UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

The Perceived Impact of Absent Fatherhood: An Exploration of Young Adults' Experiences of Father Absence.

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Sciences in Research Psychology in the School of Applied Human Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus

April 2020

DECLARATION

I, **Tau Ramadimetje Gladys**, hereby declare that the dissertation for the Masters of Social Sciences (Research Psychology) degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, hereby submitted by me, has not been submitted previously by anyone else at this University or any other university; that this thesis is my own work and all referenced materials contained herein have been duly acknowledged.

Signature: Date 20th April, 2020

Supervisor

As the candidate's supervisor, I have approved this thesis for submission

Supervisor: Mrs X.P Mfene

Date: 22 April 2020

Signed:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I thank God for all the great things He has done for me. I have learnt to lean and depend on God, my Redeemer, and on my family. The insight and endurance of my mother, who now rests in peace (28/03/2010) gave me the will to continue. I only wish that she were here in the flesh to witness this day, a day that she longed to see.

I am happy to acknowledge with gratitude, my supervisors Mrs X. P. Mfene and Ms N. Mphambo who constantly guided me on the best way to produce project work of good quality.

My sincere appreciation to my entire family, who always believed in my abilities, thank you!

I would like to give a special thanks to the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Pietermaritzburg students, my respondents, for their full and committed participation in my study. Without them, this study would not have been completed successfully.

DEDICATIONS

This piece of work is dedicated to all young adults who were raised in the absence of their fathers.

ABSTRACT

Background: South Africa has a high rate of divorce, contributing to the majority of single mothers raising their children in the absence of their fathers. The psychological effects of being raised without a father figure are reportedly debilitating for children and young adults throughout their lifespan. Each parent has a responsibility and a significant role to play in ensuring that his or her child or children are groomed and nurtured in such a way that their holistic psychological needs are fulfilled. However, due to a high proliferation of single-mothered households in societies, these roles appear to be distorted.

Significance: Few studies to date have explored the impact of father absence on the wellbeing of children or young adults. Those that have been conducted have mostly been quantitative in nature, failing to explore the subjective experiences of young adults who were raised without their fathers. Therefore, this study sought to bridge that gap by exploring the subjective experiences of young adults raised by single mothers in the absence of their fathers.

Method: The study was conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus using both the purposive sampling and snowball sampling of 11 students aged between 19 to 25 years. Due to the qualitative nature of the study design, semi-structured interviews were used to explore the subjective experiences of the participants, and a thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Results: The results of the study have shown that absent fatherhood can be experienced in two ways namely, positive and negative. On the positive side, it has been revealed that it allows children to be independent and fosters family cohesion in the sense of extended members' involvement in the upbringing of the children. However, it also has major psychological effects in terms of the individual's sense of worth, disruption in the family unit and contributes to feelings of abandonment in the child.

Keywords: Father absence, absent fatherhood, single mother, impact, young adults, psychosocial wellbeing.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and background to the study

According to Richter et al. (2012), being raised in a father absent home requires numerous adjustments on the part of the family. This is because it brings about changes in the family structure, family roles, family relationships and the family's economic circumstances. Currently, the number of absent fatherhood homes is rising (Howard et al., 2006). This raises the question whether single caregivers are able to raise their children appropriately, so that they may also grow up to be responsible adults within the traditional belief that a child needs both the father and mother to achieve full mental and emotional development (Mavungu et al., 2013). Making sure that the needs of children are met in and outside the home may be burdensome for some single caregivers (Shefer & Clowes, 2012). Unlike in the past, especially in African culture, raising and disciplining a child was a collaborative effort between parents and the society (Makusha, 2013).

In contrast to the above, in modern times parents are viewed as the only caregivers responsible for disciplining their children (Makusha, 2013). The type of parenting style and structure can have either positive or negative effects on the emotional development of the child (Thupayagale-Tshweneagae et al., 2012). Absent fatherhood has been associated with negative impacts such as delinquency, poor academic performance and school dropout, raising concerns of self-fulfilling prophecies (Wilhelm, 2014). A father plays a significant role in the early stages of the child's development, as well as on the mentality of a child. Furthermore, the morals and personality children portray at school are indicative of the kind of environment they come from (Wilhelm, 2014).

In the United States of America, the number of single mothers who are raising their children alone with absent fathers is increasing rapidly (Howard et al., 2006). It is believed that young adults from absent fatherhood families are more likely to have fewer resources than those in homes with both parents. This is a consequence of the sole caregiver not being able to take

care of the family financially by herself (Howard et al., 2006). Regardless of how self-driven a female caregiver may be, for as long as the father is absent, young adults will not be satisfied as they need a father figure in their lives (US Census Bureau, 2011). Research conducted in the US found that more than 19 million children, including young adults, live in absent fatherhood homes. This crisis is increasing daily. As a result, many young adults do not know who their fathers are (McLeod & Kaiser, 2004). It is believed that young adults from homes with involved fathers fare better in most areas of their lives compared to those with absent fathers. This is because their wellbeing is nurtured appropriately, as compared to fatherless young adults (McLeod & Kaiser, 2004). In the USA, most teenagers are raised by a single caregiver, which is mostly the mother, because of absent fatherhood. This trend is becoming increasingly prevalent than before (Ainsworth et al., 2015).

In Asian countries such as Japan, absent fatherhood is prevalent and many children are being brought up without their fathers (Tanaka & Nakaza, 2005). Most fathers are preoccupied with being wealthy, as they immerse themselves in their jobs and businesses, whilst neglecting their children or not making time for them (Tanaka & Nakaza, 2005). When children learn that their fathers are away from them or have less contact with them, they develop emotions such as anger and hatred. Consequently, their wellbeing becomes affected (Yeung, 2013). Moreover, absent fatherhood appears to affect children's lives negatively as they tend to assume their fathers are hostile or neglectful (Bae, 2016).

Research conducted in Australia shows that most of the households are headed by single mothers (East et al., 2006). This is a result of absent fatherhood. This implies that most children are being raised in the absence of their fathers (East et al., 2006). It has also been reported that the father's presence is very influential in the development of the child, both socially and psychologically. Moreover, it is believed that father absence is a predictor of negative self-concept and maladaptive behaviours in children (East et al., 2006). It has also been shown that children who grow up in the absence of their fathers, particularly females, are prone to pre-marital sex (McLanahan et al., 2013). This results from the young women's attempt to find affection, which they never received from their fathers (McLanahan et al., 2013).

A study carried out in Botswana shows that father absence might yield both negative and positive impacts on a child's life. In fact, children are not disadvantaged by growing up without their fathers, as mothers and other family figures play a crucial role in moulding and grooming the child (Thupayagale-Tshweneagae et al., 2012). In some cases, children who grow up in father-absent homes are likely to succeed in life. This is because they feel they are compelled to establish and prove themselves (Datta, 2007). Thus, father absence does not necessarily disadvantage a child but rather the environment in which the child is brought up, for instance, if a mother supports a child adequately emotionally, physically and financially, then the chances of children longing for their fathers are slim (Datta, 2007). However, most young adults who are raised in the absence of their fathers are reported to have been negatively impacted emotionally, as these children direct their anger towards their mothers, assuming that their mothers are responsible for their father's absence (Thupayagale-Tshweneagae et al., 2012).

In South Africa, a gradual but steady increase in the divorce rate since 1996 implies that children are more likely to experience significant changes in family structures across their childhood and adulthood (Smith et al., 2014). This draws attention to the parenting roles and needs of single caregivers, usually mothers. Generally, single caregivers have fewer economic resources, less help with the provision of child care, behaviour monitoring and lower levels of support than married parents, where the father is present (Misra et al., 2012).

In South Africa, the non-involvement of fathers in the upbringing of their children seems to be on the increase and is gradually becoming the norm (Morwe et al., 2015). Due to the growing number of single female-headed households, absent fatherhood is prevalent in South Africa (Richter, 2006). In support of Richter (2006), the Department of Social Development (2012) has also found that the number of female-headed households is increasing exponentially in the country. In the South African context, poverty and high unemployment rate are the most prevalent contributory factors that lead to a large number of fathers failing to take responsibility for their children (Makofane, 2015). Only a handful of present fathers give their children support and care; however, the majority are absentees (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2012). It is reported that many South African fathers neglect to

care for their children financially. Where they do involve themselves, often their financial contribution is meagre and oftentimes insignificant. Furthermore, the very same fathers neglect their children emotionally and physically (Mabusela, 2014).

1.2 Problem statement

Absent fatherhood has become a national concern; therefore, jointly, both the father and mother have important roles to play in ensuring that their children acquire appropriate and balanced social, psychological, moral and academic development (Amoateng, 2004). Each parent has a unique role in the psychological, social, educational, gender role and career development of his or her children (East et al., 2006). However, the growing societal acceptance of single motherhood has distorted these complementary roles (Carlson, 2006). This has in turn adversely affected the upbringing of young adults with regards to their psychosocial and educational wellbeing. Absent fatherhood homes are more likely to be low-income homes (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). South Africa is reported to have the highest rate of father absence across the world (Nyanjaya & Masango, 2012). Furthermore, it has been found that father absence has an impact on the psychosocial wellbeing of young adults (Hawkins, 2015). The negative impact on children's psychosocial wellbeing is reportedly indicated in experienced high stress levels, low-esteem, promiscuous behaviour, teenage pregnancy, and low socio-economic status of the family unit (Whitehead & Holland, 2003).

In addition, father absence has been reported to cause psychological problems in the lives of young adults. These young adults may develop certain negative emotions towards the male parent possibly because they are not exposed to a male parent figure (Grossmann et al., 2005). Such psychological problems may include anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. The affected children may also exhibit aggressive behaviour, learning difficulties, and develop sleeping disorders (Hofferth, 2006). Low self-esteem has been found to be one of the impacts of father absence (Johnson, 2013). For this reason, children may think that they are not good enough and different from their peers who have father figures in their lives causing them to feel inferior to those with present fathers (Johnson, 2013).

Fathers are regarded as primary coaches and play a decisive role in the education of their children. This is because they provide cultural mediation in the life of a child (Ramisur, 2007). According to Piaget's epistemological theory of learning, learning is an on-going activity in which a child or young adult makes or constructs his or her knowledge (Ultanir, 2012). As with all constructions, there has to be a support structure or foundation. Thus, young adults need existing structures provided by both mother and father to support them in achieving their maximum potential (Ultanir, 2012). It is very likely that without the support structure of the father, children will not accomplish their true potentialities (Ultanir, 2012).

1.3 Significance of the study

The limitations of the previous studies are that they seemed to magnify the negative outcomes while trivialising the positive ones. Furthermore, previous studies have been quantitative in nature, failing to explore the subjective experiences of young adults who were raised without their fathers. Therefore, the current study sought to explore the subjective experiences of young adults raised without the presence of their fathers. Additionally, it aimed to explore how young adults raised without their fathers perceive the impact of being thus raised. The research findings are anticipated to provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences of young adults who have grown up with absent fathers. Furthermore, the research findings are expected to provide an avenue for policy changes regarding fatherhood and father absence, by equipping researchers with evidence, understanding of the issues and the scope of the problem.

1.4 Aim of the study

The current study sought to explore the subjective experiences of young adults raised by single caregivers. Furthermore, it sought to explore how these young adults perceive the impact of absent fatherhood in their upbringing.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The following objectives are central to the study:

- To explore the subjective experiences of young adults who were raised without fathers;

- To explore the perceived impact of absent fathers in an individual's (young adult) psycho-social wellbeing; and

- To explore the perceived impact of absent fathers in the family unit.

1.6 Research questions

The study sought to engage with and provide answers to the following questions:

- What is the subjective experience of being raised without a father?

- How do young adults raised in absent fathered homes perceive the impact of absent fatherhood in their psychosocial wellbeing?

- How has absent fatherhood affected the family unit?

1.7 Delimitations of the study

The study focused only on young adults who were students, aged 19 to 25 years old, who were raised by single mothers. The young adults were all students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

1.8 Definition of the key terms

1.8.1 Single caregiver

A single caregiver can be described as an adult who provides and protects those who cannot do so on their own, children in particular (Hornby, 2010).

1.8.2 Absent fatherhood

For the purposes of this study absent fatherhood refers to the physical absence of the father encompassing the neglect of the physical, and psychosocial needs of a child and young adult (Nock & Einolf, 2008).

1.8.3 Young adult

Doll (2012) describes young adult as a person between the ages of 18 and 35 years. However, according to Erickson, stages of life are described according to age groups, consequently, a young adult is categorised between 18 and 40 years (McLeod, 2008)

1.8.4 Fatherhood

Hornby (2010) describes fatherhood as the relationship between the father and a child, where a father is present in his child's life.

1.8.5 Psychosocial wellbeing

According to Smith and Silva (2011), psychosocial wellbeing encompasses the spiritual, social, emotional and mental state of the individual at a given time. Biddle (2006) describes psychosocial wellbeing as being able to engage socially with significant others and being able to be content with others.

1.9 Limitations and gaps for the previous studies

Various studies (Brooks, 2008; Ikramullah et al., 2009; Kevorkian, 2010; Eddy & Holborn, 2011; Dickerson, 2014; Cooper, 2009; Morwe et al., 2015) have associated absent fatherhood with adverse impacts; namely, low self-esteem, promiscuous behaviour, teenage pregnancy and low socio-economic status. However, due to the quantitative nature of these studies, they lack an in-depth exploration of the subjective experience of father absence, which can be obtained from individuals who have had first-hand experience of this phenomenon. Thus, the current study attempted to provide an in-depth exploration of these subjective experiences, by interviewing young adults who have been raised in absent-father homes. Furthermore, little is known about the positive influences of father absence; however, the current study attempted to explore the positive influences emanating from experiences of father absence.

Additionally, this study explored if absent fatherhood influences the socio-economic conditions in family units.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter described the background of the research and also explained the problem statement, as well as the aims of the research. The chapter also outlined the research objectives and the research questions. Delimitation of the study was described and the concepts that are used in this study were defined. The next chapter presents a literature review of issues relevant to the research topic.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature on fatherhood from a general African perspective, including the specific South African perspective. The first section entails the historical and contemporary description of fatherhood within the African context. This includes a review on the role of non-biological father figures in the lives of African children. Secondly, an exploration of literature on fatherhood and absent fatherhood in South Africa, where fatherhood was shaped by the country's unique history, colonisation and contemporary social forces. Followed by an exploration of the impact of absent fatherhood on individual wellbeing, as well as within the family unit. The last section entails discussion of the theory that underpins the study, which is the Attachment theory.

2.2 Defining father absence, fatherhood, and absent fatherhood

 2.2.1 Father absence

Boothroyd and Perrett (2006) describe father absence as a concept used to refer to a situation where a child grows up in a household without his biological father. This may be the case where the father and the mother are separated or have not lived together from the start (Boothroyd & Perrett, 2006). Mancini (2010) conceptualises father absence as the absence of the father who does not reside with children or whom the children have no access to for various reasons including incarceration, business travel, and divorce. Mancini (2010) went further to explain that incarceration is one of the leading factors that contributes to father absence. According to Mancini (2010), there is a positive correlation between father absence and teenage pregnancy. The speculation around this correlation is that teenage girls tend to mirror their mother's behaviour while these children are still in the developmental stages, such as menstruation. Living in an absent father home, some mothers are reported to date multiple men in an attempt to find a suitable partner or a father to the growing the children. Father absence refers to the absence of the biological father with frequent or infrequent contact, as well as those absent due to death (Langa, 2014). It also includes fathers who are

not known to their children or those who are known but not physically available to the children (Langa, 2014).

Despite his definition of father absence, Langa (2014) views father absence as a diverse concept which has contextual meaning to different cultures. This is the case because some research indicates that father absence does not refer to a deceased father as the death of a parent may be viewed as a psychosocial circumstance (Boothroyd & Perrett, 2006). Franklin et al. (2015) associate father absence with male mortality, including male labour migration in which a father hardly spends time with his child.

2.2.2 The concept of absent fatherhood

According to Nock and Einolf (2008), absent fatherhood is conceptualised as the absence of the male parent, be it physically, emotionally, or financially. This is where the father fails to provide for the basic physical and emotional needs of the child and fails to have a positive influence on the lives of his children (Boothroyd & Perrett, 2008; Kevorkian, 2010; Makusha, 2013; Thompson, 2014). In addition, the father is uninvolved in the children's upbringing and adds no emotional value to the family as a unit (Knoester et al., 2007; Boothroyd & Perrett, 2008; Nock & Einolf, 2008; Kevorkian, 2010; Kimani & Kombo, 2010; Makusha, 2013; Thompson, 2014). Furthermore, McLanahan and Sandefur (2009) added by viewing absent fatherhood as a concept where the father is not physically present during the children's childhood and in their young adulthood. They further argued that although a young adult may live with his or her father in the same household, if they do not have a proper relationship with each other, a father may be considered an absent father (McLanahan & Sandefur, 2009). In addition, absent fatherhood can be described as a failure to improvise financially in caring for the child until a child is ready to be an actualised adult (Shefer & Clowes, 2012). Additionally, absent fatherhood also consists of instances where a father does not bond with the child from pregnancy until young adulthood (US Census Bureau, 2011).

Boothroyd and Perrett (2008) concurred with this and highlighted that the physical presence of the father has no meaning in the life of a child if there is no emotional relationship between them. Segal (2010) viewed absent fatherhood as those relationships where the father lacks the emotional connection in his relationship and does not share the responsibility of raising his

children. Financial contribution is but one aspect of being present in a child's life and does not encompass the whole concept of being there for all the child's needs (Joussemet et al., 2005). It does not refer exclusively to deceased parents but includes those who are still alive, yet not involved in their children's lives (Boothroyd & Perrett, 2006).

In South Africa, the non-involvement of fathers in the upbringing of their children seems to be on the increase and is gradually becoming the norm (Morwe et al., 2015). Due to the growing number of single female-headed households, absent fatherhood seems to have become an accepted trend in contemporary South Africa. According to the Department of Social Development (2012), the number of female-headed households is escalating exponentially in the country. In the South African context, poverty and high unemployment rates are the most prevalent contributory factors that lead to a large number of fathers failing to take responsibility for their children (Makofane, 2015). Likewise, it has been found that only a handful of present fathers are giving their children or young adults support and care; however, the majority are absentees (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2012). Many South African fathers fail to care for their children financially. In cases where they do, they contribute a small amount of money, and the very same fathers neglect their children both emotionally and physically (Mabusela, 2014).

According to the available literature, absent fatherhood is predisposed by factors such as the father's age, socio-economic status, disapproval of parents or migration (Makusha, 2013). For this reason, it is argued that the younger the father, the higher the chances are that he will be absent from his child (Richter et al., 2010). Furthermore, absent fatherhood seems to be influenced by the nature of the relationship between the mother and the father; for instance, if the mother and father are fighting or are divorced, the father may become reluctant to visit his children, thus depriving his children of a quality relationship with him (Rushton, 2004).

Similarly, Guajardo et al. (2009) stressed that children who are born out of wedlock are likely to experience absent fatherhood in their lives. This is because the father may wish to hide his infidelity from his wife and is thus likely to cut all ties with his mistress, including the illegitimate child born from that relationship (Rushton, 2004). When the father is financially absent the single mother may find it difficult to provide for all the child's needs from a single

income. This lack of mutual contribution appears to be contrary to the basic notion that it takes two or three to raise a child, for optimum and healthy development (DeBell, 2008). It should not be trivialised that both parents have a unique role to fulfil in a child's life, thus a father's psychological absence is likely to deprive a child of those qualities a child or young adult needs from the presence of a father figure (DeBell, 2008).

2.2.3 Defining fatherhood

Fatherhood can be described as the presence of either the biological or social father who cares for the needs of the children (Clowes et al., 2013; Thorn, 2013). Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines fatherhood as a lifelong responsibility of the father towards the child. The focus of the study is absent fatherhood, as such the researcher dwells on absent fatherhood, with some discussion on fatherhood in both African and contemporary views.

2.3 Fatherhood within the traditional African context

Within the African context fathers were regarded as powerful heads of households responsible for making decisions on behalf of the family (Makofane, 2015). Apart from decision-making, historically, it has been hitherto important for fathers to take the responsibility of providing for material needs of their children. However, in some cases fathers were occasionally there to provide other non-material needs necessary for children to thrive which, among others, includes love, approval and security (Heron, 2019; Roman et al., 2016). Fatherhood was a collective responsibility not limited to one's biological child but extending to other children within the community. This was premised on the fact that traditionally marriage was regarded as consisting of more than merely husband and wife, as characterised by modern day communities (Chikovore et al., 2013). Relations were created because of marriage and they were significantly valued. Within the African context, individuals had the spirit of communalism and were committed to the common good of their community. Helping one another, including fathering children from absent fathered homes, was predominant (Chikovore et al., 2013). The spirit of communalism entails the community caring for one another, including children without fathers, as a united rather than a separate entity (Brown et al., 2013).

According to Morrell (2006), fatherhood in the African context did not constitute the presence of a biological father, but rather a male substitute who assumed fatherly roles for the children. Being a father entailed relational ties between a male figure and the child. In African perspective, fatherhood was not ascribed to DNA but rather the fatherly roles provided (Morrell, 2006). A family member or a member of a community, for example, a man's brother in cases where the child has no male parental figure, assumed fatherhood. In African ways of being, doing and knowing, fatherhood necessitated the significance of a male adult caring for the needs of the children. Africans see a child as belonging to every adult, this implies that a child has a right to be protected and cared for despite the absence of biological fathers (Lesejane, 2006; Morrell, 2006).

2.4 Fatherhood and absent fatherhood within the contemporary African context

Lately, African societies have digressed from upholding the traditional significance of fatherhood (Ratele et al., 2012; Malherbe, 2015; Freeks, 2017). The traditional family set-up is fading away, and the role that fatherhood played in the upbringing of a child is missing in African societies (Kansiime, 2015). Most African communities are facing the challenge posed by the absence of fatherhood (Magangi, 2018). This challenge can possibly be solved by restoring the traditional definition of fatherhood, where fathers had the critical role of providing, nurturing and protecting their biological children as well as those within the community at large (Chikovore et al., 2013; Makofane, 2015). According to Mavungu et al. (2013), a significant number of African children are not exposed to a good father-and-child relationship. For example, Richter and Panday (2006) conducted a study in South Africa and found that South Africa had the lowest marriage rate throughout Africa. Posel and Devey (2006) went on to add that the country was the second in Africa (after Namibia) with a very high rate of absent fatherhood.

In South Africa, most young fathers reflect with sadness on how they never had the opportunity to know their fathers or never had someone who played the role of a father in their lives (Clowes et al., 2013; McLanahan et al., 2013). They acknowledge that they do not have the experience and guidance concerning the roles and responsibilities of a father (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). It is therefore critical when formulating policies and programmes to include the issue of fatherhood and involvement of fathers in the lives of

children (Gadsden et al., 2016). Likewise, a comprehensive understanding of the nature and form of fatherhood in the South African context is crucial, along with an understanding of how fatherhood has been shaped by African history, cultural traditions, colonisation, and contemporary social forces (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012).

