



“Lived experiences of young adults who grew up without their biological fathers”

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Declaration

I, Eunice Boniswa Mulambo declare that:

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all South African young adults whose fathers were absent when they were growing up.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to the heavenly father who has not only enabled me to complete this dissertation but has also sustained me throughout my studies.

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of young adults who grew up with absent fathers. Previous studies had shown that the absence of fathers had an impact on the lived experiences of most children. This study therefore aimed to explore beyond childhood experiences. The theoretical framework for the study was the Attachment theory. Semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted via Zoom due to COVID-19 regulations on gatherings with six young adults from the Ekurhuleni Municipality in Gauteng, South Africa to explore their lived experiences of growing up without their biological fathers. The interviews were recorded and then analysed using thematic analysis. The findings from the study showed that the absence of the father had both negative and positive impacts on young adults. Also, there were various reasons why their fathers were not present in their lives. The research findings have revealed that the absence of fathers in their children's lives affects their behavioural and emotional well-being, as well as social aspects not only in childhood, however even in early adulthood. The research concludes that the lived experiences of the young adults were directly and indirectly shaped by their father's absence.

Keywords: Decolonised African feminist, experience, young adults, father absence, identity, academic performance, relationships, support, resilience, impact.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and background to the study

Over the last few decades' fathers have become an increasing presence in research, yet research on fathers still lags behind that on mothers, consequently there is still too much to learn about fathers (Cabrera,2020). The absent father issue is a worldwide phenomenon and is a common feature in most societies. This has resulted in studies being conducted investigating the nature and extent of this issue. Such studies have been conducted across the world and have produced varying results that have helped enhance our understanding of this issue.

Richter et al. (2012) noted that 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 dynamics of the family in terms of structure, roles, relationships and the family's economic circumstances. This plays an instrumental role in shaping the experiences of the young adults who would have grown in such an environment. Hall & Sambu (2019) observed that growing up with absent fathers raises the question of 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.

Langa (2020) highlighted that absent fatherhood has become a thorn in the flesh in most South African communities. This has largely contributed to some of the societal ills affecting the country. Father absence has been reported to cause psychological problems in the lives of young adults. 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). It has become clear that additional research is necessary in order to fully understand the absent fatherhood problem, considering that nearly a third of South African children grow up without their fathers as revealed by the South African Institute of Race Relations (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). According to Statistics South Africa's (StatsSA) General Household Survey (2018), 43.1% of children lived with their mothers, while 3.3% of children lived

only with their fathers. Furthermore, a report released by StatsSA in 2021 revealed that most children living in South Africa were likely to grow up without their biological fathers.

The current study aims to explore the lived experiences of young adults who grew up in a South African township without their fathers. There is little research on the lived experiences of young adults who grew up with absent fathers, as well as their perceptions of how growing up without a father affected their careers, romantic relationships, and other life decisions, although prior studies have increased our understanding of the psychological and social challenges that absentee fathers face.

1.2 Problem statement

As noted before the absent father's phenomenon is a global one and South Africa has not been spared. Langa (2020) highlighted that absent fatherhood has become a thorn in the flesh in most South African communities. Several factors have been unearthed that contribute to absent fathers, according to Statistics South Africa's 2019 Report, divorce has become more frequent in South Africa, making it more typical for children to grow up without their fathers. This has largely contributed to some of the societal ills affecting the country such as high teenage pregnancy, crime as well as substance abuse (Langa, 2020). Father absence has been reported to cause psychological problems in the lives of young adults. 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). It has become clear that additional research is necessary in order to fully understand the absent fatherhood problem, considering that nearly a third of South African children grow up without their fathers as revealed by the South African Institute of Race Relations (Holborn & Eddy, 2011).

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Most research studies (Mather, 2010; Holborn and Eddy, 2011) have focused on the negative implications of absent fathers in children's lives. However, other factors such as resilience and fatherhood outside biological relations have largely been ignored. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore various factors, negative and positive, that shape different experiences of young adults who grew up without their fathers. Thus, numerous factors that contribute to the absent fatherhood problem as well as its impacts will be carefully researched and analyzed in order to understand this phenomenon.

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to understand and investigate the experiences of young adults who grew up without their fathers.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The current study had the following objectives:

1. To explore some of the possible reasons why some fathers are absent in their children's lives.
2. To explore the social, economic and emotional impact of growing up without a father.
3. To explore available sources of support for the young adults who grew up without their fathers.

4. To explore behaviors associated with growing up with absent fathers.

1.5 Research questions

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

1. How do young adults feel about their experiences of growing up without their biological fathers?
2. What are the psychological, social, and economic effects of growing up without a biological father?
3. What are the protective factors (resilience) that assist children to become successful adults despite the odds?

1.6 Significance of the study

There are many research studies such as the one conducted by Nduna and Sikweyiya in 2013 that were conducted about absent fathers. However, most of these studies were conducted in other countries, and little research exists in the South African context. Moreover, these studies like the one conducted by Budlender and Lund (2011) have particularly focused on the impact of absent fatherhood in childhood and not much was covered in adulthood. Also, the research studies have not focused on the lived experiences of having an absent father. This is the gap that this study intends to fill within the South African context, where a father may mean any male figure in the extended family such as uncles, brothers, and grandfathers (Denis & Ntsimane, 2006, Nduna & Sikweyiya. 2013). Therefore, this research explores the lived experiences of these young adults who grew up without their “biological” fathers. The significance is that the study will contribute to the limited body of knowledge when it comes to the South Africa context in terms of absent fatherhood.

1.7 Organisation of the dissertation

Chapter 1: This chapter provided a general introduction and orientation to the study. The chapter further included the problem statement, the goal, objectives and research questions of the study, and the key concepts of the research study.

Chapter 2: This chapter contextualised the experiences of young adults who were not raised by their biological parents to further understand its impact in children's lives and also to comprehend other factors that might have contributed to different experiences. A theoretical framework for this study was also introduced and discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3: This chapter comprehensively captured the data collection process that was followed to complete the study. Ethical considerations also were fully discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4: This chapter provided the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the empirical research findings of the study.

Chapter 5: This chapter comprehensively discussed the key findings of this study. The findings were discussed in the context of relevant literature and the theoretical framework.

Chapter 6: The conclusions, limitations and recommendations of the study were explored in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the views of other researchers concerning the lived experiences of young adults who grew up without their biological fathers. Literature review 'attempts to establish a broad, all-encompassing foundation for the study's objectives. The chapter provides a survey of the literature on the issue of missing fathers from the South African viewpoint and across the world. The chapter will explain the absence fatherhood phenomenon as well as the theoretical underpinning of the current study.

2.2 The absent fatherhood phenomenon

The phenomenon of absent fatherhood is a broad and multifaceted concept. It can be defined in a variety of ways, and Hawkin (2015), define absent fatherhood as the absence of the male parent, whether physically, emotionally, or financially. This is where the father fails to meet the child's basic physical and emotional needs and fails to have a positive influence on his children's lives. Furthermore, the father is uninvolved in the upbringing of the children and adds no emotional value to the family as a unit by viewing absent fatherhood as a concept in which the father is not physically present during the children's childhood and young adulthood (Langa, 2020). They also claimed that, while a young adult may If a child lives in the same household as his or her father and they do not have a good relationship, the father may be considered an absent father. Furthermore, absent fatherhood can be defined as a failure to invest financially in the child's care until the child is ready to be an adult.

Yogman and Eppel (2021) argued that fathers have a substantial influence on both their children's and family's health and development. They further state that twenty-first century fathers are more involved in caretaking of their children and see parenting as central to their identity. Their involvement right from birth is beneficial in so many ways. Father involvement can be formative and significant; it is associated with a decrease in the likelihood of risk behaviors in young adulthood if the parent-child relationship is strong. According to Segal (2010), absent

fatherhood refers to relationships in which the father lacks emotional connection and does not share responsibility for raising his children. Financial support is only one aspect of being present in a child's life; it does not encompass the entire concept of being present for all of the child's needs. It does not only refer to deceased parents, but also to those who are still alive but are not involved in their children's lives (Boothroyd & Perrett, 2006).

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). In South Africa, fathers' non-involvement in their children's upbringing appears to be on the rise and is gradually becoming the norm (Langa, 2020). Absent fatherhood appears to be an accepted trend in contemporary South Africa, owing to the growing number of single female-headed households. Poverty and high unemployment rates are the most prevalent contributory factors in the South African context, leading to a large number of fathers failing to take responsibility for their children (Makofane, 2015). Similarly, only a small percentage of current fathers' support and care for their children or young adults. However, the vast majority are absent (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2012).

Absent fatherhood is predisposed by factors such as the father's age, socioeconomic status, parental disapproval, or migration, according to the available literature (Makusha, 2013). Furthermore, absent fatherhood appears to be influenced by the nature of the mother-father relationship; for example, if the mother and father are fighting or divorced, the father may become reluctant to visit his children, depriving them of a quality relationship with him (Yogman & Eppel, 2021).

2.3 The reasons for father absence

2.3.1 Divorce and single-parent households

One of the reasons for fathers' absence in young adults' lives is divorce and single parent households. According to Statistics South Africa's 2019 General Household Survey, 21.3% of children aged 17 years and below did not live with their parents, which is nearly one-fifth of all children. These children later grow to be young adults as defined by Higley (2019). According to

the report, this is primarily due to parent divorce, which means that many children are raised by their mothers in the absence of their fathers. As Berk (2019) observes, about half of American marriages end in divorce and the majority of these divorces involve children. Therefore, as divorce rates are rising, many children are growing up in single-parent families, with most of these homes being headed by mothers (Wilson, 2014). Thus, the young adults grow up in such an environment in which their fathers are absent as a result of this.

Research suggests that the presence of a father in a household has some positive consequences generally. Berk (2019) noted that most families that had fathers who were present generally had children who were more behaved and acting in accordance with the law. As Biddulph (2018) emphasises, the majority of fathers cut off contact with their children as soon as they realise that they would not be married to their mothers any longer. According to Nduna and Sikweyiya (2015), young adults would start to show sad moods, decline in academic performance, grow violent, run away from home, and participate in early sexual experiences when one or more parents stop being actively involved in their lives.

2.3.2 Socio-economic cultural factors

Socio-economic and cultural factors also contribute to the absence of the fathers in the young adults' lives. Some of the contributing factors to absent fatherhood include fathers who migrate to urban areas for job opportunities, leaving their families behind (Makiwane, 2016). This may create a schism between fathers and their children (Budlender & Lund, 2011). Thus, rural-to-urban migrations also cause young adults to grow up without their fathers (Madhaven et al., 2008). Furthermore, the rapid increase in unemployment levels in South Africa has contributed to the absence of fathers, as some have been forced to look for employment abroad. As a result, the majority of men have been separated from their families in search of better economic opportunities (Mbiyozo, 2018). Furthermore, in most African countries, a man must pay lobola and so financial difficulties may further delay marriages, resulting in them not having the opportunity to be raised by their parents.

2.3.3 Migrant labour

Migrant labour has been identified as one of the factors contributing to absent fatherhood. Apartheid institutionalised migrant labour for the country's Black majority. Migrant labour is still a common form of labour in South Africa (Budlender, 2019), accounting for more than half of all rural workers. Thus, migrant labour has influenced and continues to influence parental involvement. Fathers and mothers are frequently absent from their homes in order to earn a living and provide for their families (Ramphela & Richter, 2010). Fathers are forced to live apart from their families for extended periods of time as a result of the migrant labour system. It also contributes to the decline in marriage rates, increased father absence due to abandonment, infidelity, and encourages multiple partnering. In most cases, husbands and wives live apart for eleven months of the year.

