Studies acknowledge that number of visits back home by migrant parents does not positively affect a children's wellbeing but it is the quality of those visits that increases children's wellbeing in terms of appropriate activity involvement with their children which creates a sense of warmth through the display of love, kindness, hugs (Goodman 2018).

Previous studies conducted on transnational and none resident fathers express fathers' desire for continuous emotional involvement and care for their children (Goodman 2018 and Poeze 2019). Care giving role have included closer emotional relationship between fathers and their children, embracing expression of feelings, spending time together during temporary home visits, doing activities with children and sharing physical contact like hugs.

### *3.3.4 Challenges of transnational fathering*

Numerous studies have however indicated existence of negative consequences as well as emotional strains for the progress of children and their parents in regards to transnational families despite the opportunities created by migration through remittances (Poeze 2019, Budal 2018, Lamb 2010 and Caarls et al., 2018).

In regards to fathers, some scholars have indicated that migration challenges the stability and continuity of fathers' roles, identities, wellbeing and predominantly as a source of stress and a risk factor for families and children (Lamb 2010 and Caarls et al., 2018). Separation of fathers from their children can be a painful issue, causing suffering, frustration, feelings of loss and powerlessness (Souralová & Fialová 2017). This differs from previous transnational parenting

studies where men are shown to have ignored the emotional needs of their children and instead focused on economic provisions (Budal 2018 and Weisner 1994).

Fathers' emotional breakdown has been backed up by Dávalos (2020) on his study about transnational fathers from Spain and Ecuador. In the study (ibid) fathers exhibited emotions of pain and guilt for not being with their children though maintained strong social connections with family members through communication. Such feelings of emotional breakdown and pain due to separation of parents and children has predominated transnational mothering study where maternal separation with children always left mothers with feelings of loss and guilt (Madziva & Zontini 2012). On the other hand migrant fathers feel that it is their 'responsibility' to migrate, with migration often seen as a sacrifice for the family and children wellbeing (Souralová & Fialová 2017).

### **3.4 Perceptions about fathering**

The difficulty involved in defining the term fatherhood has not left it alone. Consequences have been felt by researchers trying to understand perceptions of what it involves (Lamb 2010). Previously in the traditional cultures, fathers most often were expected to be the key providers for the family, while women tended to handle routine home duties and the daily care and nurturance of the children (Okello 2019).

Within the traditional communities, a father was perceived as a provider, a protector and as a family head, With a man's success equally measured by his ability to provide for his family (Mncanca, Okeke, & Fletcher 2016). This meant that fathers' care often occurred outside the home and mainly activity based (Miller 2011). There has always been an indication that paternal caring patterns of provision carry's an element of emotional care. According to Dermott (2003) Fathering involves intense involvement of men with their families, expressing a loving interest in their children's lives as opposed to only discipline and authority. Fathers are also perceived as moral teacher or guide, providing guidance to their children through intensive monitoring and participation in their children daily lives (Goodman 2018).

Paternal care has also been previously categorized to include dimensions of communication between fathers and their children. In her study on intimate fathering, Dermott (2003) categorizes father child communication in key aspects of talking, listening and understanding. It encompasses an openness of emotions, the expression of affection and the building of a close relationship where the father communicates with the child depending on the child's level of understanding and maturity without authority and hierarchy (ibid).

### **3.5 Perception of fatherhood from the African perspective**

Though there exist differences in cultural beliefs and customs within African communities, the role ascribed to fathers are the same in almost all African societies. In African society, the patriarchy offers fathers full responsibility over the family and the community. In the south African traditional societies for example, fathers are offered authority and obligation to care and provide for their family (Desmond 2006). Being an agricultural and a hunting society, fathers had much time to care for their children as well as ensuring guidance. Children were highly cherished and part of man's pride and prosperity in the community. In the Ghanaian societies for example, having biological children was a sign of adulthood and responsibility (Ampofo, Okyerefo, & Pervarah 2009). A father had to ensure that children were properly raised with good morals as children's character had an impact in the family. Among the South African societies, a father was



the steward of moral authority with concluding powers in the family (Nhlanhla, 2006). He was the sole provider in the family, availing material needs including food, shelter as well as protection of his family members against external threat (Makofane 2015). Fathers had to be a living example to their children and the entire community who always participated in the nurturing of children. In the event of failure to fulfill these roles for example when a man became abusive to his children, drunkard and negligent of his duties and responsibilities, he had to lose his paternal role and responsibility (Desmond, 2006). Children and women of a man who lost his paternal responsibilities were always placed into the care of extended family either under the guardianship of the maternal or paternal relatives upon the consensus reached during family and clan meetings (ibid). This was because of the *ubuntu* perspective that held a communal view of individuals and families where interdependence was highly cherished as opposed to individuality (Nhlanhla, 2006). This meant that child upbringing was a community responsibility. However, the advent of colonialism in Africa interfered with the family and community structures. Mining and urbanization pulled men from their home to the mining areas and urban centers creating gaps in the family as fathers increasingly became unavailable in the families to fulfill their duties. For example in South Africa, men migrated from rural areas to urban mining centers creating fathers' inability to nurture and care for their children (Desmond, 2006). This therefore shifted perception of father's role in the family to provision as men increasingly began to move away from agriculture to urban centers leaving the nurturing and guidance role of children in the hands of their mothers. This is contrary to traditional setting where fathers had the primary responsibility upon children and always made sure there was a close relationship. It therefore became normal for African fathers to stay away from their families for extended periods of time and others ended up becoming *visiting fathers* as most of the time was spent in the mines (Makofane, 2015). This is in relation to transnational parenting as fathers stay for extended period of time from their family. Many fathers are unable to provide the protection, supervision and moral guidance roles in the family due to their absence. This has caused a lot of challenges to the family structure and now nation states and civil society organizations looking for mechanisms of how fathers can participate in the lives of their children. The image of African fathers has changed and currently reflected as nonresponsive, abusive, irresponsible and non-caring to children and family as they are continuously reflected as perpetrators in the reports of domestic violence (Makofane 2015, Mncanca et al. 2016 and Setel et al. 1997). In recognition of the shifts in the societal images held about fathers, this paper seeks to examine the caring experiences of Ugandan fathers looking after their children in a transnational setting. The purpose is not to make an evaluation of their perception and care in relation to the traditional perceptions but to gain an understanding of their lived realities.

#### **Chapter 4: Theoretical framework**

This chapter presents the theory that guided the study and emerging concepts in relation to childcaring according to the theory. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the concept fatherhood. It then proceeds to presentation of parental capital model, providing an understanding of the concept capital, based on different researchers. It presents the existing forms of care accessed by children from parents that's direct and indirect care as well as the different dimension of care that can be provided by parents under the different forms of care. The relevance of the theory to the study as well as the different forms of capital available to parents concludes this chapter.

## 4.1 Fatherhood

Definition of the term fatherhood is contested (Poeze 2019). To some researchers, the term is social historically, culturally and geographically defined and not static (Poeze 2019 and Michael 2010). According to Menjivar et al. (2012), the term fatherhood implies several dimensions and not only limited to men's breadwinning but also provision of emotional and practical support to children, including meeting all the emotional, physical and material needs of the children. A father can either be the biological father or any male adult fulfilling those roles either through relationship with the child, being a step parent or any adoptive guardian while employing the broader definition (Poeze 2019). Fatherhood is sometimes interpreted in terms of behavior and actions (Pleck 2007). Fatherhood however sometimes is interpreted as a parental status, narrowly as fertility status of being a biological father or not (Lamb 2010).

The different interpretation of fatherhood generates other categorizations like masculinity. However, just like fatherhood, the definition for masculinity is contested. According to Hoffman and Hattie (2005) interpretation of masculinity varies from society, cultures and even individuals from within the same culture, relating it to the traits carried by a male gender and men's sense of their maleness. This was also indicated by Courtenay (2000). Pribilsky (2004) explained masculinity in relation to a male's gender identity and associated beliefs about men including exercise of power with emphasis that the term is socially constructed. In relation, Pleck (2010a) conceptualized masculinity in two different forms. These include a male gender status referring to a person being either a male rather than being a female or in the biogenetic perspective as male. Masculinity orientation, by contrast, refers to variations within the male gender status category (Pleck 2010a). When taken in the context orientation, masculinity concerns variations among the persons holding male gender status in the extent to which they have male gender-typed characteristics or attitudes, or in how masculine they are. According to Pleck (2010a), masculinity as an orientation has two different ways. Masculinity as a male's gender-typed personality disposition or configuration of traits and masculinity as a male's attitudes and beliefs about how men actually are and how they should be (Pleck 2010a). It's this orientation that brings about difference in perspectives and interpretation of how fathers are and should be.

This has been acknowledged by Hershberg and Lykes (2019) where they employed the concept positive masculinity involving father's traits promoting the wellbeing of fathers and their loved ones. Positive masculinity promotes egalitarian beliefs as well as supportive family relationships (ibid). Such fathers are greatly involved in the lives of their children. On the other end of the spectrum according to Hershberg and Lykes (2019) is hyper masculinity where power is held by men who frequently exercise it within the family through authoritarianism and violence.

## 4.2 Parental capital model

Parental capital model is a sociological model initiated by (Coleman, 1988), where he identified two forms of capital that parents offer to their children. The model interprets parenting behaviours and care given to children as capital investment by parents into children's lives. Coleman (1988) referred to one form of capital as parental financial capital and the other as parental social capital, of which their detailed explanation is presented in the later section of this chapter. Being a sociologist, Coleman (1988) based his model on sociological belief that sees an individual as a socialized actor and action as governed by social norms, rules and obligations.

Important to consider however are the different conceptions of capital. According to Bourdieu (1986), capital refers to resources accumulated by individuals over a given period of time presented

into three different kinds. One being economic capital, which is directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights. The second form of capital is the cultural capital, which is believed under certain conditions to be convertible into economic capital. Cultural capital may be institutionalized in form of educational qualifications passed on from generation to generation (ibid). Bourdieu (1986) identified the third form of capital as social capital, made up of social obligations in form of a title, status, positions and responsibility. It includes networks of connections possessed by an individual, which benefits and resource in puts can be convertible into economic capital. Social exchanges are solid investment, where profits are to be got in the long run, in monetary or other forms (ibid). Economic capital is at the root of other forms of capital for example offering of social and cultural capital requires investment of time while exchange of gifts involves monetary exchange which all has an economic value (ibid).

This paper is however guided by Coleman's (1988) theoretical conception of parental capital as used by Pleck (2007) where he uses the model to explain what parents do for their children and its relevance to children's development. Parental capital model offers a foundation about how fathering promotes children's development and what essentially fathering is (Pleck, 2010b). Parental capital model emphasizes an interactive process between the father and the child. This will guide in analyzing of transnational fathers' perception of care basing on the parental capital model's contextualization of what essentially fathering is. The model is useful in the analysis of the study as it helps to understand the forms of care provided by transnational fathers to their children that is direct and indirect care and how is accessed by their children. The five dimensions of paternal involvement will guide in analysis of how transnational fathers have been able to share responsibility of child upbringing between them and the children's mothers based on transnational father's perception and behaviors in their daily lives.

The two forms of parental capital are to help in analysis of the resource support mechanisms that have facilitated transnational fathers to provide care for their children as well as understanding of what forms of care and support do fathers consider of importance to their children.

Aspects of paternal care as put forward by the parental capital model are however in relation with other research findings in the field of fatherhood. Dermott (2003) uses the term intimate fathering to refer to involved fathering practices relating to ideas of emotional openness, communication and close relationship between the father and his children. Aspects of paternal involvement have picked interest in many fatherhood studies for example in their study titled "fathering practices in the twenty-six intact families and the implications for child development", Lewis and Welsh (2005) use the term paternal involvement to look at the form of care provided to children by their fathers. Paternal care was categorized into four dimensions of fathering that are paternal activities with the child, micro and macro responsibility as well as cognitive emotional involvement(ibid). These aspects of paternal care have also been identified by Desmond (2006) in the study conducted about fatherhood from an African cultural perspective. These three authors and others will guide in understanding the dimensions of care put forward by Pleck (2010b) while employing the parental capital model.

Parental capital model considers paternal care into two forms. One being paternal direct care involving direct contact and interaction between the father and children. The relevance of direct care is the amount of time spent by the father doing care taking and involving in shared activities with the child (Pleck 2010b). The other form of care is paternal indirect care which is provided to the child by the father indirectly without physical interactions (Pleck 2010b). Indirect and direct care both involve positive engagement activities, warmth-responsiveness, control as well as

process responsibility pertaining to parent's desire and ability to actively get involved in the entire child's life (Pleck 2010b).

The model summaries paternal care and involvement into five dimensions;

#### *4.2.1 Positive engagement activities*

This includes father's interaction with children where the father gets involved in children's activities, motivating as well as encouraging them likely to promote development (Pleck 2010b). An example could be the father attending important children's events and spending time with the child physically on those interactions. Positive engagement activity dimension of paternal care has been acknowledged by many fatherhood researchers. Lewis and Welsh (2005), in their study on Fathering practices in twenty-six intact families recognized fathers doing activities with their children as a core dimension of care which promotes child's cognitive-social development. Father's engagement in activities with children is part of the father's responsibility in the African societies. It was believed that from such activities children learn to be responsible as well as using such activities to pass on training and molding of children's behavior that is cherished (Desmond 2006). Activities were however organised communally in accordance to age and sex. Some activities were used for initiation purposes (Ampofo et al. 2009).

#### *4.2.2 Warmth and responsiveness*

This relates to caring for emotional needs of children. It includes parental qualities like showing affection through hugging, telling his children he loves them, closeness to children, listening to child's point of view and extending appreciations to children. Lewis and Welsh (2005) referred such child caring qualities to Cognitive and emotional involvement, including thinking about the child, talking, knowing and understanding the child based on the child's level of development. Dermott (2003) relates aspects of paternal warmth and responsiveness to intimate fathering, interpreted in terms of rights, responsibilities, trust and perceptions about self between the father and the child.

Parental warmth and responsiveness is based on the quality of relationship established between the father and children than mere paternal presence (Coleman 1988 and Goodman 2018). These ideas of parental warmth and responsiveness mean fathers can provide emotional care even during periods of physical absence. Things like showing appreciation to the child, telling them how much the father loves him and listening to the child's point of view does not require direct contact based on fathers' physical presence. Parent can either do it through use of phone calls for the case of transnational fathers or indirectly arranged/delivered through other people. These could be people within the social network like the child's mother or other family members as it has always been the case with transnational and none resident fathers (Poeze 2019 and Soralová & Fialová 2017).

#### *4.2.3 Control*

This includes paternal responsibilities particularly monitoring and decision making about the child. This corresponds with Lewis and Welsh (2005) macro responsibility level of paternal care entailing guiding, leading and steering the child; imposing a moral code and imparting values involving caring about' than 'caring for' the child. Dermott (2003) relate guidance to intimacy that is intimate relationship between the father and the child done on a nonhierarchical relationship where guidance is delivered through interaction with children depending on their level of understanding and openness about things. Guidance, monitoring and decision-making concerning children have been indicated as father's daily obligation in the African communities. This is

because of the perception held that a child's behavior is a reflection of his/her family (Setel et al., 1997).

#### ***4.2.4 Indirect care***

This include activities done for the child by the father that do not entail direct contact with the child (Pleck 2010b). Indirect care is expressed in the forms of financial indirect care involving availing resources to facilitate childcare, material purchasing and arranging goods and services for the child. It as well includes social indirect care fostering community connections with peers and institutions (Coleman 1988 and Pleck 2010b).

#### ***4.2.5 Process responsibility***

Refers to father's role of making sure the child is taken care of including arranging for resources to be available for the child. It includes caring practices like arranging for the child's baby sitter, father making child's appointments with the hospital, determining when the child needs new clothes and selecting of school for the child (Pleck 2010b). Process responsibility is considered as both a process by making sure the child is taken care of and as indirect care having activities like arranging for resources to be available to facilitate child's care by other people (ibid). Process responsibility could be referred to as day today responsibility as used by Lewis and Welsh (2005) including planning especially activities and appointments, monitoring the child's friends, and helping children with homework.

The parental capital model equates the concepts of parenting and fathering to child caring, by referring to the father's actions, behaviours and identity to what men who are fathers do and experience in their role as fathers. Pleck considers it helpful to use the concept fathering as the marker term of fathers' behaviours and action of caring for their children (Pleck 2007) thus the three concepts will be used synonymously.

The two forms of capital as conceptualized by the parental capital model are beneficial to the study for the purposes being; Parental financial capital is relevant in transnational parenting studies for the purpose being that it provides an understanding of how family financial resources and materials are used for the benefit of the child and circumstances under which they facilitate child care. This is based on the recent transnational parenting studies as fathers have indicated the desire to provide and care for their children as a motivating factor for their migration ( Dávalos 2020 and Poeze 2019). And as already indicated in the literature review chapter, migration is seen as a an economic investment that facilitates child caring (Pribilsky 2004). This necessitates understanding of how migration resources are employed for child's benefit.