The following section will outline how South Africa's family set-up was disrupted by the migrant labour system that was imposed on black people (John & Comaroff, 2018). Black people were forced to work in mines far away from their families which meant that they had no time with their families and only saw their wives and children during the holidays (Hall & Posel, 2018). This disruption of the family set-up was linked to a political system that was built around poverty, colonialism and an apartheid system whose ideas operated against the emancipation of black people in all spheres of life (Morison et al., 2016).

2.5 The history of segregation in South Africa and its impact on family units

2.5.1 Old family structures, colonisation and migration

South Africa is one of the countries in Africa that has experienced a history of colonisation. As a consequence of the process of colonisation, fatherhood was re-conceptualised from the traditional point of view into a contemporary or western viewpoint (Gillis, 2000; Nduna & Khunou, 2014). Prior to colonisation, fatherhood in African context entailed not the presence of a biological father but rather the presence of a male substitute who assumes fatherly roles in the lives of the children (Nduna & Khunou, 2014). In support of this, Chauke and Khunou (2014) maintained that there were dominant conceptualisations of fatherhood, which consist of numerous roles. These roles include "protection, moral authority, family responsibilities, provision and the function of being a role model especially for young men" (p. 18). For Chauke and Khunou, fatherhood was deemed a polygonal role, which served African people sufficiently prior to colonisation and apartheid.

On the other hand, Gillis (2000) maintained that historically fathers have been seen through the lens of biology; however, fatherhood itself is socially and culturally constructed. Morrell (2006) contended that African culture is not homogenous, which implies that fatherhood and

fatherhood roles vary from the culture to culture and from the context to context. Alongside this, interaction between the father and the child despite the father's physical unavailability, is deemed to be fatherhood; this may in one way or the other underestimate the role of fathers who are willing but unable to interact with their children on a daily basis, as well as being unable to provide financially for them (Morrell, 2006).

As mentioned earlier on, the family units in which fathers assumed their roles were significantly affected in the apartheid era. The household was impacted by the system of migrant work and the head of a household, which was usually the father, had to go look for work in the urban areas leaving his family behind (Budlender & Lund, 2011). According to Dubow (2007), the migration of men from their rural homes to urban areas in search of greener pastures affected their marital lives, including their fatherly roles. The institution of traditional marriages was also disrupted as men were absent from their homes (Sooryamoorthy & Makhoba, 2016). According to Posel and Rudwick (2011), traditional marriages involve performing important rituals that take place over time rather than on a single occasion. As a result, migrant male workers were unable to carry out those rituals due to their work commitments. The absence of a male figure to officiate traditional marriages had an impact on African marriages (Hall & Posel, 2018). In this era of migration, women and children did not have the privilege of visiting their husbands or fathers in the cities, which affected the concept of fatherhood and the family unit (Benya, 2017). Consequently, women headed many family structures, which was the reflection of single parenting (Rogan, 2016).

2.5.2 New family structures

Lately, having children out of wedlock has become commonplace in South Africa (Blackie, 2014). This phenomenon is most likely to increase with the socio-economic emancipation of women (Posel & Rudwick, 2012). Modern day women share equal opportunities with men and in some cases they succeed in obtaining well-paid jobs, enabling them to take care of their families (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2017). The fact that women are becoming economically emancipated has also resulted in a deviation from the traditional family, which constituted of both parents and their children, in which the father took care of the family (Makiwane & Berry, 2015). Traditionally, a family set-up which excluded either the father or the mother

was perceived as being incomplete, and was associated with producing maladjusted children (Sooryamoorthy & Makhoba, 2016). In addition to the aforementioned, the spirit of communalism seems to be fading away as societies are becoming more individualistic, with everyone minding their own business and nobody having time to look out for another man's child (Hatch & Posel, 2018). Bearing the above scenario in mind, young men seldom receive wise marriage counsel from their elders for several reasons, which include, among others, parents not having time due to pressure from work (Amoateng & Heaton, 2015).

In recent times, young adults get married without proper guidance and most of their marriages fail due to current family structures which have replaced the traditional family structures and marriages (Richter et al., 2010). Young adults learn about love, marriage and fatherhood from what is portrayed on television emanating from western cultures (Sooryamoorthy & Makhoba, 2016). Traditionally, gatherings were organised at which both young men and women were taught about adulthood. These gatherings were held separately and were conducted during puberty. Both young men and women were taught how to relate to the opposite sex (Sooryamoorthy & Makhoba, 2016). Young men were taught about responsibility and would not be involved in sexual activities before marriage. The old adage was "*wedlock is padlock*". This implies that when a marriage takes place, there must be no separation between the husband and the wife. Also, once a young man impregnated a girl, he had to marry and stay with her forever. Nowadays society has become permissive and some believe that there are advantages to being a single parent, deviating from the African tradition (Sooryamoorthy & Makhoba, 2016).

According to Ward et al. (2015), in modern day South African societies having both parents present within the family has both advantages and disadvantages. Several studies have shown that the advantages and disadvantages are dependent on the parent-child relationship (Barthassat, 2014; Gadsden et al., 2016; Thomas & Umberson, 2017). Conversely, Lansford et al. (2001) argue that there are some children who need both parents to succeed and find fulfilment while others only need a single parent. For example, some children who are raised in families where their parents were always fighting and arguing might blame their parents for their failures in their adult life (Sobolewski & Amato, 2007). In some cases, such children would have preferred to be raised by a single parent because they would not have been

exposed to the fights and disagreements while growing up (Mthombeni, 2010). Similarly, hostile environments can perpetuate damaging patterns and cycles of broken relationships throughout generations (Forward, 2009).

Morrell (2006) contended that there are variations in the understanding of fatherhood and absent fatherhood. These variations are based on both African and Western viewpoints. The Western viewpoint is believed to be dominant in contemporary South Africa (Roman, 2014). This may result from the idea that most South Africans, in particular, have adopted various ways of conceptualising fatherhood (Roman, 2014). These imply that fatherhood is understood in terms of a man who impregnates a woman. As a result, the man is defined as the father despite non-fulfilment of his fatherly roles (Hofferth & Anderson, 2003). According to the Western definition of fatherhood, biology is the predominant factor that gives meaning to a father and fatherhood (Taylor et al., 2013). However, this excludes technologies such as artificial insemination which is one of the modalities to assist the process of pregnancy (Morrell, 2006).

Alongside this, the media plays an influential role in the transformation of the concept of fatherhood in contemporary society. Through the media there seems to be an association between fatherhood and financial provision, where one is deemed a father inasmuch as he provides financially, while neglecting other roles that are deemed significant for growing children (Chauke & Khunou, 2014). Although fatherhood also includes good parenting, the media seems to portray parenting in the form of a nuclear family structure in which other family members who play a significant role in the upbringing of the child are being downplayed (Morrell, 2006).

2.6 Absent fatherhood as a contributing factor to single parenting

A substantive number of studies have been conducted in South Africa which have shown that many young men do not show an interest in their children (Madhavan et al., 2008; Padi et al., 2014; Ratele et al., 2012). It is evident that the majority of these young men are neither there to support their children in whichever way necessary, nor are they interested in the wellbeing of their children (Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2015). Some of these absent men even deny paternity of their children (Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2015), some exclude themselves from the associated

responsibility by highlighting their unemployment status (Mavungu, 2014). In addition to these, some men choose to be absent in their children's lives as a way of avoiding the stigma linked to their colour and/or the kind of relationship they have with the child's mother (Adhikari, 2009).

According to Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) (2017), 62% of children born in South Africa in 2016, the father was not present. Worldwide, South Africa is among the leading countries with high rates of absent fatherhood (StatsSA, 2017). As alluded to in the previous sections, the migrant labour system is one of the contributing factors of the high rates of children growing up without their fathers, which consequently resulted in a number of female-headed households (Rogan, 2016). The traditional meaning of fatherhood is no longer applicable to modern day societies in South Africa due to the ongoing demographic transition and urbanisation in the country. For the purpose of this study absent fatherhood will be premised on contemporary family structures.

2.7 The impact of absent fatherhood in childhood

Absent fatherhood has been found to have an impact on the lives of children (Kimani & Kombo, 2010). Being raised in the absence of a father figure can be challenging, not only for the growing child but for the mother as well (Morwe et al., 2015). Raising a child is supposed to be a collaborative effort by both parents, considering the immense demands inherent in parenting (Richter et al., 2010). Trowbridge (2014) stresses that being raised without a father physically and emotionally, is very hurtful in the sense that the child does not only feel the loss of a father, but also experiences feelings of gradual rejection by the immediate paternal family members from whom protection is sought. When young adults feel gradual rejection, they tend to displace their anger to their significant others (Wilhelm, 2014). These growing children are oftentimes deprived of a normal childhood due to the absence of a father figure, resulting in them having to take on parenting roles at an early age (Shefer & Clowes, 2012).

Child upbringing is perceived as both a collaborating and cooperating task between both the mother and the father, to create a warm and fulfilling environment for the child (Richter et al., 2010). This is buttressed by another study, in which Schwarzwalder (2014) asserted that male children experience slower mental maturation, as compared to their female counterparts,

as single mothers are more likely to pay more attention to female children, which is natural as being of the same gender they are conversant with their feminine needs; therefore, the presence of a male parent is essential in the process of nurturing the children, especially boy children. Nevertheless, when male children are raised only by their mothers, their development tends to be single sided; they need the same gender role model in order to emulate through modelling (McLeod & Kaiser, 2004).

Father figures play a particular role in the lives of their children as much as mothers do. The father through his involvement in the child's upbringing fosters a sense of protection and security from the external environment (Mabusela, 2014). When this father figure is absent in the upbringing of children, they are likely to perceive this as neglect and may act out aggressively towards others out of pain (Shefer & Clowes, 2012).

Similarly, it was also reported that absent fatherhood can lead to loneliness in children (Liu et al., 2010), who may experience insufficient care from a single mother (Zhao et al., 2017), low self-esteem (Valtolina & Colombo, 2012) and depression (Zhao &Yu, 2016). Normally the presence of a child's biological father or a fatherly figure in a child's life, coupled with strong emotional investment, are important in maintaining attachment relationships (Cassidy & Shaver, 2002). On the contrary, absent fatherhood has been linked to negative emotions and feelings that disturb attachment bonds (Cassidy & Shaver, 2002). Liu et al. (2009) suggested that the depression-type disorder in children without a father might be ascribed to disruptions in the parent-child attachment. In the absence of a biological father, the quality of care from people living with or close to the child is crucial to minimise the impact of absent fatherhood on children. Effective psychosocial support from a fatherly figure may assist children to cope with the absent fatherhood (Boss et al., 2016).

It would seem that father figures' involvement, physically, emotionally and otherwise, seems to bolster a sense of confidence and increase self-esteem in the child in various ways. Through modelling, not only is the child prepared to deal with future challenges, but it also fosters a sense of being loved and cared for by both parents (Shefer & Clowes, 2012; Shenk et al., 2013). Being raised without a father figure is painful because a father is supposed to teach his children how to love, how to learn, how to be protective of self and others, and how

to care for others. Therefore, when the father is absent, there is no model that children can emulate while they transition to young adults (Mabusela, 2014).

2.8 The impact of absent fatherhood in young adulthood

2.8.1 Gender specific roles

According to Shenk et al. (2013), when children transition to young adulthood in an unstable environment, they are forced to take on adult roles despite note being sufficiently mature to assume that responsibility. Instead of enjoying the benefits of being children or enjoying their youth, they have to take on adult roles (Shenk et al., 2013). As young children learn to trust their parents and others who care for them to satisfy their basic needs, they gradually feel wanted, valued and loved (Knoester et al., 2007). In contrast, young adults from absent father homes seem to lack that intrinsic trust and are more likely to feel unwanted and unworthy of love, resulting from the lack of affection and affirmation they experienced in their upbringing (Dickerson, 2014). In some cases, a young adult, particularly a young man, who was raised in an absent father home, may experience difficulty in asserting and taking charge of his life as he lacks confidence which stems from the lack of a male figure in his life, as mothers are prone to shelter and overindulge their sons (Cooper, 2009). Reportedly, there are certain things a young male adult would only feel comfortable sharing with a male figure (Makofane, 2015). Although single mothers do play a big role in the nurturing and caring of a young adult, there are certain aspects of manhood that can only be taught by a father figure (Makofane, 2015). A father represents a shepherd, someone who safeguards and supports his children (Abrams et al., 2007).

Teaching a boy about manhood requires someone who is knowledgeable and experienced, and a father figure or a substitute, in the form of an extended family member like an uncle, fulfils that role (Waldfogel et al., 2010). However, Jackson (2010) concurred but added that inasmuch as a child may have a substitute for a father, such as an uncle or a grandfather, there will always be a gap or an emptiness caused by the absence of a biological father. Similarly, Monama (2011) argues that everyone needs a role model, someone to look up to; primarily, these role models are both the mother and the father.

According to Makofane (2015), lack of a father is a disadvantage, especially in young male adults, as these young adults are not well-equipped, well-nurtured and/or well-directed. They find it very difficult to conduct themselves as men. Guajardo et al. (2009) also agree that these young adults are more likely to conduct themselves as women or model their mothers, as they have no male significant other to look up to. A young male adult needs to be nurtured and cared for through modelling. However, in cases of absent fatherhood, they seem to lack that gender-specific modelling, and find themselves in limbo (Waltz, 2007). In addition, a father is needed especially when his son reaches puberty, where issues of intimacy and sexuality become imminent, and the lack thereof increases the likelihood of a distorted perception regarding expected or acceptable conduct in romantic relationships (Richter et al., 2012).

In contrast, Drexler and Gross (2005) asserted that male children brought up in absent father homes also develop into happier mature adults, just as their female counterparts; this is because single mothers are likely to pay more attention to their children without any distraction from the husband, who may demand spending more time with the mother. Drexler and Gross (2005) further argued that a male child does not necessarily need a father for a healthy development, but rather needs a reassuring and loving environment. In this regard, a devoted single mother is also able to provide such necessities. These findings highlight that the emotional detachment encapsulated in father absence renders debilitating effects for the young male adult who seeks gender-specific modelling.

On the other hand, when young female adults are raised without their fathers, they tend to have trouble in choosing male partners in relationships caused by their lack of experience with males in a relationship setting (Guajardo et al., 2009). The involvement of a father figure in a girl child's life creates a mental representation of what future relationships are supposed to be with male partners (Guajardo et al., 2009). Wilhelm (2014) concurred and added that young female adults may struggle to adjust in heterosexual relationships, as they are unfamiliar with such relationships. They may feel threatened by the same assurance and protection they seek. Additionally, Makofane (2015) contended that the involvement of a father figure reassures a girl child of her self-worth, while the converse leaves a deep wound in the young female adult's life. This reassurance becomes a template for the development of

the young female adult until she can assert herself and be independent. Lack of a father figure in a girl's upbringing is likely to result in feelings of insecurity and inadequacy (Brooks, 2008). The father's involvement in any child's life can never be trivialised or underplayed due to the varied adverse effects resulting from its absence (Waltz, 2007).

In contrast, Armstrong (2015) contends that being raised without a father is not as difficult as people may think. In fact, it is normal and prevalent. However, having no father is not always a disadvantage to children or young adults, as there are many alternative social role models that a child or young adult may emulate, such as pastors and neighbours, who can help raise a child (McCarthy & Bonhoeffer, 2015). Growing up without a father may not be easy; however, it does not always define a child (Boothroyd & Perrett, 2006). Absent fatherhood does not necessarily predispose a child or a young adult to become a helpless victim (Boothroyd & Perrett, 2006). Although reviewed studies may depict fatherless young adults as not open to new situations nor likely to succeed, the bottom line is that it depends on the individual's aspirations and their own motivation to achieve them (Steinberg, 2001).

McLeod and Kaiser (2004) also argue that being raised without a father is neither difficult nor unmanageable; the problem arises when a child or young adult expect their single mothers to have a relationship with their absent fathers for their own sake. Being raised without a father is not really a challenging experience, as the children and the single mother become accustomed to the situation from time to time (Monama, 2011). In support of this, Cartwright and Henriksen (2012) asserted that it is only outsiders who assume or think that not having a father is a stressful experience. However, these young adults have ways of dealing with their situation. Growing up without a father can result in children becoming empowered adults in the sense that they become independent and mature earlier than their peers. These young adults also become determined to succeed in life (Trowbridge, 2014). Young adults who are raised in the absence of their fathers are more likely to have other insights; hence the challenges they have experienced because of the lack of resources that their fathers should have provided, result in them acquiring more life skills and oftentimes they work harder in life than children from two-parent homes (White, 2015). It is believed that growing up without a father breeds self-resilience, as children learn to depend on

themselves, rather than expecting too much from someone else. They are also likely to be wiser than their counterparts are (Makofane, 2015).

Furthermore, it has been reported that most young adults who are raised in absent fatherhood homes, particularly males, tend to have empathy towards women as they have witnessed the struggles of their single mothers in order to survive (Jackson, 2010). These young adults tend to grow up respecting and treasuring women, based on their experience of how brave women can be, even in the midst of sombre situations (Armstrong, 2015). They tend to be resilient as they model their single mothers (Armstrong, 2015).

It would seem that the subjective experience of absent fatherhood can have both a positive and a negative impact. It would be interesting to explore what environments or factors foster a positive or negative outcome.

2.8.2 Psychological factors

According to Hawkins (2015), the impact of absent fatherhood creates a sense of helplessness and leads to acceptance of circumstances, which hinders young people's ability to become ambitious and resilient. Some young adults from absent father homes have been reported to have high levels of psychological problems such as stress, sadness, anger and loneliness, depression and dishonesty (Donnellan et al., 2005). When fathers are absent, children tend to overthink, wondering if they are being loved or cared for by their fathers (Johnson, 2013). In contrast, McLeod and Kaiser (2004) assert that stress and anxiety are also likely to stem from environmental factors, where the father is present at home yet does not have a good relationship with his children. The emotional detachment is likely to elicit anxiety, with the child longing for attachment, yet not experiencing it. It is maintained that it is not the absence of the father in other settings that is associated with stress but the abuse that these children may be exposed to in the presence of the father (Culpin et al., 2013). In addition, White (2015) asserted that in cases of parental disputes, some young adults are likely to find themselves caught in the midst of parental conflict and become stressed, while the absence of their father gives them solace as they are not called upon to choose sides.

2.8.2.1 Low self-esteem

Absent fatherhood has been shown to have an impact on a child's self-esteem in the sense that they feel rejected by their fathers, and may feel a sense of unimportance (Sheslow, 2008). Amongst other effects of growing up without a father is self-doubt and a likelihood to please others, as the child's sense of self is negatively affected (Cooper, 2009). Due to the low sense of self, other areas may be affected, such as academics, career, and the workplace environment with a tendency to think or feel that they are not adequate as compared to their peers (Adler & Stewart, 2004). Furthermore, Brooks (2008) contends that the absence of a father figure, often causes the young adult to struggle with trust issues, both with themselves and the world, expecting rejection from others, just as they feel rejected by their own father. Similarly, Kevorkian (2010) asserts that some young adults brought up in absent fatherhood homes tend to second-guess themselves, especially in the presence of their peers, due to their sense of inadequacy with regard to their capabilities. Conversely, when children have an adequate relationship with both mother and father, they are likely grow up into adults who have a high self-esteem and self-confidence, while the lack of attachment with a father and a mother is likely to diminish that confidence (Luo et al., 2011).

In contrast, Cartwright and Henriksen (2012) believe that when the father is absent, children or young adults form a strong relationship with the mother in a manner that she is likely to teach them to stay focused, driven and to believe in themselves. Makofane (2015) concurred, arguing that being raised without a father does not always breed low self-esteem, but highlighted that the type of relationship a young adult may have with a primary caregiver influences their self-esteem. For instance, if a single mother supports and assures a child on how good and effective they can be in life, the child is likely to develop a high self-esteem.

2.8.2.2 Attempted suicide

Absent fatherhood is believed to increase the risk of suicidal behaviour among the youth (Wasserman & Wasserman, 2009). A study conducted in South Africa by Stark et al. (2010) found that attempted suicides among children or young adults is influenced by various factors, ranging from social issues to family problems, which include absent fatherhood. Suicide appears to be one of the effects of absent fatherhood, especially among young black male South Africans, as these children have no male figure in their lives to share their

problems with; they often feel depressed and experience suicidal thoughts (Du Plessis, 2012). In addition, these young adults are predisposed to stress when they have no male significant other in times of hardships; therefore, they could possibly have feelings that are associated with suicidal ideations (McCarthy & Bonhoeffer, 2015). Some young adults raised in homes with absent fathers are likely to commit suicide, as they tend to feel rejected by their fathers (Jacobson & Gould, 2009).

Kruk (2012) also supported the view that young adults from homes with an absent father figure are more likely to be involved in anti-social behaviours such as suicide. These young adults often feel unloved and unwelcomed, tend to perceive themselves as unworthy and these dysphoric feelings make them prone to committing suicide (Kruk, 2012). Reportedly they attempt suicide as a cry for help to what they perceive as emotional neglect from a single mother who is preoccupied with issues of survival and providing for the family (Inniss, 2013). Some children may view the mother's struggle as their fault, and thus feel they are a burden to her, increasing their likelihood to commit suicide (Lizardi et al., 2009).

2.8.2.3 Anger

Young adults reportedly become angry at themselves or displace this anger to any male figure, generalising that all men are the same as their perceived abandoning father (Luo et al., 2011). It has been found that young adults from absent fatherhood homes are likely to place the blame on themselves or others for their fathers' perceived abandonment (Ramisur, 2007). These young adults are likely to assume that their fathers left them because they are not adorable or good enough. Consequently, they tend to blame their mothers or their significant others for this perceived abandonment by their fathers (Park, 2007). Cabrera et al. (2008) supported this view, adding that a mother is often blamed by the young adult who struggles to understand the lack of involvement of the father in their lives. They then reportedly tend to become angry with themselves or displace this anger to any man, generalising that all men are like their perceived abandoning father (Luo et al., 2011). This is supported by various studies (Inniss, 2013; Sevim, 2015; White, 2017) citing that some young adults struggle with impulse control, bursting in anger when they are with significant others, even at the slightest of disagreements (Carlson, 2006), due to a perception that they are unwanted by their fathers (Donnellan et al., 2005).

The perceived abandonment by the father affects other relationships; for instance, these young adults reportedly struggle with intimacy as well as maintaining stable relationships (Hawkins, 2015). The abandonment issues are usually noted in their inability to commit and paranoid preoccupations about their partners' infidelity (Makofane, 2015). Moreover, these young adults would always suspect that their romantic partners are having extra-marital affairs even when they do not have tangible proof, which proves they still have unresolved issues within themselves. These young adults would reason that they do not trust anyone since their fathers were good men before disappearing (Makofane, 2015).

It would seem that the absence of a father figure at home can have either negative or positive effects, depending on the individual child and the nature of attachment between the child and the primary caregiver.