As a result of the prolonged separation, many males end up with two families: one with an urban woman who meets their immediate sexual needs and the other with a rural wife who keeps the rural home stable (Ramphela & Richter, 2006). Also, men frequently neglect their rural families because of the low wages they receive. Multiple sexual partners in turn raise the risk of HIV infection. The pandemic has a significant impact on the family structure, financial security, and the availability of extended family members to care for children and others, such as the elderly.

2.3.4 Inability to provide financially

Another factor contributing to father absence is the inability of fathers to financially support their families. Research has shown that one of the most common and significant causes of paternal absence in South Africa is the father's inability to financially support his family. Under the migratory labour system, Black men were typically employed in unskilled, seasonal, and low-paying jobs, resulting in insecure means of support, as well as extended periods of time without any kind of paid work (Jewkes & Morell, 2010). As a result, most Black African men found it difficult to define their masculinity through material or professional achievement (Jewkes & Morell, 2010). Some of these men have historically explored alternatives to the good provider role in order to gain respectability by staying in touch, spending time with children and providing in-kind

materials such as food or diapers, as well as connecting children to paternal relatives who can serve as resources.

According to Mkhize (2016), the provider role still takes precedence in the South African context. Contrary to the Western concept of fatherhood, which includes emotional support, Black fathers associate fatherhood with being able to provide financially for their families. In most cases, the absence of the father means that the majority of the children grow up without certain basic necessities. According to Mkhize (2016), the majority of children in most Black communities in South Africa who grew up with absent fathers reported some form of financial insecurity. Hence, since they are unable to provide for their children, some men may feel inadequate as fathers and they may decide to leave their families in order to avoid disgrace and shame. This is due to the changing social value of fatherhood which has become increasingly associated with a man's role as a provider (Eddy et al., 2013). However, not all young adults who grew up with absent fathers faced financial difficulties. Some women end up taking on the primary role of provider and ensure that their basic needs are always met.

2.3.5 Parental separation and divorce

Parental separation and divorce are two major reasons for fathers' absence from their young adult's lives. According to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), 60% of South African children have absent fathers, and more than 40% of South African mothers are single mothers. The significant increase in the number of single parent homes has resulted in a number of national policy initiatives aimed at strengthening the institution of marriage and encouraging the establishment and maintenance of two parent homes, as it is believed that this can improve child outcomes. Divorce rates have continued to rise globally since then. Divorce has been identified as a significant cause of father absence (Harper & Fine, 2017).

However, over the last 30 years, there has been an increase in the percentage of single mothers who have never married (Mather, 2010). According to StatsSA, many young adults (46%) lived with only their biological mother, while 2% lived with only their biological father. Hence, 42% of

divorced couples had children under the age of 18 years. Moreover, divorce in families with minor children frequently results in custody battles that are often settled in favour of the mother rather than the father, which may affect the level of father involvement. According to Harper and Fine (2017), the majority of separated or divorced fathers may struggle to establish their role as non-residential fathers. Harper and Fine (2017) further observed that the identity of divorced fathers is frequently linked to the relationship they previously had with the former spouse and children, posing difficulties in forming a new identity as a non-residential parent and honouring their responsibilities. This affects the children when they are young adults because they will not be able to experience first-hand the affection and care from their fathers regularly due to their absence.

2.3.6 Death

One of the causes of father absence has been identified as death. Since the turn of the millennium, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in South Africa, has resulted in an increase in mortality rates. HIV/AIDS rates in South Africa have continued to rise, leaving behind a generation of children who have lost their parents, caregivers, and other loved ones to the disease (Case & Ardington, 2006). In 2019, StatsSA reported that HIV was responsible for 4.8% of all deaths in the country, placing it among the top five causes of death.

In the literature on the South African family and its response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic lack of parental involvement may result from abandonment motivated by concerns about the disease's progression or from death caused by the illness. This could also apply to other serious illnesses such as cancer. Death has a significant impact on families. It may result in financial losses, as well as the loss of other sources of assistance (Nduna & Jewkes, 2012).

Recent studies in Sub-Saharan Africa suggest that children who have lost both parents are at risk of poor educational performance (Nduna & Jewkes (2012; Case & Ardington, 2019). Furthermore, it has been discovered that children whose fathers have died live in significantly less affluent households (Case & Ardington, 2019). Although many researchers have found a link

between children's well-being and parental death, Case and Ardington (2019) argued that determining whether parental death has a causal impact on young adult's outcomes is difficult because it is frequently unknown how well-off a child's household was or what level of education the child had attained prior to the parent's death (Case & Ardington, 2019).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has also led to the death of parents, which has resulted in father absence as well. The pandemic has claimed millions of lives worldwide and thousands in South Africa. It has destroyed families and left many children orphaned. Wang et al. (2020) noted that most young adults lost their fathers who were the main providers leaving them with their mothers to take care of them. This shows that death as a result of COVID-19 also contributed to the absence of fathers in some families.

2.3.7 Paternity

Another reason fathers may be absent is because of denied or unknown paternity. In South African literature, there are numerous reports on undisclosed paternity and subsequent absent fathers (Holborn, 2011). Sometimes the father is aware of the paternity but denies it because he does not want to take the responsibility of providing for a family and children (Chikovore & Makusha, 2010). Unknown paternal identity deprives children of their right to know both biological parents, while also affecting their legal status. Thus, it is critical to resolve paternal identity in order to avoid negative family relationships (Holborn, 2011).

There are several other reasons why fathers may contest their children's paternity (Richter et al., 2010). Men may believe that it is the woman's responsibility to prevent pregnancy, and that the pregnancy is the mother's way of tricking them into a more committed relationship or extorting money from them. As a result, the most common reason for paternity disputes is the father's distrust of the child's mother. The father's denial is motivated by concern for his own family. This is especially true for young fathers who may have to drop out of school to care for their child. As a result, when their fathers reject paternity, it is possible that fathers would be absent from their children's lives. This in turn affect them when they are young adults as they grow up without any

form of contact with their fathers and lack a sense of identity as a result.

2.4 The impact of father absence on young adults

The absence of the father has an effect on social development and emotional stability, which is an important factor in cognitive functionality. Richter et al. (2010) observed that young adult's inability to give and receive love, as a result of not having a father-child relationship, causes them pain. Gray and Anderson (2016) observe that absent fatherhood has a direct impact on socio-emotional and behavioural problems. Physical, mental health, social competence, later IQ, and other learning outcomes have been reported to be poorer in young adults whose fathers are not physically present and influential in their socio-educational growth when compared to children whose fathers are physically present and influential (Ward et al., 2015). As a result, although these young adults may not be vocal about their feelings of absent fatherhood, they may be affected greater than previously thought. The implications of absent fatherhood are likely to be seen even in adulthood where they can struggle with heterosexual relationships that can mean being absent in their own children's lives, struggles with independence, poverty and low self-esteem (Magqamgana & Bazana, 2020).

2.4.1 Social-emotional effects

Father absence can also have social and emotional consequences on the young adults. According to Hawkins (2015), the impact of absent fatherhood creates a sense of helplessness and leads to acceptance of one's circumstances, limiting young people's ability to become ambitious and resilient. Stress, sadness, anger, and loneliness, as well as depression and dishonesty, have been reported in some young adults from absent father households. When fathers are absent, children tend to 'overthink', wondering if their fathers love or care for them (Johnson, 2013). While fatherlessness has a negative impact on both adolescent boys and girls, a lack of an adult male role model may be more detrimental to boys' social and emotional development. Madhavan et al. (2012) observed a difference in emotional expression between boys and girls, which promotes emotional development in girls while discouraging it in boys. Hence, girls are taught to be reflective and expressive of their own and others' emotions. Boys,

on the other hand, are frequently denied emotional support and discouraged from expressing their feelings.

As a result, boys may be indifferent to the feelings of others at home and at school. The influence of their fathers can be traced back to the tendency of boys to demonstrate a lack of emotions. Citing a Boston University research study, Pollock (1998) observed that fathers' active involvement in their sons' lives resulted in less aggressive, less competitive, and more emotionally expressive behaviour, as well as the ability to convey vulnerability and sadness. In addition, boys with active, caring fathers did not feel the need to act out or show aggression in order to win their fathers' love and attention.

Cartwright and Henriksen (2012) believed that when the father is absent, young adults whilst still growing form strong relationships with their mothers, and that she is likely to teach them to stay focused, driven, and to believe in themselves. Makofane (2015) concurred with this observation, arguing that growing up without a father does not always result in low self-esteem, but that the type of relationship a young adult has with a primary caregiver influences their self-esteem. For example, if a single mother encourages and assures her child about how good and effective, she can be in life, the child is more likely to develop a high sense of self-worth.

2.4.2 Anger

Another effect of absent fatherhood is anger. Research has shown that young adults become angry or direct their rage at any male figure, assuming that all men are the same as their perceived abandoning father (Luo et al., 2011). It has been discovered that young adults raised in absent fatherhood homes are more likely to blame themselves or others for their fathers' perceived abandonment (Ramisur, 2017). These young adults are likely to believe that their fathers abandoned them because they were unsuitable. As a result, they tend to blame their mothers or significant others for their fathers' perceived abandonment.

According to Ramisur (2017), who supported the claim that another effect of father absence is anger, he noted that young adults who struggle to understand how little their fathers are involved

in their lives frequently blame their mothers. When this occurs, they allegedly blame themselves or any male, generalising that all men are like their allegedly absent father (Luo et al., 2011). Numerous studies have found that some young adults have difficulty controlling their emotions and become irrationally angry when they are with significant others, even over minor disagreements, because they believe their fathers do not want them (White, 2017). According to Sevim (2015), a study conducted by the South African NGO Fathers discovered that young adults from absent fatherhood homes are more likely to commit suicide and also experience emotional problems such as anger as a result of their fathers' rejection of them.

The father's perceived abandonment affects other relationships, for example, these young adults reportedly struggle with intimacy and maintaining stable relationships (Hawkins, 2015). Their inability to commit and paranoid preoccupations about their partners' infidelity are typical signs of abandonment issues (Makofane, 2015). Furthermore, these young adults would always suspect that their romantic partners are having extramarital affairs, even if they do not have tangible proof, demonstrating that they still have unresolved issues within themselves. These young adults would argue that they do not trust anyone because their fathers were good men before they vanished (Makofane, 2015). It appears that the absence of a father figure at home can have either positive or negative effects on the individual child.

2.4.3 Lack of identity

One of the consequences of absent fatherhood is lack of identity for the child young adult affected. This is especially true in cultures where children, particularly boys, are expected to take their father's surname. As a result, in order to comprehend fatherhood and what father absence entails, it is necessary to comprehend what the use of a paternal surname denotes (Nduna & Jewkes, 2011). Makofane (2015) noted that men are considered as the carriers of cultural heritage and identity, according to socio-cultural norms. Fathers are thus thought to be the primary contributors to their children's ethnic identity, and descendants of men are thus required to preserve ancestry by using their fathers' surname. The father and the use of his surname are associated with cultural identity. In such cases, the father's family must perform traditional rituals

for the young adults in order for them to be accepted into the family. As a result, the absence of fathers has a negative impact on the young adult because they may not perform all of the rituals or take their father's surname, resulting in them not having their proper identity as per cultural dictates (Makofane,2015).