Social capital on the other hand is to help in analysis of how transnational fathers have been able to use their social networks in caring for their children given the emphasis it places on individuals turning their networks as forms of support in times of need with interdependence on one another (Coleman 1988). Parental social capital will also help in analysis of the ways transnational fathers have been able to build social networks for their children as they fulfill their daily care roles. Social networks are believed to turn out as points of support for their children in form of social capital outside the home environment like peers in schools and community for the child's socialization (ibid).

#### ***4.2.6 Parental financial capital***

Financial capital is approximately measured by the family's wealth or income. It provides the physical resources that can aid child's achievement. A fixed place in the home for studying,

materials to aid learning, the financial resources that smoothens family problems and facilitates provision of goods and services to children (Coleman 1988).

Regarding parental capital model, parental financial capital includes materials provided to the child by the parents including the basics of life; food, clothes, shelter, services like education, health and gifts. These can either be through direct care, delivered by the father himself or indirectly arranged through other people for the child's benefit (Pleck 2010b). Parental capital model considers parental financial capital sources to be within the family. According to the model, material indirect care explains the extent to which the child gets the benefits of family financial capital and how family financial resources are used for the child's benefit (Pleck 2007). Dermott (2003) notes that ideas of financial care and emotional attachment occur together both in current accounts of fatherhood and in the past whereby through financial provision, a father is able to express his affection to children

Financial capital model perceives paternal financial resources as a factor that determines father's ability and capacity to provide for his children all the basic goods and services. It determines the father's capacity in selecting the standard of school the child will go to, as well as facilitating arranging, planning and organizing for indirect care (Coleman 1988). This will help in analysis of support resource mechanisms for transnational parenting.

#### *4.2.7 Parental social capital*

Social capital refers to individual connections with the "outside world" and resources that can be accessed through ties in the networks (Lin 2005). Individuals rely on such networks of friends, workplace and the community for financial, material and social support thus networks turning into social capital for individuals within the networks. There exists interdependence in time of need through maintaining equally strong and reciprocal relations with each and everyone else (Lin 2005 and Ihlen 2005).

social capital is also defined as the "aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition or in other words, to membership in a group which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the world" (Bourdieu 1986, p. 21). These relationships may exist only in the practical state, material and symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them. Relationships are created, maintained and reinforced in exchanges (Bourdieu 1986). The volume of the social capital possessed by an individual thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected (Ihlen 2005).

Bourdieu (1986) recognizes the benefits gained from membership in a group as the basis for the solidarity which makes it possible in the sense that existence of a network of connections is not a natural given or even a social given, constituted once and for all by an initial act but a product of an endless effort.

Network of relationships are therefore product of investment strategies based on individual, collective, knowingly or unknowingly aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term (ibid).

Individuals transform contingent relations, such as those of kinship, neighborhood and the workplace into relationships that are at once necessary and elective. Social networks are composed

of durable obligations with subjectively felt feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship or institutionally guaranteed rights designed to favor legitimate exchanges and exclude illegitimate ones (ibid). This is achieved through producing collective occasions such as rallies, cruises, hunts, parties, receptions, places, smart neighborhoods, select schools, clubs, or practices like smart sports, parlor games, cultural ceremonies which bring together individuals in a seemingly homogeneous way as possible in all the pertinent respects in terms of the existence (Bourdieu 1986).

Social capital in this regard implies expenditure of time and energy either directly or indirectly. From an economic perspective, social capital is not profitable or even conceivable unless one invests in it a specific competence as accumulating and maintaining social capital rises in proportion to the size of capital invested (Ihlen 2005 and Bourdieu 1986). social capital however is not completely fungible but may be specific to certain activities whereby a given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful in a certain aspect (Coleman 1988).

Taking on Coleman's (1988) conception of social capital in parenting, parental social capital takes two forms that is family social capital and community social capital (ibid). With family social capital associated to the parenting behaviors promoting the child's school readiness, cognitive-social development and educational aspirations (Pleck 2007). According to Coleman (1988), social capital of the family is the relations between children and parents, as well as when parents include other members' relationships within the family. The central difference created by family social capital is the time and effort spent by the father with the child on intellectual matter (ibid). Social capital within the family that gives the child access to the adult's human capital depends both on the physical presence of adults in the family as well as the attention given by the adults to the child, including the eventual relationship established (ibid).

From family social capital perspective, parental human capital in form of parental education and skills are irrelevant for children's outcomes if parents are not an important part of their children's lives, taking an example of circumstances where their human capital is employed exclusively at work or elsewhere outside the home (ibid). Physical absence of adults may be described as a structural deficiency in family social capital (Pleck 2010b).

Community social capital on the other hand consists of the social relationships that exist among parents and connections parents provide to their children with the outside world including integration into the community and extended family (Coleman 1988). Parents' relations with the institutions of the community regarded to be essential for children's academic excellence and reduces the chances of school dropouts (ibid).

Paternal economic status is to considered as a determining factor on the size and nature of social capital the child will be connected, integrated and linked with in the community, including kind of peers he will interact with (Pleck 2007, Gillies & Edwards 2006, Bourdieu 1983 and Coleman 1988).

Pleck (2010b) considers the quality of family social capital in terms of the nature of paternal relationship with the child's mother in determining father's ability to care for the child and the kind of care accessed by the child. Existence of a supportive mutual relationship between parents acts as a facilitating factor for the child to access paternal care both through direct contact with the father and indirect care arrangements through the mother while misunderstandings becomes a hindrance for the child to access paternal care (ibid).

Social networks through communities and extended family members can be a great strength for child caring due to the resources offered to individuals as they can easily step in during periods of parental absence (Twikirize 2014 and Desmond 2006). Saleebey (2013) through the strength perspective acknowledges the resources offered to people by social networks, with a belief that everybody has external assets, competencies, and resources which may be either realized and utilized or unrealized and unused.

The parental capital model is in relation with the strength-based perspective. The strength based perspectives calls upon us to be mindful of things in a person's world, relationships, culture, opportunities, conditions and people that might be positive, supportive, helpful to them (Healy 2014, Masten 2014 and Saleebey 2000). This is indicated by the model's Central focus on making an account of resources, reserves, and capacities possessed by the father and in the environment—family, extended family, neighborhood, and institutions in facilitating paternal care (Pleck 2007 and Coleman 1988). These resources are considered as strength to individuals in accordance with the strength based perspective (Saleebey 2013). These support resources will be employed in the analysis of how transnational fathers' have coped up with challenges posed on their caring experiences based on their lived realities.

## **Chapter 5: Methodology**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents information on how the study was conducted by describing the methodology adapted by the study. It begins by informing about the research design and the reasons for choosing it, followed by giving information about the study population, by offering information about the participants, their characteristics and how they were accessed. The chapter describes the various methods used in data collection and analysis with the various steps taken during analysis. It then concludes with the ethical considerations and limitations of the study.



## 5.2 research design

The study employed an exploratory, qualitative research design seeking to explore how Ugandan transnational fathers perceived childcaring and how they integrated these perceptions into their daily lives as they looked after their children. Being that fatherhood and child caring is social-historically, culturally and geographically interpreted and understood (Lamb 2010), the study employed an interpretivist epistemology as it sought to understand how transnational fathers interpreted their daily childcaring actions. Epistemology is concerned about what kind of knowledge can be obtained that is how the social world is studied (Bryman 2012, p. 27). According to Bryman (2012), interpretivist acknowledges the differences between people with focus on interpretation of meaning associated with human behaviors and actions. Interpretivist also acknowledges that people's own accounts are simply epiphenomena that have no causal significance and therefore need for reservations of judgment about their behavior (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). The study employed constructivist ontological position as it sought to consider ways in which social reality of transnational child caring is created by transnational fathers. This approach looks at categories that people employ to understand the world, and meaning created through interaction (Bryman 2012). According to Bryman(2012, p.32), ontology is concerned about interpretation of the social world in other words researchers' world view.

There has always been tension about whether treating the accounts of the people being studied as sources of information about themselves and the world in which they live or treating those accounts as social products whose analysis can tell us something about the social-cultural process that generated them (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, p 97). Qualitative studies are guided by constructivist philosophical position in that humans produce accounts of themselves and their world (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). The study therefore purposed to consider what transnational fathers perceived as childcaring and what facilitated their childcaring based on their accounts.

According to Bryman (2012), qualitative methods helps to gather in-depth information about the subject of study, which was intended to give transnational fathers an opportunity to express their own views in exploring their lived realities . Qualitative methods are also flexible in nature as they give the researcher more liberty to restructure the study at any point in time as opposed to the rigid quantitative methods (Bryman 2012). The method is also credited for generating interpretations, perceptions, views, values, beliefs, customs and experiences of the study population as noted by Patton and Chochran (2002) as cited by Nazridod(2017).

## 5.3 study population and sampling procedure

Respondents were seven Ugandan migrant men who were living in Gothenburg Sweden with their children left home in Uganda. They were aged between 28 to 57 years old who helped in exploring issues in relation to perception of childcaring and how perceptions are put into their daily lived realities as well as factors facilitating care. Respondents had to fulfill the following criteria in order to qualify for participating into the study;

- Men with a Ugandan origin aged above 22 years. Men who have biological children in Uganda below the age of 18 years. I took on a narrow definition of fatherhood for the reason being; article 18 of united nation's convention on the rights of the child that inspired this study talks about biological parents in regarding parenting and caring for children and neither social, adoptive nor foster fathers as they are seen as alternative measures in the case of parental inadequacy (UNCRC 1989).

- Have lived in Gothenburg Sweden for a period more than 3 month before the time of the study. This was considered for the purposes of exploring a variety of experiences, and to have fathers with varying timely experiences of distance fathering.

Respondents were selected by use of purposive sampling procedure. This was done by considering and selecting transnational fathers who had knowledge and experience in their daily lives in relation to transnational childcaring. According to Bryman (2012), purposive sampling helps in accessing participants suitable for the study, as the researcher only gets access to individuals considered relevant with deep knowledge and understanding about the subject being studied.

To access respondents, I adapted various strategies which included; asking the previous Mfamily students who had studied in Gothenburg about the existence of any Ugandans they knew and if they were willing to share their contacts. I also chose to attend African churches in Gothenburg of which I thought to get into contact with the Ugandans attending church services. Using the contacts obtained from the previous Mfamily students and those from churches, I learnt about the existence of football matches and trainings for people from different African countries in Gothenburg which I attended as well to get into contact with Ugandans.

I also joined informal associations of Ugandan living in Gothenburg. Basing on the contact obtained and people I was meeting, I inquired from the Ugandans I had met about whether they had children in Uganda and or they knew about any Ugandan man living in Gothenburg but having children in Uganda, explaining the intention of doing research about transnational Ugandan fathers.

From the contacts, I was able to get in touch with four Ugandan men who had left their children in Uganda. These men later referred me to other contacts they knew about, having their children in Uganda who also later linked me to other respondents making the link continuous thus the study ending up with a snowball purposive sampling technique. According to Bryman (2012) snowball sampling helps to gain access to a wide range of participants relevant to the study topic where participants propose other respondents with similar experience relevant to research. The technique is good for accessing respondents unknown to the researcher (ibid).

First meetings with respondents were however sometimes initiated by the help of “gate keepers” that is people who knew about Ugandans living in Gothenburg. These directed me to churches as well as linking and adding me to the different associations of Ugandans in Gothenburg. Gate keepers help researchers to access participants in communities which researchers are not conversant with and to gain access to participants unknown by the researcher (Deane & Stevano 2016). Respondents were either contacted directly through physical approach or through watsapp and direct phone calls during which I discussed about the information letter concerning the study and delivered it to them either in hard copies or sent soft copies on emails and other social media platforms.

#### **5.4 Data collection methods**

The study employed qualitative methods of data collection in gathering respondents’ data. Qualitative in-depth Interviews through use of semi structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data from respondents while document review was done to collect secondary data under literature review process. The process of data collection commenced in the third week of February and ended in the second week of March interviewing seven respondents.

#### *5.4.1 Semi structured interviews*

The study employed semi structured in depth interviews through use of open-ended guiding questions to help collect perceptions and experiences of participants. Data was recorded using an audio recorder and field notes. Use of open-ended guiding questions was intended to give respondents more freedom to express their opinion and memories in relation to caring for their children. While using semi structured interview, interaction become a conversation, setting the participants at liberty to define and describe their meaning of the study subject without constraint (Goodman 2018). According to Bryman (2012), semi structured interviews helps the researcher to keep focused on the topic during interviews and gives opportunity to gather information which could have not been known before going to the field. This is due to the freedom it offers to participants in expressing their views, actions, beliefs and perceptions while responding to questions. Interviews were conducted in both English and respondents' local languages.

Audio data recording helps to avoid missing out of responses and interruption of respondents during interviews as the researcher is kept focused on the interview unlike when note taking is being carried out (Bryman 2012). Keeping focused during the interview is an expression of interest by the researcher and elicits responses from the respondent. Hammersley and Atkinson( 2007) acknowledge that the interviewer's manner while the respondent is talking can be an indication of whether the responses are important or judgmental reactions from the interviewer.

Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with seven transnational Ugandan fathers of which five were face to face interviews and two were telephone interviews. Five of the seven respondents had interviews conducted twice, employing both face to face interviews and telephone interviews. This was intended for purposes of follow-up on the issues captured during the first interview. The second interview with respondents was conducted in a period not less than seven days after the first interview in order to be able to capture emerging issues. The two remaining respondents had their interviews conducted once.

Face to face in-depth interviews with respondents had some aspects of observation as I was able to observe information from respondents' phones. This was done by looking through transnational fathers' photos with their children, videos, whatsapp audios as well as transnational fathers' whatsapp statuses and profile pictures backing up information already captured during interviews thus adding more value to the study findings. Respondents were informed about observation method during interviews and in the information letter which they consented to by ticking under its provision on the consent form. Information captured by observation included their communication practices, what they communicate and frequency of communication. It also included activities engaged in with their children, places toured by their children, videos and photos for parties and celebrations.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) acknowledges observations as an evidence of what people say about their perspectives and perhaps about their behaviors, though they warn against treating respondent's accounts with doubt. Respondents kept on showing videos and photos in relation to the subject in question which helped in backing up the interviews.

Field notes were used to gather information obtained through observation during face to face interviews by writing down what I heard and saw in the field during interviews. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) indicates taking long time without taking notice of data collected having a likelihood of diminishing the quality of data, losing of data details while in worst circumstance the

whole episodes can be forgotten, with the only solution being to make notes during actual observations.

The researcher's observation was based on four transnational fathers' interactions and activities done with their children. This involved looking through their previous interactions with children like looking into their whatsapp messages, phone galleries and checking their whatsapp statuses. I sometimes observed their interactions directly when they called or were called by their children and care takers during interviews. Interviews with aspects of observation always lasted between two to three hours. The four interviews which involved observation were out of the five respondents with whom I had face to face interview. While one of the fathers had lost his phone, which had data about his children by the time of interview. The remaining two transnational fathers out of the total seven respondents had their interviews conducted on telephone. This made me unable to do observations during telephone interviews of which the decision for doing telephone interview is discussed in the study limitations section later in this chapter. Telephone interviews lasted between 37 to 53 minutes.

## 5.5 Data analysis

Denaturalization transcription style was employed during transcription of audio data in order to keep track of participants' responses and to remove involuntary ones to minimize distortion of data. According to Mero-jaffe (2011), the method helps to keep responses as given by participants, removing involuntary sounds which promotes accuracy of data, making it easy to read and understand

Data from transnational fathers was recorded through use of audio recorders and field notes. It was then transcribed in the local languages as used by the respondents after attentive listening to the audios. Transcripts were then translated into English with focus put on maintaining of meaning as per the transnational fathers' local languages and narratives.

Thematic analysis as a method of analyzing qualitative data was employed. According to Bryman (2012), thematic analysis helps in organizing data through coding and categorizing it in regards to the subject of study. It builds codes in the transcripts recorded and helps the researcher in relating data to theoretical understanding and interpretation (ibid). Coding and categorizing helps identify similarities and differences, generate causal connections and repetitions in relation to Ryan and Bernard (2003) as cited by Bryman(2012). Translated transcripts were coded manually through repetitive reading and looking for respondent's key words in relation to research questions. Codes were then categorized to help generate themes in relation to the study topic

The study employed an inductive-deductive thematic analysis. After the first coding and generation of themes, I was inspired by the parental capital theoretical work by Pleck(2010) and Coleman, (1988) and decided that the concepts of financial and social capital were useful in analysis of data coded. I then conducted a re-coding of the data, employing relevant theoretical concepts thus, the analysis being characterized by shifts between concepts that sprung from empirical data and concepts informed by theory

## 5.6 Ethical considerations

The study was ethically approved by the research supervisor and the department of social work-university of Gothenburg. This was done after ensuring that the study was to be conducted in accordance to the rules that govern research for master's students in Sweden.