2.8.3 Behavioural impacts

It has also been found that most young adults from absent fatherhood homes are not well-disciplined and tend to display behavioural problems. This is because the single mother may not have the time to monitor behaviour while simultaneously being pre-occupied with issues of survival and providing for her children (MacCallum & Golombok, 2004). This is because most single mothers work full time to provide for their children; therefore, the overwhelming demands of work, coupled with discipline issues, may leave children prone to cracks in oversight and lack of monitoring (MacCallum & Golombok, 2004). Conversely, Biblarz and Stacey (2010) stressed that a young adult does not necessarily need a father to be well-disciplined. However, an environment that is conducive to positive input, in which a single mother is applying appropriate parenting techniques that encourage a child to develop a sense of morals, is essential. In addition, Makofane (2015) supported that inasmuch as children may need fathers to look up to, absent fatherhood has no direct influence over the behaviour of the children, as behaviour can be learned through modelling from a single mother. Hawkins (2015) concurs that absence of a father has no impact on the children's behaviours; however, primary caregivers, supposedly single mothers, often impact on how children behave in their everyday lives as they nurture and monitor these children daily.

2.8.3.1 Promiscuous behaviour and teenage pregnancy

Dickerson (2014) asserted that many young adults from absent fatherhood homes are more likely to engage in sexual behaviours from an early age. Furthermore, they may become promiscuous in an attempt to seek emotional attachment from different partners in order to compensate for the lack of, yet longed for, experience from their absent father. This is mostly prevalent in females for instance, who tend to be attracted to various men unconsciously searching for a bond that their father failed to provide (Ikramullah et al., 2009). The younger females hope that these men could provide them with the safety and assurance that they lacked from their fathers. The reportedly promiscuous behaviour increases the likelihood of teenage pregnancy associated with the circle of absent fatherhood (Ellis et al., 2010).

In addition, young male adults engage in unsafe pre-marital sexual activities, resulting in unplanned pregnancies, where these young men then fail to be involved in the upbringing of their children due to lack of modelling from their own fathers (Nowak, 2003). Various studies (Mancini, 2010; Webster et al., 2014) supported this view and added that some young adults raised without their fathers' involvement in their lives engage in sexual intercourse from an early age due to lack of monitoring and discipline by single parents who are overwhelmed by the demands of their jobs and family responsibilities. It would appear that absent fatherhood has a major impact on young adults' lives as promiscuous behaviour and early sexual involvement have potential health risks in addition to teenage pregnancies.

2.8.4 Social and romantic relationships

According to Ramisur (2007), most young adults from absent fatherhood homes have difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships with their peers. Furthermore, these young adults are reported to experience difficulties in confiding in their friends or their significant others, as they find it difficult to trust others, as a result of being abandoned by their fathers (Brooks, 2008). Lizardi et al. (2009) concurred and added that young adults who are raised by single caregivers are predisposed to relationship problems with their peers, as they tend to display signs of insecurity among their peers, which decreases their chances to effectively react to the demands of the environment (Kimani & Kombo, 2010). Alongside this, romantic relationships can serve as a protective factor due to their emotional and socially satisfying nature; however, romantic problems are reportedly stressful as these young adults

may presume they may have to deal with abandonment similar to their absent fathers (Luo et al., 2011). Perceived abandonment by the father affects other relationships; for instance, these young adults reportedly struggle with intimacy as well as in maintaining stable relationships (Hawkins, 2015). The abandonment issues are usually noted in their inability to commit and in their paranoid preoccupation with their partners' infidelity (Makofane, 2015). These young adults reason that they do not trust since their fathers were good men before disappearing (Makofane, 2015).

On the other hand, it has been further established that young female adults brought up in homes marked with absent fatherhood have a greater chance of getting divorced; this is because the absence of a male significant other in their childhood creates a rift between themselves and their male partners (Richter, 2006). Therefore, these young adults display difficulties in coping with marriage demands, resulting in divorce (Thupayagale-Tshweneagae et al., 2012).

In addition, most young female adults from absent fatherhood homes often find themselves longing for love from their romantic partners as fear being abandoned (Horne, 2011). Furthermore, it is found that no matter how abusive their romantic partners may become or how unhappy they may be, these young adults choose to remain in such abusive relationships, as they have a profound desire to be loved and cared for, especially by their male significant others (Eddy & Holborn, 2011).

2.9 The impact of absent fatherhood on the socio-economic status of the family unit

2.9.1 Financial impact

In addition to psychosocial wellbeing absent fatherhood has been reported to have an economic impact on the family as the family becomes dependent on the mother or any other caregiver (Kimani & Kombo, 2010). In most cases, particularly in low and middle income countries, the left behind parent is normally unemployed and may struggle to meet the basic needs of the child (Whitehead & Holland, 2003). Likewise, it has been reported that fatherless families are most likely to end up in poverty because the income of one parent may

not be enough to provide for the whole family (Kids Count, 2009). Contrary to this view, Eddy and Holborn (2011) reported that in South Africa in absent fatherhood families, the family is likely to get financial benefits in the form of the father paying for the family's maintenance. Furthermore, homes with absent fatherhood tend to have sufficient financial provision because in most cases the law forces the father to pay for the children's maintenance (Mavungu et al., 2013).

2.9.2 Disorganized family

Absent fatherhood is believed to jeopardise the family unit because the family structure has to change and adapt; for instance, if there is a male sibling in the family, he takes on the father's role in an attempt to help the mother establish a warm and loving family environment (Osborne & McLanahan, 2007). Moreover, a single mother may be working everyday leaving her with insufficient time and space to monitor and supervise children's behaviours; as a result, children may misbehave without their mother noticing (Tillman, 2007). Where there is a lack of solid attachment between the children and their mother due to her daily commitments in an attempt to fulfil both parental roles, the family gradually becomes disorganised (Osborne & McLanahan, 2007).

Similarly, absent fatherhood impacts the family unit negatively, as a single mother has to work full time and oftentimes she is obliged to take any kind of job in an attempt to fulfil the children's basic needs (Hofferth, 2006). As these single mothers work overtime and have limited time to physically bond with their children, the family unit gradually becomes disorganised as the mother juggles to play many roles simultaneously (Kimani & Kombo, 2010).

2.10 Theoretical framework

Attachment theory of John Bowlby

The attachment theory of John Bowlby is appropriate for the present study because it highlights the importance of attachment between a child and his/her caregivers. Bowlby (1958) asserted that attachment begins at infancy and continues throughout life and he mentioned several innate behavioural control systems that are needed for survival and procreation. He further described attachment as a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings (McLeod, 2007). For Bowlby, a secure attachment is characterized by a child experiencing positive feelings and feeling loved by his or her caregivers; for example, the mother and the father. However, when there is no affection, a child feels unloved and rejected by the parents (Hiolle & Canamero, 2007). According to this theory, every child should have an attachment with at least one caregiver (McLeod, 2009). A secure attachment with parents provides the necessary sense of security and foundation (Stroebe & Archer, 2013). Children form strong relationships with their caregivers in childhood; thus, a sensitive and emotionally available parent gives a child a platform to trust the caregiver and the world as a result of the experience established with the primary caregiver (Boundless, 2016).

In contrast, caregivers who are not available and attuned to the child's emotional needs increase the likelihood of the child becoming insecure and predispose the child to dysfunctional personality patterns in early adulthood (Grossmann et al., 2005). Likewise, a relationship between a child and caregiver is significant for socialisation; however, its absence is associated with juvenile delinquency, emotional difficulties and anti-social behaviour (Petters, 2006). Every child needs a warm, loving and trusting relationship with both their parents, and those children who fail to experience a warm and loving relationship with their parental figures, are more likely to develop a sense of rejection and neglect (Ainsworth et al., 2015).

In light of the many findings on contributions by fathers towards their children and development of their families, few studies to date have unpacked the contributions of parenthood on father-child attachment (Brown et al., 2012). Nonetheless, the attachment theory assumes that associations for secure attachment occur not only in mother-child attachments but also in father-child relationships. As such, attachment theory would maintain

that contributing patterns of a father to a child relationship and interaction in the early stages of life give rise to healthy and secure development in most areas of the child's functioning through to young adulthood. Fatherhood serves as a foundation in which children acquire a sense of attachment, security and warmth. However, fatherhood absence could predispose a child to develop unhealthy functions such as difficulty in making and maintaining relationships due to lack of trust. Father-child relationship is reported to inhibit behavioural problems in the growing child and throughout adulthood.

The attachment theory of Bowlby is considered important for this study as it lays a foundation for the importance of caregiver-child attachment that would ultimately reinforce a child into particular behaviours (Brown et al., 2012). Moreover, the theory is crucial for this study as it highlights fathers as significant attachment figures based on two predominant factors. Firstly, the father's role is to provide security and love to the child, and secondly he has to play a role in ensuring that a child explores and undertakes new endeavours (Cosentino, 2018).

2.11 Conclusion

The literature above found that fatherhood in African context does not encompass biology but rather the fatherly roles a male parent provides to the growing children. However, due to a number of various factors, such as migration, labour, new family structures, colonisation, etc, fatherhood has been reconceptualised in the new dispensation. Compared to other countries, South Africa has been found to have a high number of children growing up in homes with absent fatherhood. Absent fatherhood has been found to impact not only on the growing children but also young adults. Alongside this, the impact on the psychosocial wellbeing of absent fatherhood seems to be adversely affected, as such, certain personality styles may occur depending on the individual. Owing to the adverse impacts of absent fatherhood, some young adults from such families are portrayed as incomplete individuals. However, this cannot be taken into consideration based on the Attachment theory of John Bowlby, which stressed the importance of a secure attachment with at least one caregiver and the developing child.

The literature reviewed explored and discussed key issues affecting individual wellbeing resulting from the father's absence. Firstly, it looked at the subjective experiences of young adults who were raised without a father. It was mentioned that being raised without a father is very hurtful as one does not only feel the loss of a father but it also elicits rejection by the immediate paternal family members from whom protection is sought (Trowbridge, 2014). Secondly, the literature explored the perceived impact of absent fatherhood on the individual's psychosocial wellbeing. Central to these research aims, various scholars (Dickerson, 2014; Makofane, 2015; Mavungu et al., 2013; Monama, 2011; Morwe et al., 2015) highlighted the emotional, psychological and behavioural impacts of absent fatherhood, such as anger, low self-esteem and suicide emanating from absent fatherhood, on individual wellbeing. Thirdly, literature explored the impact of absent fatherhood in a family unit. Attachment and livelihood of the family unit were considered the most effective influential factors.

The literature reviewed denotes a gap in current arguments around the father's absence, such as, the advantageous factors of absent fatherhood. Much of the literature focused on the negative impacts of the father's absence, and paid little attention to the positive benefits these children or young adults have derived from absent fatherhood.

In conclusion, absent fatherhood has an impact on the individual's wellbeing, an impact which is considered disadvantageous in the lives of young adults. However, it would appear that inasmuch as the children long for their father's love, oftentimes they receive more attachment from their single mother as she devotes most of her time caring for her children, as compared to homes with present fathers where a mother has to divide her attention to satisfy both the husband and the children. Furthermore, it would appear that absent fatherhood does not always result in financial loss at homes. Instead, there seem to be varying outcomes. Furthermore, it would appear that absent fatherhood does not always bring about undesirable impacts in the children's lives and desirable impacts are also experienced. This includes success and independence.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section aims to provide the work plan of the research. Research methodology therefore refers to the overall approaches and perspectives to the research process as a whole (Collis & Hussey, 2003). This chapter will present the research methodology that was used in the study and includes the following subsequent subsections: research design, location of the study, population of the study, sampling and sample size, research instrument, data collection, data analysis and ethical principles that were considered in the study.

3.2 Research design

A research design is the strategy, the plan, and the structure of conducting a research project (Monette et al., 2008). Cooper and Greenaway (2015) define research design as a set of procedures that guide the researcher in the process of collecting and interpreting data. The research design therefore is a process that outlines how, where and when data will be collected and analysed; it is a guideline that the researcher will follow in order to answer the research questions. A qualitative research design was adopted for this study. Qualitative research is a research approach that collects information in the form of words, not numbers (Welman et al., 2005). Qualitative research is concerned with the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals under study regarding a particular phenomenon (Hancock, 2002). For the purpose of the present research, a phenomenological approach was adopted. A phenomenological approach was used in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of young adults who have experienced or are experiencing absent fatherhood in their lives (Groenewald, 2004; Schwandt, 2007). The phenomenological approach was fundamental for locating the meanings or experiences of young adults with regard to the impact of absent fathers (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Furthermore, this approach helped in providing rich and detailed description of young adults' experiences of their father's absence (Monette et al., 2008). This approach helped the researcher explore as accurately as possible the lived experiences of young adults regarding their father's absence while refraining from any pre-given framework but instead focusing on the facts (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011).

3.3 Location of the study

The study was conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg, located in uMgungundlovu District, in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. Participants were young adults (students) who had been raised by single caregivers (specifically mothers) in the absence of their fathers. This is because the researcher was interested in exploring the impact of absent fatherhood.

3.4 Population of the study

The population of the present study consisted of students from absent fatherhood homes at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Pietermaritzburg Campus in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Both male and female young adults who were fluent in English were chosen to take part in the study. The respondents were aged from 19 to 25 years.

3.5 Sampling and sample size

Bless (2008) defines sampling as a technique that is used to select a sample from the population. Sampling involves taking a portion or a smaller number of units of a population (DePoy & Gilson, 2008).

Non-probability sampling method is the most appropriate technique for phenomenological studies (DePoy & Gilson, 2008). Through the use of non-probability sampling the researcher was able to select participants from the population of interest (Neuman, 2006). Subjects in a non-probability sample are usually selected based on their accessibility or special interest rather than by means of random sampling (Cooper & Greenaway, 2015). Therefore, two non-probability sampling strategies were utilised, namely, purposive sampling coupled with snowball sampling. Purposive sampling refers to a deliberate selection of participants based on their special qualities. It does not have a prerequisite for a determined number of participants, nor is it based on the underlying theories but rather on the needs of the study (Etikan et al., 2016). Nonetheless, a number of participants in purposive sampling is crucial as it assists in attaining manageable amount of data. Purposive sampling is a strategy in which participants share information based on their lived experience or knowledge. Moreover, the ability to express and communicate opinions in a reflective manner are also

part of what is required in purposive sampling (Etikan et al., 2016). In this case, only young adults who were brought up in absent fatherhood homes were purposively chosen for the study. Snowball sampling is a method by which the participants of the research study direct the researcher to other people who can take part in the study possessing the research interests; therefore, the sample increased in size (Neuman, 2006). The snowball sampling strategy enabled the researcher to recruit subjects that would not have been known due to the sensitivity of the study (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Finally, snowball sampling was selected as it was not easy to identify participants for the study. It made use of referrals.

Using purposive sampling, the study was advertised at the University of KwaZulu-Natal through posters on notice boards. Two participants at the University of KwaZulu-Natal responded to the advert and the researcher obtained more participants through referrals from these two initial participants (snowball sampling technique). The researcher then continued to ask for referrals from the acquired contacts until eleven (11) participants were recruited. Both males and females, who were fluent in English, were chosen to take part in the study. The reason for this is that the participants were from diverse backgrounds in which the meaning of their responses could be lost through translation; therefore, communication in English was preferred. The participants were aged from 19 to 25 years.

3.6 Recruitment of participants

The researcher sought permission to conduct the study from University of KwaZulu-Natal's gatekeepers (Appendix 1) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Ethics Committee for ethical clearance (Appendix 2). Once the permission was granted the researcher placed advertisements for the recruitment of study participants on numerous notice boards at the University. Permission to place posters on notice boards was granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Risk Management Services. Participants responded to adverts through the WhatsApp contact number written in the poster adverts (Appendix 3). Time and venues for interviews were arranged, and the interviews took place at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's lecture rooms when they were not in use as well as the students' residence. Individual interviews were conducted. At the beginning of the interviews, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to respondents and gave a brief introduction to and background of the study. The contents of the consent form (Appendix 4) were thoroughly discussed with the

respondents who agreed to its contents and signed before participation. Furthermore, ethical considerations were discussed and respondents gave permission for audio recording. The language used in the interviews was English and no translation was needed as all the students interviewed could understand and speak English fluently.

3.7 Research instruments

Research instruments involve tools which are used to acquire information for research purposes (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Research instruments provide guidelines for the data collection and analysis. Examples of research instruments are interview schedules, questionnaires and surveys (O'Leary, 2004).

In the present study, an interview schedule (Appendix 5) was used as an instrument for data collection. According to De Vos et al. (2011) an interview schedule is an interview with pre-coded questions to produce brief and comprehensible questions to the participants. An interview schedule also refers to an interview guide that provides the researcher with a set of predetermined questions to be asked during the interview (Huberman & Miles, 2002). This ensured that all the objectives of the study were covered during the interview. The data collection instrument was developed in English, as all the students who were interviewed could understand and speak English; therefore, no translation was needed.

The interview guide included the following components:

- The subjective experiences of young adults who were raised without a father;
- The perceived impact of absent fatherhood in the individual's psychosocial wellbeing;
- The impact of absent fatherhood on a family unit.

3.8 Data collection

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interests, in an established fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses and evaluate outcomes (Hammersley, 2009). An interview was used as a method of collecting data. An interview is a systematic way of talking and listening to people and is

another way of collecting data from individuals through conversations (Kajornboon, 2004). The selected young adults were interviewed in order to understand their experiences of being raised by single caregivers in the absence of a father figure.

The type of interview that was used was the individual semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview facilitates the elimination of unnecessary questions and reformulation of unclear ones (Bless, 2008). Interviews also allow for the discovery of new aspects of the research problems by exploring in detail the explanations supplied by the participants (De Vos et al., 2011). In addition, a semi-structured interview allows for a certain degree of flexibility and the pursuit of unexpected lines of inquiry during the interview (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). Another advantageous feature of a semi-structured interview is that it allowed the researcher to probe or ask the young adults questions that are more detailed about their experiences of being raised without a father, and not to just adhere to the interview guide (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). In addition, the researcher was able to explain and rephrase the questions when participants were unclear about any question (DePoy & Gilson, 2008). An audio recorder was used to record the interview, ensuring that data could be transcribed verbatim for data analysis purposes, without omitting any information. Students consented to take part in the study and to be audio-taped. In addition, the researcher used pre-coded open-ended questions, which allowed probing. The data collection instrument was derived from the aims and objectives of the study. Data was transcribed in the form of emerging themes, in order to be coded.

3.9 Data analysis

According to Hancock (2002), data analysis in a research project involves summarising the mass of data collected and presenting the results in a way that communicates the most important features. Data analysis is a systematic procedure to identify essential features and relationships; it is a way of transforming the data through interpretation (Groenewald, 2004). The current study made use of a thematic analysis method in order to interpret the collected data. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a "method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 7). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis pinpoints data from another and interprets recurring patterns in the research. Thematic analysis was used to develop meanings from the accounts and/or

statements of the participants. The researcher used this analysis to reduce the collected data into themes and derive meaning from young adults on their experiences of absent fatherhood. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis involves the following steps:

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with data

This phase involves the researcher immersing themselves with the collected data to a point whereby they are familiar with depth and breadth of the content of data. In the process of immersion, constant readings of the data coupled with themes as well as the search for meaning took place. Transcripts were read several times to gain a sense of the whole content.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Generating initial codes involves selecting and producing the codes derived from the data. Coding procedure was seen as part and parcel of data analysis as these codes were grouped together. These codes were sought from the content of data which were deemed interesting and meaningful to the research study. The researcher created an initial list of items from the data set that had a recurring pattern.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

This phase began after all data was coded and collated. A long list of the different codes that had been identified across the data set was compiled. This phase focused on analysing broad themes in the data, rather than codes. At this point, the focus was put on searching for the potential themes from the content of the data. Themes were selected from the initial codes. All the relevant coded data extracts were collated into the identified themes. This implies that the codes were analysed together in order to derive to a potential theme.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

This phase involved the refinement of themes. In this phase the researcher looked for the themes that support or disprove the research questions. The researcher extracted the themes that were interesting and also looked at why some codes were discordant.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

This phase entails the definition and refining of the themes which form part of the data analysis. The definition and refining of themes imply the significance of what each theme is about, as well as making sense of what aspect of each theme connotes.

The researcher refined and defined the themes, and organized them in a consistent and coherent manner along with their narratives. Furthermore, the researcher gave the interpretation of the themes and stated what seemed interesting about them.

Phase 6: Producing the report

Phase six began after the compilation of a full set of themes that were identified in the previous phases, and involved the final analysis and write-up of the research report. It began after setting out the themes. Within the write-up procedure, storytelling process took place while highlighting the validity of the data.

3.11 Validity and reliability of the study

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher made use of trustworthiness, which consists of the following component: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

3.11.1 Credibility

Babbie (2010) defines credibility as "compatibility between the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the respondents and those that are attributed to them" (p. 277). In qualitative research, credibility involves a degree to which research data, including the analysis of data, are probable and reliable from the perspective of research participants (De Vos et al., 2011;

Kumar, 2012). Credibility is equivalent to internal validity; this implies ways in which the results of the study correspond with reality (Kumar, 2012). Nonetheless, at the heart of qualitative research, reality entails meanings which people ascribe to their daily social discourse. The purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participant's eyes; however, research participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results (Anney, 2014).

In this study, the application of credibility lies in the thorough explanation and documentation of that which is known, as an audit trail of the data which was collected, as well as data analysis. The process of explanation and documentation has enriched the trustworthiness of the results of the study (Creswell, 2014). Another criterion of credibility is member checks. Member checks occurred when research participants reviewed the collected data and checked whether the data was correctly interpreted. Member checks allowed the participants to validate their accounts and fill in any possible gaps (Cope, 2014). Another approach utilised was the elimination of assumptions and bias in the study. This approach was applied to avoid possible preconceived ideas of the researcher being transposed onto the lived experiences and/or the worldviews of the participants (Kumar, 2012). Moreover, in order to ensure credibility, the study utilised a semi-structured interview as a guiding tool, in order to guarantee the consistency of the findings by asking the same open-ended questions. Furthermore, a thematic analysis method was used to ensure consistency within the data, by coding individual extracts into themes, which were grouped together in terms of their relationship to one another.

3.11.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings, for example, outside the Pietermaritzburg campus (Finfgeld-Connet, 2010; Houghton et al., 2013). Transferability is equivalent to external validity, which implies that the study results can be applied to different contexts. Walliman (2011) contends that in qualitative studies transferability is almost impossible to accomplish as study results are likely to be based on subjective points of view of each participant. Cope (2014) maintains that transferability can be achieved when study results are not only significant and meaningful to the research participants but also to other individuals in

different settings (Cope, 2014). Readers can evaluate whether the findings of the study fit into or are transferable to other settings. Transferability is however dependent on the study aims. This implies that it can only be achieved if the study aims to generalise the results (Cope, 2014). In the case of this present study, transferability was not achieved as the results of the study are not representative of individuals of other ethnic groups, in different contexts.