2.5 Behavioural impact of father absence on young adults

This section of literature review will examine existing literature regarding the impact of father absence on behavior. Studies such the ones conducted by McCallum and Gambok in 2014 have discovered that the majority of young adults from absent fatherhood homes exhibit behavioural problems (MacCallum & Golombok, 2014), Behavioural issues manifest themselves in nearly every aspect of a young adult's life. This manifestation of behavioural problems in young adults has been attributed to the fact that a single mother may not have the time to monitor behaviour while dealing with issues of survival and providing for her children (MacCallum & Golombok, 2014). Since most single mothers work full-time to provide for their children, the overwhelming demands of work, combined with discipline issues, may leave children vulnerable to gaps in oversight and a lack of monitoring (MacCallum & Golombok, 2014).

According to Biblarz and Stacey (2010), a young adult does not need a father to be disciplined. However, an environment conducive to positive input is required, in which a single mother employs appropriate parenting techniques that encourage a child to develop a sense of morals. Furthermore, Makofane (2015) argued that while children may need fathers to look up to, absent fatherhood has no direct influence on children's behaviour because behaviour can be learned through modelling from a single mother. Hawkins (2015) agrees that the absence of father has no effect on children's behaviour but, primary caregivers, ostensibly single mothers, frequently influence how children behave in their daily lives as they nurture and monitor these children.

2.5.1 Drug and substance abuse

Drug and substance abuse has been identified as one of the consequences of absent fatherhood. Most young adults who grow up without their parents turn to drug and substance abuse.

Makofane (2015) discovered that teenagers with involved fathers are less likely to use drugs and engage in high-risk behaviour. The study also found that teenagers who spend time with their absent father have a lower risk of substance abuse than teenagers who do not see their fathers. Hence, father involvement was more important than father presence. Adolescents with more involved fathers who helped enforce rules were less likely to use drugs than adolescents with less involved fathers. Zirima's (2012) findings also emphasised the consequences of uninvolved fathers. They discovered that without an involved father, the youth were more likely to use substances. In fact, 75% of all adolescent patients in drug treatment centres came from fatherless homes. Children from single-parent households are more likely to drink and smoke, in addition to abusing drugs. Children raised by a single mother have a 32% higher risk of smoking, drinking, and using drugs than children raised by two parents (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012).

These findings concur with Demuth and Brown's (2004) view that fatherlessness is associated with alcohol or drug abuse, demonstrating that young adults raised 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 because their single mothers are likely to be committed to their jobs and have limited time to supervise them.

2.5.2 Child health and sexual activity

Research has shown that young adults in two-parent households are more likely to be healthy than those who grew up in single-parent households. Those raised by two parents have greater access to health care than children raised by a single parent (Gorman & Braverman, 2018). According to Gorman and Braverman (2018), children who grow up in fatherless homes are more likely to be obese when they become young adults. Furthermore, infant mortality rates are 1.8 times higher when the parents are unmarried, and father interaction predicts better infant health (Carr & Springer, 2010). A study conducted in the New Zealand and the United States with some young adults revealed that those who grew up with absent father were found to be associated with early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy (Barker & Kainz, 2018).

2.5.3 Promiscuous behavior

Another consequence of absent fatherhood is that young adults from such homes frequently engage in promiscuous behaviour during teenage hood and have teenage pregnancies. According to Dickerson (2014), many young adults from absent fatherhood homes are more likely to engage in sexual behaviors at a young age. Furthermore, they may become promiscuous in an attempt to seek emotional attachment from different partners in order to compensate for the absence of, yet desired, experience from their absent father. This is most common in females, who are attracted to various men unconsciously in search of a bond that their father failed to provide (Ellis et al., 2010). The younger females hope that these men would provide them with the security and assurance that their fathers did not provide. The alleged promiscuous behaviour raises the risk of teenage pregnancy, which is linked to the circle of absent fatherhood (Ellis et al., 2010). Furthermore, young male adults engage in risky pre-marital sexual activities, resulting in unplanned pregnancies, after which these young men fail to be involved in the upbringing of their children due to a lack of role modelling from their own fathers. Absent fatherhood appears to have a significant impact on the lives of young adults, as promiscuous behaviour and early sexual involvement have potential health risks in addition to teenage pregnancies.

2.5.4 Relationships

Mclanahan et al. (2018) noted that young adults from absent fatherhood homes have difficulty initiating and maintaining relationships. According to Ramisur (2017), most young adults from absent fatherhood homes struggle to form and maintain relationships with their peers. Among the key developmental tasks of adolescence and young adulthood is the ability to form a stable and fulfilling romantic relationship. This process involves the ability to balance intimacy and closeness with individuality and separateness and develops in a variety of relationship contexts, most notably in the relationships of adolescents with their parents (Scharf & Mayseless, 2018). Parent-child relationships are regarded as the primary context for learning how to form and maintain a romantic relationship. Children develop expectations and schemas of their relationship with each parent through these relationships, and they internalise a general model of close

relationships. As a result, young adults who grow up in an environment where this closeness is not fostered by having a relationship with either of their parents are likely to struggle to initiate and sustain relationships.

On the other hand, it has been established that young female adults raised in homes marked by absent fatherhood have a higher risk of divorce. This is because the absence of a male significant other in their childhood creates a rift between themselves and their male partners. As a result, these young adults struggle to cope with marriage demands, leading to divorce (Thupayagale-Tshweneagae et al., 2012).

2.6 Financial impact of father absence

Several studies found that absent fatherhood has a financial impact on the family because the family becomes reliant on the mother or another caregiver (McLanahan et al., 2018; Kimani & Kombo, 2010). The left-behind parent is usually unemployed, especially in low- and middle-income nations, and may struggle to support the child's basic necessities (Whitehead & Holland, 2003). Similarly, it has been observed that fatherless households are more likely to be poor because one parent's salary may not be sufficient to support the entire family (Kids Count, 2009).

Contrary to popular belief, Eddy and Holborn (2011) found that in absent fatherhood families in South Africa, the family is more likely to receive financial benefits. Eddy and Holborn (2011) found that in absent fatherhood families in South Africa, the family is more likely to get financial benefits in the form of the father paying for the family's maintenance. Furthermore, families with an absent father are more likely to have adequate financial resources because, in most situations, the father is required by law to pay for the children's upkeep (Mavungu et al., 2013).

According to Ramphele and Richter (2006), there is an assumption that children who live with their fathers are financially supported. This is due to certain father characteristics that are universal across cultures, such as "breadwinning." This perception is reinforced by youth perceptions that their lives would be better off financially if their fathers were not absent from their lives. According to Nduna and Jewkes (2011), one of the main reasons children wanted to know

their fathers was because of financial difficulties they were experiencing. They believe that the presence of a father would alleviate their financial difficulties.

However, this is not always the case. Due to rising unemployment rates and low-paying jobs, an increasing number of married couple families are living in poverty (Mather, 2010). Job scarcity is a significant issue in South Africa (Clowes et al., 2013), and as a result, there are households where both parents are poor due to unemployment. In 2008, only 34% of South African children under the age of 18 years lived in a home with a working parent (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). Furthermore, there are families in which both parents are unable to provide due to illness or addiction. Although poverty does not discriminate against any one group, it is concentrated among Blacks in South Africa, owing primarily to the country's history.

2.6.2 Assuming adult responsibilities

Ratele et al. (2012) noted that children from households which had absent fathers are more likely to assume adult responsibilities at a young age, when youngsters move to young adulthood in an unstable setting. According to Shenk et al. (2013), such children are driven to assume adult roles when they are not developed enough to do so. Instead of enjoying the joys of being a child or their youth, they are forced to assume adult responsibilities. Children eventually feel wanted, valued, and loved as they learn to trust their parents and those who care for them to meet their basic needs.

On the other hand, young people from absent father households, appear to lack that inherent trust and are more prone to feel unloved and undeserving of love as a result of the lack of affection and reinforcement they received as children (Dickerson, 2014). In some situations, a young adult, particularly a young man, who was raised in a home with an absent father, may struggle to assert and take command of his life due to a lack of confidence stemming from the lack of a male figure in his life, since mothers are prone to shelter and overindulge their sons (Cooper, 2009). According to reports, a young male would only feel comfortable sharing certain things with a male figure (Makofane, 2015). Although single mothers play an important role in the upbringing and

care of their children, there are some qualities of manhood that can only be taught by a father figure (Makofane, 2015).

2.6.3 Educational outcomes

Previous research conducted by Song (2018) in China revealed that a father's level of dedication to his child has an impact on their educational progress. Shears (2017) for example, discovered that a father's commitment to being sensitive and supportive during his child's early years had a positive impact on his child's cognition, language, and educational development. Downer et al. (2018), conducted a review of 291 relevant articles focusing on father involvement in early childhood learning. Downer et al (2018) note that nine articles found to be directly associated with father absence and academic development, which focused on the child's cognitive capacities, educational attainment, language ability, and preparation for school. By adjusting for maternal participation, the researchers discovered that the father made a significant contribution to the child's linguistic abilities in the most rigorous tests. A father's presence, in particular, was found to have a considerable favourable impact on academic results and competence. Warmth, responsibility, parental pleasure, nurturance, financial contribution, and language use are all important factors to consider.

2.7 Resilience among young adults who grew up with absent fathers

Several studies have been undertaken in an attempt to gain more understanding about resilience among young adults who grew up with absent fathers. Resilience is a positive trait or the ability to function and cope effectively with difficult situations. It can also refer to the manner in which an individual seeks protective factors which support him or her with coping with the consequences of a stressful or life-changing situation. In this instance the children growing up with absent fathers find ways to cope with the absence. Although this is not an easy thing to do, some try to do so. Panter-Brick and Leckman (2013) noted that some Black South African women who do not have fathers use silence as a strategy to avoid speaking about their father's absence at home in an attempt to show gratitude and respect to their mothers.

In other instances, some of the young adults that grew up with absent fathers exert their efforts to attain meaningful life achievements that would help elevate their own and their mothers' social standing to counteract the effects of the absent father. Other studies noted that resilience in the young adults can be seen in the manner in which they utilise psychosocial and structural resources in their family to sustain their well-being (Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013). These authors noted that mothers and other extended kin provide a basis for the children to experience a sense of belonging, group identity and even encourage educational and employment goals.

2.8 Sources of support for children with absent fathers

The children who grow up with an absent father as noted earlier experience a variety of challenges that affect their general wellbeing. This means that they would be in dire need of support to navigate life, thus a need for sources of support. According to Zirima (2012), the major source of support for the children from absent fatherhood is the maternal side of the family. Hence, in most African societies when the relationship between the parents fails the mother usually remains with the children and raises them on the maternal side of the family. Thus, the uncles, aunts and grandparents become the primary and crucial sources for the mother and her children as they would assist in catering for the needs of the children in all aspects.