Participants of any research have the right to information about the study being conducted before taking part in the participation. This includes information about why the study is being conducted, voluntariness of their participation and information on how data will be collected. Participants should also be made aware about the consequences of participating in a study as well as information about the researcher conducting the study. Any other issues currently involved or to be involved in the near future including confidentiality of their identity, the role of gate keepers used in the study and their limits in far as accessing respondent's information should be clear to research participants (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007 and Bryman 2012).

This was achieved through emailing out the study's information letter to participants. Information letter contained information about purpose of the study and likely consequences to be faced by respondents intending to participate. It also contained information regarding methods of data collection that were to be used (interviews and observation), the institution supervising my work as well as contact of the supervisor. Before conducting data collection in the field, I introduced myself physically which was followed by going through the information letter. The intent was to find out any issues which needed clarity in regard to the information letter delivered.

The information letter was also subjected to pilot testing. This was intended for purposes of clarity as well as looking at issues in the study which might jeopardize protection of respondents.

Consent forms were signed by respondents with whom I had face to face interviews. During the process, they also consented to using of observation method during interview. Respondents with whom I had telephone interviews consent was done orally after reviewing the information letter and looking at issues which needed clarity. According to Deane and Stevano(2016), consent forms helps to formalize the process of consenting and helps to protect the researcher as there is always a proof of reference that consent was sought while also offering respondents opportunity to be fully informed about the nature and implications of their participation in research.

Bryman (2012) acknowledges that participation in research should be voluntarily without any coercion or persuasion. Respondents should feel free to move out of the study at any point in time without giving any reasons as to why. This was ensured during the study in that even after three of the initially contacted respondents pulled out of the study, I never used any persuasive language to influence their participation. However, two of the respondents opened up on their own and informed me about why they couldn't participate in the study.

There were no promises offered to respondents outside the purpose of research. According to Bryman (2012), deceptive promises tend to compromise the quality of research and negatively affects cooperation of future research participants.

Confidentiality of respondents' identity was ensured through use of tags as pseudo names. Transcripts were allocated tags instead of real names given by respondents during interviews. The use of tags and pseudo names has been acknowledged to protect participants from likelihood of being identified (ibid). Tags used were T1, T2 up to T7.

Regarding the use of 'gate keepers', their role was only limited to linking and introducing me to the participants. Gate keepers were not available during interviews to avoid invasion of privacy.

According to Deane and Stevano (2016) use of gate keepers might sometimes be intrusive to participants and they may not feel comfortable to answer some questions. This is because participants will be known to the gate keepers used.

Respondents were also informed of their right to information being collected from them, right from the audios recorded, transcripts of the data being given and the actual final report to be written. Right to information was to ensure that their privacy is protected and that the report contained personal data which they were confident with. It was also intended for reflection purposes in and that their responses were being used as collected. Only one respondent requested for the transcript as well as the actual report before submission to the supervisor which was posted via his email. Mero-jaffe (2011) acknowledges sharing of raw data as well as findings of the study to give participants more powers to ensure what they actually said is what the study presented. It also allows participants to ensure that no individual identifiers are reflected in the study in regarding their interpretations and perceptions which enhances their protection from consequences of research findings (ibid).

## **5.7 limitations and challenges of the study**

### ***5.7.1 Reliability of the research findings***

One of the major questions asked in social research findings is about how reliable are the results of research findings, that is whether the results of the study are repeatable and consistent (Bryman 2012). Conducting follow up interviews enhanced achieving consistency of the study. This enabled to carry out follow-up questions after a period of not less than seven days. Follow up interviews enhanced reliability as there was no changes in respondent's perceptions concerning childcaring in regard to responses captured in the first interviews.

There was also checking for the meaning of codes during the process of coding. This was done to ensure consistence in the data presented in the report as well as the themes to be generated from the codes. During the process of coding, generated codes were compared to the data transcribed from respondents. Creswell (2014) acknowledges comparing data and codes in enhancing reliability of qualitative studies.

### ***5.7.2 Validity of the study findings***

Validity in social research relates to whether conclusions generated by the study are actually what the study intends to generate and how credible are the results generated (Bryman 2012). The following factors and processes enhanced validity of the study.

Being an insider, there was self-reflection concerning how my sharing a common identity of origin with respondents might affect my research, I tried much as possible to avoid personal biases and intrusion into respondents' privacy during the study process. Bryman (2012) calls upon researchers to be aware of their relationship with research participants. This helps to minimize mistakes that might jeopardize the validity of research findings(ibid).

To achieve internal validity, the study employed various methods of data collection (triangulation). Observation as a method of data collection gave added value to responses got during interviews. It was another approach for fathers to express and share their everyday lives by giving me opportunity to look through their phone gallery as well as witnessing their communication with children back home. Triangulation of data collection methods has been supported to achieve internal validity of the study as different methods can help achieve accuracy of study findings

(Creswell, 2014). Document review through reading of earlier literature also enabled to enhance validity of the study findings by comparing previous findings to interviewed fathers' responses.

Internal validity was also achieved by conducting interviews twice with five transnational fathers. This enabled conducting of follow-up interviews with transnational fathers. It offered an opportunity for participants to give more clarity on their perceptions and caring practices. Follow up interviews have been acknowledged to enhance validity of qualitative research(Creswell, 2014). Conducting interviews twice with respondents also elicited responses from interviewed fathers. The first interview acted as a process for building rapport thus respondents being freer to share detailed information about their perceptions and caring experiences.

Data obtained during interviews was subjected to respondent's validation. This was done both during the follow up interviews where responses from the first interviews were discussed. There was also emailing of transcripts and study findings to respondents. This was to ensure that transnational fathers' perceptions and caring practices presented in the study represent their lived realities. This has been acknowledged by Bryman (2012) to enhance validity in qualitative research.

Sharing common identity with respondents might sometimes be a limiting factor for interviews while differences can facilitate interviewing process as opposed to being a barrier(Hammersley & Atkinson 2007).

Being an insider in that I shared a similar identity with respondents always created challenges during interviews as respondents thought I knew everything I was asking about. First of all, they expected me to be a father secondly being a Ugandan they expected me to know how Ugandan men raise and care for their children. Lastly, they were afraid of their confidentiality as they feared to talk to someone who could easily trace their background and family information. This was managed by probing for more responses from respondents who thought I already knew what they were talking about and asking for the meaning of slogans as used by the respondents. I also ensured their confidentiality by informing them of the purpose of the study by clarifying on the information letter. Being an insider also helped to capture meaning of words used in the local language as well as relating their perceptions and caring experiences to the Ugandan context. This in turn enhanced achieving validity of study findings.

### *5.7.3 External validity*

In social research, external validity answers the question of whether study findings can be generalized to the social setting(Bryman 2012).

The study generated in-depth perceptions of fathering and fathering practices which could be applicable and useful in transnational and fathering studies. The detailed description of interviewed fathers' perceptions and practices of childcaring allows for possibility to transfer findings to other research studies in the same context/setting of transnational fathering. Transferability of qualitative research findings to studies in the same context has been acknowledged by Bryman (2012) given the fact that qualitative methods leads to generation of in-depth findings.

The study however employed qualitative methods of data collection and research design which made it difficult to entirely achieve external validity based on the following reasons; Having based the study on a small sample, research findings cannot be generalized to the entire population of transnational fathers neither to all Ugandan transnational fathers but hope to add on the already existing knowledge in regards to transnational parenting and fatherhood. Rain and Becker(1992) acknowledges that the limitation of qualitative studies is the non-generalizability of research

findings though it does offer a deeper analysis of the study subject with possibility of transferring findings to studies in similar context.

The sampling method employed in conducting data collection that is purposive snowball sampling technique also poses challenge to the study. This is due to the limitation that respondents always referred me to participants within their circle with a likelihood that they shared similar experiences, gate keepers also connected me to people whom they thought were willing to participate within their circles. This therefore acted as a limitation to my sampling technique. This challenge however has been acknowledged by Bryman(2012) in his discussion of the limitations of purposive snow ball sampling. This however contributed to the study validity as it enabled to get respondents with similar experiences though experienced differently.

#### ***5.7.4 Confidentiality of study participants***

Given the small population of Ugandans living in Gothenburg from which I drew my sample (study population), it's very difficult to entirely ensure confidentiality of respondents in such a small population and specifically with this research where respondents have unique qualities that is Ugandan men having children in Uganda. However as mentioned in the ethical consideration section, I employed the use of tags as respondents' pseudo names. Information that could easily elicit identification of respondents was as well removed from the study's background information presented about participants.

#### ***5.7.5 challenges faced during the study***

The study was also affected by the corona pandemic which restricted movements and travel to conduct interviews. This was solved by resorting to conducting of telephone interviews instead of face to face interview. This however hindered the researcher from using observation methods as a method of data collection to back up respondents' responses as it was the case with face to face interviews. I couldn't do observations over the telephone. On the other hand, respondents were afraid of sharing/sending photos, videos and audios relating to them, their children and the rest of other family members. Observation was therefore used on only four out of the seven respondents. Bryman (2012) acknowledges that telephone interviews do not offer platform for capturing of nonaudible responses like attitudes, behaviors, gestures and other relevant information which can be collected only through observation during face to face interviews.

The interview process also had some challenges in that three respondents whom I had initially contacted pulled out of the study. I was however later able to cover up as respondents kept on referring me to other participants to be interviewed using snowball sampling.

## **Chapter 6: Findings and analysis**

### **6.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the caring experiences of transnational Ugandan fathers in Gothenburg Sweden based on transnational fathers' perceptions of care and lived realities. This chapter presents findings and analysis of the study obtained from qualitative in-depth interviews with seven transnational Ugandan fathers and observations conducted during interviews. The chapter begins with the profile of interviewed fathers and proceeds to presenting of themes derived from the interviews conducted. Themes were transnational fathers' perception of childcaring in



terms of provision and breadwinning as an aspect of care, communication and visits, emotional care and guidance as well as factors that have facilitated father’s provision of care in each theme.

### 6.1 profile of interviewed transnational Ugandan fathers.

This section offers information about interviewed transnational fathers, their family details, their level of education, age, and occupation previously held before moving out of Uganda. It presents number of children left behind in Uganda, their age and gender as well as their marital status with children’s mothers. It provides information regarding reasons for leaving Uganda and the type of care arrangements provided to their children. Respondents’ background information is summarized in a table.

Participants were seven males with a Ugandan origin aged between 28 to 57 years of age and their children below 13 years of age. Participants who had more than one child in Uganda had given birth to them through more than one mother. Only two of the participants had a formal relationship with one of their children’s mothers that is recognized their children mothers as their wives while the rest of respondents the women were just mothers to their children without any intimate loving relationship. Reasons for migration to Sweden upon first entry varied from education, work permits, asylum seeking as well as marriage visas. Only one of the respondents had his daughter staying with the maternal grandmother and the rest of the participants had their children staying with their mothers. Their period of stay in Sweden ranged from 6 month to 30 years.

Table 3: indicating Social demographic characteristics of respondents

Id	Pseud name	Age	Level of education	Previous Occupation in Uganda	Number of children leaving in Uganda	Age and gender of children	No of wives & marital status with the children mother	Caretaker of the children in Uganda	Time spent in Sweden
1	T1	57	Senior four	Businessman	3	9-daughter, 8-son & 5-son	2 & Married to one	mothers	30 years
2	T2	49	diploma in business management and administration	clearing and forwarding	2	13-son & 12-daughter	2 & Not married to any	mothers	12 years
3	T3	30	Studying master’s program	teacher	3	10-daughter, 6-son & 2-daughter	2 & Married to one	2 years-maternal grandparents, Other 2 with mother	6 months

4	T4	28	university drop out	Working with civil society organization	1	1 year and 4 months daughter	1 & not married	mother	6 years
5	T5	35	Bachelors' degree in teaching	secondary school teacher	1	7- daughter	1 & not married	mother	7 years
6	T6	38	Secondary education	Businessman	3	11- daughter, 12 son and months- daughter	2 & not married to any	mothers	10 years
7	T7	34	Certificate	hotelier	1	4 - daughter	1 & Not married	Mother and sometimes paternal grandparents	3 years

## 6.2 transnational father's Perceptions about child caring.

Perception about child caring was one of the issues captured by the study where transnational fathers attached their meaning and perception in regards care for their children. In this section, interest is in the fathers' perceptions of care, to help understand and answer the research question about how fathers relate their daily practices to "good fathering" in the next section.

### 6.2.1 communication with children

In their narratives, respondents emphasized the importance of maintaining communication with their children as for example seen in T1's response below;

*"Now looking after the child is do you care, have you called to see how he is doing, does the child know you. Because you might provide everything but when the child does not know you. Now my children you cannot deceive any one of them that that one is your father and they accept...they can tell you the other daddy was here" (T1, 57 years)*

T1 calls his children every day to see how they are doing. T1 used these moments of communicating with his children to establishing close contact with children. T1 believed communication with children is the only mechanism through which children gets to know their father. T1 believed calling his children always enabled him to establish a close relationship with them where no one could deceive them that he is not their father and they accept. T1's perception of care in terms of communication was not different from other respondents. Interviewed fathers believed close contact with their children was maintained through frequent calling of their children every after the other day or after a period of two weeks. Calling of children was not just checking

on children but aimed at establishing a nurturing relationship by spending time together over the social media platforms. Transnational fathers believed they cannot be recognized by their children as fathers unless there is continuous communication between them, and their children given the long-time separations with their families.

Transnational fathers' perception of care in terms of communication is in line with Hershberg and Lykes (2019) study on transnational fathers in the US. In their study, fathers believed they used communication not just as a means to check in but a way of which to pass time together with their children and families aimed at establishing close relationship (ibid).

Transnational fathers' childcaring perceptions of interacting with their children through communication aimed at establishing an intimate relationship is an indication that interviewed fathers have been able to use their family social capital for the children's benefit through ensuring their emotional presence in children's lives despite their physical absence (Coleman 1988).

### *6.2.2 Caring for the child is financial provision and guiding*

Transnational fathers' perception and interpretation of care included aspects of financial provision and guidance to their children. In their responses, these were among the core issues of parental care in relation to communication as for example seen in T3's narrative below,

*“Caring for the child I think it is in both providing and guiding. Providing the basic needs of life, I would say if I may summaries it. Housing, food, medication and all other basics of life... guiding I mean everybody who comes in this world needs someone to show them how to live and when not to do certain things and I think that is part of caring for the child. Setting limits but as well as breaking the controls” (T3 30 years old)*

T3 perceived childcaring in terms of both providing and guiding. T3's perception of care in terms of provision however included providing children with food, housing, medication and other basics of life with aspects of financial care. His perception of care in terms of provision was in relation with other interviewed fathers as they perceived financial care as their major responsibility in their children's lives and families. Interviewed fathers always had to ensure availability of enough resources to meet financial needs in the family. This was seen in their responses in that though some of the respondents were studying in Gothenburg, still they were the major providers in the family. Interviewed fathers' perceptions about child caring in terms of financial provision is in relations with studies conducted about perception of fatherhood among African fathers (Mncanca et al. 2016 and Setel et al. 1997). Perception of paternal childcaring in terms of financial provision was also indicated in the study conducted about fathering and substance abuse in Northern Uganda (Mehus 2015). In the study, interviewed men perceived provision as father's major responsibility in the family, availing shelter, food, clothes, medication and other basics of life including security and protection to family members from external threats (ibid).

Interviewed fathers believed it was their responsibility to look after their children since they were the one who brought them on earth. Respondents believed there was no need to transfer the responsibility to other people. Interviewed men believed through financial provision, they can use the financial resources in the family to invest in the child's future for example through education and ensuring that they gave their children a better childhood. This directly confirms with parental capital model on the benefits of financial capital investment into children's lives (Coleman 1988).

Though their migration to Sweden was for different reasons relating to asylum seeking, education, marriage visa and a few having entered on a worker's permit, respondents mentioned the desire for providing to their children as the major reason for continued stay in Sweden as other respondents have ended up staying for more than five to thirty years which wasn't their aim in the initial entry into Sweden. This was aimed at giving their children a better foundation to manage life issues than they themselves as fathers received. Respondents therefore turned migration to Sweden as an economic investment that has generated resources to facilitate their financial care practices for their children. As indicated in the background information section, respondents had to leave their businesses, studies and work to migrate to Sweden for better earnings than in Uganda. Interviewed fathers believed children must be cared for as they are innocent of their being on earth. Respondents supported paternal responsibility over their children by clarifying that even during periods of separation and divorce with the child's mother, it still remains a father's responsibility as children are not part of parent's relationships. This was being put into practice as they continued to look after their children despite of there not being an official marital relationship with the children's mothers as reflected in their background information. Interviewed men believed financial provision for the child is something a father cannot run from as they considered it a daily responsibility always carried on their shoulders. Even when the father is sick, he must think and devise mechanisms of providing to family members. This is however in relation with the African traditional perception of a father who had sole responsibility to provide for his family. A father who failed to provide for his family in the event of being drunkard, abusive and negligent had to lose his paternal responsibility to other members in the extended family(Nhlanhla 2006 and Desmond 2006).