3.11.3 Dependability

According to Anney (2014), dependability refers to the consistency of the study, including its method. Dependability is analogous to reliability. It is the degree to which the same results can be produced should the study be replicated with similar participants within a similar context using similar study methods (Shenton, 2004). In the present study, dependability was addressed as the procedure in the study was narrated thoroughly which could enable other researchers to replicate the same study to obtain similar findings. The replication of the study could also assist in verifying whether proper channels were followed in the research process (Shenton, 2004).

The researcher took into consideration the consistency of the research procedure as well as the methods used. The researcher ensured that the research methods, questions and techniques were coherent and correctly linked to one another. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that there were no changes made with regards to the study. To ensure dependability of the process, the researcher designed questions that were clear and logically connected to the research purpose and design. In so doing, consistency was ensured as the key concept that addresses dependability of the data. Furthermore, to address the concept and to avoid multiple field workers being involved in data collection, the researcher conducted the interviews personally.

3.11.4 Confirmability

Qualitative research is based on the notion that every researcher carries a distinctive worldview towards the research study (Elo et al., 2014). Confirmability can be described as the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study can be supported or confirmed by others (Anney, 2014). Confirmability is equivalent to objectivity. Confirmability was

achieved as the results of the study are indeed the experiences of the participants rather than the perspectives of the researcher. In further achieving confirmability, triangulation was taken into consideration to avoid bias (Shenton, 2004). In avoiding the researcher's own predispositions, the methods used in the study were explained, including the reasons for the chosen methods. An audit trail was critical in this process. It enables readers to go through each stage in the process using the approach described (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, confirmability was achieved by ensuring that the interpretation of the research findings was not fabricated by the researcher but derived from the data obtained from the participants. Additionally, the researcher applied the element of reflexivity, which helped in putting aside her personal background, beliefs, values and preferences that might affect the research study. The rationale for this was to ensure that there was no bias during data collection and analysis.

3.12 Ethical considerations

Ethics refers to the values and/or rules that guide people's actions to determine whether a particular action is right or wrong. In the case of research, ethics can be described as principles that must be followed by the researcher conducting the study for the wellbeing of the participants (De Vos et al., 2011). In this study, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Ethics Committee (Appendix 2), with the protocol reference number HSS/1039/016M. The following are the techniques that guide and describe ethics principles when conducting research.

3.12.1 Informed consent

Informed consent refers to the degree to which the participants are informed about their rights when participating in a study (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011). Informed consent ensures that the participants of the research fully understand the study and choose whether or not to take part in the study taking into consideration their values and their preferences consistent with the study (Emanuel et al., 2000). In obtaining informed consent, individuals were also informed about the possible risks and benefits in taking part in the study (Emanuel et al., 2000). Participants were informed about the research that was being conducted and they voluntarily agreed to take part in the study. They were made aware that their subjective choice of whether to take part in the study or not, was respected. Participants understood the study information and made rational choices without being coerced. After explaining the aim and

objectives of the study, participants were provided with an informed consent form to sign as proof of their voluntary agreement and participation.

3.12.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity encompasses the protection of the identities of the research respondents (Rajasekar et al., 2006). The respondents' names were symbolised using numerals and/or alphabetical letters in order to protect them from any potential harm. The researcher also ensured that the correct names of the respondents were not readily available to anyone else. Confidentiality also refers to the safety of personal materials (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011). Confidentiality refers to a circumstance where the researcher knows the identity of the participant yet protects it from other people (Walford, 2005). Ensuring confidentiality also encompasses the use of a variety means, which includes keeping and/or storing the information and/or records provided by the participants in a secure place and/or destroying it after a certain period of time (Wiles et al., 2006).

Confidentiality involves treating the respondent's details in a safe and private manner. The researcher achieved confidentiality by safe-guarding the information provided by the respondents from other people.

3.12.3 Discontinuance

Discontinuance involves a withdrawal or a termination from participation in the research study (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011). In the present study, the respondents were guaranteed that they would be permitted to withdraw during the interviews if they experienced any discomfort. The researcher further assured the respondents that they had the right to discontinue with the interviews and that there would be no penalty for doing so.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter described the nature of the study, which is qualitative. Furthermore, it described the study design, population, location, sampling, procedure and methods of collecting and

analysing data, as well as how respondents were ethically protected. The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The findings are divided into the following sections: biographical details of the respondents, the subjective experiences of being raised without a father, the psychosocial impact of absent fathers on individual wellbeing, and the impact on the family unit.

4.2 Respondents' biographical details

This section provides the respondents' biographical details. Eleven respondents were sampled for the study, both males and females who were able to understand and communicate in English. All the respondents were students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, South Africa. The respondents' ages ranged from 19 to 25 years.

Table 1: Respondents' biographical details

Biographical item		N = 11	
		N	%
Gender	Male	4	36.4
	Female	7	63.7
Age	19–22	2	18.2
	23–25	9	81.8
Ethnicity	Bapedi	4	36.4
	amaZulu	4	36.4
	Basotho	1	9.1
	Coloureds	1	9.1
	AmaXhosa	1	9.1

Eleven respondents participated in the study, 36.4% were males and 63.7% were females. The majority (81.8%) of the respondents were aged 23–25 and 18.2% were aged 19–22. In terms of ethnicity, 36.4% of respondents were Bapedi, 36.4% were amaZulu, 9.1% were Basotho, 9. % were amaXhosa and 9.1% were Coloureds.

4.3 Thematic analysis

This section will cover the themes obtained from the results. The themes will be presented according to the study objectives.

Table 2: Themes

Objectives	Themes	Subthemes
The subjective experiences of young adults who were raised without a father	There are no specific themes under this objective, however the participants reported different experiences of being raised without a father and to some degree some experiences had similarities. The subjective experiences of being raised without a father will be discussed under objective 1.	

To explore the perceived impact of absent fatherhood in an individual's (young adult) psychosocial wellbeing; and	The Psychological and emotional impacts of absent fatherhood	• Stress; attempted suicide or suicidal thoughts; trust issues and anxiety or feelings of inferiority; anger or hatred, self-blame or others.
	The Behavioural impact of absent fatherhood	• Peer and romantic relationships; academic performance, truancy or bunking classes; promiscuous behaviour and teenage pregnancy; alcohol or drug consumption and criminal behaviour.
	The Social impact of absent fatherhood	• Identity and role confusion; independence and decision-making.
To explore the perceived impact of absent fatherhood in the family unit.	The Socio-cultural impact of absent fatherhood on the family unit The psychological impact of absent fatherhood on the family unit The economic impact of absent fatherhood on the family unit	• Family conflicts, violence or disorganised family; parental roles; young adults search for their fathers; multiple surnames and attachment; and religious or cultural practices;

	The social impact of absent fatherhood on the family unit	

4.4 Objective 1: The subjective experience of being raised without a father

Participants reported the experience of being raised without a father in numerous ways. The majority (36.4%) of participants experienced growing up without a father in their lives as difficult, as they witnessed their peers who had good relationships and were receiving support from their fathers. These participants cited that they needed a father figure to acquire certain knowledge from them and for fathers to provide emotional and/or financial support, as a mother could not fulfil the fatherly role and responsibility. This is illustrated in the following extracts:

Respondent 4 (male): "*To tell you the truth… it was as hard as hell because you have to go around watching kids with their parents and then their father figures providing stuff for them and only you'll go back to the house asking your mom to provide something which she can't afford…*"

Respondent 7: (female): "*It's very difficult, cause I always felt a need for… cause we grew up very poor hey, and a father is in a position to provide and I felt he had taken the pressure of my mother lightly… I guess he wasn't interested, or it was not the time or the place or whatever, and it's always pretty to have both parents, like if you want to ask your father for something, like there are certain mainly things you wanna ask your father about…*"

Moreover, particularly male respondents, reported that not having a father was difficult because at times the mother became over-protective of them which resulted in them being unable to take ownership of their lives. Therefore, they needed a father figure to encourage self-determination rather than being over-indulged. These male participants seemed to emphasise the need for a father to teach a boy child or to be a role model.

Respondent 4 (*male*): "*… and sometimes I needed a father to encourage me to choose the things I wanted… self-determination… you know…*"

Respondent 8 (*male*): "*… Yah I can say that my mother did her best, but sometimes she would be overprotective, you know… and fathers are not overprotective… most of the time it was difficult not having a father or a role model, a parent in the picture, but like it didn't in anyway result in me being a less of a man.*"

Despite the fact that some understood absent fatherhood as a difficult experience, some (36.4%) respondents felt that it can sometimes be managed as long as there is someone in the picture or a role model to look up to. The respondents cited that they have regarded their uncles and other male relatives as father figures in their lives as a way to manage the gap that was left by their fathers and also felt that these uncles or other male relatives have played a huge role in their upbringing.

Respondent 3 (*female*): "*Ok, for me it wasn't really difficult and also it wasn't easy, I suppose it was manageable because I always had uncles and aunts because I come from a very big family, my mother and my granny…*"

Respondent 6 (*male*): "*Uhm, I wouldn't say it was hard, but it's not a nice experience, I mean when you grow up with your friends and peers there comes a time where people start talking about their fathers, you know, and the only people that you can relate to is your uncles; so it's not a nice experience but I really appreciate my uncles because they played a big role in my life.*"

Respondent 10 (*male*): "*I wouldn't say it was not hard but I managed, yah I managed because there are other strong people in…*"

Respondent 1 (*female*): "*…so I couldn't call him my father, but my mom because she was around, so even now I haven't spoken to my father for 5 years and it's not a big*

deal, but during Fathers' Day I used to think… I wonder how he's doing, that man, does he think about me, you know."

In contrast, other (18.2%) respondents experienced absent fatherhood as an easy experience in their lives. For these respondents, the experience felt normal to them, as it was the only reality they knew in their lives. They also reported that they would not describe father's absence as a difficult experience as their single mothers were able to play both roles of being a mother and a father, as described below:

Respondent 5 (male): "It wasn't difficult. If I were to say it was difficult I would have had the experience of growing up with a father figure. He wasn't in my life; and so for me there was no difference between his absence or presence."

Respondent 11 (male): "Hmm, I mean for… sometimes people, I don't wanna say people make it a big deal for not having a father, because it is in some respect, but like… I don't… I'm just really grateful to my mom because she's pretty much playing both roles like a mother and a father… I thought it was normal because I don't know any better, so I didn't experience the difficulties. The only difficulty I had it's… like at school they would ask why he is not in the picture, but other than that I was alright…"

One participant (9%) did not specify whether she had experienced absent fatherhood as difficult, manageable or easy. However, she seems to have perceived absent fatherhood as both a relief and a challenge considering the fact that her mother was able to provide everything she needed as well as being aware of the kind of person her father was. She put it this way:

Respondent 2 (female): "Well at first I'd say, growing up without my father I thought it didn't bother me at first coz I realized, I saw the kind of person he was and then I just saw its best for me to not be around, in terms of envying other kids that their fathers are around, yes I did, uhm because I also wished my father was like a normal dad, like everybody else, but in terms of lacking financially no, I had everything other kids had. My mother made sure that she provides everything I needed."

The above extracts confirm that different participants experienced the absence of a father differently. Some participants felt it was difficult, while others had ambivalent experiences and others did not seem to have had negative experiences. Furthermore, the support systems in the form of extended family members appear to have had a bolstering effect on coping with an absent father, offering temporary relief for the absent father figure.

4.5 Objective 2: The perceived impact of absent fatherhood in the individual's psychosocial wellbeing

Under this objective, it was identified that being raised without a father has three major impacts. These were identified as: (a) the psychological impact; (b) the behavioural impact; and (c) the social impact of being raised without a father. These themes are discussed below.

4.5.1 Theme 1: The psychological and emotional impact of being raised without a father.

4.5.1.1 Stress or depression

Most respondents (27%) felt that being raised in the absence of a father had an impact on their psychological wellbeing. They reported to have experienced psychological distress, such as feelings of stress and/or depression, due to growing up without a father. These participants reported growing up with a fear of rejection or abandonment, emanating from the confusion of being rejected by their own father, who was expected to protect and shield them from harm. Additionally, it seemed to affect their sense of worth, as they began to interpret their father's rejection as an indication that they (as humans) are not good enough to make their fathers want to stay with them.

> *Respondent 9 (female): "... I just went through a bit of a depressed stage because sometimes I would ask myself how it feels to grow up in the presence of a father, stuff like that. Maybe by now if my father was around, I would have known things that I don't know and have had things I don't have. You also envy other students who have their fathers, you know... each and every child needs to grow up having both parents in their lives. Not having a parent is not nice."*

Respondent 7 (female): "*… so the time I was depressed I was even crying, I just felt neglected all alone in a big city, yah, I had a feeling of loneliness.*"

Respondent 10 (female): "*… my head always knows or acknowledges that people leave, you know, so if they don't leave, I'd make them want to leave; if they don't leave, I would get frustrated,… so I think that's where I get it from. But I hate it cause it makes me a problem child, a psychological problem child, but I suppose I am, I think it's just the tendency, yah.*"

The study found that some respondents experienced significant stress emanating from their father's absence, to the extent that they reportedly had suicidal ideations. For these participants life was not worth living, as they considered themselves unlovable.

Respondent 10 (female): "*I've never attempted suicide, uhm I'm scared of pain, I had suicidal thoughts, but I don't know if they were based on my father, yah I had a lot of suicidal thoughts, I still do… Anyway, what I'm trying to say is that this life bores me, there's a lot of wrongs with it, for me, yah… uhm I feel… I always say that being alive is not the best thing that a person can be, like being alive is overrated, you know…*"

However, some respondents did not attempt suicide or have any suicidal ideation, despite the fact that life was not easy in the absence of their fathers.

Respondent 2 (female): "*No, I have never tried suicide, I have never thought about that, haha, yah, I knew that it's hard but no, haha.*"

Seemingly, the reported feelings of unworthiness and rejection resulted in suicidal thoughts in some respondents, while others reported that they had never thought of ending their lives because they were rejected by their own fathers.

As seen in the above extracts some participants reported to have felt depressed due to abandonment by their fathers. Moreover, they stressed about this perceived abandonment to the extent that they sometimes thought of ending their lives. However, others had not experienced suicidal ideations despite having stressed about the whereabouts of their fathers or the perceived abandonment. The feelings of abandonment resulted in them being unable to maintain relationships with their peers, friends or romantic partners, as they expected them to leave one day, just as their fathers left them. This fear of abandonment reportedly led them to end their relationships prematurely, as a way of protecting themselves from the perceived anticipated rejection.

4.5.1.2 Trust issues or anxiety or inferiority and abandonment

As mentioned earlier some respondents cited experiencing difficulties with trust in their relationships. The generalisation that nobody can be trusted seemed to be the hallmark of many of the respondents' experiences as people are considered to be vindictive and thus prone to betrayal at any point in time.

> *Respondent 3* (*female*): "*… I don't trust cause my dad was also a nice guy then look at him now, so I have that thing yah.*"

> *Respondent 11* (*female*): "*… I don't really believe that males are reliable, I don't… like I would never seek support from men of any kind. I would say… in terms of my mentality of males, yah.*"

In contrast some did not have issues with trust as they were able to separate their experiences with their fathers and judged each case on its own merit. One respondent said the following:

> *Respondent 1* (*female*): "*Mmh that depends, but I'm a very trusting as well, my ex-boyfriend used to tell me that I am very naïve, I tend to trust people in the beginning but when somebody shows me their true colours I just let me pull away…*"

Alongside this, some respondents reported experiencing feelings of inferiority when in the presence of other people or their peers. They stated that in comparison to their peers, they would not feel good enough. They also reported experiencing feelings of unworthiness, as they had no father figure to reassure them and hold them in high esteem. Some respondents reported feeling anxious in the presence of others and feared rejection.

> *Respondent 3* (*female*): "*… I would worry about things, I would worry and worry, so I think that my worry was caused by my father's absence, yah.*"

> *Respondent 10* (*female*): "*… we might speak same language and be interested in the same thing, but I always feel inferior in some way, then I'd try distancing myself from them…*"

> *Respondent 11* (*female*): "*Yes, I definitely do have tendencies as a result of my father's absence, like, low self-esteem thing and feeling inferior because if my own father can't accept me how can anyone else do? So, I don't… sometimes I don't feel worthy of being cared for, so that also impacted on me…*"

Absent fatherhood affected the respondents to the extent that they struggled to trust due to the perceived abandonment. They elicited feelings of loneliness and fear of being abandoned. The generalisations of abandonment by their fathers have driven the respondents to have negative beliefs about other people even those with reportedly good intentions. However, others seem to have not allowed the abandonment to cloud their judgement. Moreover, it would appear that absent fatherhood adversely affected respondents as some reported feeling inferior or anxious in the presence of others as they lacked the assurance which their fathers would have provided had they been present. The respondents feared rejection from their peers as they sensed their peers to be rejecting them, like their fathers did.

4.5.1.3 Anger or hatred

One of the emotional impact issues reported by young adults was anger directed towards fathers who, according to the respondents, had failed them by not being present and involved in their lives. Some respondents vented their anger at other people, especially males, whom they considered similar to their estranged fathers. Moreover, some respondents said they hated their fathers because they neglected their own children.

> *Respondent 1* (*female*): "*… I would pass him by the street but he wouldn't say anything to me but as I grew older I made peace with it, I have made peace with it but I'm still a bit angry.*"

Other respondents said:

> *Respondent 11* (*female*): "*… I had like some resentment towards them*; *so in terms of coping with certain things, like I just ignore males in general. I just felt some resentment towards males just because of my father. I don't think highly of them at all. I still don't, but yah, but it didn't bother me that much.*"

> *Respondent 3* (*female*): "*… I don't wanna say I'm angry or bitter, it's just one of those things that if he needed a kidney I wouldn't give it to him, kind of things…*"

Others reported that despite the fact that they had to deal with the void left by their absent fathers, they did not experience emotional outbursts such as anger; instead, the father's absence moulded them to act or behave in a way that showed maturity. Respondent 7 put it this way:

> "*… so my father's absence never moulded my character, or how I feel or act, I've never acted out somehow. I think I have this little bit of maturity that I can control how I feel or control my feelings not to have outbursts…*"

It would seem that absent fatherhood shaped the characters of the respondents in various ways, as it affected how the children reacted to situations. As reported, some were able to control their anger, while others felt some anger or hatred towards their fathers or their significant others. However, over time they were able to make peace with the perceived abandonment.

4.5.1.4 Self-blame or blaming others

Some respondents blamed themselves for their fathers' absence, as they believed that they were not good enough and were thus responsible for their fathers' absence. Some respondents blamed their mothers or their significant others for their fathers' absence, as they assumed that their mothers should have insisted or pleaded with their fathers not to leave. Additionally, some felt that their fathers' absence was a lack of responsibility by their fathers towards them.

> *Respondent 11 (female): "… I would say, I don't blame them but I do think my mom could have been an active person but no… encouraging me to have a relationship with my father…"*

> *Respondent 4 (male): "I blame him, he's not responsible enough, so I mean like I believe if you are a man you should handle your woman no matter what's happening and no matter how much stress load they are giving you…"*

> *Respondent 1 (female): "I blame all of them! I blame my grandmother from my father's side if my father was not taking the responsibility then why didn't she?"*

It would seem that most respondents experienced psychological impacts such as abandonment and depression, trust issues or inferiority, blame, and anger or hatred, resulting from constantly worrying about the whereabouts of their fathers and their reasons for abandoning them. They reported that they were impacted psychologically in terms of how

they viewed the world and what others thought of them. Furthermore, it would seem that the idea of the father being absent was perceived as neglect and unjustifiable by many participants. Some responded regarding it as cowardice in the sense that even if the relationship had been unbearable, it did not justify the father abandoning them. Some felt that the family, especially the paternal family, were partly responsible as they did not discourage the father's behaviour, or show their disapproval of his decision by supporting the participants, irrespective of what the father's decision was.

4.5.2 Theme 2: Behavioural impacts of being raised without a father

It was reported that absent fatherhood appears to contribute to a variety of behavioural changes by those who experienced and perceived it as abandonment. These behavioural changes occurred in various contexts, such as peer and romantic relationships, as well as in social change. Some reported to have experienced academic excellence as they were motivated by the lack of resources, which should have been provided by their absent fathers, while others stayed away from school due to the fear of being teased by their friends and peers. The respondents also reported that they engaged in activities that were not morally acceptable for people in their age group, such as alcohol and drug consumption, crimes, promiscuous behaviour, to mention a few, resulting from lack of supervision, which according to the respondents should be provided by the father when the mother was preoccupied with other household needs.

4.5.2.1 Relationships and social interaction

The respondents reported absent fatherhood to have impacted them socially as they often isolated themselves from their peers, who they sensed were rejecting them or labelling them as fatherless. They further indicated that they felt that isolating themselves was the only way to avoid trouble which could arise from being teased about being fatherless.

> *Respondent 2 (female)*: "*... relationally, I wouldn't say the only thing I do… say is that I don't know how to relate to older men. Most of my friends would tell me how they relate to their fathers. This is what their mothers told them; this is how you relate, so, I don't know how to relate with older men.*"

Respondent 11 (female): "*... yah sometimes I do, okay I don't really interact with a lot of boys, but yah I would say sometimes I do isolate myself on purpose, so that I don't get hurt or whatever, like to prevent it before it happens, yah.*"

As reported, other respondents felt that they could not maintain relationships with their significant others because they did not have anything to discuss. Respondent 10 cited that she had to sever her relationships with friends because she did not trust them, a lack of trust caused partly by her absent father whom she blames for having broken the trust. It would appear that the absent fatherhood impacted on how the respondent socialises or perceives other people. She reported this as follows:

Respondent 10 (female) "*... I would stay somewhere then leave my friends. When I leave they must stop talking to me, that's how I do it, so in turn I stop contacting them, I keep quiet, and I mean what should we talk about? So that's me I would be sabotaging the whole thing, ah these stupid people!*"

Respondent 10 (female) "*... I don't have new friends, I don't get a lot of friends and then I would leave because they are weak and let me leave.*"

Some reported that they experienced a void in their lives which they coped with by replacing what they yearned for and lacked with a subconscious hope that it would be reciprocated.

Respondent 7 (female): "*... cause like my father is absent in my life so I feel a void and whoever comes in my life, I give them the love and attention and everything, because I would never want anybody to experience what I felt.*"

4.5.2.2 Academic performance and truancy or bunking class

Apart from the relationships and social interaction that some of the respondents referred to, academic performance was cited as another area that was affected. Some respondents felt that the absence of their fathers affected them negatively academically, as they were teased at school because they lacked the necessary educational resources for schooling. They even reported missing classes because of lack of academic resources which should have been provided by the absent fathers. Consequently, their academic performance was affected. These respondents would stay away from school or school events as their counterparts teased them for not having the materials or resources required at school.