2.9 Theoretical framework

The present study will utilize the Attachment theory by John Bowlby. Attachment theory is a conceptual framework for developmental psychology and has been advanced to the study of adult attachments in interpersonal relationships, relational communication, and individual-level psychological processes (Tyrell & Msten, 2022). They further note that it evaluates the nature of a relationship from infancy to adulthood and investigates various factors that contribute to the relationship's development. This relationship usually begins when the child is a few weeks old, but it can have an impact on later relationships as an adult. For example, studies have shown that children with secure attachments have fewer difficulties in intimate relationships than those with unsecured attachments, whereas children with unsecure attachments may struggle in intimate relationships (Cabrera, 2020).

John Bowlby's attachment theory is appropriate for this study because it examines the importance of attachment between a young adult and his or her caregivers. Attachment, according to Bowlby, begins in infancy and continues throughout life, and he mentions several innate behavioural control systems that are required for survival and procreation. Bowlby defines a secure attachment as a child experiencing positive feelings and feeling loved by his or her caregivers, such as the mother and father. When there is no affection, a child feels unloved and rejected by his or her parents (Cabrera, 2020). According to this theory, every child should have at least one caregiver attachment. A strong bond with one's parents provides the necessary sense of security and foundation. In childhood, young adults form strong relationships with their caregivers; thus, a sensitive and emotionally available parent provides a platform for a child to trust the caregiver and the world as a result of the experience established with the primary caregiver (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 2015).

Caregivers (fathers) who are unavailable and unresponsive to their children's emotional needs during childhood increase the child's chances of becoming insecure and predispose the child to dysfunctional personality patterns in early adulthood (Neff & Beretvas, 2013). Similarly, a child-caregiver relationship is important for socialization; however, its absence is associated with juvenile delinquency, emotional difficulties, and anti-social behavior in young adulthood (Erol and Orth, 2013). According to Ainsworth et al. (2015), every young adult needs a warm, loving, and trusting relationship with both of their parents during childhood, and children who do not experience a warm and loving relationship with their parental figures are more likely to develop a sense of rejection and neglect.

Despite numerous findings on fathers' contributions to their children and the development of their families, few studies have examined the effects of parenthood on father-child attachment (Erol & Orth, 2013). Nonetheless, attachment theory assumes that secure attachment associations occur not only in mother-child attachments, but also in father-child relationships. As a result, attachment theory contends that contributing patterns of a father-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 young adulthood. Fatherhood provides a foundation for children to develop a sense of attachment, security, and warmth. However, fatherhood absence could predispose a young adult to develop unhealthy functions such as difficulty in making and maintaining relationships due to lack of trust. Father-child relationship is reported to inhibit behavioral problems in the growing child and throughout adulthood. Bowlby's attachment theory is considered important for this study because it lays the groundwork for the importance of caregiver-child attachment, which will ultimately reinforce a young adult into specific behaviors later in life (Ainsworth et al., 2015).

2.10 Conclusion

In summary, a number of studies have been conducted in an attempt to explain the absent fatherhood phenomenon. Literature review has shown that fatherhood in the African context is not only limited to biology, but also to the fatherly roles that a male parent provides to his or her growing children. However, due to a variety of factors such as labour migration, new family structures, divorce, and culture, many young adults grow up without their fathers. It has been discovered that absent fatherhood has an impact not only on children but also on young adults. Absent fatherhood has a negative effect on an individual's well-being, including young adults. On the other hand, it appears that absent fatherhood does not always have negative consequences in the lives of children, since positive consequences are also experienced. In order to make the study more contextually relevant, an Afrocentric theory was chosen as the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher reflects on the concepts and theories that underpin the study. The various aspects of methodology are presented in this chapter and they include research paradigm, research design, research approach, location of the study, selection of participants, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness as well as ethical considerations.

3.2 Research paradigm

An interpretivist paradigm was used in this study. This paradigm was chosen because it takes an individual's subjective experiences as the essence of what is real to them, making sense of those experiences by carefully listening to them, making sense of what they are sharing using qualitative research techniques to collect and analyse the data in question. This was essential because the current topic involves differing individual experiences, which is one of the core characteristics of the interpretivist paradigm. In other words, the interpretivist paradigm demonstrates the value of how people feel or experience a particular thing or situation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.3 Research design

A research design is the strategy, plan, and structure used to conduct a research project. Cooper and Greenaway (2015) define a research design as a set of procedures that guide the researcher through the data collection and interpretation process. As a result, the research design is a process that specifies how, where, and when data will be collected and analysed. It is a framework that the researcher will use to answer the research questions.

In light of the above, the researcher adopted phenomenology as the best research design for this study. Phenomenology is an attempt to describe lived experiences without making prior assumptions about the objective reality of those experiences. Phenomenology believes that the "true meaning of phenomena can be explored through the individual's experience of them"

(Cooper & Greenaway, 2015, p.45). The task is to investigate and describe all phenomena, including human experiences, in the manner in which they appear. The goal of phenomenological research is to describe experiences as they occur, or "lived experiences." Further, phenomenological research investigates the unique experiences of individuals in a given situation, thereby exploring not what is (reality), but what is perceived to be.

3.4 Research approach

A qualitative approach was used in this study. Qualitative research is concerned with the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals under study regarding a particular phenomenon of interest to the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The contextual strength of qualitative research is the reason the researcher opted for it because it assisted in answering the key questions about this study, which seeks to capture the lived experiences of young adults growing up without a biological father. To meaningfully interpret the individual's experiences, a subjective relationship between the researcher and the participant must be established (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This was achieved through the first interviews that were done to build rapport with the participants.

The study focused on people's experiences and paid attention to specifics in the context of exploring the feelings and emotions of young adults that grew up without their biological fathers. Qualitative research elucidates deliberations, fine-tunes measures of abstract concepts to lived experiences, and may yield theoretical background (Neuman, 2014). Those are some of the few strengths that motivated the researcher to select the qualitative approach in conducting this study, with the focus on semi-structured interviews, focusing on the description and exploration (instrumental) of young adults' experiences, with the aim of gaining new knowledge that may not only inform policy development and public education (Fouche & Schurink, 2011), but also help to illuminate the topic and enrich the current body of knowledge. The researcher is of the view that this research approach allowed them to be subjective, however, the researcher certified objectivity by upholding ethical considerations, and selected those participants that were not known to the researcher.

3.5 Location of the study

The population of the present study consisted of young adults whose fathers were absent in their lives while they were growing up. The participants were residing in Ekurhuleni, Gauteng during the time when the study was conducted. The inclusion criteria are the following: young adults aged between 18-35 whose biological fathers were absent in their lives while growing up, being resident in Ekurhuleni, and the willingness to participate in the study.

3.6 Selection of participants

The participants were selected using a sampling technique called purposive sampling. The sample consisted of black female and male South Africans aged between 18-35 who grew up with absent fathers from Gauteng in Ekurhuleni. Berndt (2020) defines sampling as a technique for selecting a subset of a population. Further, Berndt (2020) attests that non-probability sampling is the best technique for interpretative studies. Non-probability sample subjects are typically chosen based on their accessibility or special interest rather than through random sampling (Cooper & Greenaway, 2015). The researcher was able to select participants from the population of interest by using non-probability sampling.

Purposive sampling is the non-probability sampling technique which was used by the researcher to select participants. It refers to the intentional selection of participants based on their unique qualities (Cooper & Greenaway, 2015). It does not require a set number of participants and is not based on underlying theories, but rather on the needs of the study. Purposive sampling is a technique through which participants share information based on their personal experiences or knowledge about a particular topic. Furthermore, the ability to express and communicate opinions in a reflective manner is required in purposive sampling (Creswell, 2013).

The researcher published an advertisement on different social media platforms namely Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to recruit the participants. Those who were interested in participating in the study were requested to contact the researcher. Details about the study were included in the advertisement. According to Polkinghorne, "Because the goal of qualitative

research is enriching the understanding of an experience, [therefore] it needs to select fertile examples of the experience for study. Such selections are purposeful and sought out; the selection should not be random or left to chance” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p.140).

The researcher selected the first eight participants to contact her. These were based on the location of the study (Ekurhuleni in Gauteng) who also met the criteria for the study. Eight prospective participants contacted the researcher expressing their interest to participate in the study. However, two participants did not meet the criteria.

3.7 Data collection method

The researcher used the interview method to gather the data for this study. Individual interviews were used to collect data because the researcher wanted an opportunity to engage with the young adults in-depth. Thus, the researcher used semi-structured interviews. Greeff (2011) states that a semi-structured interview allows the researcher to obtain a comprehensive picture of the participant’s perceptions and experiences because it is supple. Further, the author reiterates that when using semi-structured interviews, the researcher will be guided by prearranged questions of the interview schedule (Greeff, 2011). This method is applicable because it allows individual participants to share views, ideas, experiences, and concerns on the issues and also add on what the researcher had not anticipated (Greeff, 2011).

According to Presado et al. (2021), the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic imposed clear limitations on qualitative research by making it difficult to go to the field and decreasing the possibility of incursions in research contexts, particularly in health services, affecting the use of techniques that use the word, the look, and empathy. New technologies have emerged as tools to support qualitative research, allowing researchers, professionals, and participants to maintain communication and collaboration networks. However, the focus groups, nominal groups, interviews, and conversation circles all remained possible, thanks to the use of interactive platforms that allow visual contact and recording while also removing the researcher from the context in which the phenomenon occurs and allowing for limited viewing of participants.

Therefore, in line with the changing nature of qualitative research as noted by Presado et al. (2021), the researcher used virtual individual interviewing as a form of data collection, specifically semi-structured interviews which fostered in-depth explorative understanding and meaning, experienced by the young adults (Greeff, 2011). Interviews allow a reflection on the description of phenomena of interest, cover a variety of viewpoints, and foster in-depth information. Greeff (2011) warns that interviews can be limiting if the researcher has poor interviewing skills and has difficulty establishing rapport with the participants. The researcher, a qualified social worker with eight years of experience, employed her excellent interviewing and communication skills developed over the years. The researcher ensured that rapport was established to ensure that the interviews were successful and yielded valuable data to answer the study's key research questions.

The interviews were collected using Zoom because face-to-face contact was discouraged during the peak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic when data were collected. The researcher utilised the recording function of Zoom to collect data, to ensure that quality of data was not compromised. During the interviews, the researcher asked open-ended questions that allowed the participants to give comprehensive descriptions of their experiences. To ensure that no one was disadvantaged in taking part in the study, those who indicated interest but did not have internet connections were provided with data to enable them to participate in the interviews.

3.8 Data collection instrument

The data were collected using an interview schedule (Appendix 2). To generate the interview schedule, the researcher conducted a thorough literature search to identify the research gap. It is this research gap that the current study seeks to fill. Thus, the researcher used the schedule to collect relevant data. In order to generate rich and thick data, the researcher would pose probes, which are questions that are used when seeking clarity on various issues that arise during the interviews.

3.8.1 Data collection procedure

The researcher had three sequential and purposefully spaced-out sessions with each of the six participants, as suggested by Seidman (1991; 1998). The purpose of the first interview was to acquaint the participant with the subject and foster a relationship of trust. Building rapport with the participant is essential to the quality of the data produced since there will be a desired amount of trust, which eventually results in openness (Hennink et al., 2011; Steinke, 2004). It was believed that the time between the participant's initial interaction and the second interview would give them a chance to seriously consider the subject, resulting in the interview producing rich, and thick descriptive data. Before doing the last follow-up interviews, the researcher had to listen to audio recordings of earlier interviews. Doing so gave the researcher the opportunity to seek clarifications on areas that were not clear.

