



**UNIVERSITY OF
MPUMALANGA**

Creating Opportunities

**Exploring perceptions of young adults on the effect of father absence on
their wellbeing in Ehlanzeni District, Mpumalanga Province**

Kenny Lethuxolo Nhlope

201906988

Master of Arts in Psychology

Supervisor: Prof. C Gwandure

Co-Supervisor: Dr R. M. Mhlari

MAY 2026

DECLARATION

I, Kenny Lethuxolo Nhlope, declare that this research, titled “*The Lived Experience of Father Absence: Young Adults’ Perspectives on Well-being in Ehlanzeni District, Mpumalanga Province*”, is my original work, submitted to the University of Mpumalanga in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology. I confirm that this work has not been previously presented for examination at this institution or any other institution by myself or anyone else. I acknowledge that I properly cited and referenced all sources used in this work.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This dissertation is affectionately dedicated to the cherished memory of my late mother, Miss Gladys Hlophe. Her unwavering love and support, despite the challenges posed by my father's absence, have provided a consistent source of intellectual stimulation. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to my aunt, Nelisiwe Hlophe, who selflessly assumed a motherly role to me after my mother's passing. This study further honours the resilience and courage of young individuals, like myself, who were raised by their single mothers in father-absent households.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Primarily, I give thanks to God, who strengthens me according to His promises (2 Timothy 4:17). This experience, as challenging as it was, has taught me to lean on and depend on my Saviour, Jesus Christ, all my friends, and my family.

I sincerely appreciate and acknowledge my supervisors, Prof. C. Gwandure and Dr R. M. Mhlari, for their unwavering guidance in helping me produce high-quality work. Your sustained support and patience have been invaluable throughout this journey; I appreciate your understanding.

My earnest gratitude to my entire Hlophe family, and friends for the consistent encouragement and love they have shown me while conducting this study. I know they did not understand why I kept on studying this far instead of looking for a job, but they supported me. To everyone who took me in after my mother's passing, words fail me when I think about the kindness you have shown me. My aunt Yvhone and her late husband Roger, thank you so much. My uncle, Anthony, Mmamkhulu, the Mbalane family, and the Shabangu family, I am a graduate today because of your efforts.

Specifically, with the utmost respect and honour, I appreciate Mr Tshepo and Mrs Lerato Shabangu for advising me to redo my Grade 12 when I failed in 2017 and for the consistent emotional and financial support they have provided me with since my first undergraduate degree up to this far.

To my brothers and friends, Malibongwe Nkosi, Khuliso Mulaudzi, and Silindelokuhle Xulu, you have been with me and encouraged me to keep on pushing even when it was hard; you are appreciated.

I am immensely indebted to the National Research Foundation for the financial support provided during my Master's period. They awarded me with an opportunity to excel and prove myself capable of producing such work. Funding made things much easier for me; I did not have to worry about fees, but focus on producing quality work.

Finally, my sincerest gratitude to all the young adults for their unwavering dedication and invaluable contributions to my study. Their selfless involvement was instrumental in facilitating the effective initiation of this project, and I am indebted to each and every one of them. Akwandze tihlobo tami.

ABSTRACT

South Africa exhibits an alarmingly high prevalence of absent fathers, with approximately half of the children in the country lacking regular paternal contact. This phenomenon is particularly concerning, given the nation's ranking as the second-highest in global father absence rates. Extensive research underscores the deleterious consequences of father absence on the mental health and well-being of adolescents and young adults. This phenomenological study explored the lived experience and perceptions of young adults regarding father absence and its impact on their well-being in the Ehlanzeni District of Mpumalanga province. A total of 25 participants, 10 males and 15 females, aged between 18 and 25 years, were recruited using snowball sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and thematic content analysis was employed to analyse data. The attachment theory by John Bowlby provided the theoretical framework for interpreting the findings. The study uncovered several emerging themes related to the participants' subjective experiences of being raised in a father-absent home, the role of a father, the emotional and psychological impact of father absence, behavioural consequences, social effects on individual well-being, and the coping strategies employed by the participants. The findings revealed that father absence disrupts the bond between father and child, with participants reporting feelings of abandonment and neglect. Extended families were seen as playing a crucial role in cushioning the young adults from hardship and providing social and economic support until they became independent.

Keywords: Absent fatherhood, father absence, single mother, young adults

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

UMP:	University of Mpumalanga
FREC:	Faculty Research Ethics Committee
WHO:	World Health Organization

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	II
DEDICATION	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
ABSTRACT	V
GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS	VI
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VII
LIST OF FIGURES	XII
LIST OF TABLES	XII
LIST OF APPENDICES	XII
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Rationale for the Study	3
1.3 Significance of the Study	5
1.4 Chapter Outline	5
1.5 Chapter Summary	6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Theoretical Framework: The Attachment Theory of John Bowlby.....	7
2.3. Literature Review	9
2.3.1 Father	9
2.3.2 Father's Absence and Family Structure	10
2.4 Fatherhood and Absent Fatherhood Within the African Context.....	11
2.5 The Effect on Young Adulthood	13
2.5.1 The Effect of Father's Absence on Both Genders	14
2.5.2 Psychological Effect of Absence Father.....	16
2.5.3 Low Self-Esteem and Father Absenteeism	17
2.5.4 Anger Issues	18
2.5.5 Teen Pregnancy, Social and Relationships	18

2.5.6 Academic Achievement.....	20
2.6 Socio-Economic Status and Father Absenteeism.....	22
2.7 Coping Strategies.....	23
2.7.1 Types of Coping Strategies.....	24
2.7.2 Culture and Coping Strategies.....	26
2.7.3 Children with Single Caregivers.....	27
2.8 Aim of the Study	28
2.9 Objectives of the Study.....	28
2.10 Research Questions	29
2.11 Definition of the Key Terms	29
2.11.1 Absent Fatherhood.....	29
2.11.2 Fatherhood	29
2.11.3 Psychosocial Wellbeing	29
2.11.4 Young adults	29
2.12 Chapter summary.....	29
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	31
3.1 Introduction.....	31
3.2 Research approach	31
3.3 Research Design.....	31
3.4 Study Location.....	32
3.5 Sampling and Sample Size	33
3.6 Measuring Instrument.....	34
3.7 Data Collection Procedure.....	34
3.8 Data Analysis.....	36
3.8.1 Phase 1: Familiarisation	36
3.8.2 Phase 2: Coding	37
3.8.3 Phase 3: Generating Themes	37

3.8.4 Phase 4: Themes Refinement	37
3.8.5 Phase 5: Themes Definition and Naming	37
3.8.6 Phase 6: Results Compilation.....	37
3.9 Ethical Considerations.....	38
3.9.1 Informed Consent	38
3.9.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality.....	38
3.9.3 Discontinuance	39
3.10 Ensuring the trustworthiness of the study.....	39
3.10.1 Credibility.....	39
3.10.2 Transferability	40
3.10.3 Dependability.....	40
3.10.4 Confirmability.....	41
3.11 Chapter Summary.....	41
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS	42
4.1 Introduction.....	42
4.2 Demographic Table.....	42
4.3 Themes and Sub-Themes	43
4.3.1. Theme 1: Subjective Experiences of Being Raised in a Father-Absent. 44	
Home	44
4.3.2 Theme 2: The Role of a Father.....	48
4.3.3 Theme 3: The Psychological Impact of a Living Father's Absence	49
4.3.3.1. Sub-Theme: Stress	49
4.3.3.2 Sub-Theme: Anger Issues.....	50
4.3.3.3 Sub-Theme: Trust Issues	51
4.3.3.4 Sub-Theme: Abandonment and Rejection.....	52
4.3.3 Theme 4: Fatherlessness and Behavioural Patterns	53
4.3.4.1 Sub-Theme: Social Interaction and Relationships.....	53