> *Respondent 1 (female)*: "*I think I would sometimes wake up in the morning; I would pretend to have a headache and not go to school, but in terms of bunking no, if I was at school I would be at school, I don't remember going home while in school, but I stayed at home most of the time and pretended to be sick.*"

> *Respondent 4 (male)*: "*Yho, I choose not to go to school because one other reason why I didn't go to school was that… I didn't have resources like school uniforms and stuffs like that, sometimes children would be like… uhm, talking about going to career exposure and so forth, the week whereby the teacher would be constantly reminding the kids about the trip I would dish the school or if I know there's casual or maybe condolences or contributing a R5 or something, I would not come to school for that day because I would want that part to skip me, that's who I am.*"

In contrast to what the previous respondents said, some felt that their father's absence had no bearing on their academic performance. Ironically, they used it as motivation for them to succeed. Three participants described it as follows:

> *Respondent 9 (female)*: "*Eh I would say during the early stages my father's absence affected me but now I'm okay. I'm excelling at school; so, it's no longer having a bad impact.*"

Respondent 6 (male): "*I never experienced that, uhm, as I said earlier that from my mother's side family, like they value education in such a way that there was no way for me to not miss school, there was no way for me to not perform well because they… like my mom and aunt checked everything, even the homework, they would check my homework. They would compare my performance from last semester to this semester, so there was no way for me to not perform well or having an excuse to perform well.*"

Respondent 11 (female): "*No! I never had such cause my mom is into education, it's like, and it's just a thing that I never thought of on my mind in terms of school or education…*"

Other respondents cited they did not stay away from school in their days, as their single mothers encouraged them to focus on education in order to secure a better future. Furthermore, some responded that inasmuch as they would bunk classes because of being teased by their classmates and their lack of academic resources, they reportedly changed their lifestyles as they realised that it was only through education that they could succeed despite being fatherless. Most respondents answered as follows:

Respondent 7 (female): "*I always loved school, like I grew up in a single-mother home, so, I had to use my education ahead in life, so I could never… like I was a second-born child, so I always had to be an example to others, I always had to perform at school, and I always had to lead by example, so, I never had that, and I always loved going to school because that's where I met people, my classmates and friends.*"

Respondent 2 (female): "*Oh no, oh no, never! Like I said I always focused on the good things that are happening in my life, like my education…*"

Respondent 11 (female): "*No! I never had such because my mom is into education. It's like it's just a thing that I never thought of in terms of school or education…*"

It would seem that over time some coped with the ordeal by immersing themselves in books in order to deal with the dysphoric feelings associated with the perceived abandonment by their fathers. Furthermore, it would appear that single mothers and other significant others were perceived as motivators of academic excellence as reported by the respondents. It would seem that some respondents faced financial problems. This was a result of having single mothers who were not able to provide all the necessary academic resources. Despite the challenges, their children still focused on their education and stayed in school. However, others stayed away from school, but they eventually realised the importance of staying in school and finishing their education so as to have a better future.

4.5.2.3 Alcohol and/or drug consumption and criminal behaviours

The use of alcohol or drugs seemed to be prevalent amongst some participants, with an estimated 40% reporting poor monitoring by the mother who seemed preoccupied with issues of survival and providing for the family. Some of the participants seemed to engage at an early age in alcohol abuse, possibly as a defence mechanism or to please their peers. In addition, some respondents reported engaging in bullying as a protective shield from mockery and victimisation by their peers. A 22-year-old described her experience as follows:

> *Respondent 3* (*female*): "*... he would be there and you know be strict and whatever, because my mom would be like, cause I'm very manipulative, I'd be like I attended extra classes at school, and I would go to parties, and if my dad was there he would be, like, I would take you to school, yah.*"

Another gave a different account for using bullying as a defence mechanism:

> *Respondent 4* (*male*): "*I'm an animal, so I don't isolate myself, actually I bully people… I don't do that now, but like verbally I can do that… bulling as a defence mechanism or anything, yeah.*"

On the other hand, crime and criminal activities ensued due to absent fatherhood. Some respondents cited that they had committed criminal activities at an early age as a result of a lack of household resources. These respondents felt that if the father has been present, he would have taken responsibility and made provision for the family while the kids were enjoying their childhood. The 23-year-old male responded as follows:

> *Respondent 4 (male): "Not to say smoking is a bad thing, let me say stealing stuff where I got myself into a situation where I had to find see myself in jail or something… it wasn't going to happen, because I was trying to be a man and taking a responsibility of not asking too much from my mother, so I was kind of trying to make a life."*

According to another respondent, his account indicated that absent fatherhood had not resulted in him engaging in criminal acts, as their single mother raised them to be well-behaved individuals. He reported this as follows:

> *(Respondent 9) (male): "I never got into any criminal activities… when I was young I was very disciplined, just that I was a bully."*

These testimonies indicate that these young adults experienced and responded in various ways to their fathers' absence. The early use of alcohol could have an attempt to please their peers or an indication of being easily influenced by their peers. It also seems to be indicative of poor monitoring at home by the mother who may have been overwhelmed by the need to alleviate the dysphoric feelings experienced by her children because of the perceived abandonment by the father. Parallel to these accounts, were those who reported bullying other children, suggesting displaced anger, a feeling experienced by some respondents because of the perceived abandonment by the father. Additionally, it would seem that the lack of household needs which the respondents felt should have been provided by the father, had driven the respondents to engage in criminal activities in an attempt to fill the financial gap at home. These respondents worried about their financial situation at home while their counterparts enjoyed the benefits of their youth. However, others seemed to have experienced

a warm and fruitful upbringing by their single mothers to a point where there was no need for them to worry about finances or to engage in criminal activities to help their struggling mother.

4.5.2.4 Promiscuous behaviour and teenage pregnancy

The experience of being raised without a father seems to have had contradicting effects as reported by the respondents. Some attributed their early sexual engagement to the fact that they lacked a father figure in their lives. Alongside these responses, were reports of promiscuous behaviour which was also attributed to absent fatherhood. Reportedly, some had difficulties with trust especially when it came to romantic issues, fearing that the partner would leave them just as their father did.

> *Respondent 10 (female): "… there are things that I've done that I know I shouldn't have done, like boys' stuff, things that… it sounds like cliché but it's probably true, yah, but I have done things that God knows I shouldn't have done… I've had multiple partners, haha, yah that's all I wanna say, I don't know if they were caused of my father's absence."*

In contrast, those who were from a Christian background reported that their religious beliefs shaped their behaviour accordingly as they focused on what was deemed to be morally acceptable. Respondent 2, a female respondent, answered as follows:

> *Respondent 2 (female): "In terms of promiscuity, I come from Christian home, so my mom raised us in that way, and also I think about my religion. In my religion affiliation, God is our father; so in terms of a father figure I always look up to God as my father, and fortunately promiscuity I never got to that level, yah."*

> *Respondent 8 (male): "I'm a very faithful person. If I date you, I date you only and I expect you to do the same. So I've never made an excuse to a lover or a romantic partner about my past experience, or my father's issues I've always been honest with them and yah."*

It would seem that promiscuous behaviour and early sexual activities were attributed to absent fatherhood as reported by some respondents. However, others seemed to think otherwise and said they were not impacted as they chose to behave in a morally acceptable way despite the void left by the father.

It would seem that absent fatherhood has affected respondents' behaviour and lives differently. In addition, it would appear that absent fatherhood affects how the respondents form and maintain relationships with their significant others. Some seemed to have transferred their feelings of rejection onto their peers and romantic partners, resulting from the lack of trust stemming from the father's perceived abandonment. Some reported to have been defined by the father's absence while others felt it had nothing to do with their interactions with others. It would appear that some respondents had to isolate themselves from their peers for fear of being misunderstood, rejected and mocked. Consequently, it became difficult for them to socialise or initiate interactions with their peers. Some seemed to have been affected in their academic lives as a result of the lack of academic resources meant to have been provided by their absent fathers. However, some seemed to have had support structures in their academic lives which helped them to succeed. It would seem that some respondents engaged in criminal acts, such as bullying, as a defence mechanism to deal with abandonment while others stole from others in an attempt to fulfil basic needs for their households. In addition, it would seem that absent fatherhood shaped the respondents' behaviours, some engaged in early sexual behaviours while others behaved in morally accepted ways.

4.5.3 Theme 3: Social impacts on individual's wellbeing

Apart from the emotional and psychological impacts, the respondents reported that the fathers' absence impacted on their social wellbeing. Some reported to have struggled with identity as a result of not knowing their roots due to the perceived abandonment by their fathers. Others were able to succeed in life as they considered absent fatherhood to have influenced them in making proper decisions to become independent in life.

4.5.3.1 Identity or role confusion and parental roles

The respondents reported that they considered identity and role confusion as being some of the impacts resulting from being brought up in the absence of a father. Some respondents reported to have struggled with identity issues resulting from not knowing their paternal spiritual orientation; they also responded that they needed to identify themselves with their fathers to understand who they really were. They reported to having struggled to identify themselves due to lack of spiritual connectivity perceived to have resulted from not knowing their fathers. Consequently, they found it difficult to understand their roots. They also indicated that they needed their fathers in order to learn more about their spiritual background. Two respondents responded as follows:

> *Respondent 10 (female): "No, maybe I'm in denial, but yah, maybe I had identity crisis, I have identity issues even now, I just told you one of them. My spiritual orientation is part of my identity and I'm having trouble with balancing or regulating, whether I wanna be traditional or religious or whether I should balance it, that's a big struggle for me."*

> *Respondent 6 (male): "… the only thing that I can think of is a longing for identity, that people to identify with… like, I mean to see your father and to identify with as your father and to see your brothers to identify similarities you know, uhm, that's the only thing,… the issue of identity, like identifying myself. On that issue of identity, to… longing of my father's presence, to identify with him."*

Moreover, some respondents felt that they experienced an identity crisis when they needed their father's surname; they indicated that using his surname would be a way of knowing who they are. A 25-year-old male respondent reported as follows:

> *Respondent 6 (male): "I think it's that issue that I mentioned earlier on that one would need to identify themselves with and also to have a relationship with my father, and also to get a history of my surname to know my clan, those things, you know it's*

only a father who can do that, I mean your mom as much as she might know some of the things she would not know it as much as a father, you know."

In addition to the aforementioned, some reported that they had struggled with career paths. This was because they did not know who they were and what they wanted in life because they felt that their fathers failed them by not taking care of their needs.

Respondent 3 (female): "*… I really had a problem with choosing a career, you know, and you don't know what they say; you don't know how to choose a career because you have internal issues. My father's absence uhm, I blame my father's absence for my choice of career… yes, I think that's how it happened…*"

It would seem that some respondents were forced to grow up fast and prematurely take up parental roles in order to support their mother. Though not overtly communicated, some respondents felt an obligation to assume these roles considering the situation at home. Some even had to work at an early age in order to supplement the family income, while others had to rely on educational loans or bursaries in order to survive. Some of the parental roles included making sure that the other siblings were behaving in a morally acceptable way as reported by the respondents. Respondent 2 stated this as follows:

Respondent 2 (female): "*… I always had a job on campus, always tried to get extra jobs so I could help out you know.*"

Others responded as follows:

Respondent 10 (female): "*Yes, like with… and I failed… with my sisters, oh man, they are such chaos in their lives and they make decisions, like you'd feel if there was a father in the family, they would not have made… or maybe but at least there would be that voice that says 'you not leaving my house at this time and you not coming to my house at this time,' it would have avoided them, maybe to have children , cause they*

both have kids, and it's something, I try to talk to them about, but obviously I can't make my voice is too thin, yah, I have."

It would seem that the notion of absent fatherhood consists of many factors that contribute to identity and role confusion as some respondents reported the importance of their father's surname, while others emphasised choice of career paths. In addition, some highlighted the importance of spiritual connection and identity in their lives. Furthermore, it would appear that the respondents were compelled to take up jobs while at school, to help the struggling mother. Moreover, it would seem that parental roles do not only consist of the need for financial assistance by the respondents. It also implied the need for the respondents to support their siblings emotionally and ensure that they are well-behaved while the single mother was busy with other household duties. Therefore, it would seem that absent fatherhood affected the psychosocial wellbeing of the respondents in a negative way.

4.5.3.2 Independence and decision-making

Some respondents reported that they experienced absent fatherhood as a driving force to independence. These respondents felt that they had learnt to take ownership of their lives at an early age without having to depend on others because they were fatherless. They also indicated that they were able to make their own decisions without having to confirm or seek approval from their fathers; as a result, these respondents felt a sense of self-reliance, as they had to reflect on their own lives and make proper decisions by themselves on what they wanted in life. Two respondents answered as follows:

Respondent 4 (male): "You know sometimes, people can view it as a bad thing but actually as an academic I see it not as bad thing at all, because it matured me, it made me to be an independent man; it made me to stand up and stand for myself and made me to be who I am today, I mean like I couldn't have known much about life, I could have been a spoiled brat; so, thanks to the nigga for not being part of my life because now I am a man."

> *Respondent 11 (female): "… I think mom really drilled in that I should stand for myself and just be independent, build my own career and my own everything so she always told me that… even my uncle, my father's brother, he always said… oops I can't remember the phrase that he uses, oh he said anything a guy can give you, you can do it for yourself, like, he says don't depend on another male when you can do it yourself, like there's nothing that a man can give that you can't get for yourself…"*

In addition, some respondents felt that the lack of resources at home as a result of the single mother's inability to provide for her children's needs motivated them to work hard in life as they felt that hard work was the only solution for them to become successful. Thus, these respondents became successful or were close to becoming successful:

> *Respondent 1 (female): "… I want to show him that I can be successful without him, I will be successful even if he didn't do anything for me and once I'm successful I will show him and I will also reject him…"*

In addition, some felt that their father's absence had shaped them to believe that women are capable of initiating and achieving anything for themselves, without seeking help from a male. They also felt that no roles are gender specific. Some, however, felt that the absent fatherhood resulted in them rejecting the idea that denotes women as objects; these respondents never experienced the absence of the father figure in the house. Therefore, it became difficult for them to regard men as role models, as reported.

> *Respondent 11 (female): "… So in terms of working hard, my mom is a very hard worker. She has 3 jobs and she works tirelessly and she's doing her PhD and stuff so a lot of my hard works come from her because I can see what she does, like, she has been doing it for a while, like built her own name and stuff, so I definitely look up to her in terms of that."*

In contrast, some respondents felt that a man is still the head of the house and should be the one who gives orders in the family, regardless of his absence in their lives.

Respondent 4 (male): "... but I still believe a man is the head but I'm not promoting patriarchy, I believe that man should rule."

It would seem that for others, absent fatherhood bred positive outcomes in the lives of the participants. Over time some had to learn to make their own decisions and depend on themselves without having to rely on others. It would also appear that inasmuch as the absent fatherhood was a difficult experience in the lives of the respondents, interestingly it had driven them to become independent individuals at a younger age and to strive for success. Furthermore, from among these respondents, it would seem that one of the respondents was still angry with her absent father, as she emphasised that she would prove to him that she can become successful without him. Despite their fathers' absence, some still believed that a man is the head of the family, while others perceived it differently as it was reported that women are also capable of achieving and doing anything a man can do.

4.6 Objective 3: The impact of absent fatherhood on the family unit

In addition to psychosocial wellbeing, absent fatherhood also impacted on the family unit as reported by the respondents. The respondents reported that they experienced financial loss due to the single salary from their single mother. Others felt that they struggled with identity issues and deviated from cultural practices, as they had no male parent to identify themselves with or to take a lead in religious activities. Others responded that they had to take part in parental roles that were meant for their fathers, in an effort to help their single mothers. Moreover, some respondents viewed their father's absence as an experience that promoted attachment in the family unit.

4.6.1 Socio-economic status

Some respondents (36%) felt that the father's absence negatively impacted on their financial situation at home. These respondents felt that if the father has been present and able to assist the mother to take care of the household needs, they would not have had to struggle financially and their financial situation would have been better, as two salaries would have made a significance difference.

Respondent 3 (female): "*Yah absolutely, because one income is better than one, I mean 2 incomes is better than 1, yah, but the thing is that my mom is very good at managing the money and she has a good job which gives her like a lot of benefits, but, obviously, yes, things would be different, I would have had a car or something, yah.*"

Respondent 4 (male): "*… Because, like, if you go to school and stress financially, you gonna drop your grades and stuff like that, so psychologically it affects you most cause it keeps on ringing like a bell in your head that only if your father was there for you you could have been having a better life.*"

Respondent 6 (male): "*Uhm… yah, cause my father was a business man, so, definitely, it could have been different if he was around, but, anyway… like uhm, my mother's family, they were united so they supported each other, so we didn't feel that much of a difference.*"

Respondent 7 (female): "*Yah, we would be much better off… obviously my father could have provided, then… because of his absence he did not. Yah it affected the financial situation at home and I think that's one of the biggest factors. His absence affected me financially. He was absent when I needed cash, love and attention, yah that.*"

However, some respondents experienced absent fatherhood differently and reported that the absence of their father impacted positively on the family unit, as he would have spent the money recklessly and would have also abused alcohol.

These respondents cited that:

Respondent 2 (female): "*I would say, yes and no. Yes it would have been different if my father had, like, if he wasn't struggling with his alcohol, knowing in the sense of…*

if he stayed around and stayed married to my mom but still had his drinking problems, then I think it was even going be worse than when it's just my mother and I."

Respondent 11 (female): "... I wasn't spoilt but she spoils me sometimes and yah, she has pretty much done everything so, I didn't experience any financial problems or crisis, because he wasn't there. My mom would have everything covered so, yah."

It would appear that absent fatherhood impacted the family's financial situation in two ways, both negatively and positively, as some reported the financial loss due to a single mother having to care for the family's financial needs alone. However, for others it appears to have been a financial relief as their fathers were perceived to have mismanaged money or have abused alcohol. It also seemed to have had no negative effect on the family unit, as some single mothers were able to provide for the financial needs of their children all by themselves.

4.6.2 Family conflicts or violence and disorganised family

Apart from the socio-economic status, some respondents mentioned that family conflicts were some of the negative impacts caused by absent fatherhood in the family unit. The respondents reported to have experienced conflicts amongst the family members resulting from unanswered questions about their absent fathers. They also indicated that the conflicts were caused by the single mother who favoured some siblings at the expense of others and from her inability to deal with the loss of the father.

Respondent 8 (male): "... Oh yes I have fought, a lot of times with my siblings, but like I've never resented them because our fighting always brought us closer."

Respondent 4 (male): "I told you that I am second born right? The case was before my mother and father separated, it's like my brother was born in 1990, my mother was in love with him than the second born (me), so I would report everything to my father, and after they got separated, my mother developed this kind a hatred of me in favour

of the first born, stuff like that, so that thing turned into abuse cause she was beating the hell out me, so I became wild."

Some respondents felt that the absent fatherhood had disorganised the family unit. They reported that they would sometimes behave in morally unacceptable ways, as they had no one to look up to, as the father was physically and emotionally absent from them. Moreover, they felt that they made decisions that affected the entire family, which they would not have made if the father had been around to support them.

> *Respondent 10 (female): "… if there was a father in the family they would not have made… or maybe but at least there would be that voice that says you're not leaving my house at this time and you not coming back into my house at this time, it would avoided them maybe from having children, because they both have kids, and it's something I try to talk to them about, but obviously I can't cause my voice is too thin, yah, I have."*

Furthermore, the respondents reported that they experienced instability in their homes due to the absent fatherhood. Their single mother would take advantage of the children by coming home late. One respondent stated this as follows:

> *Respondent 1 (female): "… one day when we woke in the morning we found everything stolen, from Aromat to TV and when my mom came home she was only concerned about her handbag and her R400 other than saying 'oh these poor children; are you fine'?, so yah I think if the father was present there would have been stability at home."*

In addition to disorganisation and conflicts within the family, some respondents felt that criminals viewed them as easy targets following the assault on their homes. Furthermore, they reported that they had been assaulted in their homes because their father was not around. They felt that if their fathers had been around, criminals would not have taken advantage of them, as they perceived a father presence as a source of security in the family.

Respondent 10 (female): "Yes, it fits, because we had people breaking into our house a couple of times. But when it happened I didn't think that if my dad was here it wasn't going to happen. But it makes sense, maybe it wouldn't have happened cause maybe he would have owned a gun and people wouldn't have broken into my house, yah maybe if he was around we would have a sense of security. Surely, if he was there, they couldn't have assaulted us."

Respondent 3 (female): "… I remember there was this guy who had a… I think he was a drug addict whatever, and came to my house and chased my little brother around the yard cause they knew it's just a single mother there, so if my dad was there, you know, but I mean yah."

Respondent 7 (female): "Mmh I don't think too much but you know if you are a president's daughter and people don't know that, they will not respect you, so, obviously at home if they know your father is prominent they would not mess with you, like mug you or whatever."

In contrast, one of the respondents reported not to have experienced any criminal assaults resulting from absent fatherhood. They further felt that they were not assaulted or mugged as criminals targeted those who are resourceful. One respondent explained this as follows:

Respondent 4 (male): "No, no one can steal anything from a poor person."

It would seem that the loss of the father at home negatively influenced the family unit, to a point where there was constant conflict amongst the family members, as reported by the respondents. It would also seem that if the father had been present in the respondents' lives, they would not have had conflicts amongst their siblings and their mother as the father would have been a support structure that would set standards at home. In addition, it would seem that absent fatherhood negatively impacted on the family unit as both the single mothers and

children did as they wished. It seems that only if the father was present, the family unit would have been stable and organised as his voice mattered the most. In addition, it would appear that absent fatherhood homes were taken for granted by society and criminals due to the absence of a father figure in the house. It would also seem that the respondents did not only long for the emotional or financial presence of their absent fathers but also their physical proximity, to serve as a source of security in their homes.

4.6.3 Young adults search for their fathers

Some respondents (36%) reported that they would not search for their fathers, as they do not see their fathers' value anymore, especially when they have grown up. Some responded that they would not search for their fathers, as they felt that fathers should take the responsibility of reaching out for them. Moreover, some reported that they would not search for their fathers but would not mind forgiving them if they came back. Three responded as follows:

> *Respondent 2 (female): "No, I haven't tried to search for him and I'm not planning to do so. Like I said earlier, I believe it's his responsibility as an adult to reach out, I believe that when he's ready, when he has healed and has gotten over whatever was happening in his life, he will come to me because I am not gonna push him or do anything."*

> *Respondent 4 (male): "I mean searching for him? I'm still a very active person in my family… I mean he's not like faraway, like in Durban, so, in terms of searching for him, no; not really."*

> *Respondent 7 (female): "… I think even my father… if he was to come back in my life and ask for forgiveness, I would forgive him, I am a forgiving person, I love him but I think he feels he's been absent for too long; he won't know how to fit into my life anymore."*

> *Respondent 1 (female): "Like I said we are in the same township. So, in as much as I didn't know he was my father, it's different, but people were telling me that he is my father. If I wanted him I could have gone to his house and said people say; you are my father, so what are you saying?"*

One respondent indicated that searching for his fathers was not an option as he feared that his absent father would reject them. Respondent 9, who is a male, put it as follows:

> *Respondent 9 (male): "No eish, rejection... I have a fear of rejection. I don't want my mother to stress about it because she doesn't want to talk about it. It's stressful for her, so I don't want to re-live the past."*

It would appear that some respondents are still angry with their absent fathers, as they reported that they would not search for them. However, others seem to long for their fathers' love and wish they would search for them, yet they feared that their fathers would reject them a second time.