Thus, data were collected in three different phases. Each participant was interviewed three times, and this helped to improve trustworthiness of the data. There three phases were as follows:

Introduction: This initial phase was important because it was during this phase that the topic was introduced and reflected on, enabling the participant to familiarise with the topic. Another important benefit accrued from this phase was the development of rapport, which is an important aspect when conducting qualitative research. When the participant trusts the researcher, it is likely that the data that they provide is authentic and relevant to the study.

Main interview: This phase was the second of the three phases that each of the six participants went through. During the main interview, the researcher was able to pose all the important questions that featured on the interview schedule, and those that emerged during the course of the interview. When conducting qualitative interviews, there are those questions that arise when the participants seek to answer the original questions posed by the interviewer. It is important for the interviewer to seek answers to such questions by posing probes.

(Neuman, 2014). Thus, amplification probes and follow-up questions were used to generate rich and thick data. Amplification probes are used to encourage participants to elaborate on the issue

in further detail. These are important questions that help to illuminate the problem statement.

Follow-up interview: Conducting follow-up interviews helped the researcher to get clarification on various aspects that were not clear during the previous interviews. According to Legard et al. (2003), more follow-up questions may be necessary because a single probe might not be sufficient. Therefore, the researcher had to schedule the third interview for each of the six participants to ensure that all the issues were clarified.

3.9 Data analysis

The researcher used thematic analysis, as inspired by Braun and Clarke (2006) to make sense of the data. Thematic analysis is the process of gathering data and describing, structuring, and organising the most important themes at various levels in great detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is popular with qualitative research and encouraged in Psychology, especially for its suppleness. Thematic analysis is a method that is used to identify, analyse and create themes in the data captured. Six phases are identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) in relation to this process, and these are discussed below:

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with data

This phase includes plunging oneself in the data. It entails a search for meanings from ideas that one has gotten from previous reading on the topic. Therefore, the researcher transcribed the data and read it several times to get an understanding of data generated through the interviews. The process of becoming acquainted with the data was accomplished by using the literature review as a backdrop to understand how the topic under investigation was socially constructed. Hayes (2000) referred to this as deductive thematic analysis. This is the process of developing predetermined themes based on one's knowledge of existing literature (Hayes, 2000). While reviewing existing literature on the topic of father absence, the researcher discovered that one of the most common issues raised is that fathers are frequently perceived as people who have the means to provide for their children. As a result, the researcher identified this as a possible theme (predetermined theme) that could emerge during data collection (Hayes, 2000).

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

The second phase involves organising data into groups that are either data or literature driven, and are of interest to the researcher. Therefore, at this phase the researcher identified interesting ideas from the transcription and noted them down. This is the first step in a thematic network analysis, (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Coding is the process of dividing a data domain into smaller parts and grouping data with similar information into sections. There are various coding frameworks that use colours to group data that falls into a specific category by a specific colour or by cutting and pasting (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

The coding method that entails the use of colours aided in the abstraction and identification of emerging themes. The reader had to re-read the text segments within the context of the codes under which they were classified, as suggested by Attride-Stirling (2001). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme summarises key pieces of data in relation to the research question and, to some extent, it reflects on shared and/or common meaning across the collected data. Following the abstraction of the initial themes, the selected themes were refined into themes that were specific enough to be non-repetitive but comprehensive enough to encapsulate a set of ideas contained in numerous text segments (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Phase 3: Searching for themes

This phase involves identifying patterns and similarities in the responses. Therefore, the researcher searched for identical answers from the transcriptions. This phase involved analysing broad themes in the data, rather than codes. At this point, the focus was on searching for potential themes from the content of the data. Themes were identified and selected from the initial codes. All the relevant coded data extracts were collated into the identified themes.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

During this phase, the researcher tests the themes from literature and discards those that do not have sufficient literature support.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Themes must be defined and named accordingly, after they have been identified. It therefore means that once the pattern is correctly identified, the themes must be used correctly.

Phase 6: Producing the report

The study was conducted in English. This assisted in ensuring that data or information was not lost in translation. A report was then compiled and within the write-up procedure, a storytelling process took place while highlighting the validity of the data.

3.10 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the issue of validity and reliability is contentious. Before delving deeper into the debate, the two terms must be defined. According to Joppe (2000), reliability is defined as the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study. If the results of a study can be reproduced using a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable. Validity determines whether the research truly measures what it was designed to measure or how accurate the research findings are (Neuman, 2014). In other words, can you hit "the bull's eye" of your research object with the research instrument? In general, researchers determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will frequently seek answers in the research of others (Joppe, 2000).

Although the term "reliability" refers to a concept used for testing or evaluating quantitative research, the concept is commonly applied to all types of research. If we consider testing to be a method of gathering information, the most important test of any qualitative study is its quality. A good qualitative study can assist in understanding an otherwise enigmatic or confusing situation (Joppe, 2000). This relates to the concept of good quality research, where reliability is used to evaluate quality in quantitative studies with the goal of "explaining," whereas quality in qualitative studies has the goal of "generating understanding" (Neuman, 2014, p.113).

In qualitative research, reliability refers to the consistency of responses to multiple coders of data sets. It can be improved by taking detailed field notes with recording devices and transferring

digital files. According to Patton (2011), validity and reliability are two factors that any qualitative researcher should consider when designing a study, analysing results, and judging the study's quality. According to Healy and Perry (2010), the quality of a study in each paradigm should be judged on its own terms. While the terms' reliability and validity are essential quality criteria in quantitative paradigms, in qualitative paradigms the terms credibility, neutrality or conformability, consistency or dependability, and applicability or transferability must be used (Shenton, 2004).

Therefore, the terms used to describe validity in qualitative research may differ from those used in quantitative research. For example, the word trustworthiness is often used in qualitative research in place of validity and reliability. Creswell and Poth (2013) defined study trustworthiness as the naturalist's equivalent of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity.

As a result, for the purposes of this study, the researcher used trustworthiness which includes the following components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. These important constructs are illuminated below:

Credibility: The goal of this construct is to ensure that the study's findings are plausible. To ensure credibility, the researcher used a semi-structured interview as a guiding tool, asking the same open-ended questions to ensure consistency of the findings. Furthermore, a thematic analysis method was used to ensure data consistency by coding individual extracts into themes and grouping them together based on their relationship to one another.

Transferability: This construct refers to the extent to which the research can be applied and transferred to other contexts. The researcher provided detailed descriptions of the situation and procedures. Readers can assess whether the study's findings apply to or are transferable to other contexts. However, transferability is determined by the study's objectives. This implies that it can only be accomplished if the study's goal is to generalise the findings. Transferability was not achieved in this study because the results are not representative of individuals from other ethnic groups in different contexts.

Dependability/ auditability: This construct refers to how well the research process is documented and reviewed. As a result, the researcher provided details of each process so that any external researcher can replicate the study and generate similar findings. To ensure the process' dependability, the researcher generated questions that were clear and logically related to the research purpose and design. As a result, consistency was ensured as the key concept addressing data dependability. Furthermore, in order to address the construct and avoid the involvement of multiple field workers in data collection, the researcher conducted the interviews herself, drawing on her experience as a social worker.

Conformability: This construct refers to the ability of research findings to be supported by data. Conformability is used to eliminate the researcher's bias. As a result, an audit trail was established at each stage of the research process. Further, confirmability was achieved by ensuring that the researcher's interpretation of the research findings was not fabricated but was derived from data obtained from the participants. Furthermore, the researcher used the element of reflexivity, which aided in the separation of her personal background, beliefs, values, and preferences from the research study. This was done to ensure that there was no bias in data collection and analysis.

3.11 Ethical considerations

The researcher considered the following ethical considerations:

(i) Informed consent

Creswell (2013) states that informed consent means that sufficient information has been provided to the research participants and they understood the information and implications of their participation in the study. The researcher generated an informed consent letter (Appendix 6), which was approved by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee with information about the study. The participants signed the informed consent letter prior to the interviews. Prior to the research interview, the participants

were given an opportunity to ask questions. The participants were also informed that refusing to participate in the study was allowed, hence taking part in the study was voluntary.

(ii) Avoidance of harm

The researcher selected participants who declared to her that they were in a good mental state. However, because this cannot be guaranteed, the researcher was vigilant for any signs of distress and made the necessary referral available to the participants, in case they needed help. This was important to ensure that harm to the participants was avoided. The researcher debriefed participants after the collection of data. as there was a counsellor present to conduct the debriefing and provide further counselling if it was needed.

3.11.1 Avoiding the violation of privacy: Promoting confidentiality and anonymity

According to Nueman (2014), promoting confidentiality and anonymity includes safeguarding the identities of research participants and safeguarding the identities of research participants. To protect the participants from any potential harm, pseudonyms were used. Participants were assured that confidentiality will be maintained, and participants will be informed who will have access to the findings (University of KwaZulu-Natal). The use of Zoom as a mode of collecting data reinforced confidentiality as only the participants received the meeting identifying order (ID) for them to attend the data collection meeting. The researcher assured the participants that their identity was protected. In line with this assurance, pseudonyms were used in reporting the findings.

(i) Voluntary participation

Participants were not coerced to take part in the study. Instead, the participants were informed that they had a right to withdraw from participation without giving reasons, if they didn't feel comfortable to continue. They were assured that taking the decision to withdraw participation from the study would not result in any form of punishment or negative consequences (Wassennar, 2006).

3.11.1 Debriefing of participants

Participants were debriefed, and contact details of the researcher were offered, should the participants need counselling or the opportunity to ask questions. Taking part in a study can induce anxiety and it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that no harm is caused by participating in a study (Neuman, 2014).

3.11.2 Deception of participants

Participants were provided with a thorough description of the study in the consent form. Further, they were given verbal explanations to ensure that they understood what participation entailed as well as their rights.

3.12 Conclusion

The qualitative nature of the study was described in this chapter. The researcher also explained the study's design, population, location, sampling procedure, and data collection and analysis methods. The next chapter focuses on the presentation of findings.

CHAPTER 4 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter focused on the analysis of the data that were collected during the study. The data were analysed using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data were collected from six participants who were drawn from a purposive sample in Ekurhuleni District, Gauteng. The participants revealed their lived experiences of growing up with absent fathers. Data analysis was based on the goal of the study, which was to understand and investigate the experiences of young adults who grew up without their fathers. The themes that were extracted from the data were presented in accordance with the objectives of the study, as well as emerging themes from the data that were analysed. The researcher presented the demographic profiles of the participants to help the reader to understand the findings in their proper context. These demographic profiles preceded the detailed findings of the study, which were discussed under each theme.

4.2 Demographic profiles of the participants

In this section, the researcher gave a brief description of the demographic characteristics of each participant. The participants were assigned pseudonyms that were used in this chapter.

Thapelo

Thapelo was a 31-year-old woman from Benoni, Gauteng. She was raised by a single parent and she used to stay with her extended family members at their late grandparents' house. Thapelo was employed at the Department of Social Development as a social worker. She held an Honours Degree in Social Work.

Amanda

Amanda was a 26-year-old female who resided in Tembisa, Gauteng. She grew up with her grandparents. Amanda explained that her mother remarried after separating with her father and she grew up at her maternal grandparents' house. She held a degree in education.

Mpho

She was a 33-year-old woman who was working as a social worker. She was raised by a single mother. She grew up with her mother and sibling who was 4 years older than her.