4.3.4.2 Sub-Theme: Academic Achievement.....	55
4.3.4.3 Sub-Theme: Substance Use	57
4.3.4.4 Sub-Theme: Teenage Pregnancy.....	57
4.3.5 Theme 5: Social Effect on Individual's Wellbeing.....	59
4.3.5.1 Sub-Theme: Identity	59
4.3.5.2 Sub-Theme: Self-Worth.....	60
4.3.5.3 Sub-Theme: Independence and Decision-Making.....	61
4.3.5.4 Sub-Theme: Economic Hardships.....	62
4.3.6 Theme 6: Coping Mechanisms	64
4.3.6.1 Sub-Theme: Support by Friends and Family Members	64
4.3.6.2 Sub-Theme: Seeking Professional Help.....	65
4.3.6.3 Sub-Theme: Journaling	67
4.3.6.4 Sub-Theme: Relying on Spiritual Beliefs	67
4.3.6.5 Sub-Theme: Defensive Humour	68
4.3.6.6 Sub-Theme: Denial	68
4.3.6.7 Sub-Theme: Impersonation	69
4.3.6.8 Sub-Theme: Consuming Alcohol	69
4.4 Conclusion.....	70
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	71
5.1 Introduction.....	71
5.2 Subjective Experiences of Being Raised in a Father-Absent Home	71
5.3 The Role of a Father.....	74
5.4 The Psychological of a Living Father's Absence	75
5.5 Fatherlessness and Behavioural Patterns	79
5.6 Social Effects on Individual's Wellbeing	80
5.7 The Coping Mechanisms and Resilience Factors Employed by Participants	82
5.7.1 Support from Extended Family Members	82

5.7.2 Talking with Someone Professional	83
5.7.3 Journaling	84
5.7.4 Silence	84
5.7.5. Defensive Humour	85
5.7.6. Denial	85
5.8 Conclusion.....	86
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	88
6.1 Summary of the Findings.....	88
6.2 Limitations of the Study	89
6.3 Recommendations of the Study	90
6.4 Personal Reflection	91
REFERENCES	93
APPENDICES.....	120
Appendix A: Letter to Participant	120
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form	122
Appendix C: Interview Schedule.....	122
Appendix D: Ethical Clearance	124
Appendix E: Editor’s Certificate	125
Appendix F: Plagiarism Report.....	125
 LIST OF FIGURES	
Figure 3.1: Map of Ehlanzeni District, Mpumalanga province	32

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Research timeline	35
Table 4.1: Demographic profile of the participants	43
Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes	44

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter to Participant	116
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form	118
Appendix C: Interview Schedule	119
Appendix D: Ethical Clearance	120
Appendix E: Editor's Certificate	121
Appendix F: Plagiarism Report	122

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The combined efforts and active involvement of both parents play a pivotal role in shaping development (Thupayagale-Tshweneage et al., 2012). According to Hornstara et al. (2022) fathers have a significant impact on their children's development and well-being. South Africa exhibits a concerning trend of paternal absence, with statistics revealing a disproportionately high number of fathers not involved (Gould & Ward, 2015), and over 50% of the children in the nation have no regular contact with their fathers (Letamo et.al., 2015). This phenomenon presents both social and developmental challenges that affect the upbringing of children and their lives throughout childhood to young adulthood. Research conducted by Makusha and Richter (2015) indicates that South Africa is confronted with a significant challenge related to father absence, with the country boasting the second-highest rate internationally. As reported by Carr (2015), parents are typically considered exemplars by their children, and consequently, children often copy the norms set by their parents. This notion suggests that there are certain behaviours that young adults may be deprived of because of father absence.

Research on this phenomenon has shown that the absence of fathers for a considerable length of a child's development can result in lasting repercussions on the child's general overall health, especially when the child transitions to young adulthood (Kesebonye & AmoneP'Olak, 2021). The effects of fatherlessness can pose severe challenges for young people, particularly young men (Mkhwanazi et al., 2024). Mavungu et al.'s (2013) investigation on absent fathers in Johannesburg, South Africa, discovered that a lack of father-child contact may be linked to child misbehaviour, substance addiction, and inadequate financial resources. Researchers have reported that children with present fathers accomplish better academically and possess greater self-esteem (Richter et al., 2006; Schacht et al., 2009). They feel more secure in their heterosexual relationships (Makusha & Richter, 2015). As stated by Freeks (2017) and TenEyck et al. (2023), the father-child relationship has its own special dynamic, which is often essential for nurturing exploration, autonomy, and independence in their lives.

Active fatherhood is vital for fostering healthy childhood development and promoting positive mental health (Wilhelm, 2014). Various studies have indicated that paternal influence on daughters is a crucial factor in forming a daughter's socio-sexual development, influencing her attitudes towards development, influencing her attitudes towards sex and relationships (Blankenhorn, 2007; Wilhelm, 2014). Blankenhorn (2007), in their study, indicates that paternal involvement and affection are critical factors in shaping a daughter's self-concept, feminist ideology, and sense of lovability, ultimately influencing her overall well-being and life outcomes. According to Kim et al. (2021), boys who have absent fathers are also more prone to participate in violent behaviour and dangerous sexual behaviours such as unprotected sex or early sexual debut.

Furthermore, the morals and personalities children delineate at schools are representative of the ecological and socio-cultural factors present in their original environment (Wilhelm, 2014). Richter et al. (2012) noted that experiencing paternal absence during childhood often necessitates significant family adaptations, affecting the family's organization, dynamics, and financial situation. The literature suggests that the outcomes of paternal absence in child relationships is moderated by the structure of the family, with Kalil et al. (2014) demonstrating that nurturing family relationships acts as a safeguard, mitigating the adverse effects of paternal absence on child development.

Father absence has been linked with a range of negative repercussions, such as misconduct, academic underperformance, and school dropout, raising concerns about the potential for self-fulfilling prophecies (Freeks, 2017; TenEyck et al., 2023). While much of the emphasis has historically been on the mother-child relationship, particularly in early childhood, there has been a growing recognition of the critical but often overlooked role fathers play in child development (Choo & Shek, 2013; Najam & Kausar, 2012). According to Choo and Shek (2013), positive father contribution is linked to a range of beneficial behaviours in children, such as reduced sexual activity, lower alcohol consumption, less vulnerability to peer pressure, and healthier eating habits. Tasthan (2013) noted that a detached father-child connection is linked to both productive and disruptive conflict resolution styles.