4.6.4 Religious and cultural practices

The respondents reported that absent fatherhood drove them to Christianity and also to rely on God who they perceived to be the only father who cares for them. They felt that God is the only father to receive guidance from in times of hardships. Respondent 2, who is a female, stated this as follows:

> *Respondent 2 (female): "God is our father; so in terms of a father figure I always look up to God as my father..."*

Furthermore, some respondents (36%) reported that they engaged in cultural practices, despite their fathers' unavailability to take the lead in those rituals. Additionally, they reported to have put their faith in both God and cultural practices, as part of finding some

comfort in their families. However, others wished their fathers could have participated with them in their cultural practices.

> *Respondent 6 (male): "... I'm a Christian, as I said God is a true father, you know... whether your father is present or absent, God is a true father."*

> *Respondent 11 (female): "... but whatever I feel, it's possible, culturally I do it, there are things that I think I'm allowed to do for myself, I'd do them, but I don't think there's anything that I can do culturally without my father, it's not my fault..."*

> *Respondent 10 (female): "At home we balance, we go to church and pray but we still perform our cultural practices that don't need to be performed by the father."*

> *Respondent 5 (male): "Luckily my mother and my brother are traditional healers, and my mother was also involved in traditional things, so even though my father was absent we were able to take care of traditional things."*

It would seem that religion and cultural behaviour are considered as comfort after the loss of the father in the families, as reported by the respondents. Moreover, it would appear that some respondents still wished that their fathers could have been part and parcel of their journeys and cultural engagement.

4.6.5 Multiplicity of surnames and cultural isolation; and attachment

A few respondents (18%) reported that absent fatherhood resulted in them having multiple surnames amongst themselves in the family. Others reported that they had sought for their fathers' surname despite the fact that they were absent. The need for a paternal surname was perceived by the respondents as a way of identifying themselves with the father or for building a legacy from the surname.

Respondent 1 (female): "*... because I'm using my surname, my mom is using hers and my siblings are using my mother's surname hmm.*"

Respondent 6 (male): "*Yah for sure, but she's fine now, she understands the purpose of changing the surname. Yah because, it's not really my father's surname but my surname... and I am a man, I'm gonna start a family anytime soon, so I have to pass that... that's me in fact, regardless of how, or what he did you know. That's not an issue, but it's my surname I have to pass it to my kids, you know and yah.*"

In contrast, one reported to have used one surname despite their fathers' absence. This surname is their mother's. Respondent 10, who is a male, responded as follows:

Respondent 10 (male): "*Yah we are using my mom's surname.*"

Some reported that they experienced cultural isolation in the family due to the lack of a leadership figure, who is usually the father. They responded that there are certain cultural practices that require a father to take the lead. However, some reported to have found significant others to take the place of their lost fathers, to take the lead in performing various cultural practices usually performed by fathers.

Respondent 10 (female): "*... But I don't think there's anything that I can do culturally without my father, it's not my fault...*"

Respondent 5 (male): "*Luckily my mother and brother are traditional healers, and my mother was also involved in traditional things, so even though my father was absence at home we were able to take care of traditional things.*"

It would appear that the father plays a significant role in the children's lives, as the respondents reported to have deviated from cultural practices which were perceived to need

his leadership. Moreover, the loss of a father resulted in the family unit using different surnames, in which every child used their own or their mothers. It would also seem that some respondents needed their fathers in their life to perform cultural practices for them, as fathers were considered to be leaders in cultural activities.

Attachment seems to have been one of the positive impacts of absent fatherhood for some respondents. One respondent reported that absent fatherhood gave rise to attachment in their homes. They became united in an attempt to create a happy and a complete family. Some responded that their single mothers were better able to have bond with them, as they felt they are the only people remaining in their life.

> *Respondent 2 (female): "I would say my mom has always been close to all of us, even the time my dad was pulling his stunts, so uhm I don't think we would have been attached. She was probably gonna speak more stuff with the spouse, you know… from day one when my mom has some problems, she tells us, yah, so I guess."*

In contrast, another reported that their single mothers were detached from them, as she was always busy and often preoccupied with providing the children with the basic needs by working overtime. As a result, she would come back home from work tired with little time for quality time with her children.

> *Respondent 11 (female): "… but she'd just come back from work and say hi how you doing and watch TV and go to sleep… we don't even spend time together even though we live together, so yah."*

It would appear that absent fatherhood also shaped the respondents' homes in different ways. Some seemed to lack attachment to their mothers as a result of having to spend much time working hard for her children. On the other hand, some appeared to have become more attached to one another and to their single mothers.

4.7 Conclusion

It would appear that absent fatherhood had an impact on the development of the respondents. Absent fatherhood seemed to have impacted the respondents in various ways, as most reported experiencing difficulties in their upbringing resulting from the lack of emotional and financial support which they felt should have been provided by their absent fathers. However, others seemed to have filled the father's void by finding other significant others who they regarded as role models. Furthermore, the respondents reported having been impacted in their psychosocial wellbeing. It would seem that they experienced absent fatherhood as a stressful event in their lives, which affected the way they thought, felt and perceived the world. Some of the participants reported growing up with a fear of rejection emanating from the confusion of being rejected by their own father, who was expected to protect and shield them from harm. Apart from psychosocial wellbeing, it would appear that absent fatherhood has an impact on the family unit. Most respondents felt that the financial situation at home was impacted negatively due to the loss of a second income from an absent father. In summary, absent fatherhood impacted on the respondents in many areas of their lives. These shaped their lives both negatively and positively. The next chapter presents the discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the findings of the study which support or disprove literature. The study sought to engage with research questions and ultimately answered these research questions. Below are the abovementioned questions which this research attempted to answer:

- What is the subjective experience of being raised without a father?
- How do young adults raised in homes with absent fathers perceive the impact of absent fatherhood in their psychosocial wellbeing?
- How has the absent fatherhood impacted the family unit?

5.1 What is the subjective experience of being raised without a father?

The study findings revealed that young adults raised in the absence of their fathers had different experiences. Most of the respondents reported that growing up without a father was very difficult as they had to wait enviously while other children had relationships with their fathers and received support from their fathers. Some reported the challenge of unfulfilled roles, where the single mother was overwhelmed with not only the issues of survival and providing financially, but had an emotional disconnectedness to them as children. The mother, as a sole provider, seemed to have been put under so much pressure, so much so that it robbed them of quality time with their mother. Some reported that the sight of their peers being provided for by their fathers was distressing, considering the fact that they could not attain similar things due to the family's financial constraints. These findings concur with those of Morwe et al. (2015), who revealed that being raised in the absence of a father figure can be quite challenging, not only for the growing child but for the mother too. Similarly, Trowbridge (2014) mentioned that being raised in an absent father home is very hurtful in the sense that one does not only feel the loss of the father but one also feels the gradual rejection by immediate paternal family members from whom protection is sought after. Wilhelm (2014) elaborated on this adding that when children or young adults feel gradual rejection, they tend to displace their anger to their significant others. These growing children are oftentimes deprived of their normal childhood due to the absence of a father figure, causing them to take on parenting roles at an early age (Shefer & Clowes, 2012).

Some reported the difficulty of not having a father figure as a role model, especially males. They found this to be stressful as there were certain issues they needed to learn through modelling and sharing with a male figure who had "walked the path" and who could thus offer valuable insights and advice. In addition, some reported absent fatherhood as a challenging experience as they needed a father figure to teach them how to be bold even in the midst of life's adversities. Moreover, the respondents, males in particular, cited that sometimes the mother became over-protective of them which resulted in them being unable to take ownership of their lives, therefore they needed a father figure to encourage self-determination instead of being over-indulged. Moreover, some male respondents reported that they needed a fatherly figure to acquire masculine knowledge. As a result, their father's absence negatively affected them. In these reports, the respondents highlighted the void for masculine nurturing which they lacked because of absent fatherhood.

The findings support Waldfogel et al. (2010), who maintained that children need father figures as role models. They went further and explained that teaching a boy about manhood requires someone who is knowledgeable and experienced, which role is fulfilled by a father or a male substitute. In some cases, a young adult, particularly a male, who is raised in an absent father home may have some difficulty asserting and taking charge of his life as he lacks confidence, resulting from the absence of a male figure in his life. This view emanates from the notion that mothers tend to shelter and at times over-indulge their male children (Waldfogel et al., 2010). Monama (2011) expatiated on modelling arguing that everyone needs a role model, someone to look up to. Primarily, these role models are both the mother and the father. Another study by Shenk et al. (2013) found that being raised without a father figure is a painful experience as a father also has a role to play in teaching the children how to love, how to learn, how to be protective of self and others, and how to care for others.

Some reported absent fatherhood as the hardest experience in their lives, as they suffered from negative emotions, such as anger towards others or the world. They also perceived the world as rejecting and neglecting them because of the lack of involvement of their fathers in their lives. Additionally, some reported father absence as a difficult experience because they lacked the nurturing and care of their absent fathers who were supposed to be contributing in their developmental needs, especially during puberty. Additionally, some male respondents

reported to have encountered some difficulties in communicating their developmental stages with their mother due to her feminine role, particularly relating to puberty. As a result, they needed their father to play his role in this process. Being raised by a single mother one of the most difficult things a young adult may experience. Sometimes one develops impulsive behaviours or one may be angry because one feels neglected (Shefer & Clowes, 2012). Various studies (Guajardo et al., 2009; Makofane, 2015; Waltz, 2007) supported these notions, citing the lack of fatherhood as dooming, especially in male young adults, as these young adults are not well-equipped, well-nurtured and well-directed. As a result, they find it very difficult to carry themselves as men. A boy child needs to be nurtured and cared for through modelling, however, in cases of father absence, they seem to lack gender-specific modelling, and often find themselves struggling in terms of identity formation. Regarding these, Richter et al. (2010) pointed out that a father's presence is needed, especially when a child reaches puberty and issues of intimacy and sexuality become imminent, and the lack of paternal guidance increases the likelihood of a distorted perception about the expected or acceptable conduct in romantic relationships. Regarding these, Schwarzwalder (2014) also found that male children experience a gradual mental maturation as compared to their female counterparts as single mothers are more likely to pay more attention to female children. This is because they are conversant with the needs of females; therefore, the presence of a male parent is essential in the process of nurturing male children.

In contrast, Drexler and Gross (2005) argued that a male child does not necessarily need a father to achieve a healthy development, but rather a reassuring and loving environment, referring in this regard to a devoted single mother who is able to provide such. This notion was supported by the findings of the current study, where some of the respondents reported their experiences of absent fatherhood as manageable due to their single mother's involvement in their lives. In this regard, the participants cited the dual role their mothers played in their nurturing, as well as the involvement of uncles as father figures in their lives. This collaborative parenting offered an opportunity for gender-specific modelling and other avenues for provision and learning. Some young adults indicated that they sometimes experienced it as less painful due the emotional connectedness they had with their mother.

These findings concurred with previous researchers such as Armstrong (2015), and McCarthy and Bonhoeffer (2015), who maintained that being raised without a father is not as difficult as people may think. In fact, it is normal and prevalent. They asserted that having no father is not always a disadvantage to children or young adults, as there are so many alternative social role models that a child or young adult may emulate, such as pastors and neighbours who can help raise the child. It is only outsiders who assume that absent fatherhood is a stressful experience, whereas these young adults have ways of dealing with it (McLeod & Kaiser, 2004).

In essence, absent fatherhood can be experienced both as negative and positive, and sometimes it is perceived as having no effect at all to those who are surrounded by extended family members, who then take up that role and fulfil some of the duties designated to father figures. It would be condescending to assume that anyone could fulfil that role as long as they are males, as based on the narratives of the respondents and the existing literature. It would appear that it depends on the emotional connectedness between the child and the family member who takes on the father's role. On the other hand, it can be experienced as empowering as it permits the growing young adult to assume some responsibility earlier in life, helping them to be strong-willed and independent. This sense of responsibility is in line with White's (2017) assertion that young adults from absent fatherhood homes are likely to assume fatherly roles, in order to assist their single mothers.

Whether or not this parentified role in the child is altogether beneficial remains to be explored. However, it does have some positive aspects, as reported by the respondents. Additionally, it would appear that the presence of some father figures in the form of uncles, grandfathers, or community figures serves a crucial modelling role in the growing young adult, supporting the idiomatic expression that it takes a village to raise child.

5.2 How do young adults raised in absent father homes perceive the impact of absent fatherhood in their psychosocial wellbeing?

Various studies (Carlson, 2006; Nyanjaya & Masango, 2012) have found that children raised in absent fatherhood households are prone to high levels of psychological problems such as stress, sadness, anger and loneliness, which affect their wellbeing. This was confirmed in this study where respondents reported experiencing being raised in absent fatherhood homes as stressful, which affected their cognitive functioning. Some cited feelings of rejection and worthlessness, marked by a sense of 'not good enough'. In their narratives, they reported growing up with a fear of rejection and confusion about the reasons that led to their fathers leaving them. Most of them seemed to interpret or justify the perceived abandonment resulting from their own deficit of not 'being good enough' for their fathers. This is because if they were good enough, their fathers would have stayed. Some seemed to have introjected this sense of self-blame to a point that it was experienced as coming from within them; they felt that they were inherently bad. One participant captured it as follows:

"*... my head always knows or acknowledges that people leave, you know, so, if they don't leave, I'd make them want to leave, and if they don't leave I would get frustrated...*" (Respondent 10).

From this quotation it appears that the respondent expected that other people will eventually leave; therefore, as a defence it was preferable to pre-empt their departure, in order to gain some sort of control over the situation and protect the self from psychological harm. Some felt that they were unworthy of receiving love due to this perceived abandonment by their fathers. This feeling of unworthiness is captured succinctly in studies by Biblarz & Stacey (2010) and Carling et al. (2012), which also found that as children experience abandonment perceived to have resulted from an absent father, they often experience feelings of unworthiness. In contrast, Culpin et al. (2013) asserted that it is not the absence of a father in other settings that is associated with stress but the abuse that these children may be exposed to in the presence of the father. White (2015) also emphasised that in cases of parental disputes, some children are likely to find themselves caught in the midst of parental conflict and they become stressed, while the absence of the father gives them solace by not forcing them to choose sides. From the findings of the study, it can be said that father absence does

not always breed stress in an individual's wellbeing, but elicits emotions of relief in cases of parental conflicts.

Many of the respondents reported that absent fatherhood affected their self-esteem to the extent that they believed they were not worthy of love because if they had been, their fathers would not have rejected them. Furthermore, some respondents felt that they were not good enough as they never received that assurance from their fathers. This is consistent with studies by Cooper (2009) and Sheslow (2008), who found that absent fatherhood had an impact on the young adult's self-esteem as they were likely to experience rejection from the father. They argued that other effects of growing up without a father are self-doubt and the likelihood to please others as the young adult's sense of self is negatively affected. Brooks (2008) concurred with these studies, highlighting that the absence of a father figure often leads to issues of trust, where these young adults struggle with both trust in their capabilities as well as trusting the world, expecting rejection from others, just as they feel rejected by their own fathers. Similarly, Kevorkian (2010) supported these findings, citing that some young adults tend to second-guess themselves, especially amongst their peers. This is partly because of their feelings of inadequacy in terms of their capabilities. Conversely, when children have an adequate relationship with both the mother and the father, they are likely to develop into adults who have a high self-esteem and self-confidence, while the lack of attachment with a father and a mother is likely to diminish that confidence (Luo et al., 2011).

However, some respondents disputed these assertions and felt ambivalent about absent fatherhood. They indicated that for them it never mattered that the father was absent, as their relationship with their mothers was strong and that motivated them to believe in themselves. These findings concur with those of Cartwright and Henriksen (2012), who found that when the father is absent, children or young adults form a strong relationship with the mother in a manner that she is likely to teach them to stay focused, driven and to believe in themselves.

For Cartwright and Henriksen (2012), a mother raising children on her own ensures that her relationship with the children is not only warm but also uplifting and encouraging in such a way that the children would be able to conceptualise themselves in a positive way. Makofane (2015) concurred with this, arguing that being raised without a father does not always breed

low self-esteem, but highlighted that low self-esteem is influenced by the type of relationship a child or young adult may have with a primary caregiver. For instance, if a single mother supports and assures a child on how good and effective they can be in life, the child is likely to develop a high self-esteem.

Although it may appear that absent fatherhood contributes to children's self-esteem, another factor that can mediate this is the nature of the child's relationship with the mother.

In addition to these findings, it was reported that absent fatherhood appears to have contributed to a variety of behavioural changes for those who experienced and perceived it as abandonment. These changes occurred in various contexts, such as peer and romantic relationships as well as social change. They included attempted suicide and elicited feelings of homelessness, isolation and fear of being abandoned. Most respondents reported that they were unable to maintain relationships with their peers, friends or romantic partners as they expected them to leave just as their fathers did. In other words, absent fatherhood seemed to have affected the individual's ability to trust, as they expected their significant others to do the same one day. This fear of abandonment reportedly led them to end their relationships prematurely, as a way of protecting themselves from the perceived anticipated rejection. However, some respondents contradicted this and reported that they were able to maintain relationships with their friends or romantic partners by not allowing their father's absence to interrupt what they shared with their significant others.

The findings concur with Ramisur (2007) who asserted that most young adults from absent fatherhood homes are reported to have difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships with their peers, particularly with those that they do not have close ties with. These young adults are further reported to have difficulties in confiding in their friends or their significant others, as they find it difficult to trust others as a result of being abandoned by their fathers (Brooks, 2008). Likewise, Lizardi et al. (2009) concurred with findings that young adults who are raised by single mothers are predisposed to experiencing relationship problems with their peers, as these young adults tend to display signs of insecurity among their peers, which decreases their chances to effectively react to the demands of the environment (Kimani & Kombo, 2010). Therefore, from the findings of the study, absent

fatherhood seems to breed low self-esteem in an individual's life. However, this may depend on the type of environment the child is in or the kind of moral support a child receives.

The findings of the study further show that some respondents ended their relationships with their significant others due to the assumption that people they are in a relationship with or with whom they share a friendship, would leave them soon or later anyway. This is in line with Ramisur's (2007) study conducted in KwaZulu-Natal, which found that romantic relationships can serve as a protective factor because they are emotionally and socially satisfying experiences; however, romantic problems have also been reported as stressful as these young adults are of the opinion that they do not know how to deal with problems since they did not have a father figure to look up to. Research conducted by Luo et al. (2011) also found that romantic relationships can serve as a protective factor due to them being emotionally and socially satisfying experiences; however, romantic problems have also been reported to be stressful as these young adults presume they may have to deal with negligence similar to their absent fathers. These findings clearly indicate that absent fatherhood impacts on how young adults form and maintain relationships with others.

Furthermore, some respondents reported experiencing much stress emanating from their father's absence, to the extent that they reportedly had suicidal ideations. For these respondents, life was not worth living, considering that they were unlovable. Various studies (Du Plessis, 2012; Jacobson & Gould, 2009; McCarthy & Bonhoeffer, 2015; Wasserman & Wasserman, 2009) have captured these adequately, and found suicide to be one of the effects of absent fatherhood, especially amongst young black male South Africans, as these individuals have no male figure in their lives to share their problems with. They often feel depressed and experience suicidal thoughts. In addition, these young adults are predisposed to feeling stressed when they have no male significant other in times of hardship. Therefore, they could possibly experience feelings associated with suicidal attempts.

Some young adults raised in absent fatherhood homes are more likely to commit suicide, as they tend to feel rejected by their fathers. A study conducted in South Africa by Stark et al. (2010) also found that attempted suicides amongst children or young adults are a result of various factors, ranging from social to family problems, which include absent fatherhood. In

Kruk's (2012) research, it was also found that young adults who do not have father figures often feel unloved and unwelcome and perceive themselves as unworthy. These dysphoric feelings are likely to make them prone to suicide. Inniss (2013) reported these adequately and found that they attempt suicide as a cry for help to what they perceive as emotional neglect from a single mother who is preoccupied with issues of survival and providing for the family. Lizardi et al. (2009) concurred that some children may view the mother's struggle as their fault, and thus feel as though they are a burden to her, increasing their likelihood to commit suicide.

In contrast, the findings of the present study disprove the findings on suicide. This is because most respondents reported not to have attempted suicide nor did they have any suicidal ideation, despite the fact that life was not easy in the absence of their fathers. From these findings, it would seem that absent fatherhood has terrifying impacts on those who are experiencing it but some are able to deal with it appropriately, while others are not and they resort to attempting suicide or developing suicidal ideations.

One of the impacts of absent fatherhood on an individual's wellbeing is emotional impact. Most respondents cited difficulties with trust in their relationships. Some reported that they often isolated themselves from their peers who were perceived as rejecting or labelling them as fatherless. These respondents further stated that they considered isolating themselves was the only way to avoid trouble which might arise from being teased about being fatherless. They felt that they could not maintain relationships with significant others as they reported not having had anything to interact about. One respondent indicated that she excluded her friends from her life because of the lack of trust which she attributed to her absent father, who she perceived to have broken the trust. It would appear that absent fatherhood impacted on how the respondent socialises or perceives other people.

The generalisation that nobody can be trusted seems to be the hallmark of many of the respondents' experiences, as they consider people to be vindictive and thus prone to betrayal at any time. These findings echo Cartwright and Henriksen (2012), who proposed that young adults, particularly females, who are raised without fathers have trust issues. As a result, they experience difficulties trusting men fearing disappointment, just as their fathers disappointed

them. Dickerson (2014) elaborated on this adding that lack of trust applies to everyone, including significant others who may also be perceived as rejecting them. Similar to Dickerson, Hawkins (2015) argued that the perceived abandonment by the father affects other relationships, for instance, these young adults are reported to struggle with intimacy as well as maintaining stable relationships. Furthermore, some of the respondents reported experiencing feelings of inferiority when in the company of other people or peers. They indicated that in comparison to their peers they never felt good enough. They reported experiencing feelings of unworthiness, stemming from the absence of a father figure to assure them or appreciate them. Some respondents reported feeling anxious in the presence of others, fearing rejection. Guajardo et al. (2009) conducted a study on relationships among parenting practices, parental stress, child behaviour, and children's social-cognitive development and found that fatherless children are prone to developing inferiority complexes, as they tend to over-introspect and assume that they are different to their peers who have fathers. It was also found that an inferiority complex develops when these young adults perceive themselves as not worthy because they lacked some important aspects in their lives, such as a father figure.