Karabo

Karabo was a 20-year-old male from Daveyton, Gauteng. He was a first year Accounting student at the University of Johannesburg. He was raised by his grandmother as well as his mother's siblings after his mother passed away.

Sipho

Sipho was an 18-years-old male. He hailed from Daveyton, Gauteng. He stayed with his maternal grandmother because his mother passed away when he was still young. He matriculated in 2021 and was upgrading his matriculation results at a local college.

Musa

Musa, 28-year-old male, currently working as a market analyst. He is originally from KZN but currently staying in Benoni, Gauteng because of work. He was raised by his maternal grandparents after his mother's death when he was 6 years old.

4.3 Themes and subthemes that emerged from the study

Several themes and subthemes emerged from the study. These include the following:

- Reason for father's absence.
- The social impact of growing up with an absent father
- The financial impact of growing up with an absent father.
- The emotional impact of growing up with an absent father.
- Sources of support for the young adults who grew up with absent fathers.
- Resilience among young adults who grew up with absent fathers.

4.3.1 Reasons for father's absence

This theme focused on the reasons for fathers' absence in the lives of research participants. The participants revealed various reasons why their fathers were absent from their lives.

4.3.1.1 Divorce or separation of parents

One of the themes that was unearthed during the process of data analysis was the reason why fathers were absent from their children's lives. Some participants noted that the reason why their fathers were not present in their lives was because of divorce. Hence, the relationship between the parents broke down, leading to separation and divorce. One participant shared the following;

"I have an open relationship with my mother. She just told me her side of the story and probably that is why things did not work out between them. So, I am not sure why my father decided to distance himself from me. Perhaps, the relationship between them did not work out" (Thapelo: female).

"Mmmm my mother said their relationship broke down and that is around the same time he stopped being a part of my life." (Musa: male)

The other female participant indicated that she was not aware of the reason why her father was not present. The participant shared the following;

"He was absent in my life. So, I think when I was 3 or 4 years, he broke up with my mother. Since then he never made an effort to contact us until I finished my matric" (Amanda: female).

Some participants noted that they avoid asking their mothers questions that are related to their fathers' absence because they do not want to upset them or seem to be ungrateful for all the effort, they make in raising them. The following response from in-depth interviews helps support this point:

"No. You know, I try but there was a point in time when I tried asking my mother and

you could see that she was uncomfortable to talk about it. Sometimes you just do not want to make your parents say it because whenever you raise that question, she would feel as if you are saying her contribution in your life is not enough. So I just let it go and I have never really obtained answers as to why” (Mpho: female).

4.3.1.1 Death

A sub-theme that emerged during data analysis was that of father absence due to death. Two participants revealed that the reason why their fathers were not present was because of death. One participant indicated that their father passed away when they were 8 years old and the other one said he passed on before he was born. One participant shared the following;

“Yes, and I have never seen my father. My mother told me that he passed away before I was born” (Karabo: male).

4.3.2 The social, economic (financial) and emotional impact of growing up with an absent father

The findings indicated that the young adults experienced social, financial and emotional impact as a result of father absence. The main themes that emanated from the findings, and explored in detail in subsequent sections, are the social and emotional impacts.

4.3.2.1 Social impact of growing up with an absent father

4.3.2.1.1 Growing up on the maternal side of the family

Data analysis revealed that father absence had varying social impacts on the participants. Some participants, who grew up on the maternal side of the family, indicated that a relationship with the paternal side of the family was virtually non-existent. The following responses from in-depth interviews help support this point:

“I really don’t know how can I explain it. Well, I was raised by a single parent and we used to stay with my extended family members at our late grandparents’ house. So, yeah, I used to stay with a lot of people and sometimes you just want to have your own space of doing things” (Thapelo: female).

“My mother was married to my step father and I grew up at her maternal house, with my grandparents. Well, when I was growing up I didn’t know that I had more siblings that I know now” (Amanda: female).

In addition, some participants revealed that the paternal side of the family turned down their efforts to develop a close relationship with them. One participant shared the following:

“I was raised by a single mother and, as far as I know, I was just staying with my mother and my sibling who is 4 years older than me. My childhood was not that difficult because my mother had always been working. However, growing up with just one parent has always left that little gap of wondering where the other is and what happened and all that stuff” (Mpho: female).

4.3.1.1.2 Lack of proper socialisation

The participants noted that they struggled with basic social interactions skills, especially with the elderly people, since they were not properly socialised in that aspect as a result of growing up surrounded by women. One participant indicated that he ended up learning such skills from other male figures within the community. The participant shared the following;

“No, I do not think. I think it is actually the opposite. It made me relate to other male individuals. It made me keen to have forge relationships with elders in the community because I was searching for male role models. So, I learnt a lot through my interactions with them” (Sipho: male).

4.3.1.1.3 Lack of identity

Another major theme that emerged during data analysis was the cultural impact of absent fatherhood. Some participants noted that they experience loss of identity. The participants intimated that they do not know where they come from, or how to perform traditional rites, as a result of their father’s absence, as well as the fact that they were using their mothers’ surname. One participant shared the following;

“Maybe culturally it would have made a difference. I would be using his surname because sometimes doors are closed because of such reasons. They are things that we still need. I feel if he had done things differently and some things would have turned out better but I do not know which things” (Amanda: female).

Moreover, some participants indicated that the lack of identity might have an impact on their future as they felt they did not have an identity. This is supported by the following response from in-depth interviews:

“Oh yeah. Like I said, maybe I would have known where I come from and what to do in life. I know there are challenges I am going to face in life and I need to solve them with the knowledge that my father would have taught me” (Sipho: male).

“Growing up with my father not being around means that I cannot fully say I am aware of the cultural dictates of my lineage as a result of the absence of father”. (Musa: male).

4.3.3 Emotional impact

During data analysis it emerged that father absence had an emotional impact on the young adults. A wide range of emotional issues were unearthed during analysis and were categorised as anger and pain.

4.3.3.1 Anger and pain

The findings have revealed that absent fatherhood had an emotional impact on the participants. The participants intimated that they experienced different emotions as a result of growing up without their fathers. They noted that they experienced a varying range of emotions, from internalised anger towards their fathers to the pain of growing up without them, which even today affected some of them. One participant shared the following:

“Uhhh I don’t know how can I put it? I think if he was there, I would not have the anger that I have because at this age I have so many unanswered questions that engender hatred and anger. I feel like I have some questions that need answers from him.”

(Thapelo: female).

In addition, some participants noted that they were angry and hurt because of the absence of their fathers. One participant shared the following:

“I was so angry and hurt at the same time knowing that he has other kids. I felt like I was the only one he neglected only to find out that there were a lot of us he did not care about.... It is his character because I discovered that he does not experience any guilt conscience. I do not know, maybe he is so bewitched that he cannot even consider his actions” (Amanda: female).

Moreover, some participants have revealed that their anger towards their fathers was because they could not get the love and care they wanted from them. One participant shared the following:

“It hurts a lot because at that point I felt like I do not want anything else except something that cannot be bought, which is love and care. It does not matter what happened in the past because you can never go back and change things but it’s frustrating that the person is still not interested in what is going on in your life. He has other kids that I know from a distance that are my siblings. It hurts at first but it has now got to a point where I no longer care” (Mpho: female).

One of the participants in the study noted that they had mixed feelings as a result of their fathers’ absence. He had this to say e

“I used to have mixed feelings I do not want to lie but the combination of therapy and the support of my maternal family has really helped me resolve those hence the willingness to establish a relationship with him”. (Musa: male).

4.3.4 Economic or financial impact

The data analysis has revealed that father absence had a financial impact on the lived experiences of young adults.

4.3.4.1 Inadequate resources

Some participants indicated that the absence of their fathers in their lives had a financial impact when they were growing up. The participants revealed that they lacked certain luxuries that other children enjoyed as a result of the presence of their fathers in their lives. This supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

“Yes, because we were crowded in a small house, since I grew up with my cousins who had both parents. I was raised by only one parent, my mother. At times, I wished if I had my father around because there were certain things, I wanted but because my mother was a single parent I could not get them” (Thapelo: female).

“For some reason I feel like it did. like when you see the quality of life of other kids with both parents and you wonder what kind of life you would have had if your father had been around and certain things you would get from him. If mom cannot do it for you, you would automatically think if dad was here maybe he was going to do it for you and play a huge role in your life” (Mpho: female).

However, other participants noted that they did not experience any financial difficulties as their relatives provided for all their needs and always ensured that they were content. The following responses from in-depth interviews help support this point.

“It is everything but I would not say financial because my grandparents made sure that I did not lack anything. They made sure that I had good education and I do not feel like I needed his money” (Amanda: female).

“Financially, my grandmother tried to provide but it was not enough as she had to provide for the other children at home and there were moments, I would wish if my father was there to provide some of the things that I needed” (Sipho: male).

“In terms of finance, my mother as employed as a nurse and she met most of my financial needs with some assistance from my maternal grandmother”. (Musa: male)

4.3.5 Sources of support for the young adults who grew up with absent fathers

The study findings revealed that the young adults who grew up with absent fathers had varying sources of support. These were grouped in the subtheme of maternal family support.

4.3.5.1 Maternal family support

The findings have revealed that all the participants received support mainly from their maternal side of the family. They all indicated that they grew up with their maternal grandparents and uncles who later acted as father figures to them. The participants regarded them as their primary source of support. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

“Yeah, I received support from my aunt, my uncle, and my cousin sister, whom I refer to as my sister. These were mainly my sources of support in every aspect of my life”
(Thapelo: female).

“It is everything but I would not say financial because my grandparents made sure that I did not lack anything. They made sure that I had good education. I can categorise them as my main source of support” (Amanda: female).

“I would say my grandmother was influential because she has always been there as well and my aunties, my mother’s younger sisters. I have one uncle and as far as I remember he has always been away from home; you would see him once in a while”
(Mpho: female).

4.3.6 Resilience among young adults who grew up with absent fathers

Another theme that emerged from data analysis was that of resilience. The participants revealed that their circumstances influenced their resilience. They intimated that they were driven by their desire to have a better life and to prove a point to their absent fathers. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

“You know what, I told myself that I will focus on my studies and will provide myself and my mother with all that I wished my father would do. So, I started without him in my life. He was alive but did not take care of us. I studied so hard that I could get a job, and build a home for myself and my mother. So, in a way, his absence kept me strong and pushed me to be where I am today” (Thapelo: female).

Some participants revealed that they wanted to be successful and change their lives and prove that they did not need their fathers' presence or their money to succeed. One participant shared the following:

“For some reason I would say that yes, because I have learnt to be more independent and not to burden my mother, since she has done enough. She played a role of two parents alone whilst she had other kids as well. So, I always fought to be a better person in life, to be successful, and also to strive to have my own family” (Mpho: female).

4.3.7 Behaviours associated with father absence

The other theme that emerged during data analysis was that of behaviours associated with father absence. This theme shows how father absence has an impact on the young adult's life.

4.3.7.1 Academic performance

The study revealed that absent fatherhood contributes to a variety of behavioural manifestations in young adults who grew up without their fathers. These behavioural changes occurred in various contexts. Some participants revealed that they were motivated to excel academically by sheer lack of resources, which should have been provided by their fathers if they were present in their lives. One participant shared the following:

“(Laughing) Besides typical teenager behaviour, I would not say I misbehaved. I grew up in a high-density area where a lot of girls were falling pregnant at a young age, so my family was strict and ensured that I paid more attention to my studies and spent

less time in the streets” (Amanda: female).