Additionally, other studies have shown that father-child estrangement and aggressive behaviour are strongly linked to notably elevated levels of behavioural dysregulation and depressive manifestation in adolescents (Najam & Kausar, 2012). This study investigated the effect of father absence on the well-being of young adults in Kabokweni Township, examining various dimensions including emotional, social, and psychological factors.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

A review of global statistics reveals that South Africa exhibits the second-highest prevalence of father absence internationally (Nyanjaya & Masango, 2012). As reported by Makiwane et al. (2014) 60.4% of African children aged between 0- and 9-years old experience father absence in Mpumalanga province. According to South Africa's 2019 general household survey, 63% of children do not live with their biological fathers, even though 87% of fathers are still alive. Of these, 11% are deceased, and 2% are unknown (Mavungu 2013; van den Berg et al. 2021). The State of South Africa's Fathers Report indicates that approximately 64.5% of children in South Africa do not reside with their biological fathers (Ratele et al., 2024). Numerous investigations suggest that father absence in the upbringing of children is increasing and becoming more normalised in South Africa (Morwe et al., 2015). This trend is associated to the rise of single-mother households, where absent fatherhood is increasingly viewed as the norm (Ford et al., 2008). Statistics SA (2019) reported that around 21.3% of children often experience non-traditional living arrangements, where they do not core side with both biological parents, (42%) experiencing maternal-headed households and a smaller percentage of (4%) with fathers.

Findings by the Social Development Department (2012) identified a rapid increase in the statistics of households led by women across the country. Within South African societal context, both socioeconomic challenges and lack of job opportunities have emerged as significant predictors influencing failure of a substantial proportion of fathers to being responsible for their children (Makofane, 2015). Furthermore, research indicates that while some fathers provide financial or other forms of support, the majority remain absent, with few offering care or emotional support. A substantial number of fathers in South Africa are not fulfilling their paternal responsibilities, often contribute only minimal financial support, while neglecting them emotionally and physically (Patel & Mavungu, 2016). (Thupayagale-Tshweneagae et al., 2012) in an

investigation conducted in Botswana, exhibited that the father absence can have both beneficial and bad effects on a child's development. In certain instances, children do not exhibit adverse outcomes resulting from being brought up without their fathers because their present single mothers and family members beyond the immediate household are instrumental in shaping and preparing them for adulthood. These fatherless children have a higher chance of succeeding in life (Wilhelm, 2014) because they often feel the drive to establish and demonstrate their worth (Datta, 2007). Therefore, the upbringing environment holds greater significance than the lack of paternal presence.

Majority of young adults reared without fathers are said to have been greatly affected emotionally because these children shift the blame to their mothers for their father's absence and thus become angry with them (Thupayagale Tshweneagae et al., 2012). Adolescent boys from fatherless homes are at risk of vulnerability. According to studies by Popenoe (1996) and Wright (2010), boys from different backgrounds are less likely than those raised in fatherless households, to face social problems as children. The psychological and socio-emotional consequences of growing up without a present father on children's and young adults' well-being require further investigation. McLanahan et al. (2013) investigated the incidental effects of paternal absence. According to their findings, paternal absence can have a profound and lasting negative impacts a child's social-emotional development, particularly because it increases aggressive behaviour. The consequences may be more significant for boys than in girls if a father is absent, depending on the time it happens, specifically if it occurs in early childhood as opposed to middle childhood. There is less evidence to substantiate an association between fatherlessness and children's cognitive growth.

Additionally, they discovered substantial evidence that the lack of a father encourages dangerous behaviours in teenagers, such as smoking or delaying having children until later in life, with long-lasting impacts on social and emotional growth. The evidence for an impact on teenage cognitive ability is currently limited, although paternal absence is regularly and substantially correlated with lower rates of high school graduation. The latter results suggest that rather than cognitive capacities being harmed, problem behaviours are increasing as a result of the effects on educational attainment. Most of the studies been done thus far have been quantitative in nature and has not attempted to investigate the subjective experiences of young adults who were raised without their

fathers. In an effort to close that gap, this study investigated the lived experiences of father-absent young adults raised by single mothers in the absence of their fathers, who are still alive but absent in their lives.

This study, which was carried out in the Ehlanzeni district, aimed to close a breach in the literature by investigating the perspectives of young people who had never seen their dads. The effect of their father's absence on their wellbeing was evaluated by the study. The aim of the study was to contribute to the establishment of interventions that would enable young people without fathers to cope and grow up to be more successful adults. Additionally, it was desired that this research would help develop psychosocial support for young people in underprivileged communities, such as Kabokweni, Lekazi, Nkomazi and Hluvukani, where the study took place.

1.3 Significance of the Study

In rural places such as Ehlanzeni District, father absence is a prevalent concern that has a severe detrimental consequences on the lives of both carers and young adults who were raised by a single caregiver in the absence of their fathers who are still alive. This study will supplement the corpus of knowledge on father absence by shedding light on issues related to challenges experienced by children growing up in fatherless homes. This study can possibly help in finding ways to reduce the detrimental effects of father's absence, incorporating developing youth programs that assist those affected. Studying this phenomenon will then increase awareness of the consequences and the importance of fathers in children's lives and provide advice to help children raised without the presence of their living fathers as well as help single mothers.

1.4 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1: Introduction the study

The first chapter provided an overview of the study's background, the rationale behind it, the research aim, the primary objectives, and the research questions. It also included definitions of key terms.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The second chapter offers a review of literature focusing on the experiences of young adults raised in father-absent environments and the impact of father absence. It

highlights key terms by giving definitions of what fatherhood is, absent fatherhood, and the impact on young adulthood, on different genders, academic performance, and socio-economic status. It also outlines the theoretical framework that forms and underpins the present study, focusing on John Bowlby's attachment theory, which was utilised in this research. The discussion emphasises the significance of attachment in the relationship between a child and their caregivers.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This research methodology chapter then provides an overview of the methodology employed in this study. It details the research approach, design, data collection methods, procedures, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Results

The results chapter focuses on the overall research findings. It addresses the presentation, analysis, and outcomes of the interviews conducted for data collection.

The data is interpreted and assessed, while matrices are used to condense the information into codes and themes.

Chapter 5: Discussions

This chapter presents the final findings of the study and draws conclusions based on the research. It provides a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for young adults from father-absent homes to help them cope. Suggestions for future research are also included. Additionally, the study's limitations are discussed, particularly regarding the use of semi-structured interviews, where participants have the discretion to choose what to share about their personal experiences. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, finding participants willing to fully engage in the study was initially challenging, especially among males. However, after thoroughly explaining the study's purpose and objectives, the researcher was able to secure the required number of participants.

1.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the planned study, including the research topic, background, introduction, and the rationale behind the research. The upcoming chapter will delve into the literature review, theoretical framework, research aims and objectives, research questions, and definitions of key terms.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework and literature reviews that form the foundation of this study. It adopts and justifies the use of attachment theory. The first section of the literature review defines and explores concepts of fatherhood, absent fatherhood, and their implications for family structure within the African context. The second section examines the impact of father absence on young adulthood, considering its effects on both male and female individuals. The third section addresses the psychological consequences of father absence, including its connection to low self-esteem, attempted suicide, anger issues, and academic performance. Finally, the chapter concludes by discussing the coping strategies utilised by young adults in response to father absence.