In contrast, some responded that they felt that they were able to initiate interactions with their peers and believed that absent fatherhood has not affected them negatively in their social lives. This concurs with Richter's (2006) findings which highlighted that young adults brought up in absent fatherhood homes are more confident, as they get used to doing things on their own from the early age. Park et al. (2011) elaborated on Richter's argument, emphasising that children brought up in absent father homes are likely to have many responsibilities at home, which may result in them becoming more confident to face the world. In most cases, these children cared for themselves and sometimes also for their siblings, giving them opportunities to develop trust in themselves. In relation to this, Ames (2014) also found that most children who are raised in the absence of their fathers are likely to turn into responsible adults, as they are aware of what is expected of them, and they are able to care for themselves and others without having to rely on someone else. Monama (2015) also contended that these children are resilient and more capable of dealing with tough situations hence; they have passed through the stages of hardships because of the void left by their fathers. The findings show that young adults who are raised in absent fatherhood homes perceive the effects of father absence on their psychosocial wellbeing differently; while some

felt it had impacted negatively on how they formed and maintained relationships with others, how they related to others, and how they perceived themselves, others reported not to have struggled with inferiority and trust issues.

One of the emotional impact issues reported was anger directed towards absent fathers, who were perceived as having failed the respondents by not being present in their lives. Some respondents displayed their anger towards other people, especially males, who were viewed as being like the respondents' estranged fathers. Moreover, some respondents hated their fathers, blaming them for having neglected their own children. On the other hand, some respondents perceived anger as an impact on their psychosocial wellbeing, reporting that they had experienced anger. This anger was directed towards fathers who were perceived as having failed the respondents by not being present in their lives. Some respondents vented their anger on other people, especially males, who were viewed as being similar to their estranged fathers. Moreover, some respondents hated their fathers reportedly as they accused them for having neglected their own children. These findings concur with those of Luo et al. (2011), who found that young adults raised with absent fatherhood may tend to become angry at themselves or displace this anger to any man, generalising that they are the same as their absent father. Furthermore, some young adults struggled with impulse control, bursting in anger when with significant others even at the slightest of disagreement (White, 2017). Similarly, because of their home conditions, they are reportedly difficult to deal with as a result of their bad attitude and behaviour. These manifest themselves in temper tantrums and emotional outbursts (Inniss, 2013). According to Sevim (2015), a study by the South African NGO Fathers also found that young adults from absent fatherhood homes are prone to suffer from emotional problems such as anger, resulting from a perception that they are unwanted by their fathers. This is supported by Jackson (2010), who stressed that some young adults struggled to control their temper when they are provoked. In addition, they burst out in anger or shout when with significant others as they still have unresolved issues in their hearts.

The South African NGO Fathers also found that adults from absent fatherhood homes are prone to emotional problems such as anger as they assume that their fathers do not want them, which is evidenced by their being absent. As a result, young adults may sometimes get angry at themselves or any man assuming that all men are the same (Sevim, 2015). Likewise,

Park (2007) pointed that children brought up in the absence of their fathers are likely to have problems controlling their tempers and may suffer from emotional outbursts. They may have emotional problems that need attention and if not attended to, these problems may interfere with their wellbeing which may reflect badly on their adulthood. From the findings of the present study, it would appear that being raised without a father may elicit anger or hatred in individuals as some young adults may not have been able to deal adequately with their fathers' absence.

In contrast, some respondents indicated that they had not experienced these problems despite the fact that they had to deal with the void of absent fatherhood, but that rather, absent fatherhood moulded them to act or behave in a way that shows maturity. From these findings, it would appear that anger is perceived as a negative impact on the individual wellbeing resulting from absent fatherhood. However, there are few respondents who have not experienced emotional outbursts such as anger. However, absent fatherhood had groomed them to view life with a new perspective.

In addition to anger outbursts, some respondents indicated that they blamed themselves for their father's absence, feeling that their fathers believed the respondents were not good enough and they were thus responsible for their fathers' absence. Some respondents blamed their mothers or significant others for their fathers' absence, as they assumed that their mothers should have insisted or pleaded with their fathers not to leave. Additionally, some respondents felt that their mothers may have caused their fathers to leave, while others blamed their fathers for not being responsible.

The findings of the study support those of Ramisur (2007), who found that children from absent fatherhood homes are likely to put the blame on themselves or others for their fathers' abandonment. Park (2007) concurred with this finding and pointed out that these children are likely to assume that their fathers left them simply because they are not adorable or good enough. These findings are well captured in a research conducted by Cabrera et al. (2008), who found that a mother is often to blame; hence, these children may not understand why she is not willing to involve their father in their upbringing, so that they may become part of their lives. Jackson (2010) also contended that children take time to understand the motive behind

their father's absence until they become adults and hear both sides of the story. From these findings, it would seem that the idea of the father being absent was perceived as neglect. As a result, respondents blame themselves, their fathers, mothers and/or other relatives for the perceived neglect.

Apart from the emotional impact mentioned by most of the respondents, academic performance was cited as another affected area. Some respondents felt that the absence of a father figure affected them academically, as they reported that they were teased at school due to lack of necessary educational resources. Some even reported missing school, which resulted in poor academic performance. These findings concur with Tella and Tella's (2003) study, which showed that when a father provides love and care, children or young adults enjoy a nurturing home. Furthermore, a good foundation for their educational success is constructed effortlessly. These findings are also in relation to Ramisur's (2007) study on "Parental Involvement in School", who found that children or young adults from absent fatherhood homes usually have an elevated risk of maladjustment and school failure. In addition, the social capital is much lower for those with both parents. This implies that there are limited social support and resources aimed at assisting a child or a young adult at school in order for them to perform well (Ramisur, 2007). Brooks (2008) elaborated that single mothers invest less time, energy, money and involvement in school events and other resources in their children. For this reason, Cooper (2009) highlighted that one of the symbols of a democratic educational system is the characteristic of inclusivity, in so far as both father and mother are concerned.

The encouragement of parental involvement in their children's education is now a trend that is growing worldwide (Cooper, 2009). These findings are in line with Naong and Morolong's (2011) definition of father involvement, which they defined along the lines of the kind of relationship a father has with his children's educators, parental assistance with school work and other school activities, the communication parents have with their children about school and the parents' hopes for their young adults to succeed. Various studies (Cotton & Wikelund, 2005; Naong & Morolong, 2011; Tella & Tella, 2003) have found that academic success is higher when both caregivers, including the father, are involved in their children's learning. Biblarz and Stacey (2010) also found that fatherhood involvement also includes

parents providing a safe and stable environment at home, a home that provides intellectual stimulation to children, father-child communication and a home that has the presence of good role models who value education. In addition to Biblarz and Stacey, Dobbs (2014) also contends that absent fatherhood has an impact on the education of the children: it hinders decision-making and causes negative reaction in children.

On the contrary, some felt that their father's absence had no bearing on their academic performance. Ironically, they used it as motivation for them to succeed. These findings concur with Desforges and Abouchaar's (2003) argument that absent fatherhood does not always contribute to poor academic performance, as these children do not only depend on their single mothers for academic guidance, but also from other family members who are seen as role models. Likewise, Cooper (2009) contended that absent fatherhood is not always associated with academic achievement, and found that school teachers are the major stimulants of how these children perform at school. From these findings, it can be said that absent fatherhood can alter academic performance or the success of a child if there is no one else encouraging the children in their academic lives. However, even though the father is absent, for as long as the mother guides and stimulates the children academically, they (the children) are likely to succeed academically.

The present study also found that alcohol or/drug consumption, as well as criminal behaviour, seemed prevalent amongst some participants with an estimated of 40% doing so due to poor monitoring by the mother who seemed preoccupied with issues of survival and providing for the family. Some participants seemed to have engaged in alcohol abuse in their early years, possibly as a defence mechanism or in an attempt to please peers. Similarly, some reported engaging in bullying behaviour as a protective factor from being mocked and victimised by their peers. The findings support those of Demuth and Brown (2004), who maintained that lack of fatherhood is associated with alcohol or drug abuse, which shows that young adults brought up in the absence of their fathers are predisposed to engage in risky behaviours, such as smoking and alcohol consumption, knowing that they can get away with it, as their single mothers may be committed to their jobs and have limited time to supervise them.

In contrast, Nock and Einolf (2008) argued that absent fatherhood is not a contributory factor of drug or alcohol abuse in children's lives. However, the environment that a child is brought up in plays a significant role. In essence, a drug or an alcohol exposing environment, as well as the type of peers the child associates with, may drive a child to consume alcohol and abuse drugs at an early age or behave in a particular way (Nock & Einolf, 2008). Makusha (2013) concurred and added that it is not necessarily the absent fatherhood that drives children to consume alcohol and abuse drugs at an early age, but rather a number of factors, ranging from learning through observation, to development stages.

On the other hand, crime and criminal activities were also reportedly influenced by absent fatherhood. Some respondents indicated that they had committed criminal activities at an early age because they lacked household resources. These respondents felt that if the father had been present, he would have assumed his responsibilities and made financial plans for the family and the children would have been able to enjoy the benefits of their childhood. Donnellan et al. (2005) also found that more criminals or delinquents are from absent fatherhood homes than their fathered counterparts. Boothroyd and Perrett (2008) supported the finding that young adults who are raised without their fathers are more prone to maladjustment behaviours than those who grow up in homes with fathers. Schwandt (2007) concurred and added that most young adults from absent fatherhood families have committed crime at some point in their life, as they do not spend much time with their parents; thus, the chances of them going astray are higher. Boothroyd and Perrett (2008) further argued that these children have an elevated risk of engaging in criminal activities, such as shoplifting and train surfing, as a result of the lack of a father figure to discipline and groom them about morality and how to respect other people's possessions. Kruk (2012) also reported that some young adults brought up in absent fatherhood homes engage in pick-pocketing. This may be as a result of them not having enough resources or they may be living in under-privileged backgrounds. Therefore, these young adults would try by all means to satisfy their basic needs. These arguments are captured well in Inniss' (2013) study, which showed that these individuals have higher chances of breaking the law at a younger age and ultimately imprisoned when they grow up. Their criminal acts are rooted in their impoverished families in which the father, who is charged with caring for the family financially, is absent. Consequently, children resort to taking on parental roles and end up stealing.

In contrast, one respondent gave a different account, indicating that absent fatherhood had not resulted in him engaging in criminal acts, as their single mother had raised them to become well-behaved individuals. This is in line with Dickerson (2014), who argued that absent fatherhood is not associated with criminal activities such as shoplifting, pick-pocketing and train surfing. However, an environment that has no afterschool activities, such as sports and arts, could possibly lead to children or young adults becoming criminals. In agreement with Dickerson, Ainsworth et al. (2015) also reported that when young adults become bored, they resort to exploring new things, including criminal acts.

In addition, identity and role confusion are also perceived as further impacts of being brought up in the absence of a father figure. Some respondents reported that they struggled with identity issues as a result of not knowing their paternal spiritual orientation; they also responded that they needed to identify themselves with their fathers and to understand who they really are. Some indicated that they struggled with career paths, as they did not know who they were and what they wanted in life, resulting from their fathers having failed them by not taking care of their needs. In relation to these findings, Lamb's (2004) arguments suggested that absent fatherhood changes the family unit and the children's identities. In other words, when there is no one to look up to, children struggle to identify with their gender roles and become uncertain of whom they are and fail to find their true identities. These issues of uncertainty and gender roles are well captured in Schwarzwalder's (2014) findings. These findings show that a young male adult would identify himself as a female and would assume chores and behaviours that are meant for females. Schwarzwalder added that this may result from not having a primary male adult present to groom and mould a male child towards manhood. When fathers are absent, children become actual victims. This is in relation with Jackson's (2010) arguments, who concluded that when a father is absent in the lives of his children, the children often find themselves lost, not knowing their worth and their true identities. Furthermore, male children from absent fatherhood homes are reported to display more feminine characteristics and be less masculine, as their environment does not encompass manhood. Consequently, a boy may find himself caught in the midst of gender confusion, in that some boys may be unsure as to how to behave or how to identify themselves with others (Jackson, 2010).

Some respondents reported that they struggled to identify themselves due to their lack of spiritual connectivity resulting from not knowing their fathers, consequently they found it difficult to understand their family tree. They also indicated that they needed their fathers' presence in order to learn more about their spiritual backgrounds. Moreover, some respondents felt that their identity crisis arose when they needed their father's surname; they cited that using his surname would be one way of knowing who they were. The findings concurred with Kruk's (2012) findings, that young adults who are raised without their fathers are deprived of self-concept, self-assurance and self-efficacy; therefore, they are unable to identify with others. However, when young adults are unable to identify with themselves, it then becomes difficult for them to believe in themselves (White, 2017).

It would seem that the notion of absent fatherhood has an impact on identity and gender roles, as some cited the importance of their father's surname, while others emphasised career paths. Therefore, it is evident that absent fatherhood impacted the psychosocial wellbeing of the respondents in so far as they struggled to understand who they were and what career paths they wanted to pursue.

In addition to the above psychosocial impacts on the wellbeing of young adults, some respondents reported absent fatherhood to be a driving force towards independence. These respondents felt that they had learnt to take ownership of their lives at an early age without having to depend on others as a result of being fatherless. Some added that they were able to make their own decisions without having to seek approval from their fathers; as a result, these respondents felt a sense of self-reliance as they had to reflect on their own lives and make proper decisions by themselves on what they wanted in life. This sense of making proper decisions is well narrated in Jackson's (2010) research, which contended that these young adults are able to make their own decisions without having to first seek approval from their fathers; these decisions include relationships with others, career paths and academic lives. Furthermore, some respondents felt that the lack of resources at home resulting from a single mother's inability to provide for her children's needs all by herself without a father's help, motivated them to work hard in life as they felt that hard work was the only way for them to become successful. Thus, these respondents became successful or were close to achieving success. They also felt that father absence has shaped them to believe that women are capable

of initiating and achieving anything for themselves, without any help from a male person and felt that no roles are gender-specific. Some, however, felt that absent fatherhood had moulded them to reject the idea that denotes women as objects; these respondents had never experienced the presence of a father figure in the house; therefore, it became difficult for them to regard men as role models. In contrast, some respondents felt that a man is still the head of the house and should be the one who gives orders in the family, regardless of his absence in their lives.

The findings of the present study concur with those of Joussemet et al. (2005), who found that most young adults from absent father families, particularly women, have more chances of being independent, as they do not wait on men to do things for them. Richter (2006) also argued that these women are mostly self-reliant since they never had a father in their lives that they could depend on. These women were found to be mentally strong, which make them to be resilient (Jackson, 2010). It was reported that absent fatherhood has an impact on the success of young adults. This is because it shapes a young adult's development as these young adults know that hard work is the only option, as there was never a father figure to help them (Kevorkian, 2010). Correspondingly, Osborne and McLanahan (2007) stated that there are more fatherless successful young adults than their fathered counterparts. This is because these young adults have learnt to be independent at an early age when they had no father to depend on and because they always wanted to change their impoverished backgrounds (Inniss, 2013).

Interestingly, while others reported undesirable impacts resulting from absent fatherhood, some have varying impacts such as independency and decision-making. Over time some had to learn to make their own decisions and depend on themselves without having to rely on others. Therefore, one would suggest that absent fatherhood does not always break the child but rather moulds the child to become a better and more responsible adult.

Apart from these findings, some respondents reported to have been affected academically. Some respondents reported missing their classes due to lack of academic resources which should have been provided by the absent fathers. These respondents would stay away from school or school events as they were teased by their counterparts for not having school

resources. This is in line with Tella and Tella's (2003) findings, who observed that children or young adults from absent fatherhood families are more prone to engage in truancy and sometimes they would drop out of school completely. This is because a single mother may not be able supervise them all by herself; therefore, these children are prone to mischief, including staying away from school. Cotton and Wikelund (2005) concur and added that these young adults are expelled from schools due to lack of discipline or lack of financial resources to meet their academic needs. Park et al. (2011) also pointed out that these young adults may experience adjustment difficulties when exposed to male educators. They may also feel intimidated, as they are not used to a male figure who is in authority; consequently, they are prone to staying away from school. Likewise, Kruk (2012) reported that these young adults are likely to drop out of school in an attempt to find jobs in order to assist their single mother.

Argumentatively, other respondents cited they never stayed away from school as their single mothers encouraged them to focus on their schoolwork in order to secure a better future. In addition, some indicated that inasmuch as they would bunk classes as a result of being teased by their classmates and because of a lack of academic resources, they reportedly changed their lifestyles, as they realised that it was only through education that they could succeed in life despite being fatherless.

This proves that even though some respondents faced financial problems and other challenging circumstances, such as not receiving enough supervision from both parents because of absent fatherhood, they were still able to focus on their education and stay in school. However, some stayed away from school, yet they eventually realised the importance of going to school to finish their education in order to have a brighter future.

The experience of being raised without a father seems to have had contradicting effects, as reported by participants. Some attributed their reported early sexual engagement to the fact that they lacked a father figure in their lives. There were also reports of promiscuous behaviour, which was also attributable to absent fatherhood. Reportedly, some young adults had difficulties with trust, especially when it came to romantic relationships. They feared that the partners would leave them, just as their fathers did. In addition, those who were from a

Christian background reported that their religious beliefs had shaped their behaviour accordingly, which helped them focus on what was deemed morally acceptable.

Dickerson (2014) concurred and added that most young adults from absent fatherhood homes are more likely to engage in sexual behaviours from an early age. They may become promiscuous in an attempt to seek emotional attachment from different partners, and in order to compensate for the lack yet longed for experience of a male figure. Ikramullah et al. (2009) concurred that young females tend to be attracted to various males, unconsciously searching for a bond that their fathers failed to provide. Ellis et al. (2010) added that these children or young adults hope that these men would provide them with the safety and assurance that they were missing from their absent fathers. The reported promiscuous behaviour increases the likelihood of teenage pregnancy associated with absent fatherhood (Ellis et al., 2010).

In addition, male young adults engage in unsafe pre-marital sexual activities, resulting in unplanned pregnancies. However, these males in turn fail to be involved in the upbringing of their children due the lack of modelling from their own fathers (Nowak, 2003). Various studies (Mancini, 2010; Webster et al., 2014) concurred in this finding, adding that some young adults raised without fathers engage in sexual intercourse from an earlier age due to lack of monitoring and discipline by single parents who are overwhelmed by job demands and family responsibilities. It would appear that absent fatherhood has a significant impact on young adults' lives, as promiscuous behaviour and early sexual involvement have potential health risks and could also result in teenage pregnancy.

It is evident from the findings of the present study that absent fatherhood impacts on the wellbeing of young adults in various ways, and also impacts on young adults' psychosocial wellbeing. It therefore becomes noticeable that some people are able to deal appropriately with absent fatherhood, despite the challenges they face. In addition, some young adults are able to be successful in life, as they reported to have had other support systems. However, others had negative experiences, including feelings of anger or developing an inferiority complex, as well as not being able to choose appropriate career paths due to the lack of a strong support system resulting from absent fatherhood.

5.3 How has absent fatherhood impacted the family unit?

The majority of participants reported that absent fatherhood negatively impacted on their financial situation at home. These respondents felt that if the father were present and able to assist the mother to take care of the household needs, they would not have struggled financially and their financial situation would have been better, as two salaries would have made a significant difference.

These findings concur with Kimani and Kombo's (2010) findings, whose study titled "Challenges facing nuclear families with absent fathers" found that absent fatherhood has a socio-economic impact on the family unit as a result of the loss of income from another caregiver. This is because the remaining single caregiver may be unemployed. In other cases, she may struggle to meet the basic needs (Whitehead & Holland, 2003). It is also argued that absent father homes are prone to poverty due to the loss of income or insufficient income of the single caregiver who may not be able to support the entire family on one income (Kids Count, 2009).

However, some respondents experienced absent fatherhood differently. These respondents indicated that the absence of the father impacted positively on the family unit, as the present father would spend his money recklessly and abuse alcohol. In support of this viewpoint, Eddy and Holborn (2011) also argued that in the South African context, when fathers are absent from the family, the family is likely to get financial benefits in the form of child maintenance. Mavungu et al. (2013) concurred and explained that absent father homes tend to have enough financial advancement due to the fact that in most cases the law tends to be harsh on absent fathers, resulting in the absent father getting very little from his salary, as most of it is awarded to his children in the form of maintenance.

From these findings it is clear that absent fatherhood impacts on the family's financial state in two ways: negatively and positively, as some reported financial loss due to the single mother having to care for the family's financial needs alone. However, some family units were not really impacted negatively as some single mothers were able to provide for the financial needs of their children by themselves.

Apart from the socio-economic status, family conflicts were reported to be some of the impacts of absent fatherhood in a family unit, as perceived by the respondents. The respondents also indicated that they experienced conflicts between family members resulting from unanswered questions about their absent fathers. They also responded that the conflicts sometimes resulted because the single mother favoured some siblings at the expense of the others, as well as due to the children's inability to deal with the loss of their father. In support, Demuth and Brown (2004) pointed out that absent fatherhood brings about conflicts in the family in the sense that children tend to be angry at each other or towards their single mother, assuming that she is responsible for their father's absence. Indeed, Guajardo et al. (2009) and Kimani and Kombo (2010) maintained that at times children or young adults would have disagreements with their single mother, whom they suspected of being the driving force behind their father's failure to reunite with them.

Research by MacCallum and Golombok (2004) also indicated that families without fathers are likely to experience conflicts, as these young adults tend to quarrel with their mother because most single mothers avoid talking about their break-ups with the fathers of their children. Guajardo et al. (2009), on the other hand, pointed out that the fatherless children oftentimes may feel that their mother pays too much attention to some siblings, as she sometimes is unable to bond with all of them at once; therefore, children would fight with each other, assuming that some were mom's favourite. However, it is also argued that when there is no father figure at home, life becomes easy and family members are happier as there are no fights or conflicts between the parents. When a mother and father fight, the entire family is affected (Richter, 2006). Cabrera et al. (2008) concurred. Richter (2006) found that lack of a father in the household brings about freedom in the sense that the single mother herself knows the expected needs of the home and knows how to undertake them without having to consider the father's opinions. Furthermore, even the children themselves become free in the sense that when they need something from their mother, they get it quicker, provided that the mother is able to do so, without having to negotiate with the father (Makofane, 2015).

From these findings, it appears that absent fatherhood impacts the family unit in so far as there are constant conflicts amongst the children and between the children and the single mother. Seemingly, if the father had been present in the children's lives, they would not have had conflicts amongst each other or with their mother, as the father would have been the support structure or the source of protocol that sets standards at home.

However, in the family unit, some respondents are forced to grow up with one parent, forcing the young adults to assume parental roles prematurely, in an effort to support their mother. These young adults reported that parental roles were not directly communicated; however, the respondents felt obliged, considering the situation at home. Some even had to work from an early age in order to supplement family income, while some had to rely on educational loans or bursaries in order to survive academically. Some of the parental roles included making sure that the other siblings were behaving in morally acceptable ways. The results correlate with those of Hendricks et al. (2005), who also found that when there is absent fatherhood in the family, young adults are often forced to take their mother's roles while the mother steps into the father's shoes. Shefer and Clowes (2012) also found that some children brought up in absent fatherhood homes appear to be deprived of a normal childhood due to the absence of the father figure, as the children to take on parenting roles from an early age. White (2017) explained that as the mother would return from work too tired, the children were driven to serve her. Shenk et al. (2013) concur and added that the unstable environment compels young adults to take on adult roles before they are ready to take on those responsibilities, instead of enjoying the perks of childhood. Boundless (2016) reported that these roles include accompanying other siblings to the sports grounds, and having to work at a young age, to help the struggling mother.