This indicates that interviewed fathers' perceptions of child caring were in relations with article 18 of the UNCRC (1989) considerations of the need to provide care for the children. The different financial care practices employed by transnational fathers I sought to reserve for the next section.

Guidance was believed to be a fundamental aspect of care needed by children as interviewed fathers believed everybody who comes in this world needs someone to show them how to live and when to do certain things. According to interviewed fathers, this involves setting limits as well as breaking controls of the existing limitations in children's lives. Guidance in accordance to interviewed fathers is a process responsibility involving daily tasks to be done by the father for his children which is in accordance to the parental capital model (Pleck 2010b). Such aspects of guidance have been found in the previous fatherhood studies of both none resident and resident fathers in relation to children's conduct, relationships with peers and in academic life (Dermott 2003,Poeze 2019 and Lewis & Welsh 2005).

Guidance was supported to be a core dimension of care by interviewed fathers in that it's a father's lifetime role with his children without any time of rest as for example seen in T2's response below;

*Being a father is responsibility....it isn't only full of joy; you must be first of all a good administrator. The child ends up when he/ she has done something wrong but then if you don't handle it very well it might end up affecting him but also affecting you as a father. So, you must make the rightful decision. A good father you must be a living example to the children. You are seeing now the other daughter of mine, I am with her cooking together, we do it in love, I show her and everything when you do it in love she learns but you will find other parents when the child stays in the room and sleeps. Then there you have not loved the child as a parent. Because you have not taught that child what will help him/ her*

*in future.... so, you must know when does the child do this thing, so you must divide yourself all the time you are busy, you are not a free man that's what it means to be a father (T2 49 years)*

T2 perceived childcaring in aspects of being an administrator, guiding children aimed at ensuring children's behavior has no negative effect on either the father or the child him/herself. As an administrator, T2 perceived that a father must be a living example to his children as they can learn from what they see their father do. T2 believed children always tend to imitate behaviours they see from their fathers as they take them as their role model. As role models, T2 believes fathers must exhibit good behaviours to their children while teaching them in love things which are to benefit children in both the present times and in future. Fathers must be updated about how, and the time children do certain things in their life.

In relation with other respondents' perspectives, guidance is a core dimension of paternal care that includes leading and steering the child, imposing a moral code through monitoring children's behavior and imparting values considered beneficial for children's success in life and administered in love. This directly relates to Pleck (2010) where he conceptualized guidance into aspects of process responsibility, control, warmth and responsiveness towards children dimensions of paternal care.

Guidance is perceived as family social capital that parents invest in their children, exhibited in the form of parenting behavior and parents' socialization with their children. It is essential in promoting the child's cognitive-social development, school readiness and educational aspirations(Coleman, 1988).

In conclusion therefore, interviewed father's perception of childcaring was in relation with the African traditional roles of the father in the family. In the African societies, fathers were custodians of moral authority in the family through guidance, held final administrative powers in the family and had to promote peace within their household by ensuring love prevailed among household members (Desmond, 2006). Fathers were perceived as role models in the family and community. Communication with children was highly cherished as a means to pass on informal knowledge, teach children about family norms, customs and beliefs as well as preparing children to take on responsibilities in their family and that of their parents in the event of their death (Nhlanhla, 2006).

The next section presents findings and analysis on how transnational fathers have been able to integrate their perceptual of care into their daily live as they fulfill their parental responsibility of looking after their children.

### **6.3 Transnational father's financial care practices**

This section presents how transnational fathers have been able to financially care for their children to ensure provision of basic needs in their lives.

#### **6.3.1 I send her money for upkeep every week**

Responses from interviewed fathers indicated they offered financial care through availing their children with necessities which was in line with their perception of childcare in terms of provision as indicated by their responses;

*I send her money, upkeep every week. They are three ..... I send them 300,000/= every week for upkeep regarding everything and it's their mothers who knows how to distribute*

*it. Will she buy groundnuts or beans, has she remained with the balance for milk, social media tax and going for swimming.... Victoria mall in Entebbe, that's where they say they go. They even go to freedom city...they go out (T1)*

T1 remits finances regularly which are used to cater for the financial needs of his children. Using remittances, he can cater for their children's food, pay for internet, and provide for children outings as well as the other daily needs of children in the family using money sent. T1 believed remittances facilitated his indirect care for the children as mothers were able to make purchases for the family in regards meeting their children's needs. After remitting of finances, distribution and allocation of resources in the family was left upon the mother to decide which needs of the family to be handled first and where to allocate more resources. This corresponded with other interviewed fathers who indicated that though it were mothers doing the purchases for the children, it was the remittances sent which facilitated financial provision in their families.

Sending of weekly remittance to families back home directly indicates how children have relied on their fathers for survival and how transnational fathers have to go through a struggle to ensure that there are finances to be sent to their children and families back home at every end of the week. Sending of remittances has been a major form of expressing care by transnational fathers to their children in the recent transnational fathering studies. In Dávalos' (2020) study on experiences of migrant men in Spain and Ecuador, remittances were a central activity in transnational fathers' lives. It was a matter of family survival in the home country to sustain their families in the country of origin money was sent regularly to family members, although the frequency and amount varied depending on the economic conditions of both the migrant and their families back home. Remittances were used to pay for their children's expenses, medical bills and schooling.

### **6.3.2 Paying of school fees for children**

These aspects of financial care were supported by responses from interviewed fathers for example T6 on top of meeting the daily needs of the family through remittances, money was used for paying children's fees thus meeting their education needs as narrated in his response bellow,

*Fees it's their mothers who always pay, I send them money and they pay school fees for the children,... worldremit every month they must get money for upkeep and then I pay school fees every term (T6)*

T6 sends remittances termly for his children's school fees as well as monthly pocket money using worldremit. His actions corresponded with other respondents who took it as their responsibility to provide their children with education by paying school fees on termly basis. Using remittances, mothers were able to educate children in the best schools within the country. This afforded children with high quality education. All interviewed fathers who had their children at school were being educated in boarding schools. These schools were of high standards, provided children with adequate care which enabled children to concentrate on their studies as they were always in school without external disturbances from the community. Apart from paying school fees, remittances enabled children of respondents to have adequate scholastic materials whereby transnational fathers ensured they always sent monthly upkeep to their children. This upkeep facilitated children's stay in schools, catered for their extra class activities, helping them to participate in school events and to do personal shopping. By doing so, interviewed fathers have been able to use their financial resources to enhance their children's academic achievement by availing resources to facilitate children's learning. This corresponds with process responsibility and parental indirect care in accordance to the parental capital model (Pleck 2010 and Coleman 1988).

Transnational fathers meeting their children's education needs through sending of remittances to their children's care takers has been acknowledged in the previous studies on transnational parenting. In Poeze's study on transnational Ghanaian fathers living in the Netherlands (Poeze 2019), all male migrants both categorised as 'financially struggling' and 'thriving' were sending their children to high-quality schools. This was enhanced through transmitting remittances on a regular, usually monthly basis to their children and the children's caregiver. Half of the remittances was also invested in children's extracurricular classes and activities (ibid).

Interviewed fathers considered education of their children a priority as they believed providing their children with education was an investment that would give children a better future than availing financial assets which they couldn't be able to manage without education. Investing in children education has been one of the major paternal responsibilities in studies conducted about fathering in Africa (Nhlanhla, 2006 and Setel et al., 1997).

### *6.3.3 sending gifts for during christmas through remittances.*

Transnational fathers were also able to financially care for their children through indirectly planning, organizing and arranging for Christmas celebrations for their children. This was done through sending of remittances on such special occasions like Christmas which remittances were used by mothers to make purchases for children as seen in T3's response below;

*During the Christmas time which is something celebrated.....I sent some money for them to buy some gifts and their mother I think used a 'kitenge' clothes and gave them.....and when they called me they were appreciative I could hear their excitement and I don't know what exactly went on before or after the phone call (T3)*

T3 considered christmas as an important event for his children worthy celebration even during his absence. Through remittances, he was able to buy gifts for his children as well as new clothes on christmas days which remittances he always sent days before christmas day to ensure that their children never missed out on such celebrations. T3 believed celebrating christmas with children was a way through which he expressed to his children that he cared for them. It also enabled him to fulfil his role of providing children with clothes as basic needs of life. It was also used to express his fatherly love to children and to remain part of his children's lives despite his absence. T3's narrative indicated that celebrating christmas creates memorable moments within children's lives thus something worth celebrating at their childhood. This was followed by moments of joy and excitement from children upon receiving of gifts, which made him feel happy as children appreciated the care he offered. Though the gifts were delivered by their mothers, children still acknowledged him.

This has been acknowledged in Budal (2018) on un documented Nepalese living in Portugal where parents denied themselves basics of life to be able to send gifts and other materials to their children in Nepal through remittances during both christmas and other occasions. Transnational fathers' actions of indirectly celebrating christmas with their children through purchasing of clothes and other financial materials are in accordance with the parental financial capital in that children are afforded indirect care through making of purchases (Pleck 2010b).

### *6.3.4 I get to know their birthdays and buy them cakes*

Celebration of children's birthday was another aspect through which transnational fathers financially cared for their children. From their responses, children birthdays were either organized directly by fathers themselves in times for example when their children's birthdays reached during

their occasional visits or indirectly through some people. These were either family members or other persons in their social networks who assisted in buying of cakes, gifts and other necessities including purchasing of playing materials for their children on birthdays as for example indicated in T2's narrative;

*You get to know their birthday and they tell you that this one's' birthday has come, and you get someone who can buy for him a cake and gives it to him (T-2)*

T2 always sends money for buying a cake for his son's birthday. This was in relation to all interviewed fathers as they had to keep the birth dates of their children in mind in order not to forget them. This indicated how committed interviewed fathers were in their children's lives. Even amidst busy schedule, their children's birthdays were among one of the things which they could not miss out. Interviewed fathers believed celebrating children's birthday was a way of expressing to their children that they loved and cared for them. Fathers believed a child's birthday is a special day in a child's life which only happens once a year thus worthy to invest in financial resources to facilitate its celebration. Utilization of family resources for children's birthday is considered to be a financial capital investment into children as acknowledged by the parental capital model in that it indicates paternal care (Pleck 2010 and Coleman 1988).

Under certain circumstances for example if children's birthdays reached when fathers were preoccupied or not doing financially well fathers were reminded by their children's care takers, upon which they sent remittance to help organise a birthday party for the child. This indicates children's birthday celebrations was a priority as it facilitated extension of transnational paternal care and love. Fathers invested a lot of resources in purchasing of cakes, drinks and gifts on children's birthday in that they turned them into parties for their children. On birthdays, respondents had to make sure their children experienced a new environment through organizing outings for their children where they visited children entertainment centers, animal parks and sometimes had their birthday parties celebrated in hotels. This was supported by the videos and photos of children's birthdays observed during interviews showing children cutting cakes, videos of family members singing for children as well as outings on children's birthdays.

Purchasing of cakes and other items on children's birthday has also been found in the previous transnational parenting studies, where parents felt it was one way through which children can benefit from their finances but also to cover up their physical absence (Dávalos 2020 and Madziva & Zontini 2012). Pleck (2010b) considered parental care in arranging for children's activities and celebration as both a process by making sure the child is taken care of as well as indirect care including activities like arranging for resources to be available to facilitate child's care by other people which he termed process responsibility dimension of paternal care.

Interviewed fathers' indirect care to children was enhanced through celebrating children's birthdays, it also helped to cover up their physical absence. Remittances sent to organise birthday parties expressed fathers' presence into children's lives though sometimes they turned into moments for children to build on their social capital.

This was achieved by turning their children's birthday as moments to link them with other people and children in the community. Establishing of their children's social networks was continuously done by transnational fathers inviting their friends and children from the neighborhoods to celebrate their children's birthday.



Despite their absence, transnational fathers still believed in the relevance of establishing friendship relations for their children. Fathers perceived their children's birthday as a day to have fun with their fellow children in the neighborhood, close friends and families. This therefore indicates how big their children's birthdays were and the amount of resources invested. Interviewed fathers could manage to feed children from the neighborhood as well as close family members and friends on such birthday parties. This has been supported by the parental capital model as a way in which fathers can provide social indirect care to offer emotional care, foster children's community connections with peers (Coleman 1988).

Parties and celebrations create long lasting memories which initiates establishment of long lasting homogeneous relations in turn enhancing social capital development (Bourdieu 1986). Parental capital model affirms that the size of social capital owned by an individual is determined by one's economic status of which its creation has a financial value investment in facilitating one's ability to arrange for events like organizing of parties and exchange of gifts (Coleman 1988).

### *6.3.5 I am able to save more money to care for them*

Financial care for their children was however facilitated by the economic capacity offered by migration opportunities as it availed them with all the required resources to meet their children's needs. Participants indicated the ability to meet their children's need as a major factor for staying away from them as seen in their narratives below;

*when I was in Uganda I was working. Certainly, I was able to meet the needs quit better. but also, my work in Uganda was giving me less money than I am earning as a student... if I pay my rent, ... I would still have a bit more money than what I would be getting when I am in Uganda (T-3)*

Though T3 was a student in Sweden, he was able to save more money from his scholarship than the actual amount he was being paid in Uganda which enabled him to care for his children back home. This was not different from other respondents who already had work in Sweden as increased earning in Sweden compared to what they were earning back home facilitated their financial caring practices. Fathers were able to save more money after settling their expenses in Sweden when compared to what they were earning in Uganda from their businesses and workplaces. Interviewed fathers however always remitted everything on their accounts.

In transnational fathers' lives, saving of money earned in Sweden was neither their priority nor a second option as meeting their children's needs was their priority. After settling their daily expenses and bills in Sweden, the remaining balance was all remitted back home in Uganda. This was to facilitate those who were looking after their children to ensure children were adequately cared for. As already indicated in the previous section, respondents had a duty of sending either weekly or monthly remittance for the children's upkeep, pocket money in schools, organise birthday parties as well as other requirements in the family. The burden was however felt by fathers who had more than two children in Uganda as they had to look after two separate families back home. As indicated in the respondents' background information interviewed fathers who had more than one child had given birth to them from more than one mother. The weekly remittances back home to two separate families explains the burden put on fathers and the desire to stay in Sweden for extended periods of time with others spending over five to thirty years without adequate savings to enable them to return home.

Interviewed fathers never even considered spending much resources on themselves as their family members back home always needed money for their survival. This always made fathers to live on minimum expenses in Sweden, denying themselves basics of life to ensure they had more savings in order to be able to send more money for their children. Interviewed men considered other expense on themselves beyond the daily needs for survival to be a luxury something which they could not do while families needed money back home. This turned remittances as a strategy to stay in Sweden as family members were able to appreciate the benefits of fathers' decision to stay abroad through the remittances they received. This defended respondent's actions to stay away from families and children. As indicated by Mehus (2015), the economic hardships in Ugandan families has normalized fathers' actions of staying away from his families and children for extended periods of time so long as he is able to provide his children and family with the basics of life.

Remittances were as well used as an opportunity to care for their children as they could be able to continuously send remittance to facilitate children's indirect care and provision of other basics of life for survival. This has been indicated by Pribilsky (2004) who considered migration as a social and economic investment by parents to enable them fulfill their child caring responsibilities.

This has been acknowledged in Hershberg and Lykes (2019) study on transnational fathers in the US as migrants defended their long term absence from children in terms of economic benefits afforded by migration stating that work in Guatemala didn't pay them like they were earning in Mayan thus seeing migration as an alternative. This was in relation to other response in regarding the opportunities created by earning money in Sweden towards facilitating of financial care as for example indicated in T7's response below;

*Being here doesn't hinder me in any way to care for her. I get everything I want. I get everything because you can get money and send her, do everything and I am able to get everything. I feel able to fulfill every responsibility I would be doing as a father while in Uganda (T7)*

T7 considered his being in Sweden never hindered him to care for his child as he was able to get the financial resources that he needed to look after his daughter and felt sufficient in fulfilling his perception of a good father. This was in relation with other respondents as they felt able to fulfill their child caring responsibilities, educate their children in the best schools, and take their children to hospitals. Some respondents were able to arrange for children's babysitters, pay for children's outings as well as cater even for their own expenses as fathers. Respondents therefore perceived they were able to fulfill all their perception of a good father through financial provision and to care for their children. Even in their absence, children were enabled to cover up with fatherly love from other family members who used remittances to look after them. This therefore made interviewed fathers to stay for years in Sweden though all of them came with a short-term strategy to work for some money and join the rest of family members back home. This however changed after settling in Sweden as they were able to care for their children from abroad as they continued to stay for more years and now thinking of strategies to enable their children join them in Sweden. Financial resources have been acknowledged by the parental capital model towards facilitating paternal indirect care as well as social indirect care, as availability of finances makes it easy for the child to be cared for by other people like taking the child to the hospital, attending school meetings and organizing of parties (Pleck 2010b).