2.2 Theoretical Framework: The Attachment Theory of John Bowlby

The study employs attachment theory as its theoretical framework. John Bowlby's attachment theory is particularly relevant as it highlights the significance of the bond between a child and their caregivers. Bowlby (1958) asserted that attachment begins in infancy and persists throughout life, involving innate behavioural systems essential for survival and reproduction. He described attachment as a lasting psychological bond between individuals (McLeod, 2007). According to Bowlby, secure attachment is characterised by a child feeling valued and loved by their caregivers, such as parents. Ainsworth (1989) identified three attachment patterns: secure, anxious-resistant, and anxious-avoidant. Secure attachment emerges when caregivers are consistently responsive to the child's needs. Anxious-resistant attachment results from inconsistent responsiveness, and anxious-avoidant attachment develops when a child learns not to trust caregivers due to past rejection or neglect. These early interactions with primary caregivers are critical for building trust (Page, 1999). The absence or limited presence of a father can disrupt this attachment process, potentially leading to difficulties in trust development (Senior, 2010). In this study, attachment theory provides insight into how a lack of early paternal interaction can negatively impact a child. Bowlby's attachment theory is fundamental to this study as it underscores the importance of caregiver-child attachments in shaping a child's behaviour (Brown et al.,

2012). Additionally, it highlights the critical role of fathers in providing security and love, as well as encouraging exploration and new experiences (Cosentino, 2018).

A lack of affection results in feelings of rejection and unworthiness (Hiolle & Canamero, 2007). In the present study, if children do not have any relationship with their fathers, they are likely to have attachment issues and feelings of abandonment. The lack of psychological connection between children and their fathers results in an identity crisis for some. The theory asserts that every child needs at least one caregiver to form a secure attachment (McLeod, 2009), which provides a crucial sense of security and foundation (Stroebe & Archer, 2013). Children develop strong relationships with their caregivers in childhood; thus, a responsive and emotionally available parent helps the child to trust both the caregiver and the world, based on their early experiences (Boundless, 2016). When a child has one parent or any guardian who is present in the life of the individual this results in the individual feeling secure.

Furthermore, caregivers who are unavailable or unresponsive to the child's emotional needs may lead to insecurity in the child and potential dysfunctional personality traits in adulthood (Grossmann et al., 2005). In contrast, the presence of one parent physically, if they are only physically available but cannot provide emotional support due to being preoccupied, the children tend to feel as though they are rejected by the one who is available. The child-caregiver relationship is also vital for socialisation, and its absence is linked to juvenile delinquency, emotional problems, and ant-social behaviour (Petters, 2006). Children need a warm, loving, and trustworthy relationship with both parents; those who lack such a relationship may feel rejected and neglected (Ainsworth et al., 2015).

Despite considerable research conducted on the role of fathers in their children's development, relatively few studies have examined the impact of fatherhood on father-child attachment (Brown et al., 2012). Attachment theory emphasises that secure attachment is essential not only for mother-child relationships but also for father-child bonds. Early involvement of a father in a child's life fosters healthy and secure development in multiple aspects, continuing into young adulthood. A father's presence provides attachment, security, and warmth, while his absence can result in challenges with trust, affecting the ability to form and maintain relationships. Additionally, a positive father-child relationship can help reduce behavioural issues during both childhood and adulthood (Mancini, 2010).

2.3. Literature Review

A literature review is a vital component of the research process. Merriam (1998) defines it as theoretical or conceptual writing within a specific area, supplemented by data obtained through research and observation. The purpose of a literature review is to provide the researcher with a comprehensive framework to situate their work within the broader context of existing studies on the topic. This review focuses on fatherhood within the South African context, serving as the foundation for contributions to the existing knowledge base. The theoretical framework informs the researcher about the study population, criteria for sample selection, and the refinement of the research problem. Throughout the study, the literature remains a key reference point, guiding the collection, processing, and interpretation of data.

2.3.1 Father

According to Morrell (2006) defining the term ‘father’ is crucial because it encompasses various interpretations in different contexts. In Western contexts, a ‘father’ is typically understood as the person who is responsible for reproduction, a man who impregnates a woman (Morrell & Richter, 2004; Morrell, 2006; Hunter, 2006). This biological definition, while it is accurate, is somewhat restrictive due to advancements such as in vitro fertilisation, which allows conception without the physical presence of a man (Morrell, 2006). Conversely, in the African context, the term ‘father’ extends beyond biological relationships to include other male relatives such as grandfathers and uncles who are presently providing fatherhood (Hunter, 2006). Here, fatherhood encompasses kinship ties and the social roles a man plays in relation to children, regardless of biological connections (Morrell & Richter, 2004; Morrell, 2006). Morrell (2006) further stated that fatherhood can be understood in various ways, such as social fatherhood or economic fatherhood. A social father is a man who cares for or resides with children who are not biologically his own, such as his sister’s children, grandchildren, or children from a relationship with their mother (Morrell, 2006). In African cultures, this form of fatherhood is prevalent, as all men may be seen as fathers to children within their community. For instance, a younger brother of a father is referred to as *ubab’omncani* (younger father), while an elder brother is called *ubab’mkhulu* (older father) (Morrell, 2006). Both *ubab’mkhulu* and *ubab’omncani* have moral and cultural responsibilities to care for their brother’s children if the father is unable to do so (Morrell & Richter, 2004; Morrell, 2006).

In traditional African society, the concept of ubuntu, which emphasises mutual dependence for survival, extends to care-giving. This means any person can be responsible for another's children, irrespective of blood relations (Mkhize, 2006; Lesejane, 2006). However, Lesejane (2006) noted that due to shifting social, political, and economic conditions, the traditional notion of multiple fathers and ubuntu is weakening. Morrell's concept of an economic father is someone who primarily provides financial support, such as paying for school fees and any other needs that may require finances (Morrell et al., 2003). Given these diverse definitions of fatherhood, this research specifically focuses on biological fathers rather than social fathers.

2.3.2 Father's Absence and Family Structure

Paternal absence is multifaceted, requiring a clear definition to fully understand its implications (Balcom, 1998). A father can be absent in various ways: physically, emotionally, and financially (Tau, 2020). Cultural context significantly influences perceptions of father absence, affecting its impact. In collectivist cultures, where childrearing responsibilities are shared by the community, the absence of a father may be less impactful because children are often supported by a broader network (Balcom, 1998). Collectivist cultures, commonly found in developing regions such as Africa and parts of Asia, emphasise communal well-being over individual interests (Eaton & Louw, 2000). In these cultures, people often define themselves through their relationships with others.

In contrast, individualistic cultures, prevalent in developed countries such as the United States and Australia, prioritise personal goals and self-reliance (Caldwell-Harris & Aycicegi, 2006). In such societies, the absence of a father can be more pronounced because of the focus on individual achievement and personal responsibility. Additional terms related to absent fathers include non-residential fathers, unknown fathers, and undisclosed fathers (King & Sobolewski, 2006). Non-residential fathers live apart from their children but may still offer financial, emotional, and social support (King & Sobolewski, 2006). Unknown fathers are those whose identity is not known to the child, and in some cases, the father may be unknown to the mother and other family members or may not acknowledge paternity (Nduna & Jewkes, 2011).

Research on father absence highlights various social issues. Studies have linked growing up without a father to serious social problems such as poverty, school dropout

rates, and delinquency (Kroese et al., 2021). Poverty and economic insecurity are also noted as contributing factors to father absence and adolescent behavioural issues (Tau, 2020). Children raised without their biological fathers often face lower academic performance and are less likely to complete secondary education or pursue higher learning (Langa, 2014; Franklin et al., 2015). The absence of a father can result in fewer parental resources and a lack of male role models, affecting discipline and decision-making. Fathers play a crucial role in shaping a child's self-esteem and gender roles. Boys learn male behaviour and interests, and girls potentially experience various negative outcomes, such as low self-esteem and early pregnancy, if a father figure is absent (Morrel, 2006; Schwarzwald, 2014; Tau, 2020).