“Well in terms of academic performance I would say his absence contributed positively as I determined to become a better person in life so I knew I had to excel academically which I did exceptionally so (smiling).” (Musa: male)

Furthermore, some participants attributed their academic shortcomings to the disadvantage that absent fatherhood has had on them. One participant shared the following:

“Yeah, my participation in school is limited because they would talk about things that upset you. What I am trying to say is that at school is I do not participate very well mainly because I feel I do not have anyone to please by excelling academically” (Sipho: male).

4.3.7.2 Substance use

Substance use is another behavioural manifestation associated with absent fatherhood. However, the participants revealed that they did not engage in unruly behaviours due the strict nature of the environment they were raised in. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

“Generally, I was well-behaved. The environment I grew up in was strict so there was no room for misbehaving and, as I highlighted, I channeled most of my energy towards my education, so yeah” (Thapelo: female).

“Mmm, I experimented with smoking because of peer pressure” (Karabo: male).

4.3.7.3 Impact on their view on relationships

The participants have revealed that father absence has had an impact on how they perceive and approach romantic relationships. Some participants intimated that they preferred dating someone older as they felt the small age gap between their parents contributed to their breakup. One participant shared the following:

“I also made sure that I do not go for someone of my age because my mother and

father's age gap was just a couple of months. My mother was born in 1965 and my father in 1964. I thought that because women mature faster than men, maybe a more responsible husband would be someone a bit older than me. I was mostly looking for someone who is responsible and mature" (Mpho: female).

Some participants revealed that as a result of the lived experience of growing up with an absent father they had developed serious trust issues. However, the male participants intimated that the absence of their fathers had not had any impact on how they view relationships. The following responses from in-depth interviews help support this point:

"I do not trust people easily. I become judgemental and I compare them. If we pass through some difficult phases, I begin to compare them with my father" (Thapelo: female).

"No, I do not think so. I think it is actually the opposite. It made me relate to other male individuals. It made me keen to have relationships with elders in the community because I was searching for male role models. So, I learnt a lot through my interactions with them" (Mpho: male).

4.3.8 Current relationship with the father

Most participants revealed that they lack established relationships with their fathers. Some participants intimated that their fathers were not keen on having a relationship with them and felt only one side was putting effort into making the relationship work. The following responses help support this point:

"Mmm, I do not know how I can I explain it. Currently, we are not on speaking terms and we do not have that relationship I want to have with him. I do not know if he is afraid of me, or maybe if he has guilt conscience that I might ask him why he was not there. But we do not have that good relationship" (Thapelo: female).

"He never calls; it is me who always does that. I felt a relationship should be reciprocated, even with children and parents" (Mpho: female).

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the key findings of the study and these have largely confirmed the findings from previous studies. Some of the crucial points which emerged include the various reasons why fathers were absent in their children's lives, as well as the social, economic and behavioural impacts of absent fatherhood on the lives of their children. Some of the participants highlighted that their main source of support was from the maternal side of the family. In summary, absent fatherhood has both negative and positive impacts on the lived experiences of the young adults.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discussed the findings of the study in accordance with the major themes which emerged during data analysis, in order to respond to the research questions and objectives espoused in this study.

5.2 Discussion of key findings

This section presented the discussion of the key findings of the study with reference to existing studies. The section has subtopics which include:

- The reason why fathers were absent in their children's lives
- Financial, social and emotional impacts of father absence in the young adults' lives
- Behaviours associated with growing up with absent fathers
- Resilience and sources of support
- Impact on how they view relationships

5.2.1 The reason why fathers were absent in the young adult's lives

The research findings have revealed that separation or divorce is one of the reasons for the existence of absent fatherhood. Participants intimated that the relationship between their parents could not work out as a result of various factors, leading to separation and divorce. This is consistent with the findings of other studies that were included in literature review which stated that most young adults who grew up without their fathers as a result of parental separation and divorce. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2019) found that 60% of South African children have absent fathers and more than 40% of South African mothers are single parents. The significant increase in the number of single parent homes has resulted in a number of policy initiatives aimed at strengthening the institution of marriage and encouraging the establishment and maintenance of two parent homes, as it is believed that this can improve child outcomes.

Hence, divorce rates have continued to rise globally since then. Thus, divorce is a significant cause of father absence (Harper & Fine, 2017).

Moreover, according to Harper and Fine (2017), the majority of separated or divorced fathers may struggle to establish their role as non-residential fathers. According to Harper and Fine (2017), the identity of divorced fathers is frequently linked to their previous relationship with the former wife, spouse and children, posing difficulties in developing a new identity as a non-residential parent and in carrying out their responsibilities.

The research findings have also revealed that death is a major reason why some fathers were absent in their children's lives. Some participants intimated that their fathers had passed away and therefore could not be part of the family when they were growing up. This is supported by existing studies. Death has been identified as one of the major causes of father absence due to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Sub Saharan Africa (Hall & Sambu, 2019). This has increased mortality rates in South Africa since the beginning of the new millennium. HIV/AIDS rates in South Africa have continued to rise, leaving behind a generation of children who have lost their parents, caregivers, and other loved ones (Hall & Sambu, 2019). According to Statistics South Africa (2019), HIV was responsible for 4.8% of all deaths in the country, placing it among the top five causes of death. The death of the father in most cases means that the child would grow up in a maternal setting.

5.2.2 Financial, social and emotional impact of the father's absence on the young adults

The research findings have revealed that financial challenges were a major impact of absent fatherhood in children's lives. Some participants have intimated that as a result of the absence of their fathers in their lives, they faced some financial challenges since they did not have adequate resources. The participants revealed that they lacked certain luxuries that other children enjoyed as a result of the presence of their fathers in their lives, whilst other participants intimated that the absence of their fathers had little or no impact on their financial wellbeing, since their maternal relatives provided all their needs. This is consistent with related literature which

confirmed that some children face financial difficulties as a result of father absence. According to Mkhize (2016), the provider role still takes precedence in the South African context. Hence, contrary to the Western concept of fatherhood, which includes emotional support, Black fathers associate fatherhood with being able to provide financially for their families. In most instances, the absence of the father either as a result of being away from home in search of employment, or avoiding having a relationship with a child, meant that most of the children grew up lacking certain basic necessities. Mkhize (2016) observed that most children in Black communities in South Africa, who grew up with absent fathers, reported some sort of financial constraint. According to Hansen (2022), the inability to provide adequately for the family may cause some men to feel inadequate as fathers and thus abandon their families to avoid embarrassment and shame. This may be because the social value of fatherhood has changed and has become increasingly attached to the man's position as a provider.

The research findings have also revealed that not all children experience financial difficulties as a result of absent fatherhood. Some mothers end up playing the role of the provider and ensure that their children's basic needs are always met. This is consistent with related literature. As Eddy et al. (2013) observed, the extended family system, mostly prevalent in African societies, meant that some family members would ensure that the needs of the child whose father is absent are always met.

Furthermore, the research findings have revealed that emotional challenges were a major impact of absent fatherhood in children's lives. The participants revealed that the absence of their fathers had an emotional impact on them. The participants intimated that they experienced anger and pain due to the absence of fathers in their lives as they were growing up and even in their adulthood. The anger mainly emanated from the lack of effort by fathers in establishing close ties with their children when they were growing up. These results are in agreement with previous studies. As Luo et al. (2011) observed, the absence of the father has an emotional impact on young adults. Hence, the young adults become angry at themselves or displace this anger to any male figure, generalising that all men are the same as their irresponsible fathers. Thus, the anger

originates from their fathers who abandoned them and neglected their children's lives.

5.2.3 Behaviours associated with growing up with absent fathers

The research findings have revealed that the absence of fathers had a behavioural impact on young adults. The participants intimated that they experience various behavioural manifestations, which were both negative and positive, that result from the absence of fathers in their lives. Some participants have revealed that they performed poorly at school, whilst some excelled at school as they were determined to have a better future. This is consistent with related literature. According to Ying and Yidan (2021), father involvement in parenting had a significant positive effect on middle school students' academic performance. Hence, the improvement of spatial presence and emotional presence had a positive impact on middle school students' academic performance.

However, Holborn and Eddy (2011) observed that children raised in single parent households outperform those raised by both parents academically. They used the Human Sciences Research Council's Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) as a measuring tool to find out if there is a difference in academic performance between high school students who have their fathers present at home and those who have their fathers absent due to migrant work in South Africa. There was a significant difference in performance as children with their fathers present outperformed students with their fathers absent. However, they discovered that, while there was a difference, some children in the sample with absent fathers performed better than those with present fathers.

Furthermore, the research findings have revealed that young adults with absent fathers experimented with substance use, whilst others who stayed with their mothers did not. This is consistent with related literature. According to Ajayi and Somefun's (2020) study conducted at a Nigerian university, the lack of a biological father is associated with alcohol or drug abuse. Hence, young adults brought up in the absence of their fathers are predisposed to engage in risky behaviours, such as smoking and alcohol consumption. Also, Makofane (2015) observed that

teenagers who have involved fathers are less likely to use drugs and engage in risky behaviour. Hence, teenagers living with a single mother are at a lower risk of substance abuse when they spend time with their absent father, and teenagers who spend time with their biological fathers on a regular basis are at a lower risk of substance abuse than teenagers who do not see their fathers.

The research findings have also revealed that father absence had a negative social impact on young adults. The participants revealed that the absence of fathers in their lives affected their social interaction, as well as their sense of identity. Some participants intimated that they experience lack of identity as a result of their fathers' absence. This concurs with Corneau's (2018) observation that one of the consequences of an absent father is the lack of identity for the affected child or children. Hence, this is especially true in cultures where children, particularly boys, are expected to take their father's surname. As a result, understanding fatherhood and what father absence means requires an understanding of what the use of a paternal surname means. Men are considered the carriers of cultural heritage and identity, according to African socio-cultural norms.

5.2.4 Resilience and sources of support

The research findings have revealed that there is a connection between the young adult's resilience and sources of support. The participants intimated that they were driven by their intrinsic desire to have a better life and the crucial support they obtained from the maternal side and other relatives of the extended family. This is consistent with related literature which confirmed that resilience in young adults is determined by their ability to utilise psychosocial and structural resources in their family to sustain their well-being (Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013). Hence, mothers and other relatives of the extended family provide a basis for the children to experience a sense of belonging, group identity and even encourage educational and employment goals.

The research findings have also revealed that the maternal side of the family is the main source

of support. Most participants have intimated that they grew up primarily on the maternal side where their aunties and uncles helped augment their mothers' efforts in raising them. This concurs with Zirima's (2012) observation that the major source of support for the children from absent fatherhood is the maternal side of the family. Hence, in most African societies when the relationship between the parents fails the mother usually remains with the children and raises them on the maternal side of the family. Thus, the uncles, aunties and grandparents become the primary and crucial sources for the mother and her children as they would assist in catering for the needs of the children in all aspects. However, other studies (Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013) have noted that even though the father is not present in the child's life, his family plays an active role in the child's life in some instances.