Previous transnational parenting studies acknowledges the opportunities afforded by remittances back home. Remittances facilitate care takers to provide care as well as acting as a motivation to look after the left behind children. Poeze (2019) study on transnational fathers living in the Netherlands, remittances were acknowledged to facilitate the left behind mothers and other children care takers in doing the paternal roles of the absent father through affording breadwinning in the family.

As indicated in the background chapter, remittances have been of a great importance to alleviate poverty among the households in Uganda as well as meeting the daily needs of families. In the recent 2014 population census, about 18% of the households were receiving remittances from abroad of which 7% entirely relied on remittances as their major source of earning (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2017). Reliance on remittances has been increasing following a rapid increase of remittance inflow into the country from millions 888US dollars in 2014 to 1248 million US dollars in 2018 (world bank 2019). This indicates how the left behind children and family members are dependent on the money remitted by transnational fathers and the relevance of remittances in facilitating paternal indirect care in meeting children's needs. According to Souralová and Fialová (2017), migration allows a father to better provide for his family, as far as he has access to potentially higher incomes abroad to successfully meet expectations as a breadwinner and economic provider in the family.

#### **6.4 Establishment of close contact through communication**

Transnational fathers' physical absence and longtime separation from their children was covered through maintaining frequent communications with their children and their care takers. This ranged from daily communication to fortnight and sometimes depending on the existing circumstances back home.

##### **6.4.1 I am there for her emotionally**

Interviewed transnational fathers mentioned the importance of communication with their children as a way of maintaining contact and keeping in touch within their children's lives in that they are not being forgotten as fathers.

*I am constantly in touch with her at least I try if we don't talk every day then every other day. So that she is not only receiving financial assistance materials from me, but I am there for her emotionally. So, the hope is much as I am leaving away from her, I am still in her life and as much as possible I keep going back home (T5)*

T5 was constantly in touch with his daughter through talking to her every day or after another day. T5 believed with his constant communication practices, his daughter was not only receiving financial assistance but emotional care as well. This corresponded with other respondents who interpreted their constant communication to have offered them with opportunities to still remain part of their children's lives despite the long-time separation. Fathers indicated that despite the financial care provided to their children, they still needed to be there emotionally through talking to them. Findings are acknowledged by Kilkey, Plomien and Perrons (2014) study where transnational fathers used communication care arrangements in keeping of family links alive and creating a sense of family togetherness in spite of their geographical separation with their children and families. This has also been indicated by Dávalos (2020).

Interviewed fathers have therefore been able to use their parental family social capital for their children's benefit. According to the parental capital model, social capital of the family is the relationship between children and parents of which relationship is believed to be achieved when there's a close interaction between the father and his children (Coleman 1988). Dermott (2003) acknowledges father child communication in terms of talking and understanding the child as a key aspect of paternal care encompassing an openness of emotions, expression of affection and the building of a close relationship. Budal(2018) also indicated the relevance of transnational father's communication with children by stating that migrant parent's inability to manage and maintain constant communication with their children and care takers is perceived as absence of care and abandonment.

Interviewed fathers have not therefore adopted communication as their daily normal practices aimed at both checking on children and to express their fatherly relationship through passing time together for emotional closeness. Through communication respondents maintained strong social connections with children and family members. Interviewed fathers used communication as an opportunity to actually improve on their relationships with children as well as an expression that they cared for them.

Communication was done through use of phones and internet calling using different social media platforms though sometimes fathers used direct calls to call their children and care takers. Interviewed fathers intensified communication through using a variety of communication tools when they interacted with their children to facilitate exchange of information and care as for example seen in T6's narrative below;

*We communicate almost like every after a week to two weeks,.....we communicate on phone, we call using watsap, they always tell me daddy we miss you so and so and when they have what they need as individuals, ...Send me photos, videos, audios (T6)*

T6's constant communication with his children was not only through talking and listening by use of phones but also involved sending and sharing of photos, videos as well as audios between him and his children. This was done through whatsapp calling which offered him an opportunity to see the physical appearance of his children. This brought them closer to each other, fulfilling his fatherly role through discussing important issues in relations to children's health based on their physical appearance. This was in relation to all respondents who used whatsapp as they were able to understand the emotional conditions of their children in terms of being happy or sad through video chat as well as inquiring if anything was wrong. Their communication was however filled with moments of missing the physical presence of each other as interviewed fathers narrated children being filled with the desire of seeing the physical presence of fathers in their lives after video chats on watsap. This was supported by videos observed as well as audios listened to during interviews received by transnational fathers from their children and care takers expressing how close they were to each other. Audios were however filled with sentimental messages of children requesting their fathers to go back home.

Reliance on whatsapp through video and audio calls to communicate with children and their care takers has been recognized in previous transnational parenting studies. Dávalos' (2020)study on migrant men in Spain and Ecuador transnational fathers relied on whatsapp to share videos with their children, do video charting as well as sending and receiving of texts to and from their children.

Interviewed fathers heavily relied on whatsapp to remain in contact with their children which they thought facilitated their communication as for example seen in the narrative of T1

*Yes whatsapp. It's cheaper now even themselves have put on the money. Then why don't they call me, it could be a week or after two weeks to talk to them when they are at school..... Being that they are on watsap every day....I bought for them their phones but their mothers remove the phones from them(T1)*

T1 considered watsap to be cheaper, his children could afford to use it and low costs involved. This facilitated even other respondent's communication due to its' low costs in that children could afford the costs involved in calling their fathers themselves. T1 even reached an extent of buying individual phones to his children. This enabled his children to access him any time via whatsapp. T1 not only provided phones to children but made sure social media tax and money for loading internet bundles was always part of the weekly remittances sent home. This was intended in that children could afford to buy mobile internet bundles and social media taxes, charged on social media users in Uganda. This was to enable his children to contact him without relying on their mothers' phone. With this, his children could easily express their needs as they could access him any time though mothers later removed phones from the children.

Purchasing of phones, loading of internet bundles and paying for children's social media taxes constantly indicates how committed respondents were in the lives of their children. The desire to maintain frequent communication with children through providing individual phones expresses involvement in their children's upbringing as it is unusual within the Ugandan culture for children of five, eight and nine years to own a personal mobile phone. This could partly explain why mothers removed phones from children sometimes.

Purchasing of phones for children has been supported by Budal (2018) study on transnational undocumented parents in Portugal. In the study, transnational parents bought smart phones for their children in order for them to access internet in an effort to make it easier to communicate with their children as they could easily contact each other whenever they wanted (ibid).

Interviewed fathers credited improvement in technology through availing different media apps to have facilitated their communication with children as they are always brought together. This has been acknowledged by previous research to facilitate transnational parenting and care by enabling constant communication and bringing families closer through video calls (Kilkey et al. 2014). Interviewed fathers therefore experienced little impact of geographical separation on their relationship with children. This was because they could easily see the facial appearance of each other on the whatsapp, sharing videos, photos and messaging. This gave fathers an emotional presence in their children's lives. This was found by (Poeze 2019) on his study about Ghanaian transnational fathers in the Netherlands which he termed as intimate communication.

#### **6.4.2 Communication to know how children are progressing with education.**

Communication was used as a mechanism to participate in children's education by interviewed fathers. This was reflected in their narratives as for example seen in T5's response below;

*If it's a weekday when she has gone to school, I always ask her about how school has gone. If there is anything which has happened, what are her experience with teachers, the fellow*

*students, her performance and what happened during the English lesson or math lesson. I need to know, I have been a teacher myself, so I need to know how she is progressing (T5).*

Though T5 was a teacher himself, his responses were not different from the rest of other interviewed fathers in regards involvement into their children's education. Interviewed fathers through communication actively participated in their children's education. This was always done by inquiring from their children concerning progress of their studies and offering them with guidance. This ranged from asking about children's relationship with their teachers for example if they were having troubles with any teacher in school as well as understanding subjects taught by specific teachers. Respondents invested more time inquiring about children's relationship with peers in schools and offering guidance to their children on the kind of peers to associate with. Respondents often inquired from their children about how they were finding the school environment. Respondents believed these were the determining factors for their children's academic excellence which they needed to address and offer guidance to their children.

This has been identified in the recent transnational parenting studies for example in the study about Nepalese migrants in Portugal (Budal 2018), parent's used their communication with children to discuss their children's daily lives, allocate responsibilities as well as analyzing of children's accomplishments both at home and in schools. This has been acknowledged by previous researchers on fatherhood by stating that such caring actions and behaviours relate to parental responsiveness, and an indication of warmth towards children (Dermott 2003, Pleck 2010 and Lewis & Welsh 2005).

Interviewed fathers have therefore been able to use their knowledge, skills and experience to offer their children with guidance regarding their education, relationship with peers as well as helping them in establishing proper relationship with their teachers. Respondents felt they facilitated their children's academic excellence by addressing issues that might lead to their children's education failures. This is an indication of how fathers can use their human capital to foster cognitive development as well as education achievement for their children (Coleman 1988 and Pleck 2010b).

#### ***6.4.3 She is curious to know how I am living here.***

Communication between children and transnational fathers is a two way thing involving both parties listening to each other and showing interest in the conversation. Dermott (2003) termed this kind of communication as intimate fathering established on good relationship with children. Great prominence is placed on the importance of disclosure, the ability of parents and children to communicate freely, talking, listening and understanding each other. This is based on openness of emotions, expression of affection and building of a close relationship between fathers and children. Children as well have turned these opportunities to bond with their fathers through inquiring about their father's lives for the case of children who have attained some level of maturity as seen in T5's narrative below;

*But of course, basically she is also curious how I am living here so she wants to know. she asks pictures of snow and where do I work, who are my colleagues, she needs to keep updated. In audios she is putting what her mother has said to dad. She tells me when she is not in good moods with the mother or what happened. She is really attached and complaining how she is missing me, why I should go back home, when am I going back, it's a daily question even after explaining today tomorrow she will ask again(T5)*

T5's interaction with his daughter is not different from other respondents as findings indicated that children were also inquiring about their fathers' lives. Children wanted to know how fathers spent their time, nature of work they were doing and people in their father's networks. Interviewed fathers' communication with their children was however determined by the children's age and level of maturity. Children who had attained reasonable age (above five years old) could sustain a long communication with their fathers as they had a lot of interesting stories to tell and inquire from their fathers. Children who understood what snow meant always asked their fathers to send them pictures of snow which pictures upon receiving they shared with their peers and the rest of family members. Respondents believed their children felt their long-distance care and love based on the kind of communication they had with them. Interviewed Fathers however felt that their children as well cared for them through continuous inquiries about their life in Sweden. This reinforced their communication by making it a daily practice to talk to each other. On the other hand, children used these opportunities to express what they were going through as individuals and the kind of relationship they were having with their care takers, for example if they were in trouble or there was a disagreement between them. This explains how children effectively used communication with their fathers as an opportunity for bonding and their benefits.

This kind of openness between children and their fathers, close relationships and their ability to communicate freely with each other indicate an involved style of paternal care having qualities of warmth and responsiveness (Dermott 2003). Children inquiries from parents have been supported by studies conducted on the left behind children. Nazridod (2017) in his study on the left behind children in Tajikistan indicated children always asking parents when they would be returning, inquiring about the remittances sent and kind of conditions they were experiencing with their care takers.

Though there has been an indication of transnational fathers to always pass on orders, dominance and exertion of powers and authority over children and the rest of the family members during communication in previous studies (Mummert 2005 and Pribilsky 2004), this wasn't the case with interviewed fathers. Findings show interviewed fathers used these communications to establish bonding relations, transfer emotional care and negotiate their care roles and powers in the family. This was for the reason being mothers held highest authority as well as helping their children in education achievements despite the distances. This relates to paternal warmth and responsiveness in regard to the child as put forward by the parental capital model (Pleck 2010b and Coleman 1988).

#### *6.4.4 Inadequacies encountered with communication*

Interviewed transnational fathers felt insufficient with communication as they believed little it could offer in terms of caring for their children given the challenges associated with long distance communications. Interviewed fathers with young children felt they needed to talk more with their children but limited by the children's inability to open up as seen in T7's narrative below;

*I have ever spoken to her on the phone but as you know, she isn't that kind that she talks a lot.... just as you may speak to the child because she is still very young(T7)*

T7 felt hindered by his daughter's age to have a constructive communication with her. T7 felt unable to find out his daughter's needs as well as what she was going through as an individual. This he believed was due to the challenges posed by her age in opening up as she was not talkative. This was however a common story for all interviewed fathers who had their children below six

years of age. In such incidences, it became difficult for interviewed fathers to get informed about the child's living conditions as well as establishing a close relationship with children. In most cases, children below six years were not always interested in the communication given their level of conceptualization. Respondents felt emotionally distanced from their children with worries that they may not recognize them as fathers. Interviewed men had to employ different mechanisms to stimulate their children's communication through video calls where they could show children playing materials and other games to attract their attention.

Challenges to communicate with young children has been identified by Hershberg and Lykes, (2019) study on transnational fathers from Guatemala living in the US. In the study, fathers narrated how difficult it was to talk with children on phone as sometimes they were playing or simply not interested in the communication and didn't want to talk (ibid).

Interviewed fathers therefore had to rely on indirect communication through the extended family members and the children's mothers to get informed about children's conditions and challenges. However, relying on social networks often became challenging as for example seen in T1's response below;

*When their mother gets angry, then we do not talk. Now there was a time she became angry and spent around one month when she doesn't pick my calls.... the mother can even refuse the children to come here because she knows if you remove the children from her she will not be receiving money (T1)*

T1's communication with his children was greatly determined by the level of relationship with his wife. During moments of disagreement when his wife got angry with him, communication with his children was cut off by the mother refusing to pick up his calls or switching of the phone completely. Such responses filled some interviewed fathers' narratives where they stayed without being informed about their children's welfare during the entire period when mothers decided not to talk to them. Respondents therefore always had to make sure that they were in good terms with the children's mother if they were to be afforded any opportunity to speak to their children. Even though some respondents had bought phones for their children, in periods of parental disagreement mothers made sure they confiscated phones from the children to cut them off from communicating to their fathers. Conflict between parents often creates an unsettling home environment that negatively affects the health and wellbeing of the entire family including their interpersonal relationships which greatly hinders fathers' ability to provide care for their children (Goodman 2018).

Transnational fathers' good terms with the children's mother was achieved through regular sending of remittances as well as making sure that the father attended to emergencies immediately when contacted by the children's mother. This indicates the relevance of remittances in holding transnational family ties.

This has however been indicated by previous studies on transnational parenting for example in Hershberg and Lykes (2019) study, transnational fathers always complained about switching off of phones and refusal to pick up their calls by children's mothers left in Guatemala. In response, mothers indicated how they used switching off of phone as a mechanism to exert control and pressure on transnational fathers. Women left back home believed fathers needed to know about



the conditions of children back home as well as the entire circumstances in the family which could only be done through the mother's phones(ibid).

Though family social capital has been recognized by the parental capital model to foster paternal care to his children(Coleman 1988), for interviewed fathers it has been a hindrance in circumstance of parental disagreements. This has been as a result of mothers using their powers to cut communication between fathers and their children and to directly control and influence transnational fathers' care practices as well as behaviours. Pleck (2010) acknowledges the nature of parental relationship in determining father's ability to care for his children. This has been reflected by Goodman(2018) indicating mothers as gatekeepers between fathers and their children.