In South Africa, there has been a noticeable increase in divorce rates since 1996, suggesting that children are experiencing more frequent changes in family structure (Smith et al., 2014). This places greater demands on single caregivers, often mothers, who face financial and support challenges compared to married parents (Tau, 2020). Father absence is increasingly common in South Africa, with a growing number of households led by single women (Richter, 2006). The Department of Social Development (2012) confirms a significant rise in female-headed households. Factors contributing to this trend include poverty and high unemployment rates, leading to a prevalence of absentee fathers who provide minimal financial or emotional support (Makofane, 2015; South African Institute of Race Relations, 2012). The high rate of absentee fathers in South Africa is a serious social issue (Makusha & Richter, 2015; Tau, 2020; Mkhwanazi et al., 2024). South Africa has one of the highest percentages of absent fathers in Africa and is among the countries with the highest rates of father absence globally (Freeks, 2017). Studies indicate that approximately 50% of South African children grow up in absent-parent families, with a small percentage residing with their fathers (Gould & Ward, 2015; Makusha & Richter, 2015; Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018; Salami & Okeke, 2018).

2.4 Fatherhood and Absent Fatherhood Within the African Context

According to Tau (2020), the concept of fatherhood in the African context extends beyond mere biological ties to encompass the roles and responsibilities fulfilled by a male figure within a child's life. In African societies, fatherhood is defined by relational ties and the roles played by a male adult rather than strictly by biological connection. This perspective reflects a broader understanding of fatherhood where a family

member, such as a brother of the biological father, or a community member, can assume fatherly roles (Morrell, 2006). This communal approach asserts that a child is considered to belong to every adult in the community, emphasising collective responsibility and care regardless of the biological connection (Lesejane, 2006).

In traditional African contexts, fathers have historically been viewed as key decision-makers and providers within the household (Makofane, 2015). Their responsibilities include not only meeting the material needs of their children but also addressing their non-material needs such as emotional support, care, and security (Heron, 2019).

This collective understanding of fatherhood encompasses all children within the community, reflecting the traditional values of communal support and shared responsibility in child-rearing (Franklin et al., 2015). The spirit of communalism, where community care is emphasised, supports children even in the absence of their biological fathers (Brown et al., 2013).

Despite the important role of fathers, many families today are led by single mothers, particularly in contexts where fathers are absent (Tau, 2020; Department of Social Development, 2012). Some studies indicate that single mothers, particularly in black communities, demonstrate resilience and raise successful children despite the absence of a father (Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2015). However, there remains a critical need to understand the reasons behind father absence and its impact on children. Research should focus on the perspective of absent fathers, exploring the causes of their absence and their understanding of its impact on their children. This understanding can guide efforts to address and reduce father absence. The growing phenomenon of father absence (Mkhwanazi et al., 2024) underscores the importance of examining the father-child relationship in psychotherapy (Simmons et al., 2017; Baker, 2017; Craig et al., 2018). Exploring father absence could lead to preventive measures, such as psychoeducational resources highlighting the impact of father involvement on children's development and providing individual and group psychotherapy for fathers experiencing depression (Baker, 2017; Craig et al., 2018). Black (2008) identified several factors influencing father absence, including lack of education, unstable home environments, infidelity, misconceptions about fatherhood, and emotional suffering.

Regardless of the factors leading to a fathers' absence, children are affected by their fathers' absence (Tau, 2020). Many adolescents who participated in Shields' study

described their fathers as more ghostlike—present in a psychological sense but absent physically—leading to emotional pain, anger, and sadness due to abandonment. In South Africa, a significant number of young men show disinterest in parenting, contributing to the high rates of father absence (Madhavan et al., 2008). Some fathers even deny their paternity or use unemployment as an excuse for their lack of involvement (Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2015; Mavungu, 2014). Statistics South Africa (StatsSA, 2017) reported that in 62% of births in 2016, the father was absent, placing South Africa among the top countries globally for absentee fatherhood. The migratory work system and urbanisation contribute significantly to this issue, leading to an increase in female-headed households (Rogan, 2016). As societal dynamics shift, traditional definitions of fatherhood are becoming less relevant, necessitating an analysis of modern family dynamics in understanding and addressing father absence.

2.5 The Effect on Young Adulthood

Jones (2007) explored the impact of an absent father on the separation-individuation process during adolescence through a case study analysis. Jones found that the absence of a father during this crucial phase, particularly the rapprochement subphase could lead to attachment and separation-individuation difficulties. In the case study, an adolescent male who experienced limited contact with his father displayed problematic behaviours due to an incomplete alignment process between him and his father. The premature ending of this process, due to the father's absence, led to issues with resolving rapprochement, resulting in violent and uncontrollable behaviours. However, since the participant also had a stepfather and idealised his biological father, the study did not fully address the effects of complete father absence. This limitation means that the findings may not be broadly generalisable (Jones, 2007).

Expanding on previous research, Jones (2008) examined the effects of both physical and psychological father absence on the separation-individuation process. In a case study involving a six-year-old child and a 50-year-old adult, Jones found that physical absence disrupted the separation-individuation cycle for the child, leading to therapeutic interventions focused on gradual separation from the mother. Furthermore, the adult participant experienced psychological absence despite the father's physical presence, which also hindered the individuation process. Jones' study highlighted that psychological absence could be as detrimental as physical absence, affecting a child's development of independence and self-concept. Jones recommended that clinicians

address the negative impacts of father absence within evolving family structures (Jones, 2008).

Jones et al. (2003) conducted an earlier study comparing the effects of father absence on separation-individuation among 50 middle-class white male children. The study hypothesised that boys living with only their biological mothers would encounter difficulties in the separation-individuation process. Using the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence (SITA) and the Psychological Separation Inventory (PSI), the researchers found no significant differences in the separation-individuation outcomes between children living with single mothers and those in intact families. This result was inconsistent with other studies and may have been influenced by the homogeneous sample of white middle-class males, which lacked diversity and failed to account for varying experiences among minority groups. The study did not provide insights into how minority children might experience separation-individuation differently due to father absence (Jones et al., 2003).

Shields (2003) employed quantitative measures to assess the influence of father absence on separation-individuation in a sample of 97 male participants aged 18 to 23. Using the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence and the Parental Bonding Instrument, Shields (2003) found that father encouragement of autonomy played a significant role in successful separation-individuation. The study revealed that while the physical presence of a father was important, encouragement of autonomy was a more critical factor for both present and absent father groups. This finding underscores the impact of paternal support on individuation. Though the study's lack of diversity and inability to establish causation limits the generalisability of the results (Shields, 2003).

2.5.1 The Effect of Father's Absence on Both Genders

Literature and theory propound that the link present between father absence and teenage behaviour may differ depending on the gender of the child (Boothroyd, 2017). Girls and boys tend to have different types of behavioural problems; internal symptoms are much more common in girls than in boys (Mkhwanazi et al., 2024), while boys show higher levels of external behavioural problems (Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2015).

Whether the absence of the father influences behaviour through socialisation, emotional distress, or parental monitoring, the behavioural responses to this

experience are likely to reflect and amplify existing trends. Research on the role of gender differences is mixed (McLanahan Tach & Schneider, 2013). For example, Malone and his colleagues (2004) found that parental divorce of girls is not related to external behaviour, but that male divorce is related to external behaviour in primary and secondary schools. In contrast, Allison and Furstenberg (1989) reported that the effects of family dissolution on juvenile behaviour are greater for girls than for boys. From a historical perspective, Bieber et al. (1962) argued that homosexuality stemmed from a breakdown in the father-son relationship. Similarly, Nicolosi (1991) suggested that male homosexual desires were driven by a dynamic associated with either the failure of the father-son relationship or the rejection of the child's attempts to form a bond with his father or father figure. In contrast, Alexander (1997) proposed that while early father-son relationships may not have been fulfilling, the issue was not simply a lack of connection; rather, the relationship boys desired with their fathers was never attained.