5.2.5 Impact on how they view relationships

The research findings have revealed that absent fatherhood has an impact on how young adults view relationships. The participants intimated that they developed trust issues and some found it difficult to develop relationships with adults since they were not properly socialised. These findings concurred with the findings from previous research. Ramisur (2017) maintained that the absence of the father had an impact on how one views relationships. Hence, most young adults from absent fatherhood homes have difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships with their peers. Thus, developing the capacity to form a stable and fulfilling romantic relationship is among the key developmental tasks of adolescence and young adulthood.

5.2.5.1 Implications to theory

The working theory for the study was the attachment theory. The attachment theory views the dynamics of a relationship from infancy to adulthood and examines various factors that contribute to the development of the relationship. With reference to the current study, the theory further states that children who have secure attachment have fewer struggles in intimate relationships than those with insecure attachments (Cowie, 2018). Thus, children with insecure attachments face challenges with intimate relationships. Therefore, attachment challenges are a result of absent fatherhood that extend to adulthood and in turn replicate a cycle of absent fatherhood or

motherhood. This was confirmed by the findings of the current study, since some participants revealed that they were struggling to secure stable relationships as a result of their father's absence in their lives.

For example, studies have shown that children with secure attachments have fewer difficulties in intimate relationships than those with unsecured attachments, whereas children with unsecure attachments may struggle in intimate relationships (Cabrera, 2020). When there is no affection, a child feels unloved and rejected by his or her parents (Cabrera, 2020). According to this theory, every child should have at least one caregiver attachment. A strong bond with one's parents provides the necessary sense of security and foundation. In childhood, young adults form strong relationships with their caregivers; thus, a sensitive and emotionally available parent provides a platform for a child to trust the caregiver and the world as a result of the experience established with the primary caregiver (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 2015). In the study it was shown that most of the participants had a strong bond with their mothers as a result of being more exposed to them than their fathers.

The study also showed as stated by the attachment that caregivers (fathers) who are unavailable and unresponsive to their children's emotional needs during childhood increase the child's chances of becoming insecure (Neff & Beretvas, 2013). This was evident in how some of the participants viewed relationships or acted when they are in relationships. The attachment theory contends that contributing patterns of a father-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 young adulthood. Fatherhood provides a foundation for children to develop a sense of attachment, security, and warmth. However, fatherhood absence could predispose a young adult to develop unhealthy functions such as difficulty in making and maintaining relationships due to lack of trust as revealed by some of the findings of the study.

5.3 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter discussed the study findings in accordance with the objectives of the

study. The results were also analysed with reference to related studies, where applicable. One of the most important findings of the study was that father absence had financial, social, and emotional impacts on young adults. These study findings, as well as the reasons for father absence in children's lives, concurred with previous studies.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of the findings

The aims, objectives as well as the research questions of the study have been achieved. The study findings shed light on the lived experiences of young adults who grew up with absent fathers. The young adults experienced both positive and negative impacts as a result of father absence in their lives. The results were also analysed with reference to related studies, where applicable. The study findings revealed that father absence had financial, social and emotional impacts on the young adults. The participants revealed that the absence of fathers in their lives affected their financial well-being as they could not afford certain luxuries that other children enjoyed as a result of the presence of their fathers in their lives. The participants also intimated that they experience anger and pain due to the absence of fathers in their lives as they were growing up and even in their adulthood.

The findings of the current study also concurred with previous research on the reasons why fathers were absent in children's lives. The study revealed that death and parental separation or divorce were the main reasons for father absence in children's lives. The study findings also revealed that father absence had both negative and positive impacts on the behaviour of young adults as they were growing up. Some participants revealed that they engaged in substance abuse whilst others performed poorly in school. However, not all of them had negative behaviours, since some participants refrained from substance abuse and excelled academically as they wanted to prove a point to their absent fathers.

The study findings further established a connection between the young adult's resilience and

sources of support. The participants revealed that they were driven by their intrinsic desire to have a better life and the crucial support they obtained from the maternal side and other relatives of the extended family.

6.2 Limitations

The study had 6 participants from the Ekurhuleni Municipality who took part in the study. Therefore, it is not possible to generalise the study findings to all young adults who grew up with absent fathers as the sample was not big and covered only one municipality not the entire country. The results might not accurately reflect the experiences of young adults who are also not from the same area. This restriction can be overcome in future by employing a bigger sample size. The social class, gender, race, and social setting of such a sample could all be different and, by doing so, the problem of transferability would be resolved.

In addition, the use of interviews to gather data may have certain drawbacks, and emphasises the subjective experiences only, while ignoring the objective facts of father absence in children's lives. Interviews may also be less reliable because each interviewee may have different experiences. As a result, consistency may not be achieved. Moreover, the use of Zoom removed face-to-face interaction which is one of the hallmarks of semi-structured interviews. Future research might therefore address this by utilizing other data collection techniques that enhance reliability.

Furthermore, demographic information of the participants with regards to age, race, socioeconomic status, marital or parental status was not included in data analysis. Therefore, the study findings may vary in accordance with such variables.

6.3 Recommendations

The results of this study have shown that young individuals who were raised without their fathers face various financial, social and emotional challenges. Future research must examine possible interventions that could help the young adults whilst still children and maximise their potential.

Future studies may also unveil the variance in circumstances by examining other cultures and social classes. The creation of supporting networks for young adults from absent father homes may also be considered.

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APPENDIX 1: TURNITIN REPORT

Lived experiences of young adults who grew up without their biological fathers

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APPENDIX 2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



12 May 2022

Eunice Boniswa Mulambo (221116138)
School Of Applied Human Sc
Howard College

Dear EB Mulambo,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003697/2021

Project title: Lived experiences of young adults who grew up without their biological fathers

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 15 November 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) 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.

This approval is valid until 12 May 2023.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX 3: NOTICE



Participants needed for research:

"Lived experiences of young adults who grew up without their fathers"

Criteria for participation

- Young adults between the ages 18-35
- Not raised by their biological fathers
- Residing at Ekurhuleni region, Gauteng

For more information on the study or to volunteer for participation, please contact Boniswa Mulambo on the details below:

Email: boniswa.mulambo@gmail.com

Cellphone number: 076 474 6972



APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE



“Lived experiences of young adults who grew up without their fathers”

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself
2. How do you describe your childhood?
3. Who raised you?
4. Was your father a part of your life in any way or completely absent?
5. How did that contribute to your overall experience as a child?
6. Would you say him being absent played a role in who you are today?
7. How did you overcome the challenges of him not being present?
8. What is the current status of your relationship with him?
9. How does it make you feel?
10. How is your relationship with your mother?
11. How does that make you feel?
12. How has the experience contributed to how you raise or wish to raise your children?
13. How do you feel about your overall experience as a child?
14. What were there challenges if any did you face in obtaining your qualification(s)?

APPENDIX 5: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH



Dear Prospective Research Participant

My name is Boniswa Mulambo. I am a Masters student in the Discipline of Clinical Psychology, School of Applied Human Science – University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. My proposed research title is “Lived experiences of young adults who grew up without their fathers” and the research is being supervised by Ms. Zininzi Bomoyi.

You are being invited to consider participating in this study that seeks to explore the experiences of young adults who grew up with absent fathers in South Africa and who have obtained higher education qualification.

The research is expected to include 6 participants in order to understand their experiences of the researched phenomena. The study will not provide any direct benefits to you, but it will add to the existing literature and may benefit in educating our communities about the impact of absent fathers and also add on information that can be used to inform policies. Although there are no risks involved in the participation in this study, your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

This study will be ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences. In the event of any problems or concerns/queries you may contact the researcher at:

Email: boniswa.mulambo@gmail.com

Mobile: +27 76 474 6972

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 31 260 4557 Fax: +27 31 260 4609 Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX 6: INFORMED CONSENT

I, _____, have been informed about the study titled “Lived experiences of young adults who grew up without their fathers” by Boniswa Mulambo.

- I fully understand the purpose and procedures of the study and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study where clarity was required, and I have been answered adequately.
- 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.
- If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher on +27 76 474 6972.

• 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 then I may contact:

HUMANITES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Tel: +27 31 260 4557 Fax: +27 31 260 4609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

I hereby consent to:

Audio-record my interview YES / NO

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of witness: _____

APPENDIX 7: PROOF OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

The screenshot shows a website page for the Gauteng Department of Social Development. The page title is "Access community-based care for individuals infected and affected by HIV/AIDS". The page includes a navigation menu with "Home" and "Services", and a search bar with "Log in" and "Register" options. A large number "1" is visible in the top right corner. The main content area is titled "Description" and contains the following text:

Individuals affected/infected by HIV/AIDS can request services of cleaning, cooking, assistance by taking individuals to clinics for check-ups and treatment and to check on their general wellbeing. They are also provided with food parcels.

Community Health Care Workers are available in the community to provide health care services as well as counselling.

In the spirit of 'ubuntu', communities can also help each other. Individuals can also request food gardens from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide meals for themselves and also generate income.

To access this service, you can:

- Visit the Gauteng Department of Social Development office in your area.
- Contact the community development worker in your area.

Below the description, there is a section titled "Available Services" with a link to "Request for home and community based care". There is also a "Related Services" section which currently shows "No Related Services". At the bottom of the page, there are social media icons for Facebook and Twitter, and a "Chat with us" button.

Access support for victims of abuse and trauma

Description

Victim empowerment program provides access to a range of services for people who have suffered harm, trauma and material loss through violence, crime, natural disasters, human accident or through socio-economic conditions.

The program aims to restore the loss or damage caused by criminal acts and their consequences through a variety of actions intended to empower the victim to deal with the result of the event. The victim is restored to a state as close as possible to that existing prior to the offence and ideally to a state where the person is able to learn and grow. Depending on the type of trauma suffered, assistance is provided to individuals and families.

How to access the service

Individuals can visit any of the Gauteng Department of Social Development offices close to them.

Available Services

Request for trauma support



[show less](#)

Request for trauma support

In person

Victim Empowerment Program



Find address on the map

1

Esri, CGIAF | Esri South Africa, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, METU/NASA, USGS

Powered by Esri

Agape Lerato Community SAMAG Programme

Address

5033 Mavuso Street, Extension 7, Ratanda
Sedibeng

Contact

0799281145

Access counselling for abuse and trauma

Description

This service is offered telephonically to victims who suffered abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, rape and/or victims of human trafficking. This service is provided by a counsellor and is available 24-hours to individuals in distress.

The Gender Based Violence Centre (GBVC) attends to a variety of emergency situations including indecent assault, physical violence, rape, abandoned children and verbal abuse. It also attended to cases of stalking, emotional abuse, sexual harassment, forced marriages, forced prostitution, elderly citizen abuse, bullying and family disputes.

When a caller contacts the GBVC from a mobile phone, they can be geographically located, enabling the centre to determine the resources nearest to the caller - social worker, police station, hospital or safe house. In this way, help is dispatched immediately.

The Centre can also assist in the prosecution of perpetrators as information collected throughout the intervention process can be made available to the courts as evidence.

The GBVC toll-free number is **0800 428 428 (0800 GBV GBV)**.

For more information visit [Gender Base Violence](#) site.

Available Services

Call to receive counselling



show more

Related Services

No Related Services

Services

Health Services

Education

Childcare

WorkLife

Work

Accommodation

Workplace

Parent

Student

Retiree

Entrepreneur

Small Business

Survivor

Our Organisation

Department

Institutions

Partners

Stakeholders

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Contact with us