In some instances, school's environment setting attended to by respondents' children hindered them from maintaining contact with their children through frequent communication. The boarding school setting only offers interviewed fathers with opportunities to talk to their children in holidays. Respondents however expressed that it was a long period without speaking to their children as they have to spend over three months without talking to them when in school. This is for example seen in the response of T6;

*The children are in boarding schools, I get them in holidays...like now in that they are in boarding school we don't communicate ..... I now can't manage to guide them because I don't know how they do their things and handle themselves. So, I need to be when I am seeing them in that I can tell them that this you are not supposed to do it this way you are supposed to do it in this way. (T6)*

T6's inability to talk to his children due to their being in boarding schools was in accordance with other respondents with children at school. Interviewed fathers felt being restricted by the children's school environment to stay in touch with their children. Interviewed fathers lacked control on school calendar and had to only wait for their children during holidays. This is for the reason being children are not allowed to enter with phones in any school environment in the Ugandan school setting. Secondly, the school calendar offers children four month of holiday throughout the year while the rest of the eight-month children are in school. This brought in communication gaps when children went to schools for example during the beginning of term one school calendar in early February until late April. Respondents who had their children in boarding schools never communicated to their children thus limiting their ability to maintain intact relationships with children. It's such incidences of gaps in communication between children and their fathers that generated interviewed fathers' feelings of imperfection and distress as they felt unable to fulfill their perception of a good father given their inability to offer guidance to their children. Interviewed fathers were filled with feelings of emotional gaps for their children, with concerns that children's needs were being left unattended to as they lacked information from them regarding what they wanted. This has also been acknowledged by parental capital model as an indication of family social capital inadequacy on the side of children. social capital inadequacy has been indicated to have a negative effect on the child's development due to inadequate paternal human capital in the child's life(Coleman 1988). Fathers solved this by sending monthly upkeep and pocket money to their children to decide for themselves what they wanted with the help of their mothers.

Though interviewed fathers mentioned the benefits offered by whatsapp in facilitating communication between them, their children as well as children's caretaker, ability to communicate on whatsapp was determined by the nature of phones held by children's care takers. Respondents whose children's care takers had "basic mobile phones" as used by respondents faced challenges in communication between the father and his children as they could not allow internet calling and whatsapp as well as the high costs involved in direct calls. This is for example seen in the narration of T3;

*For my two years old daughter her aunts send me he photos and videos.... I think the only reason I don't receive pictures for the other two children it's because their mother doesn't use a smart phone. She only uses basic mobile phone and then the two-year-old daughter caretakers have a smart phone at home (T-3)*

T3's children's mother lacked a smart phone which hindered him to receive pictures as well as seeing the physical appearance of his children via social media platforms. It also hindered the benefits offered by smart phones like internet calling through whatsapp, sharing of videos, photos as well as video calling which offers opportunity to see someone visually through whatsapp. In relation to other respondents, T3 took long without seeing the physical appearance of his children, worsening the incidences of emotional gaps and paternal absence in his children's lives. He lacked track on the physical growth and appearance of his children unless when he organized physical visits something he had never done before, and neither in his plans as he planned to see them again after his masters' degree program. Though T3 resorted to direct calls in order to be able to communicate with his children, the high costs involved in direct calls using airtime became a hindrance not only for him but also for the children's mother. They could not maintain frequent intact communications and therefore communicated only when there was need in the family that needed the father's decision or when he felt had missed his children for so long and wanted to know how they were doing. This hinders creation of intimate relationship between respondents and their children where communication is used simply to check in how the children are doing without much time to discuss children's personal issues(Dermott 2003).

Such challenges have however been acknowledged in the previous transnational parenting studies ( Menjívar et al. 2012 and Budal 2018). In Budal(2018) study on transnational parenting, undocumented transnational parents who were economically struggling always faced challenges to maintain communication with their children. Their financial resources could not afford them to by smart phones for their children as well as their care takers, filling parents with worries of soon being forgotten or already have been forgotten by their children due to long time without communication (ibid).

#### ***6.4.5 Transnational paternal childcare practices through occasional visits.***

Transnational fathers covered such incidences of missing to see the physical appearance of their children as well as caring inadequacies offered by communication through making of occasional visits back home. Interviewed fathers utilized every opportunity available to them in making home visits to Uganda as narrated in T6's responses below.

*I visited Uganda last year.....we moved, I gave them time and sometimes they are at school but still I go visit them and we talk, and they tell me what they need.... Yes, because their mothers introduced me as their father (T6)*

T6's response in terms of organizing visits to Uganda was in relation with other respondents who had stayed in Sweden for a period more than one year. Interviewed fathers made sure they visited their children every year, which visits were intended for the benefit of their children. Respondents believed occasional visits offered opportunity to establish close contact with their children given the physical presence. In their narratives, most of their time while in Uganda is allocated to their children. They move together and even when children are in schools, still they must make sure they visit them to establish physical contacts and nurturing relationship which they are unable to do while on phones. Interviewed fathers used this opportunity to get to know their children's needs as opposed to where they just send pocket money through remittances. This was seen by the emphasis placed in their narratives as for example seen in T1's response below,

*Every year I go there once or twice. Previous I have been going there twice, I visited the previous school and all administrators knew me. They used to hear about me. I went there personally when I had taken the children. We had gone to do something at school, and they said to me; we hear about you...Their mother told me yesterday that she will be getting me the contact of the current school. (T1)*

T1 resorted to organizing of multiple visits to Uganda every year which visits are used to establish contact with the administrators and teachers in schools attended to by his children to ensure he is known as a father. Visits to schools and establishment of contacts with school administrators were also used by other respondents to physically get involved in the education of their children. They discussed children's academic challenges as well as other issues children faced both at school and in homes. Respondents also used such opportunities to organise for children's extra class activities. This included getting for children teachers to coach them after the normal school programs, to give them homework and extra class assistances. Parents have also used this as an opportunity to get teachers' contacts. These teachers are later contacted to inquire about the welfare of their children upon returning in Sweden. Through establishing contacts and relationship with schools, parents have been able to fulfill their parental educational and supervisory caring role in the lives of their children. This in turn strengthens the support and care offered by teachers and education institutions to their children(ACP Observatory on Migration 2012). Transnational father's monitoring, supervisory role as well as establishing of supportive relationship with their children's schools has been acknowledged by the parental capital model regarding it in terms of process responsibility (Pleck 2010b).

According to Goodman (2018) the number of paternal visits does not positively affect a children's wellbeing but it is the quality of those visits that increases children's wellbeing. This includes appropriate activities to engage children, creating a sense of warmth through the display of love, kindness and hugs. This was reflected in respondents' visits to their children. Interviewed fathers said it's them to visit children in boarding schools during parental visitation days. In circumstances where they visited Uganda either before or after parental visitation days in schools, still they had to go and check on children. Boarding schools in Uganda offer parents a specific day to check on their children while in school. This is organised once every term where it's upon schools to choose the specific day depending on the school calendar. Transnational fathers' visitation of their

children in schools was supported by photos and videos observed during interviews. These showed parents having fun with their children at school during visitation days, photos of children with their teachers as well as photos of children showing their school accomplishment like art, crafts and drawings to their fathers. Interviewed fathers employed a great deal of their family social capital in the lives of their children through investing more time into activities involving children. They as well-established close relationship with children aimed at ensuring they benefit from their presence. This has been supported by the parental capital model to foster Childs social and cognitive development which are aspects of care in themselves (Coleman 1988).

Interviewed fathers considered scheduling visits back home during times of holidays as well as festival seasons which are cherished and held essential by children. Interviewed transnational fathers always expressed the desire to spend christmas season with their children as for example seen in T5's narrative below;

*She is not only receiving financial assistance materials from me, but I am there for her emotionally. So the hope is much as I am leaving away from her but I am still in her life and as much as possible I keep going back home.....at least every December.....but some times when I am able I go in July and then December also to make sure that I am around during Christmas,.....Christmas is important for the children but it's what I have tried to maintain from the time I got here.....they are in holidays and I have more time to be with her (T5)*

T5 tried to maintain visiting his daughter in the month of December with the desire to spend christmas time with her. In his perspective, December is a long holiday for children thus having enough time to spend together with their fathers. T5 used these long holidays to involve in sports activities with his daughter doing both indoor and outdoor activities. Activities included taking his for swimming, playing football at home, as well as going for tours together unlike during the July visits when children are in school. Apart from spending time together in activities during christmas, T5 believed his physical presence on such a day was just enough for his daughter regarding christmas as an important season for children. T5 was able to establish close relationship with his daughter expressing parental aspects of warmth and responsiveness as well as engaging into activities with his daughter (Dermott 2003 and Pleck 2010). In relation to T5, respondents always felt personal self-judgments for failing to visit their children during christmas. The impact was much felt by T3 who had just experienced being away from his children during christmas for his first time in life. This has been recognized in the previous transnational studies with children continuously demanding parents to go home. Parental failure to organise home visits during christmas often caused emotional breakdown for their children (Budal 2018 and Poeze 2019).

In conclusion, interviewed fathers have used their communication and visits to perform their paternal role in accordance to their perception of fatherhood. They have been able to teach and guide their children, offer emotional care and protection as well as helping children in their different areas of life. In so doing, respondents have been able to fulfill their paternal responsibilities prescribed to an African father as a teacher, molder of children's character and expression of love to his children (Setel et al., 1997). Though this was done by fathers spending much time with their children physically, transnational fathers have been able to fulfill it over phone across continental borders despite the existence of inadequacies.

## 6.5 transnational fathers' emotional care practices.

As already discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, transnational fathers' emotional involvement in the lives of their children is a fundamental aspect of their lives. Even in caring practices that has to do with communication and financial provision, fathers' narratives were filled with statements of emotional care and close relationship for their children. This section provides a detailed analysis of respondents' practices aimed at providing emotional care for their children in addition to ones presented in the previous sections.

### 6.5.1 *I try much as I can to see that am in her life even though I don't stay with her.*

In their narratives, respondents always mentioned how they wanted to remain part of their children's lives despite separations caused by migration. Emotional care was provided through getting involved into activities with their children, interactions during long distance communications as well as the different events organized for their children.

*I try as much as I can to see that I bring up my child even though I don't stay with her, I can try as much as I can to see that I am in her life. You know care, I call her, and I tell her that daddy loves her, daddy will see her soon, you know, yes, she can say dad.... papa.....so that makes me really very, very happy. (T4)*

T4 tried to nurture and care for his daughter from a distance even if he didn't live with her. T4 always maintained close contact to ensure that he is part of his daughter's life. This was done through calling her, telling her how much he loved her and promising to see her soon. Though T4's daughter was one year old and couldn't communicate verbally and neither conceptualize what the father was telling her over the phone, T4 never gave up on being emotionally involved in the life of his daughter. This was in relation with other interviewed fathers offering emotional care to their children through frequently calling and talking to them. Communication was filled with fathers' affectionate words to their children. Respondents never missed out to remind their children how much they loved them despite their being away from them. Promises of seeing their children soon filled their conversations as well. With this, respondents felt they attended to emotional needs of their children as well as passing on love to them. This in turn strengthened their relationship as children always recognized them as fathers something which made them feel happy in that they were fulfilling their perceptions of a good father.

Such affectionate relationship involving fathers telling their children how much they loved them and promising to meet their children have been indicated in the previous studies on transnational parenting (Dávalos 2020 and Pribilsky 2004). This has been also acknowledged in transnational mothering studies where mothers informed their children how much they loved them and cared for them (Madziva & Zontini 2012).

Respondents' caring practices was based upon both the verbal and physical expression of feelings and interest in their children's lives. These actions of telling their children how much they cared for and loved them is an indication of involved father which is essential in building an emotional intimate caring relationship (Dermott 2003). This has been acknowledged by the parental capital model as an indication of parental warmth and responsiveness (Coleman 1988 and Pleck 2010b).

### 6.5.2 *Being open to them nothing more than that*

In some instances, respondents employed emotional caring strategies of telling their children who have attained an understanding age their situation and the reasons as to why they cannot go back

home. Interviewed fathers did this with the belief that children will learn and adapt to the situation of not living with them as well as appreciating the care being afforded to them by fathers. This can be seen in T3's response below;

*Being open to them-nothing more than speaking to them I can do, other than promising them that I will be able to see them. But I also try to explain my situation especially to the elder ones. the one who is 10 years and the one who is turning 6 years (T3)*

T3's response was not different from the rest of interviewed fathers. While speaking to their children, respondents employed a caring strategy of openness by letting children to know situations they were going through as individuals in the foreign countries which hindered their resource abilities to visit children always. This included informing children that they needed to work in order to be able to pay for their school fees in the best boarding schools and letting children know other financial needs in the family which couldn't easily be attended to if fathers took the decision to return back home. Respondents employed this caring strategy with a belief that children will understand their circumstance in order to keep them aware that their fathers still loved and cared for them. Respondents believed it was their responsibility as good fathers to raise and live together with their children, something they were unable always to fulfill. Interviewed fathers were however able to make their children aware that they always thought about them by making promising to join children soon which promises were accompanied by gifts through remittances. In the end, children were able to understand their fathers' circumstances abroad with hopes and beliefs that their fathers loved them and soon will be reunited. This has been acknowledged by Dermott (2003) to foster emotional relationship between the father and his children as they begin to understand and trust each other.

This was found in Hershberg and Lykes' (2019) study where transnational fathers always explained to children their circumstances in that they chose to stay away from them not because they don't love them but simply because they had the desire to improve their lives (children). Fathers as well-informed children of the benefits that their absence had brought to the family like the type of house built through remittances (ibid).

### **6.5.3 I move with them every day wherever I go**

Respondents also offered emotional care to their children by spending some good time together with their children on tours and travels upon their visit in Uganda. This created memorable experiences in their children's lives as well as to cover up the long time spent by children without their fathers' physical presence. Narratives from respondents expressed interactive relationships during the various activities conducted with their children as seen in the responses below;

*Especially in the holiday I move with them every day wherever I go.....and at times their mother chases them away from me.... We go to zoo, freedom city, and all those places we go. Even on beach, and I even take them to my work that I could be doing, and they stay at work the all-day.....I even take them for "bodaboda" and they take a "bodaboda" ride a thing which their mother does not allow. And I tell them let they ride you.... I take them and they tour, do you know kasensero.... it's at the Tanzanian boarder. I even take them in the boat, and we eat fish (T1).*

Despite of his busy schedule to accomplish his personal work in Uganda, T1's daily schedule looked to have only been filled with his children's activities. T1 kept on doing one activity after the other with children. T1 was taking children to his workplaces, going for tour to animal parks like zoos, visiting children's entertainment centers like freedom city where children played indoor

games and went for ice-cream. On the next day, they were going to the beach for swimming and eating fish while sometimes they just took a ‘bodaboda’ ride as well as visiting islands in the boats. Interestingly, bodaboda is the most means of transport used in Uganda with over 1.5 million Ugandans employed in bodaboda riding (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017). This therefore explains that children of interviewed fathers are living a high class in the country as the most means of transport used is their leisure.

Despite the short time frame of their visits to Uganda, T1 in relation with other respondents made sure they spent it efficiently to benefit their children. This indicates how desiring respondents were to be part of their children lives. Interviewed fathers’ narratives were however supported by photos and videos observed from respondents’ phones during interview as they showed children sited on the bodaboda, and in boats having fun with their fathers. Videos and photos also showed children at the beach playing in sand and spending night hours with their fathers at children entertainment centers. These activities were never done by children mother which gave fathers more opportunity to express emotional closeness to their children. Such positive engagement activities between fathers and their children are one of the ways through which a father displays love and kindness to his children by turning his physical presence into something beneficial for the children (Goodman 2018), this has been acknowledged by the parental capital model as an expression of parental warmth and responsiveness with aspects of financial and social capital investment (Pleck 2010 and Coleman 1988).

Such findings are in correlation with the previous studies on transnational and none resident fathers where fathers used visits to build emotional bonds with their children through engaging with them in various activities(Souralová& Fialová 2017, Goodman 2018 and Lamb 2010).

Such caring behaviours enhances development of none hierarchical relationship between fathers and their children which builds openness, establishes trust and confidence of children into their fathers (Dermott, 2003). It has been proved to foster children’s independence and competence in dealing with challenges in the later stages of life (Welbourne 2012).

Benefits of such nonhierarchical relationships composed of friendly interactions between children and their fathers as a result of participation in collective games, travels, tours, and friendly communications are seen in respondents’ narratives as well as photos and videos sent by their children as observed during interviews. Photos and videos were filled with feelings of love and close relationship between the children and their fathers. This is seen in T1’s response and audio discussion with his son;

*They even tell you their secrets.....He can tell you do you know what daddy, can I tell you a secret and me yes.....he then tells you I will tell you when you come.....Now he sends you a photo like this one, he takes photos in the evening. All these photos he took them when at school, they take selfies and send them to me. (T1)*

In T1’s interaction with his son, his son was always telling him his secrets, making promises to him as well as sending intimate messages like videos, audios and photos. This indicates feeling of emotional attachment of children for their fathers as a result of interactions through engaging in collective activities. These activities turned them into friends unlike with a hieratical relationship which establishes boundary between children and their fathers. Using these emotional relationships, children were able to open up to their fathers by letting them know their secrets. Most of these secrets were never told to their mothers despite the fact that mothers were offering children with daily care. In their communication, it’s not only respondents who made promises, but children as well promised to tell their fathers some stories as well as what their future plans were if they visited them in Uganda. Children kept on sending photos to their fathers whom they

thought were missing them indicating that children to were not just receivers of emotional care from their fathers but they themselves provided emotional care to their fathers as well which makes emotional care reciprocal.