In other research, Stevens et al. and the ALSPAC study team (2002) found no significant differences in gender role development between boys and girls raised in father-present versus father-absent families. In contrast, Mandara et al. (2005) suggested that boys raised in father-absent households were more passive, exhibiting more female traits and fewer male characteristics compared to those raised in fatherpresent households. To examine the impact of father absence on gender role development, Mandara and colleagues surveyed 15-year-old African-American boys and girls from various high schools in Southern California. Participants completed questionnaires on gender role development, self-esteem, and family functioning, while their parents filled out demographic questionnaires. The study used the Family Environment Scale to assess family organization and the Multidimensional Self-esteem Inventory to measure participants' self-esteem. The findings showed that boys from father-present homes exhibited higher levels of masculinity than those from father-absent homes. Despite both groups aspiring to manhood, boys from father absent families were perceived to demonstrate lower levels of masculinity.

There has been a rising trend of father-absent households globally, particularly within black communities (Tau, 2020; Nduna et al., 2011; Mkhwanazi et al., 2024). Holborn and Eddy (2011) and Van den Berg and Makusha (2018) noted that boys raised in father-absent homes are more likely to exhibit hyper-masculine behaviours, such as

aggression. Likewise, growing concerns have been raised about the increasing number of boys growing up without fathers and the adverse effects this has on their development (Bojuwoye & Sylvester, 2014; Wilson et al., 2016).

2.5.2 Psychological Effect of Absence Father

From a historical psychoanalytic perspective, the involvement of a father is deemed crucial for a child's development through various stages of separation and individuation (Blos, 1967; Eliezer et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2003; Shields, 2003). During the separation process, the child undergoes three key sub-phases: (a) differentiation, (b) practice, and (c) rapprochement (Mahler et al., 1975). The differentiation phase, which often overlaps with the practice phase, involves the baby recognizing their separation from the mother and becoming more aware of their own abilities and physical independence. Consequently, the mother's presence becomes less central as the baby becomes more focused on exploring distance from her (Shields, 2003). In the rapprochement phase, the child seeks to reconnect with the mother while managing the fear of losing her (Mahler et al., 1975). The father's contribution is especially significant during the early stages of separation and individuation, as he represents an alternative to the mother and offers security as the child navigates between dependence and independence (Jones, 2007). Greenson (1968) noted that the father's presence allows the child to detach from the mother and identify with the father, which is particularly important for boys in developing male identity and psychological separation. In adolescence, the father or another male authority figure continues to serve as an external source of protection. Blos (1967) highlighted that for healthy adolescent development, the child must eventually move beyond this protective responsibility of the father. Historically, the contribution of the father has evolved from being considered minor to being recognized as central in supporting a child's development from infancy through childhood (Jones, 2008). Adolescents from father-absent households may face distinct behavioural challenges (Jones et al., 2003).

Kirshner (1992) emphasised the psychological impact of father absence, suggesting that it can lead to a fragmented sense of self. His research noted that men who were reared up in father-absent environments often faced significant psychological and neurological issues, as they lacked paternal images or memories for identification. These individuals also tended to have an intensified pre-oedipal bond with their mothers. In Africa, Khewu and Adu (2015) reported that father absence is widespread,

affecting nearly one-third of households in countries such as Namibia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and South Africa. The issue is not unique to South Africa but prevalent across the continent. Studies indicate that South Africa has a particularly high proportion of absent fathers, and black fathers are notably less involved in their children's lives compared to other racial groups (Mncanca et al., 2016; Richter et al., 2010; Richter et al., 2012). This trend shows that many black children in Africa are being raised by single mothers.

Research has shown that a father's involvement significantly affects his daughter's psychological well-being, influencing her responses to peer pressure, sexual activity, academic performance, and later life choices, including career and relationships (Wiheem, 2014). However, there is a lack of in-depth qualitative research on the experiences of daughters who grow up without a father figure. Previous studies have called for more focused research on the experiences, personal decisions, and behaviours of girls raised without a stable paternal presence (DeBell, 2008; Guilamo, Ramos et al., 2012). The absence of a father can pose challenges not only for the child but also for the mother, impacting educational outcomes and parenting responsibilities (Morwe et al., 2015; Richter et al., 2010). Trowbridge (2014) points out that raising a child without a father can be emotionally and physically painful, leading to feelings of rejection from the paternal family and, potentially, anger directed towards significant others (Wilhelm, 2014). These children often face the burden of assuming adult roles prematurely due to the absence of a father figure (Shefer & Clowes, 2012).

2.5.3 Low Self-Esteem and Father Absenteeism

Adolescents often exhibit higher levels of sexual activity and lower self-esteem, a pattern linked to feelings of inadequacy stemming from absent father figures (Hendricks et al., 2005). Supporting this view, Sheslow (2008) noted that adolescents who feel rejected by their fathers may also experience a diminished sense of selfworth. Research indicates that the absence of a father negatively affects children's self-esteem. Growing up without a father can lead to self-doubt and a tendency to seek approval from others, as the child's self-concept is significantly compromised (Cooper, 2009). Low self-esteem can adversely affect academic performance, career prospects, and workplace interactions, as individuals may feel inferior compared to their peers. Brooks (2008) also highlighted that the absence of a father often results in trust issues, with young adults projecting their feelings of rejection onto their relationships with

others. Kevorkian (2010) further asserted that young adults who experienced paternal absence are prone to self-doubt, particularly in social settings where they may feel inadequate compared to their peers. Conversely, children who maintain strong relationships with both parents are more likely to develop high self-esteem and confidence, whereas a lack of connection with either parent can undermine these traits (Luo et al., 2011).

2.5.4 Anger Issues

Young adults often project their feelings of abandonment onto other males, viewing them similarly to their perceived absent father, which can lead to self-blame or resentment towards male figures in their lives (Luo et al., 2011). Research by Ramisur (2007) suggests that adolescents from fatherless families are more likely to attribute their fathers' absence to personal shortcomings or inadequacies. They may feel that they were abandoned because they are not attractive or worthy enough, and as a result, they may direct this blame towards their mothers or significant others (Park, 2007). Cabrera et al. (2008) also found that young adults who struggle to understand the minimal involvement of their fathers often place the blame on their mothers. This sentiment is supported by other studies (Sevim, 2015; White, 2017), which reported that some young adults may have difficulty controlling their impulses and exhibit explosive anger during conflicts with significant others. This behavior is often linked to their belief that their fathers' absence reflects a personal rejection (Carlson, 2006).