From these findings, it is evident that absent fatherhood affects the family unit in a negative way, as children have to take care of each other, either emotionally or physically. This results from the limited space available for the single mother to fulfil such roles. On the other hand, these children are sometimes driven to assume roles such as having to work at a young age, in order to help the struggling mother.

Furthermore, some respondents indicated that they would not look for their fathers, as they no longer saw any value in their fathers' presence in their lives, especially as they are grown up. Some indicated that they would not search for their fathers, as they felt that fathers should be the ones taking the initiative to reach out to their children. Moreover, some reported that they would not search for their fathers but would forgive them if they returned. However, one participant responded by stating that searching for his/her father was not an option, as he/she feared rejection from the absent father.

According to Cassandra (2011), a documentary film was released, which indicated that some young adults are born through sperm donation. As a result, such children would not know who their fathers were. Nduna et al. (2011) concurred that most young adults are looking for their lost fathers through any possible medium, as culturally it is believed that a child needs to meet his or her biological father in order for them to be connected with the ancestors. It is believed that by so doing, young adults are then able to succeed in life. These young adults will therefore search for their identities. In so doing, they hope to eventually find out who their fathers are (Inniss, 2013). According to Dickerson (2014), young adults brought up in absent fatherhood homes are reported to experience pain, longing and uncertainties. Dickerson further added that when children grow up in the absence of their fathers, they feel lost. This results in them searching for their biological fathers. Wilhelm (2014), on the other hand, maintained that when children search for their fathers, mothers become frustrated, as these fathers might have rejected the pregnancy of the same child, and they might also be married to another woman. Nevertheless, Smith, et al. (2014) pointed out that in most cases, the search for the young adults' fathers does not necessarily mean that these young adults want to live with their absent fathers in the same households, but are merely seeking cultural connections from them.

From these findings, it can be said that young adults do not often search for their lost fathers. However, in cases where they do, they do it only for spiritual connectivity and identities, rather than other benefits. Moreover, their search for their fathers may in one way or another affect their single mother, who in turn has to deal with the whole process of searching.

One of the important aspects of the findings relating to the family unit, is the issue of attachment. The majority of respondents reported that absent fatherhood gave rise to attachment in their homes. They became united and attached to one another in an attempt to create a happy and complete family. They further reported that their single mother was better able to bond with her children, as she considered them to be the only people left in her life.

The results correlate with Lamb (2004), who suggested that children from absent fatherhood households tend to develop secure attachments with their single mothers due to the emotional and physical availability of the mother who tries to compensate for the missing parent. In support of these findings, Armstrong (2015) and MacCallum and Golombok (2004) also found that single mothers prioritise quality time with their children. Furthermore, they were dependable and available for their children's immediate needs. Monama (2011) supported this, adding that children from absent fatherhood homes receive more warmth and interaction than their counterparts who have father figures. This is because some fathers compete with their children for the mother's attention.

In contrast, some reported that their single mothers were detached from them, as these mothers were almost always busy and often preoccupied with providing for the children, by working overtime. As a result, she would come back from work too tired, with a limited space to have quality time with her children. These findings correlated with Mabusela's (2014) suggestions, which disputed the claims that absent fatherhood families are likely to be detached from one another as the mother would sometimes have to work overtime, in order to be able to provide for her children. Therefore, she is less likely to spend sufficient time with her children. Morwe et al. (2015) also reported that the mother becomes detached, she might only be able to spend time with her children when she comes back from work, and sometimes she would come home late at night and the children would be asleep. Therefore, they would not spend enough time together.

These findings state clearly that absent fatherhood may result in members of the family becoming more attached or detached from one another and the single mother, depending on the amount of time the single mother spends with her children.

In addition to attachment in the family unit, some respondents felt that absent fatherhood had disorganised their family units. They also reported that they always behaved in morally unacceptable ways, as they had no one to look after them when the mother was physically and emotionally absent. Moreover, they felt they had to make decisions that affected the entire family, which they would not to make if the father were present to support them. Moreover, the respondents reported to have experienced instability in their homes due to absent fatherhood. Some single mothers would take advantage of the children by coming home late.

These findings correlate with those of Osborne and McLanahan (2007), who asserted that absent fatherhood places family units in jeopardy, in the sense that the family structure has to change. For instance, if there is a male sibling in the family, he has to take the father's role in an attempt to help the mother establish a warm and loving family. Tillman (2007) also pointed out that absent fatherhood does affect family units negatively, in the sense that when there is no father in the house, chances of misbehaviour are high and the children are likely to lack discipline. Tillman added that no matter how hard a single mother may try to discipline her children, the father is needed to help groom the children. Smith et al. (2014) also attested that single mothers may be working daily, with insufficient time and space to monitor and supervise the children's behaviour; as a result, the children may misbehave without her noticing it. Likewise, Kimani and Kombo (2010) gave an account that when there is a lack of solid attachment between the children and their mother due to her daily commitments, as she attempts to fulfil both parental roles, the family gradually becomes disorganised.

In their study on "Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing" Waldfogel et al. (2010) found that absent fatherhood places a family unit in jeopardy as the single mother has to play many roles which are meant to be fulfilled by the father, such as training a boy to play sports. A study carried out in South Africa by Morwe et al. (2015) also found that absent fatherhood impacts the family unit negatively, as the single mother has to work full-time and sometimes she is forced to take any kind of job in an attempt to meet the children's basic needs. As these single mothers are sometimes forced to work overtime resulting in limited time to physically bond with their children, the family unit becomes disorganised dramatically without the mother noticing it (Schwarzwalder, 2014).

From these findings it is clear that absent fatherhood negatively impacts the family unit, as young adults become less disciplined due to the unavailability of the single mother, who has to take care of all household needs. Therefore, in her absence the family unit becomes unstable and disorganised, as young adults do as they please.

Apart from the other impacts of absent fatherhood in the family unit, some respondents reported that absent fatherhood drove them to Christianity. They also indicated that they relied on God, whom they perceived to be the only father who cares for them. They felt that God is the only father that provides guidance in times of hardships. Furthermore, some reported that they engaged in cultural practices, despite their fathers' unavailability to take the lead in those cultural rituals. Additionally, they reported that they put their faith in both God and cultural practices, as a means to find comfort in their families. However, others wished their fathers had participated in their cultural practices.

The findings correlate with Petts's (2007), which showed that families that have no father figure adopt religious behaviours, in an attempt to replace the absent father with God. Petts (2007) added that these young adults believe that God is their only father and is the only person they should hold on to. Abrams et al. (2007) added that families that are without father figures are likely to commit themselves to religion, particularly Christianity, as they believe that God Almighty will guide and sustain them. These families put their faith in God, as they see Him as a father and a protector. Roby et al. (2009) concurred and indicated that families with absent fathers tend to become more religious than others. Therefore, they participate in religious activities, as they strive to find a new family within the specific religion (Roby et al., 2009).

On the contrary, some indicated that they experienced cultural isolation in the family emanating from the lack leadership, a role usually performed by the father. They further indicated that there are certain cultural practices that require the father to take the lead. However, some reported to have found other significant others to take the place of their absent fathers in leading the cultural practices. These findings are supported by various studies (Eddy & Holborn, 2011; Makusha & Richter, 2015; Monama, 2011). These studies

contended that absent fatherhood homes are less able to engage in religion or cultural practices, such as traditional rituals, as traditional rituals are usually performed and led by fathers in the family.

Therefore, families may gradually neglect their cultural practices due to lack of cultural leaders who are presumed to be the fathers. It is further argued that families without father figures are likely to deviate from cultural practices. These families tend to undermine cultural practices, as the father is the one who introduces traditional practices to the entire family. Therefore, when the father is absent, no one else is keen to take the lead in those practices (Dobbs, 2014). From the findings of the present study, religion and cultural practices have been shown to result from absent fatherhood, as a way of finding a lost father, while on the other hand cultural practices seem to have been neglected due to the absence of a leader, a role usually ascribed to the father, who in this case is absent.

On the other hand, some respondents felt that criminals viewed them as targets following on assaults or burglaries at their homes. Furthermore, the young adults reported to have been assaulted at their homes as a result of not having a father present. They felt that if their fathers had been around, the criminals would not have taken advantage of them, as they perceived the father to be a source of security in the family. In contrast, some of the respondents reported not having experienced any crime or assaults as a result of father absence; they further indicated that they were not assaulted or mugged because criminals target those who are resourceful.

These findings correlate with those of McLeod and Kaiser (2004), who found that absent fatherhood families are targets of crime and violence, the assault taking the form of rape, robbery, murder and so forth. Hübner et al. (2009) concurred that these kinds of families are targets for criminal offences, as perpetrators assume they can get away with the crime because the head of the family is absent. Correspondingly, Eddy and Holborn (2011) asserted that absent fatherhood homes almost always become victims of their communities because they are taken for granted. As a matter of fact, when a criminal contemplates a criminal act, the first targets that come to mind are homes with absent fatherhood, as the criminals believe that safety is lacking in such homes. In addition, Demuth and Brown (2004) maintained that

when criminals engage in criminal activities, they often rope in someone from absent fatherhood family, by threatening them. This is because absent fatherhood homes are perceived as minority groups in some societies. In addition to assault, McCarthy and Bonhoeffer (2015) indicated that families that have no father figures also tend to be prime suspects of crime. This is mainly because communities or neighbourhoods tend to depict fatherless families as consisting of undisciplined children or young adults as a result of absent fatherhood.

It would appear that absent fatherhood homes are taken for granted by society and criminals, due to the lack of a father figure in the house, who is perceived to be a source of a protection. In addition, it would seem evident that children or young adults do not only long for the emotional or financial presence of their absent fathers but also their physical proximity to protect them and their homes.

Lastly, the respondents reported that absent fatherhood has resulted in them having multiple surnames in the family unit. Some reported that they sought their father's surname despite the fact that he was away. The reason for this was the need for a paternal surname, which was seen as a means of identifying themselves with the fathers or to build a legacy from the surname. Some indicated that they used one surname at home, despite their fathers' absence; this one surname was their mothers'.

The findings concur with those of Osborne and McLanahan (2007), who found that some young adults from absent fatherhood homes have multiple or different surnames; the reason for this is that when the father disappears, a young adult may change his or her father's surname resulting from feelings of anger emanating from being abandoned. Guajardo et al. (2009) concur with this, adding that these young adults often found themselves using different surnames within the household. This is because when the father walks out on the family, the mother may marry another man and change her surname, along with her children. Consequently, when the mother falls pregnant from her new husband, she might opt to give the children her new surname; thus, eventually, every child would take his or her father's surname, while living in the same household (Mavungu et al., 2013). In contrast, Smith et al. (2014) indicated that young adults, particularly males, tend to take their fathers' surname, as

culturally it is believed that a boy has to carry his father's surname, for him to be able to perform certain cultural roles and pass on the surname to his children, as part of paternal legacy.

5.4 Conclusion

The findings of the study were discussed in relation to the objectives of the research study. Where possible the results were linked to previous studies. The results indicate that the subjective experience of being raised without a father can be either difficult or manageable, depending on whether the children or young adults have role models and/or a support structure to help mould them, and a single mother who is able to care for the children both financially and emotionally. The results also indicate that absent fatherhood impacts on the individual's psychosocial wellbeing in various ways. For some, it impacted on the way they perceived themselves and the world, including how they form and maintain their relationships with their significant others. For some it affected them positively, as it moulded them to become responsible beings and take ownership of their lives at an early age. The results further indicate that absent fatherhood affects the family unit by obliging children to become parents at an early age, as they tended to assume parental roles in attempt to help their single mothers. Surprisingly, for others, absent fatherhood was considered an advantage as most families were able to attach to one another, as a way of achieving a warm and complete family unit. Depending on the financial status of the family, absent fatherhood may be construed as detrimental to growth or enhancing growth for those experiencing it. Conclusively, absent fatherhood has various impacts on the individual's wellbeing in the family unit. The next chapter presents the limitations, recommendations and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONSAND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of the findings

The findings of this study highlight the effects of being raised without a father, which can have both negative and positive effects on the children being raised in single parent households. On the negative side, children experience a ripple effect in terms of their psychosocial wellbeing, where their sense of worth is affected. Reportedly, these children experience dysphoric feelings, which are then internalised and identified as a 'bad object'. Identification with the bad object elicits these dysphoric feelings to the point of isolation and inability to connect with significant others, as a way of protecting the self from further harm. Depending on the individual's emotional attachment with the single parent raising the child, others are able to manage the father's absence well, drawing from available resources in the form of extended family members like uncles, or other positive role models in the community, for example pastors, who fulfilled the absent father's role. This then highlights the significant role that extended family members play in the upbringing of any child, reinforcing the African expression that 'it takes a village to raise the child'. Thus, children who had substitutes and/or role models were better able to manage the void created by the absent father, as these role models or substitutes were able to fulfil fatherhood roles in the children's lives.

The results of this study also revealed that father absence can have positive effects because it compels these children to accept responsibility from a young age and motivate them to achieve in life. This highlights the important role of appraisal, where the individual decides to look at what they have instead of focusing on what is lacking. Appreciating the efforts of the involved parent seems to motivate some of these young adults to dream big, by focusing on what is possible rather than being demotivated by what should have been. These findings correlate with other studies that emphasise that not all children raised in single parent homes are doomed for failure.

The study further established that some single mothers are able to instil good values that prepare their children for independence, to face the world despite dire circumstances. In these instances the importance of support groups for single mothers becomes pivotal, whether it be

financial, social or emotional, to ensure some form of stability in these single-parent-headed households. Furthermore, it became apparent that father absence has significant financial implications for the family unit. The missing source of income appears to limit access to certain resources for the children raised in these family settings. The collaboration between parents irrespective of dynamics in their relationship becomes significant for the benefit of their children.

6.2 Limitations

Due to the sensitivity of the study, the obtained sample was small; only 11 respondents from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Pietermaritzburg campus were willing to participate. The results of the study cannot, therefore, be generalised to the whole population of students raised in single-parent households. Furthermore, as the participants were university students, the findings may not be a good representation of the experiences of young adults who have never been to a tertiary institution. Future studies can improve on this limitation by using a larger sample. Such a sample could vary in terms of social class, gender, race and social context. This would address the issue of transferability to a larger scale.

Lastly, the use of interviews to collect the data may have some limitations, placing emphasis only on the subjective experiences while neglecting the objective facts around fatherhood and father absence. Furthermore, interviews may be less dependable, as each respondent may present unique experiences during data collection. As a result, consistency may possibly be difficult to accomplish. Therefore, future studies can address this by using other data collection methods that address the issue of reliability.

6.3 Recommendations

The findings of this study have highlighted that young adults brought up in the absence of their fathers experience difficulties in various areas of functioning; namely, emotional, psychological, and academic. Future studies need to look at interventions that may be available to assist these vulnerable children and optimise their potential. This study also focused on students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. It would be beneficial to interview students from other institutions, in order to compare their experiences and how they are

impacted by the concept. Looking at different cultures and social standing, future studies might reveal variations in terms of contexts. These findings may also assist in the development of supportive structures for children who come from absent father homes.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to find out what the premorbid functioning of these families was, in order to ascertain to what extent the change in parenting affected the family unit as a whole.

Previous studies have shown the importance of role models for the youth, especially those from absent father homes. The current study concurs with this finding. Future studies can also look at the impact of role models as support structures in the upbringing of children from absent father homes.

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APPENDIX 1: UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL'S GATEKEEPERS LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

26 May 2016

Ms Ramadimetje Gladys Tau (SN 210525026)
School of Applied Human Sciences
College of Humanities
Pietermartizburg Campus
UKZN
Email: gladiestau@gmail.com

Dear Ms Tau

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"The perceived impact of absent fatherhood: An exploration of young adult's experiences of father absence".

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting interviews with students aged between 18 to 25 years, raised without fathers, on the Pietermaritzburg campus.

Please ensure that the following appears on your questionnaire/attached to your notice:
- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely
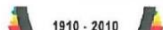
MR SS MOKOENA
REGISTRAR

Office of the Registrar
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 8005/2206 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 7824/2204 Email: registrar@ukzn.ac.za
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APPENDIX 2: ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL ™

INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

2 August 2016

Ms RG Tau 210525026
School of Applied Human Sciences
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Tau

Protocol reference number: HSS/1039/016M
Project Title: The perceived impact of absent fatherhood: An exploration of young adult's experiences of father absence

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 11 July 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Ms Mphambo Nondumiso
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor D Wassenaar
Cc School Administrator: Ms Nondumiso Khanyile

APPENDIX 3: STUDY ADVERT

WE WANT TO TALK ABOUT FATHER ABSENCE.

Would you be interested in participating in a discussion about father absence? Are you being without a father and a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and aged 18 to 25 years?

I am looking for young adults who are being raised without fathers to take part in a study

"*The perceived impact of absent fatherhood: An exploration of young adults' experiences of father absence.*"

I will be conducting individual interviews to discuss absent fatherhood.

If you are interested in participating in this study or would like more information, please contact the researcher by email, sms or please call me.

Email: fatherabsence89@gmail.com or Call: 078 884 3490

fatherabsence89@gmail.com	fatherabsence89@gmail.com	fatherabsence89@gmail.com	fatherabsence89@gmail.com	fatherabsence89@gmail.com	fatherabsence89@gmail.com	fatherabsence89@gmail.com	fatherabsence89@gmail.com

APPENDIX 4: CONSENT LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL
For research with human participants

INFORMED CONSENT RESOURCE TEMPLATE

<u>Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research</u>

Date: March 2016

To Whom It May Concern

My name is Tau Ramadimetje Gladys from the Department of Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am a student enrolled for the Masters in Social Sciences (Research Psychology) degree. My contact details are gladiestau@gmail.com or 07888 43490.

You are being invited to participating in research titled, "The perceived impact of absent fatherhood: An exploration of young adults' experiences of father absence." The aim and purpose of this research is to explore the subjective experience of young adults raised by single caregivers. It also seeks to explore how these young adults perceive the impact of absent fatherhood in their upbringing. The study is expected to enroll twelve (11) participants at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. It will involve interviews with no wrong and right answers. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be 25 to 30 minutes. There will be no payment for participation.

The study may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: when answering the question, "what is the subjective experience of being raised without a father"? may upset or bring about

emotions such as anger or pain to some participants. If that happens, the researcher will refer you to Child and Family Centre for therapy should be any need. The study will provide no direct benefits to the participants; however, it may help other young adults to learn more about these effects, so that they may be better able to deal with them appropriately. In addition, the study will enlighten every young man or absent father to realize the importance of being present in his child's upbringing. This study hopes to find the effects of absent fatherhood on the psycho-social well-being of young adults.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number: HSS/1039/016M).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at gladiestau@gmail.com or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You have the right to refuse to take part in this study. However, I would appreciate it very much if you would share your thoughts with me. If you choose to participate, you may still quit at any time and there will be no penalty for doing so. In addition, you will not be judged in any way for discontinuing.

There will be no consequences for participants for taking part; however, the researcher may choose to terminate your participation from the study if you do not cooperate.

The study has no payment for taking part and participants will not be paid for participating in the study.

I will not record your name and the information you provide will remain confidential. I will make use of false names or numbers to represent the names of participants. The information you provide will be kept for future research purposes. Finally, the information will be stored in a secure location for a period of five years, after which it will be destroyed.

CONSENT FORM

I have been informed about the study entitled "The perceived impact of absent fatherhood: An exploration of young adults' experiences of father absence" by Tau Ramadimetje Gladys.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study "The perceived impact of absent fatherhood: An exploration of young adults' experiences of father absence."

I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed that there are no incentives. Furthermore, there is psychological intervention, should psychological distress occur to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher at gladiestau@gmail.com .

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers, I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Video-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Use of my photographs for research purposes   YES / NO

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Witness   Date

(Where applicable)

_____   _____

Signature of Translator   Date

(Where applicable)

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

Interview Guiding/Prompting Questions

- Please briefly tell me about yourself?
- Were you raised by a single mother?
    - Do you have any siblings and how many are they?
    - Who provides for you in the family?
    - Is your father involved in your life?
    - If yes, how so (financially, emotionally)
    - What led to your father not living with you?

- Tell me about your experience of growing up without a father?
    - Is it easy or difficult? Please explain, giving examples
    - How did you take the experience of growing up without your father?
    - What challenges have you faced growing up without a father?
    - How are dealing or how did you deal with those challenges?
    - What coping mechanisms do you use to deal with challenges?
    - What stands out as one challenge that you had to deal with growing up without a father?
    - Is there any significant event that you can relate that had a major impact in your life?

- How has father absence affected you?
    - Are there any experiences that you can remember that were significant? Please tell me more about them.
    - Psychologically or emotionally how have you been affected?
    - Is there any bad behaviour or tendencies that you believe can be attributed to father absence?
    - Who do you turn to for emotional comfort?
    - How is your relationship with other people?
    - Was it painful growing up without your father?
    - If yes, what are the things that you engaged in as a coping mechanism?
    - Did they make things better or worse?
    - What are your feelings towards your father?
    - How has the experience of absent father affected your sense of worth?
    - Some people growing up in absent fathered homes tend to engage in early sexual activities; how was your experience?
    - How long did your relationships with lovers last?
    - Have you had any stable relationship?

- Tell me about how your father's absence affected the financial situation at home?
    - Who was the bread winner at home?
    - Was your father supporting you financially?
    - Do you think the economic status would have been different if your father was around?
    - What are the things you had to miss out on as a result of his absence?
    - Is there any family role you had to take up as a result of your father's absence?

- Is there anything you would like to share with us that you think is important?

APPENDIX 6: CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRE LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF ^TMI
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

25 July 2016

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to provide the assurance that should any participant interviewed by Ms Tau Ramadimetje Gladys, (Psychology Masters student) require psychological assistance as a result of any distress arising from the research project on *"The perceived impact of absent fatherhood: An exploration of young adults experiences of father absence"*, the service will be provided by Masters one Psychology students and intern psychologists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus Child and Family Centre – phone 033-2605166.

Yours sincerely,

K.P Maruping
Coordinator of University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus Child and Family Centre

Child and Family Centre
School of Applied Human Sciences

Postal Address: Private Bag X01, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg, 3209, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)33 260 5166   **Facsimile:** +27 (0)33 260 5809   **Email:** Naidoon2@ukzn.ac.za   **Website:** psychology.ukzn.ac.za

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APPENDIX 7: TURNITIN REPORT

turnitin

Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author:	Gladys Tau
Assignment title:	Community project report psyc622
Submission title:	father absence
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