The role of children in attending to their fathers emotional needs has been acknowledged by many researchers in African cultural perspective studies on fatherhood (Setel et al., 1997).

This has also been found in a study based on the left behind Tajikistan children as they kept on sending photos, videos and continuously made promises to their parents (Nazridod 2017).

#### ***6.5.4 Transnational fathers' feelings of guilt and powerlessness due to inability to offer emotional care to their children.***

Though interviewed fathers were able to care for the emotional needs of their children across continental borders, their responses were coupled with feeling of helplessness and insufficiency in providing all the emotional needs of their children. Respondents felt their physical absence hindered them to fully show their children how much they cared. Their narratives were filled with wishes had they been to be in the same physical space with their children as seen in the response of T5 below;

*Of course, I cannot do more than just talking to her on a regular basis. I cannot do more than that. sometimes it needs the physical presence, in that way you feel more powerless you get a call someone has been mean to your child and you cannot be there to defend her then you feel powerless.... The only way I can deal with it is to talk to her when I am here. I can only talk to her and convince her why school is important but of course if I had been back home, then the way I would handle it would be just more than talking. Maybe I would go physically with her at school. For example, if someone at school has bullied her then I would go there physically and find out who is it and confront the situation more practically than just talking here. (T5)*

One of the most distressing calls and communication between T5 and his home people was when they reported to him that someone had abused his daughter. In relation to other respondents, the tone and sentiments in their responses really indicated emotional breakdown due to their failure to provide emotional care to their children all the time as a result of physical absence in their children lives. Respondents believed their children were always subjected to abuses in both schools and communities by people who took advantage of their father's physical absence to do whatever they wished to them. Respondents were filled with feelings of self-blame, guilt and emotional breakdown. This was due to their inability to protect and defend their children when attacked and accused by other people or even to protect them from being bullied at schools. Interviewed fathers believed their physical absence made them powerless as they wished to confront the situation practically by physically getting in touch with those abusing the rights of their children as well as engaging school authorities.

ACP Observatory on Migration (2012) also indicates that children are on a higher vulnerability to sexual abuse and any other form of exploitation once one or both parents are absent. It also indicates inadequacy of parental protection during times of parental absence which has emotional impact on both the migrant parent and children.

Within the African traditional society however, a father is perceived as a protector as well as a family head who must protect and defend his children and family members against external threats and attacks (Desmond, 2006). Father's failure to protect and defend his children against external



threats and attacks is perceived as fathers' inadequacy within the African context ( Mncanca et al. 2016). Paternal role of protecting children has been supported by the parental capital model referring failure to accomplish such a role to parental family social capital inadequacy due to fathers' inability to advocate for their children (Coleman 1988). This defence and protective paternal responsibility is not afforded by long distance parenting. Respondents could not stop or confront those who attacked their children in schools and communities over phone calls. Parental emotions of pain, powerlessness, insufficiency and guilt due to inability to defend and protect children have been identified by the previous researchers in both transnational mothering and fathering studies (Madziva & Zontini 2012, Budal 2018, Alaazi et al. 2018, Souralová & Fialová 2017 and Dávalos 2020).

Respondents powerlessly resorted to convincing their children under such circumstances as to why they should go to school though children's bullying at school remained unresolved. This worsened interviewed fathers' feelings of guilt for their decision to migrate as they failed to fulfill what seemed the qualities of a good father in accordance to their perspectives.

#### ***6.5.5 Transnational fathers' strategies of dealing with feelings of guilt and powerlessness regarding emotional care inadequacies for their children***

Social capital through friends and extended family networks have been a great resource for respondents in dealing with such circumstances of abuse to their children as well as covering up of emotional care gap created by fathers' physical absence. Responses from interviewed fathers expressed reliance on social networks in providing direct and indirect emotional care to their children. This is for example seen in T5's narrative below;

*I would have wished to be present in all situations she goes through like take her to school, pick her from school but because of the distance I am un able to do that but I can say that I am very thankful that despite the distance she is progressing relatively well I cannot complain so much about her performance in school and all have worked out. All I miss is the daily presence in her life..... I would be the one to take her to and from school, we go to the parent's meeting in school. If she is sick, I would be the one to take her to the hospital and get her treated what physically the mother and other people are doing (T5).*

Though T5 wished to be present in his daughter's life like to engage into activities including taking his daughter to school, attend medical appointments and school meetings for his daughter, he was unable to fulfill due to his physical absence. Interviewed fathers in relation to T5 had to lose parental responsibilities over their children to other people within the extended families. Respondents acknowledged the work done by children's mothers as well as other people within their social networks who have taken over their paternal responsibilities through attending school meetings, attending to children when sick as well as attending to their daily needs which requires someone's physical presence like protection and defence from abusers.

Respondents were contented and thankful of their children's progress despite their inability to physically take part due to their absence. Respondents were grateful of the care received by children from other people which enabled them to cope up with paternal absence as well as addressing their daily challenges of life. Benefits of social networks in looking after children have been recognized by the parental capital model as well as by other researchers who employed social capital theories in parenting (Bourdieu 1986, Lin 2005, Coleman 1988 and Pleck 2007). This has been in the previous studies conducted on transnational fathers as indicated in Pribilsky (2004)

where fathers relied on their spouses and extended family members to look after their children in their absence.

Interviewed fathers have been in some incidences indirectly supported and encouraged to stay abroad for extended periods of time as they are contented with the care offered to children by the extended family networks. This was seen in their responses as for example seen in the response of T7 below;

*There is not much challenge like getting worried about the child's situation. I know that the home people are always there to support and look after her. I trust the home people very much. All the home people generally (T7)*

T7 corresponded with other interviewed fathers who put much trust in the extended family members with a belief that they will always be there for their children in times of need at any circumstance. This has given them a peace of mind while abroad with nothing to worry about in that their children are getting care from very many people from the extended family. Respondents have been indirectly facilitated to continue with their long time stay in Sweden though they had moved there with a short-term goal strategy.

The extended nature of raising children in Uganda through relying on other members of the family to offer all kind of support in looking after one's children has been of a good resource to many parents. In their research about Ugandan parents living with HIV/Aids in Sweden (Åsander et al. 2013), mothers mentioned how they missed the social support offered by the extended family members as well as friends in raising and looking after children in Uganda. This is because of the *ubuntu* perspective that make people to live interdependently on each other in African families (Nhlanhla, 2006).

In addition to relying on family members and friends, respondents relied on the support from community institutions to offer emotional care to their children. Institutions such as schools have been a great support to the children during their father's absence as for example seen in T1's response below;

*I miss them, yes somehow yes. But I am not always there every time thinking about children and missing them. I don't miss them so much only that I am aware they are in the right hands, if we talk then we talk and now that they are in school, I know they are at school and I will again talk to them over the weekends (T1)*

Though T1 was missing his children when in school, he wasn't all the time thinking about them neither worried about their welfare. T1 was aware children were in the right hands of people at school. Apart from being centers of knowledge, schools were acknowledged by respondents in looking after children including provision of emotional care to children.

Interviewed fathers put much trust in school administrators and teachers towards offering of care to their children. This could partly explain why many interviewed transnational fathers educated their children in boarding schools than day schools where children commute from home daily. Reception of care by children from teachers and school administrators was ensured through respondents establishing close relationships with their children's teachers, as well as picking teachers contacts upon visits. As already indicated in the previous sections, it's these contacts that

they used to talk to their children as well as getting updates about their children's wellbeing while in school.

The role of schools in offering care to children in addition to academic knowledge has been acknowledged in many transnational parenting studies. ACP Observatory on Migration(2012) calls upon strengthening of school communities through training teachers and school administrators on how to offer guidance to children of transnational parents. It also acknowledges the role of schools towards attending to children's emotional needs (ibid).

According to the parental capital model, Parents' relations in society as well as institutions of the community has been regarded to be essential for children's academic excellence with reduced chances of children's school dropouts. Such relations are believed to offer children with care, guidance and support in alleviating the would be problems of life (Coleman 1988). That aside, community social capital in form of institutions like schools are believed to be a great resource for children socialization through access to peers, delivery of knowledge and information to children for social and cognitive development thus attending to children's emotional needs (ibid).

#### **6.6 Guidance across continental borders.**

As indicated in the section about transnational fathers' perception of care, interviewed fathers perceived guidance in a view that everybody who comes in this world needs someone to show them how to live and when not to do certain things, setting limits as well as breaking the controls for children, being a leaving example to children. These were not only their ways of raising children, but they perceived it to be the qualities of a good father. This section on guidance is to help us draw more light on interviewed fathers' caring practices towards provision of guidance to their children in an effort of fulfilling their perceptions of a good father.

*when its holiday I am checking holiday package from school.....checking if she has done it and how is she fairing on with the questions and then we keep going to the village together to visit the grandmother(T5).*

Despite of him being a teacher, T5's participation in the education of his daughter was in relation with the rest of the respondents who had their children in school. Respondents were helpful to their children by helping them with their studies. Interviewed fathers monitored how children progressed with academic holiday packages received from schools and guiding them in question approach through assisting them in question interpretations. In so doing, respondents were able to employ their human capital, using their knowledge, skills and education in assisting their children with education achievement. Interviewed fathers' actions of providing guidance is an expression of fathers' loving interest in children's lives. This involved actions like collectively participating in children's education activities as opposed to employing of authority, orders and command by father. Such actions have been credited to promote children's cognitive development as well as establishing close relationship between children and their fathers (Dermott 2003 and Lewis & Welsh 2005). This has been acknowledged by the parental capital model as mechanisms through which fathers use their family social capital to foster their children's achievements in life (Coleman 1988).

By participating in their children's education, interviewed fathers were able to fulfill an African perspective of a good father. From an African cultural perspective, fathers teach by showing,

telling, giving of rewards to children and by doing aimed at setting an example to children (Mehus, 2015).

Respondents participated in guiding their children into their cultural values by linking their children to extended cultural networks. Interviewed father were able to fulfill this by making occasional visits to their kin relations with children as for example narrated by T2;

*When I go we can move with them, visit some family members...end up when going to functions and you go with them or sometimes I end up it's a Saturday and you move together then you know you will have lunch out. Things like that (T2)*

T2 considered it important to spend time with his children and guide them through visiting extended family members as well as attending functions with them. In so doing, T2 believed children are guided on how to relate with other people as well as guided to know their relatives. In relation to T2, respondents believed they needed to introduce their children to their cultural roots. They turned these visits and conversations into moments to instill cultural values and beliefs into their children and at the same time children helped to build their own social network with other children found on the functions and families they visited. It's through such interactions like on functions and visits to extended families that cultural capital is passed on from generation to generation as they facilitate exchange of knowledge and information among people. This is mostly when elder ones allocate more time to the young generation (Bourdieu 1986).

Ensuring children are connected to their extended family members has also been identified in the previous transnational parenting studies of parents with an African back ground (Madziva & Zontini 2012 and Poeze 2019). For example in his study about Ghanaian transnational fathers living in the Netherlands (Poeze 2019), migrant men decided to send their children back home for purposes of instilling Ghanaian cherished cultural values and beliefs into their children.

Cultural beliefs and values in relation to one's conduct, behavior and morals are of great importance in the African community. Within African communities, it is an important goal of parents to raise children who are competent successful but as well participating in the activities that their cultural place finds important and meaningful (Weisner 1994). This is acknowledged by the parental capital model in that through guidance parents are able to use their family social capital in form of experiences to help foster children's success in life (Coleman 1988).

#### ***6.6.1 Guidance is impossible when not in the same physical space***

Despite their ability to offer guidance to their children during physical visits and the frequent communications with their children both directly and indirectly, transnational fathers have been affected by the long periods of physical absence from their children in regard to offering of guidance. This was seen in their narratives during interviews as for example seen in T6's response below;

*I am supposed to speak to the children as a parent...because sometimes they can do things when I don't need them when am required to put them in the right path, I need them to take. But I now can't manage because I don't know how they do their things and handle themselves. So, I need to be when I am seeing them. With that, I am able to tell them that this you are not supposed to do it this way, you are supposed to do it in this way. (T6)*

T6's response was filled with feelings of inability to speak to his children as parents which was limiting his capacity in guiding children into the right path. T6 could not manage guiding his children as he wasn't aware about how they were behaving and handling themselves due to his physical absence. Fathers involvement in guidance of children in terms of discipline and setting boundaries for the child has been considered an important practice of paternal care (Lewis & Welsh 2005), of which T6's inability to offer guidance to his children bring parental care deficiency to children (Weisner 1994).

T6's response was however not different from other interviewed transnational fathers. Some interviewed fathers expressed guidance being totally impossible when the father is not staying with the children. This could be seen in T3's narrative below;

*Guiding is 80% impossible when you are not in the physical place. It's only 20% possible. I think even 20% is on a higher scale, because really guiding requires observing, and then you comment on behavior, you suggest behavior remedy, and you listen to them. On the phone I can only listen and provide sometimes my contextually irrelevant guidance. Then what am I doing?.....it can be challenging especially if you think you have to be parenting and sometimes it makes you feel insufficient as apparent because; one you feel today I am in Gothenburg and I am supposed to be helping my young girls and young boy grow up well but in terms of space you are not there. So, you resort to only speaking to them on telephone which is also insufficient in giving you the parental space that you would rather have if you are in a physical space (T-3)*

In relation to T3's narratives, respondents indicated that guidance required observing of their children's behavior and commenting on the observed behavior and suggestion of remedy for the unwanted behavior. Guidance required listening to children's perspective regarding their behaviors which interviewed fathers regarded impossible to achieve when living in different geographical space. Interviewed fathers felt relying on phones was contextually irrelevant in that they could only listen to their children, sometimes providing guidance which wasn't applicable to children circumstance. This filled respondents with feelings of inadequacies and insufficiency in guiding their children. Interviewed fathers believed they were only able to fulfill less than 20% of their work as fathers towards nurturing of their children through guidance.

This has also indicated in Dávalos(2020) study on migrant men living in Spain and Ecuador where migrant fathers were filled with feelings of guilt due to their physical absence in the children's lives. Fathers felt un able to guide their children as their responses indicated children always needed the physical presence of their father(ibid).

#### **6.6.2 Social networks as capital in offering of guidance to children**

Social capital networks of the family have however been a great resource in offering of guidance to children and performing of other child nurturing role that could have been performed by fathers. In their responses, interviewed fathers expressed much reliance on such networks in guiding their children with fathers withdrawing from such responsibilities in some circumstances as for example seen in the narrative of T1 below;

*Their mum is tough a lot she has to cross check/ examine the phones she doesn't even give them space.... I go there but I don't have time to check their phones. Their mother becomes*

*tough on them very much. She doesn't give them time to bring no sense...and I leave for her the powers because she is the one with them (T1)*

In relation to T1, due to respondents' long-time physical absence and inability to control children's behaviours on phone, children's guidance in terms of disciplining turned out to be solely a mothers' role. Mothers had the responsibility to closely monitor their children's behavior including cross checking of their children's phones as respondents handed over all the powers to them. Even during their physical visits, they didn't have that time to cross examine their children phones to see how children used their phones. Interviewed fathers therefore assigned the powers and authority concerning their children to the mother as they felt women best understood their children as they always lived with them. This directly confirms with the ongoing social work concern of fathers abandoning their roles and duties of child nurturing to mothers which has generated shadow fathers into families (Ewart-Boyle et al., 2015).

This has been found in the previous transnational parenting studies where fathers have left the entire children's nurturing responsibilities into the hands of children's mothers and other members of the extended family, as transnational fathers concentrated on economic provision in the family (Dávalos 2020, Nazridod 2017 and Lamb 2010). Family social capital networks including members from the extended family are a great resource in offering child support in the event of paternal absence (Coleman 1988).

Transnational fathers' allocation of powers to women and emotional involvement with aspects of parental warmth and responsiveness towards provision of guidance to their children contrasts some previous studies involving fatherhood and fathering. In these studies, fathers have been previously indicated to exercise powers, dominance and authority in the family as they offer guidance to their children and the rest of family members (Mummert 2005, Pribilsky 2004, Åsander et al. 2013 and Miller 2011).

## **Chapter 7: Discussion and recommendations**

This paper presents a study on caring experiences of transnational Ugandan fathers living in Gothenburg Sweden based on responses from seven transnational fathers. The study employed an exploratory, in-depth qualitative research design and data collected using in-depth interviews. This chapter presents discussion of the major findings in the study, conclusions and recommendations.

### **7.1 Discussion and conclusions**

The study's first research question was how transnational fathers perceived and understood child caring? Findings of the study reveal that interviewed fathers perceived childcaring in terms of; (1) communication, involving calling to see how the child is doing as well as establishing a close relationship with the child. (2) financial care provision, including providing children with the basics of life, (3) guidance where the father plays an administrative role in the family. In fulfilling this perception, a father steers up his children with his behaviours, leads and guides them in all aspects of life by him being as a living example.