2.5.5 Teen Pregnancy, Social and Relationships

Research overwhelmingly supports the idea that a father's involvement significantly affects daughters' sexual behaviours, romantic relationships, and sexual risk-taking. Delpriore et al. (2013) conducted a randomised experiment to establish a causal link between absentee fathers or low-quality paternal involvement and their daughters' sexual risk behaviours, while controlling for genetic and environmental factors. Their findings revealed that reminders of paternal disengagement increased women's sexual thoughts, permissiveness, and negative attitudes toward condom use. Interestingly, these effects were specific to female sexual decision-making and did not extend to male children or affect non-sexual risk-taking behaviours (Delpriore et al., 2013). Similarly, Ellis et al. (2012) employed a controlled sibling design experiment to explore the causal relationship between father engagement and daughters' risky

sexual behaviours, while accounting for genetic and environmental factors. The study, which involved 101 sister pairs aged 18 to 36, found that father absence was a risk factor, while high-quality paternal involvement acted as a protective buffer against risky sexual behaviours. Notably, siblings close in age reported similar experiences, but larger age gaps between sisters revealed significant differences in perceptions of paternal involvement, indicating that changes in paternal parenting styles might occur over time.

The impact of paternal sexual communication on daughters' sexual behaviours has also been highlighted. Guilamo-Ramos et al. (2012) conducted a systematic review of studies on paternal investment and teenage sexual behaviour, assessing 13 studies published between 1980 and 2011. Their analysis found that father communication about sex was consistently associated with teenage sexual activity, more so than paternal attitudes towards sex. They suggested that future research should focus on broader aspects of sexual behavior rather than just sexual intercourse, utilising qualitative methods to explore specific father-child communication patterns. Research indicates that boys growing up without fathers often face more severe behavioural issues compared to those with both parents present. Wilson et al. (2016) argued that father absence triggers a crisis affecting moral development and frequently leads to criminality and delinquency. Boys from fatherless families are reported to have higher tendencies towards violence, substance abuse, and absenteeism. Nieuwenhuis and Maldonado (2018) found that such boys are more likely to exhibit internalised issues such as depression and anxiety, as well as externalise aggression and hyperactivity.

Sikweyiya et al. (2016) found that South African boys without biological fathers are more likely to experience behavioural difficulties and trauma. These boys are also at a higher risk of engaging in gender-based violence. Schmuck (2013) noted that single mothers might resort to harsher disciplinary methods, potentially contributing to violent tendencies in their sons. Boys from absent-father households often struggle with social adjustment and self-control, leading to aggressive behaviour and potential delinquency (Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018). Falana et al. (2012) noted that these boys tend to exhibit aggression and trouble with self-regulation. Hill et al. (2016) observed that such boys often face ongoing interpersonal issues and substance abuse, which can lead to incarceration.

Alleyne-Green et al. (2015) examined the effect of paternal involvement on sexual risk and dating violence in adulthood, using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. They found that while perceived father closeness was linked to lower sexual risk-taking, it did not reduce the likelihood of experiencing dating violence. This suggests that while father involvement affects sexual behaviour, other factors might influence dating violence. Research by Manlove et al. (2012) showed that strong father-daughter relationships are associated with lower likelihoods of engaging in casual sex and higher parental supervision. Mendle et al. (2009) found that children from father-absent homes reported earlier sexual initiation and higher teenage pregnancy rates. Their study showed a medium effect size for the total sample, a small to medium effect size for girls, and a large effect size for boys, indicating that father absence impacts pubertal maturation and sexual behaviour, especially in low socioeconomic contexts. Burns (2008) conducted a phenomenological study interviewing mothers of adolescent girls about their daughters' sexual activities in relation to father absence. The study identified three themes: (a) the idealisation of a father figure to fill the void, (b) the desire for stability and support from a male figure, and (c) the misconceptions about men that arose from living without a father.

2.5.6 Academic Achievement

Adolescent boys raised in single-mother households often face challenges that affect their educational performance and behavioural development. Research indicates that these boys tend to show less dedication to their education and exhibit behaviours that can be difficult for their mothers to manage. Studies by East et al. (2018), Hill et al. (2016), and Pitsoane and Gasa (2018) suggest that boys from father-absent homes experience a range of issues, including interpersonal difficulties, a diminished ability to delay gratification, poorer psychological adjustment, depression, and anxiety. Pitsoane and Gasa (2018) attribute these challenges to the lack of a positive father-son relationship, inadequate supervision, insecure attachment, and limited paternal involvement. In contrast, boys with present fathers tend to exhibit higher self-confidence, reduced fear of failure, and improved self-esteem (East et al., 2017; Hill et al., 2016).

The presence and quality of father-son relationships have been shown to positively impact boys' social, emotional, and behavioural development (Hill et al., 2016; Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018). Research indicates that fathers play a crucial role in their

children's educational and professional growth (Stephen & Udisi, 2016). Boys with strong father-child interactions tend to perform better academically (Change, 2015; Chauke & Khunou, 2014), and paternal involvement is linked to academic success (Mncanca et al., 2016). Conversely, the absence of a father is associated with poorer academic performance and a higher likelihood of school dropout (Stephen & Udisi, 2016; Franklin et al., 2014). Steffan (2012) found that in rural Bangladesh, a lack of paternal involvement and financial support negatively affects children's academic performance. Similarly, McLanahan et al. (2013) reported that the absence of a father in the USA leads to lower academic achievement and increased school dropout rates. Whitney et al. (2017) also highlighted the negative impact of father absence on both academic and emotional development, suggesting that father absence affects a child's overall development across social, emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and academic domains.

African studies echo these findings. In Nigeria, Stephen and Udisi (2016) reported that teenage boys from single-mother households often perform poorly academically and fail to meet their educational goals. Falana et al. (2012) found that the lack of a male role model has a particularly detrimental effect on boys' intellectual development compared to girls. In South Africa, Franklin et al. (2014) and Holborn and Eddy (2011) noted that father absence is linked to lower academic performance and educational attainment among teenage boys. Holborn and Eddy (2011) found that secondary school students from father-absent households scored lower on academic assessments across all subjects. Previous research underscores the significance of father commitment in influencing a child's educational development. Mkhwanazi et al. (2024) found that a father's sensitivity and support positively impact early cognitive, language, and educational development. Downer et al. (2008) reviewed studies on father involvement and early childhood learning, finding that father absence affects cognitive abilities, educational attainment, and school readiness. They identified that aspects such as a father's presence, warmth, responsibility, parenting satisfaction, nurturance, financial contribution, and use of language significantly contribute to positive academic outcomes. Ward (2008) expanded on this by analysing archival data from the adolescent health data set. He found that children in two-parent households had higher levels of academic achievement compared to those in father-absent

households, concluding that a father's presence positively impacts educational outcomes.

2.6 Socio-Economic Status and Father Absenteeism

Economic status plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between family structure and child outcomes. Carlson and Corcoran (2001) highlight that the absence of a father diminishes the family's income as the father's role as a provider is lost. This reduction in income has detrimental effects on children and contributes to the economic disadvantages faced by single-mother families. They note that nearly two-thirds of single mothers globally do not receive financial support from their children's fathers, placing single-mother households at a perpetual economic disadvantage (East et al., 2017). Louw (2018) found that single-mother households have, on average, one-third lower family income compared to married-couple families and are more than five times as likely to experience poverty. Specifically, single-mother families have a poverty rate of 44.8%, compared to 8.7% for two-parent families. Families with two parents, particularly married couples, often have more financial resources and better access to healthcare, which contributes to addressing their children's health needs (Langton & Berger, 2011). Financial resources not only enable parents to afford necessary goods and services but also improve their psychological well-being and ability to provide quality parenting.