(4) respondents however emphasized the importance of establishing an emotional caring relationship between the father and his children. A father does not only provide basics of life to children but try to be involved in the lives of his children by attending to their emotional needs. Interviewed fathers believed unless it's achieved, the father-child relationship becomes more or less like that of a stranger where the child cannot even recognize his father. This was in relation with the parental capital model as it emphasizes father child close relationship as the major caring factor in the child's life termed as parental warmth and responsiveness (Coleman 1988 and Pleck 2010). has also been found by Dermott (2003) and Lewis and Welsh (2005) in their studies on paternal involvement.

Transnational fathers perception of childcaring findings were in relation with studies about African current fatherhood and traditional perceptions of fatherhood (Desmond, 2006). However, their perceptions presented a more involved paternal caring as they considered childcaring as a fathers' fulltime responsibility which he must fulfill even when admitted in the hospital.

The second research question was; a) How do transnational fathers put their perceptions about childcaring into practice; Findings of the study indicated interviewed fathers' care practices involving both direct and indirect forms of care as put forward by Pleck (2010). Sometimes, care to children was delivered directly by fathers to children during frequent contacts either during long distance communication or occasional visits to Uganda. Fathers participated in different events and activities with their children for example tours, boat sailing, swimming, plus participating in other indoor and outdoor events. In some instances, interviewed fathers' care provision was delivered indirectly through family members to their children. This was done by sending remittances to make purchases and organise events and parties for children.

Findings from the study also revealed interviewed fathers care practices relying mainly on financial provision and frequent communication with their children. Communication was perceived by interviewed fathers as care as well as a mechanism through which other forms of paternal care were delivered to children. During communication, interviewed fathers were able to provide emotional care to their children. Fathers didn't use communication only to check on their children but to make sure they were emotionally involved in their lives. Respondents believed close nurturing relationships could only be achieved through frequent communication. Communication was also used as a mechanism to pass on guidance to their children through participating in children's academic and social aspects of children's lives.

Financial care through provision of basic needs contained aspects of emotional care. Respondents perceived their actions of organizing children's birthday, purchasing of items and investing financial resources on days like christmas and taking their children for outings as an expression of paternal love and care to their children.

Study finding were however similar with previous studies on transnational mothering. In recent studies, mothers believed it's through financial provision to their children that they can transfer their emotional care by purchasing gifts and other materials ( Madziva & Zontini 2012 and Souralová & Fialová 2017). In both studies, parents employ celebration of children's birthdays, purchasing of gifts and play materials for their children. Findings of the study however expressed more involved paternal emotional involvement in children's lives in comparison to the previous studies on mothering. Interviewed fathers organized tours and played both outdoor and indoor games with their children upon visits. This form of care isn't indicated in transnational mothering. Interviewed fathers also remitted finances back home regularly which enabled them to provide more emotional care through organizing parties for their children which isn't common in the most of transnational mothering studies ( Madziva& Zontini, 2012).

Study findings revealed that interviewed fathers' emotional involvement in the lives of their children was in relation with previous findings on transnational mothering. Interviewed transnational fathers' narratives like *"much as I am leaving away from her, but I am still in her life"* were similar with responses found in transnational mothering studies. In these studies, mothers were reported saying *"I am here but I am there"* (Budal, 2018 and Madziva & Zontini, 2012). This therefore indicates that despite being in a foreign country, migrant men still wish to be involved in their children's lives. Interviewed fathers expressed desire to maintain physical presence in the family. Migrant fathers are however locked up in a dilemma as they need to be able to financially provide for their family and at the same time maintain the physical presence in their family. Powerlessly interviewed fathers have taken the decision to stay in a foreign country for purposes of earning more resources to be able to provide a better future for their children.

As put forward by Goodman's study on nonresident fathering that women play the gatekeeper's role in regards father child interaction and care (Goodman, 2018). Findings from the study revealed interviewed fathers' care for their children being much dependent on the children's mothers. First of all, it was mothers who introduced respondents to the schools attended by children as well as assisting them in establishing contacts with the school authorities. And lastly interviewed fathers' ability to communicate with children was determined by mothers. In the event when



fathers bought phones for their children, how and when to use those phones depended on the mother.

b) How do transnational fathers' care practices relate to their ideas of what constitutes a good father; Finding of the study revealed interviewed fathers' experiences regarding provision of care for their children were covered by mixed feelings in regard to their perception of what constitutes a good father. First, interviewed fathers were filled with feelings of powerlessness, insufficiency and incapability in fulfilling their perception of a good father. This was due to their inability to defend, protect, guide and attend to all the emotional needs of their children. Feelings of insufficiency led to emotions of regrets and guilt for not being able to live with their children. This was worsened when they witnessed reports of abuses being suffered by their children. Losing their parental responsibility to other people in the family who attended to their children's emotional needs also sometimes brought in worries as they lost powers in controlling how and when to communicate with children. Interviewed fathers believed guidance and emotional care provision in terms of offering protection to children against external threats required physical presence in the lives of children. Study findings partly contradicted with the previous studies where transnational fathers have been portrayed to exercise powers, dominance, control and authority in the family. Findings revealed transnational fathers' feelings of powerlessness and inability to perform such commanding roles.

Secondly, findings revealed interviewed fathers' moving to Sweden had availed them with opportunity to provide for their children. They could afford boarding schools, organise outings as well as arranging and planning for financial resource provision considered as process responsibility by the parental capital model (Coleman 1988). These resources have been used by other family members to provide indirect care to the children. Findings also revealed that interviewed fathers' migration to Sweden enabled them to have increased earnings compared to what they were being paid in Uganda. This enabled them to adequately meet all their children's needs thus happy for their decision to migrate. As already indicated in the analysis and literature review chapter, financial benefits of migration have always been a strategy as well as comforting factor for parents to stay away from their children (Lamb 2010, Hershberg & Lykes 2019 and ACP Observatory on Migration 2012).

The third research question was; what resources are available for transnational fathers in dealing with feelings of distress and imperfections in relation to fathering from distance? Findings from the study revealed that interviewed fathers relied on the financial resources. Finances through remittances facilitated both indirect care and direct care provisions. Findings also revealed interviewed fathers relied on social capital networks from the family members. These attended to children's needs, offered guidance whenever required and attended children's school meetings. Social media platforms through watsapp were also revealed as a great resource for fathers as they could easily communicate with their children, share photos as well as videos.

Interviewed father held an African father's perceptions about care. paternal role of being an administrator in the family, a primary provider, role model and one who provides guidance and protection to children have been indicated in studies of fatherhood from Africa (Nhlanhla, 2006). However, the mode of communication and care has changed. In the African context, communication between father to child is mainly face to face (Desmond, 2006), while interviewed fathers mainly relied on social media platforms. It should however be noted that it's the inability

to fulfill their perception of an African father which led to feelings of powerlessness, insufficient and guilt.

From the social work perspective, interviewed transnational fathers have been able to remain involved in the nurturing of their children through providing emotional care, guidance and basics of life to their children. Interviewed fathers have also maintained their emotional presence in their children's lives despite their physical absence for such extended periods of time. This has been through frequent affectionate communication with children and various activities organised indirectly. Their perceptions indicated a child centered parenting behavior that focuses on the best interest of children. This is because interviewed fathers valued all paternal aspects of care.

Interviewed fathers have therefore been able to meet their children's basic physical, emotional and developmental needs in terms of health, education, emotional, development, nutrition shelter and safe living conditions as stipulated in the Ugandan Children Act (2016) as well as meeting the care provision and support to their children as called upon under article 18 of the UNCRC (1989). This was fulfilled irrespective of their nonofficial marital status with the children's mother as already indicated in the participants' background information.

## **7.2 Implications for social work/ significance of the study**

The study is considered relevant for social work as its findings are believed essential in the following ways;

From the study, violence and disagreements between transnational fathers and their wives negatively affects the child's relationship with the father in terms of communication including accessing basic needs of life. Social workers working with families having parents staying in different countries need to address issues that are most likely to cause violence in the family in order that children are not put to risk of living without their basic need being attended to.

From the study, communication between fathers and their children is as essential as financial provision. Using communication, fathers attended to children's emotional needs. This can be relevant for social workers working with children who are living in different countries like migrant minors in assessing the emotional needs of such children. It is also relevant during implementation to ensure children maintain contact with their parents.

It can also be helpful for social workers working with children in schools and childcare institutions where children stay long without seeing their parents. This can be used in designing programs that can help to maintain communication between children and their parents. This is based from the study's findings that absence of communication between children and their fathers turns the father child relationship into that of strangers even when fathers are providing children with financial needs.

The study indicated that children staying in different locations with their fathers for extended periods of time are most like to live unguided in life due to fathers' inability to monitor their behaviours. This is relevant for social workers working with children staying in different countries with their parents in designing intervention programs for children through incorporating in guidance and counseling services.

### 7.3 Recommendations

The study was intended to only find out caring experiences of transnational fathers based on their perception of care. Views of children as recipients of care as well as those of mothers were not captured by the study. I therefore recommend future researchers to consider views of children as well as those of mothers in helping to understand how children perceive the care received from fathers. Mothers as intermediaries of care between fathers and their children should also be included as well.

From the study, transnational fathers' challenges were associated with their failure to protect and defend their children when abused by other people in community and in school environment. I suggest social workers should consider including children growing up in transnational families under the categories of (OVCs) who need special attention and protection. This is due to exposure to abuse and exploitation with no one to defend. Inability to access parental protection has however been noted by ACP Observatory on Migration (2012) indicating that child living without both or one of the parents have a higher risk to suffer abuse and exploitation than children living with both parents.

From the study, transnational fathers suffer emotional breakdown due to their inability to provide care for their children. Receiving countries should ensure provision of psychosocial support to transnational parents in order to reduce feelings of self-blame and guilt in their lives mainly those one still struggling economically.

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## Appendix a: Interview guide

Personal information.

Name.....

Age..... number of children.....

- When did come to Sweden?
- Could you just tell me a story of how you came to Sweden?
- What were your experiences during your settling in Sweden?
- What were your expectations before moving to Sweden and have you met them?
- What was your level of education before moving to Sweden, have you upgraded?
- Could you please tell me the kind of work you were doing before moving to Sweden?
- How many children do you have and how many are below or above 18 years of age?
- Did you have children before moving to Sweden, how many did you have?
- Were / are you married to their mother (what type of marriage), are you still staying together?
- Are all of them leaving in Uganda or you have some staying here with you?
- Whom are the children staying with?
- Could you please tell me how you have been able to fulfill your caring responsibilities?

Communication and visits to children.

- How often do you communicate with your child?
- How often do you visit the child physically or have you ever seen the child since you came to Sweden?
- What form of communication do you always use with your child/ caregiver?
- Could you please share with me some of the things you did with your child during that visit?
- Could you please tell me what your conversation is always about during your communications
- Do they always contact you or?

Meeting child's needs

- Could you please tell me how you are handling the situation of meeting your children's needs like education, emotional and health?
- Let us talk about the financial needs of your children, how are you handling it. Do they call you when they need money and what financial responsibilities do you have over them?

Involvement in children's care

- Can you please share about how you feel concerning your children's behavior, discipline, academic performance and health?
- Do you have contacts of their school or a health facility where they go?
- What other things do you do for/with your child when here that you would like to tell me?

### Challenges.

- Could you please share with me some of the challenges you face when caring for your children in Uganda when you are here.
- Sorry to ask, do you miss them and how do you go about it?
- What support services exists or how have you been able to manage all the challenges you have talked about?

## **Appendix b: Information letter**

### **DO FATHERS CARE? EXAMINING CARING EXPERIENCES OF TRANSNATIONAL UGANDAN FATHERS IN GOTHENBURG SWEDEN**

Dear respondent,

I am Mpaata Rogers, a Ugandan international student of the European Master's Programme in Social Work Practice with Families and Children, at the University of Gothenburg. I am currently undertaking a research study on transnational parenting of Ugandan fathers; that is, Ugandan men living here in Gothenburg, Sweden but having either one or more children under the age of 18 years back home in Uganda.

Please, read the information provided below in order to be well informed about the research before consenting to participate.

#### **Purpose of the study.**

The study is intended for academic purposes for a master's degree programme at the University of Gothenburg. The university has it as a requirement for any social work master's student to produce a thesis/research-based report as a prerequisite for completion of the programme and subsequently graduating.

#### **Why transnational parenting of Ugandan fathers?**

Little knowledge through research about the caring experiences of migrant fathers. Ugandan fathers were chosen because of the limited research in the east African region and I being a Ugandan, it would be easy for me to get in touch and conduct interview with Ugandans.

#### **How will I benefit from the study?**

There will be no immediate, direct benefit gained from participating in the study. However, your experience will help shed some light on what migrant transnational fathers go through in foreign countries as they try to full fill their child-caring responsibilities.

#### **What are the likely consequences for my participation in the study?**

There is no anticipated negative impact in as far as your participation in the study is concerned. Your personal information and details will be anonymised by the use of a pseudonym (information you will give/data will be given a name different from yours). The only anticipated cost will be in terms of time, around 2 hours, spent reviewing this information form, the consent form and during the interview. The interview time is/can be divided into two sessions of 45-60 minutes each, depending on your convenience. You will determine where, in Gothenburg, I can meet you for the interview(s).

#### **How will the interview be conducted?**

The interview will be conducted through asking open ended questions about your experience as a transnational father, you will also be requested to provide a simple story about your experience in

moving to Sweden, settling and caring for your child back home. If possible, you may share with me some of the conversations you have with your child(ren) and/or caretaker(s) back home. Our conversations will be audio recorded, and I will later transcribe them to ease my analysis.

### **Optional activity: Observation and how it will be conducted.**

I would also desire to take part in a few of your daily activities if you are free with it. This could include leisure time, when you are talking to your child/child's caretaker, having a look at some of things you think may be helpful to my study (e.g. pictures, etc.). If you wish, I will provide you with a sheet or notebook to record some of your daily activities relevant to the study. Alternatively, this information can be covered during the interviews.

### **How safe is the information I provide?**

I would like to assure you regarding confidentiality and privacy of information to be provided. Your information will be accessed exclusively by me and, in an unlikely incident, by my research supervisor. There will be no identifier of your identity on the work sheet as I will anonymise all the data through use of pseudonyms. Audios recorded during interviews and the anonymised transcripts will be deleted in a maximum of two weeks after clearance of my study report.

### **Can I withdraw from participation during the process of interview?**

You are free to withdraw at any stage of data collection during your participation in the study, you are free not to allow observation or even to request removal of certain information even after data collection. You do not have to provide a reason for withdrawal, but if the reason would be helpful to me whether in line with the research or in working with other respondents, I would be happy if you shared it. You are entitled to requesting for a transcript of the data you have provided and that which has been observed.

Thanks for reserving your time to go through this form. You may now proceed to the consent form if you agree to participate in the study. In case you need any further information please contact me (Mpaata Rogers) on the contact details below. I have also provided my research supervisor's contact in case you need to get in touch with her.

#### Researcher

Rogers Mpaata

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#### Supervisor:

Prof. Therese Wisso, Department of Social Work, University of Gothenburg

Email: therese.wisso@socwork.gu.se

## Appendix c: Consent form



EUROPEAN MASTER IN SOCIAL WORK WITH FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

### Consent form (by Mpaata Rogers)

#### DO FATHERS CARE? EXAMINING CARING EXPERIENCES OF TRANSNATIONAL UGANDAN FATHERS IN GOTHENBURG SWEDEN

Dear respondent,

I am Mpaata Rogers, a Ugandan international student of the European Master's Program in Social Work Practice with Families and Children, at the University of Gothenburg.

Thank you for taking your time to read through the information form of this study, and for considering participating in my research. One more step before we begin is for you to formally provide your consent. This form is designed to document your agreement to participate in the study. Please feel free to answer accordingly, and do not hesitate to contact me for any clarity.

The consent form is filed by ticking in the box corresponding to the information provided and later by appending your signature.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information form provided

I have been given opportunity to ask questions regarding the topic

I understand that my participation is voluntary, with freedom to withdraw at any time without giving reason

I therefore agree to participate in the above study

I understand that the information gathered will be used for academic purposes and that it may be used for future research-in line with the current study.

I agree with audio recording during the process of interview

yes

No

I agree to the use of anonymised (no identifiers) quotes in the report

yes

No

Participant's name .....

Signature.....date and place.....

Researcher: Mpaata Rogers. Signature and date .....

Supervisor: Professor Therese Wisso Gothenburg University

| Email: [therese.wisso@socwork.gu.se](mailto:therese.wisso@socwork.gu.se)