Carlson and Corcoran (2001) argued that children in single-mother families experiencing ongoing poverty are at risk for developmental delays. This is partly due to the inability of these families to afford basic needs and other resources essential for healthy cognitive and social development. The economic status of a family also affects the neighbourhood environment, with children from higher-income families being more likely to encounter peer influences that foster academic success and pro-social behaviour compared to those from lower-income families (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001). Economic stress can also impair parenting effectiveness, further impacting children's development and adjustment (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001). Nieuwenhuis and Maldonado (2018) emphasised that high levels of poverty among single mothers contribute to poor academic performance and mental health issues in adulthood. Mkhwanazi et al. (2018) noted that family instability increases stress and has adverse effects on children's mental and physical health, disproportionately affecting low-income single-mother households. In addition to psychosocial impacts, absent

fatherhood can have significant economic repercussions. Families dependent on a single caregiver often struggle to meet basic needs (Tau, 2020). In many low- and middle-income countries, the remaining parent, often unemployed, faces difficulties providing for the entire family (Whitehead & Holland, 2003). This can lead to increased poverty in fatherless households (Mkhanazi et al., 2024). Conversely, Eddy and Holborn (2011) reported that in South Africa, absent fathers may still contribute financially through court-ordered maintenance, potentially mitigating some economic challenges. Mavungu et al. (2013) also note that legal requirements for fathers' maintenance payments can provide financial support for families with absent fathers.

Cultural context further influences the impact of father absence. In Africa, for example, fatherlessness is often tied to social status and proximity to the maternal family. In Ethiopia, levirate marriages, in which a widow marries her deceased husband's brother, are common, and divorce rates are very low (Gibson, 2008). This cultural practice may lead to situations where children lack a stable father figure if the new husband does not provide adequately for the family. Similar cultural patterns are seen in West Africa and India, where deeply ingrained gender norms and minimal paternal involvement are prevalent (Engle & Breaux, 1998). In summary, the economic and cultural dimensions of father absence are complex and multifaceted, affecting children's developmental outcomes in various ways. Economic disadvantages due to the lack of a father's financial contribution often exacerbate the challenges faced by singlemother families, while cultural practices and social norms further shape the experience and impact of father absence.

2.7 Coping Strategies

Coping is a multifaceted psychological process that encompasses an individual's cognition, attitude, and behaviour (Duhachek, 2005). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping involves "the continually evolving thoughts and behaviours that individuals use to manage, endure, or mitigate internal or external demands perceived as exceeding their resources". Fathima (2024) distinguished between two types of coping efforts: problem-focused, which aims to alter the environment to alleviate stress, and emotion-focused, which addresses the emotional responses to stressors. It is generally believed that individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to employ active problem-focused strategies, while those with low self-esteem may resort to passive emotion-focused methods (Duhachek, 2005). Ungar (1998) posited

that coping should be understood as a context-specific process influenced by the challenges individuals face and shaped by their social, political, and economic environments.

Ramphela (2002) noted that young people may adopt various coping strategies in response to adversity, including negative methods such as silence, rebellion, substance abuse, gangsterism, and defiance of authority. However, positive coping strategies, such as journaling and seeking social support, are also utilised (Shiota et al., 2006). Resilience is a related concept, often understood as the ability to cope and thrive despite challenging circumstances. Initially viewed as a rare trait possessed by a few, contemporary theories suggest that resilience is a universal capacity inherent in everyone (Masten, 2001; Fredrickson et al., 2003). Resilient individuals are typically optimistic, embrace new challenges, and experience high levels of positive emotions. They often use these positive emotions to handle distressing situations, employing strategies such as humour, creativity, and exploration (Fredrickson et al., 2003). However, cross-cultural resilience researchers such as Ungar (2004) argue that the Western perspective on resilience is limited and advocate for a more ecological definition. Ungar (2004) suggests that resilience should be understood as both an individual's ability to find coping mechanisms and the support provided by their social environment.

2.7.1 Types of Coping Strategies

Different theories across various disciplines seek to define and explain coping strategies. Some theorists argue that coping begins in infancy, while others link it to personality traits or cultural contexts (Lazarus, 1993; Schwartz, 1987; Fathima, 2024). Dai et al (2023) suggest that coping strategies are influenced by one's environment, such as social support, which mediates stress levels and coping methods. Weissman (1986) posited that coping strategies are skills acquired during early development, indicating that coping is adaptable, and individuals can learn new skills over time (Mashigo, 2010). Coping is defined as the cognitive and behavioural efforts an individual employs to manage or mitigate internal and external stressors (Folkman et al., 1986; Fathima, 2024). Folkman et al. (1986) identified two primary coping methods: problem-focused coping, which involves addressing the situation directly, and emotion-focused coping, which centres on managing emotional responses to stress. Schwartz

(1987) found that those using emotion-focused coping may be more prone to depression compared to those employing problem-focused strategies.

In recent years, the role of religious and spiritual coping has gained more attention, particularly within the health sector (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Religious coping is utilised by individuals facing distressing situations, such as illness or bereavement. It is multidimensional, involving various methods (Abu-Raiya & Jamal, 2021). Koenig et al. (1998) described it as “the use of religious beliefs or behaviours to facilitate problem-solving and alleviate the negative emotional impacts of stressful circumstances”. Pargament et al. (2000) identified 21 types of religious coping that serve five functions: meaning (offering frameworks for understanding and interpreting distress), control (providing a sense of mastery over stress), comfort/spirituality (reducing anxiety about living in a world where negative events can occur), intimacy (fostering social connection and identity), and life transformation (helping individuals make significant life changes and find new sources of meaning). Thune-Boyle (2006) argued that religious and spiritual coping includes cognitive aspects (such as viewing situations as part of a divine plan) and behavioural aspects (such as engaging in religious practices such as prayer and attending services). Although religious and spiritual coping is generally seen as positive, some researchers have noted potential negative aspects. Negative religious coping can involve viewing one’s situation as divine punishment, including punitive and demonic reappraisals, reappraisals of God’s powers, and spiritual discontent (Pargament et al., 2000; Abu-Raiya & Jamal, 2021).

Theories of coping have historically portrayed women as less capable of coping compared to men, with a tendency to use more emotion-focused strategies and seek social support, while men are seen as more problem-focused (Banyard & GrahamBerman, 1993). Matud (2004) found that women often use emotion-focused and avoidant coping styles, whereas men use more rational and detached approaches. Li, DiGiuseppe, and Froh (2006) linked women’s higher rates of depression to their coping styles, particularly emotion-focused strategies such as ruminative coping, which involves excessive worry about stressors. Gender stereotypes and socialisation may contribute to these patterns (Matud, 2004; Li et al., 2006). However, Mullis and Chapman (2000) found no significant differences in coping styles based on age, gender, or other factors. Despite the broad definitions of coping

strategies in contemporary literature, Banyard and Graham-Berman (1993) highlight ongoing issues with distinguishing “good” from “bad” coping strategies.

2.7.2 Culture and Coping Strategies

Coping strategies have traditionally been framed through a Western perspective, leading to a Western-centric view of how people manage stress (O'Connor & Shimizu, 2002). According to O'Connor and Shimizu (2002), cultural factors play a crucial role in shaping coping methods. For instance, individuals from individualistic cultures, which emphasise personal goals and self-reliance, tend to use strategies focused on personal problem-solving. In contrast, those from collectivist cultures, which prioritise family and community, often adopt avoidance strategies or seek support from their social networks, particularly when interacting with authority figures.

Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) highlighted that within any culture, some coping strategies are considered more effective than others for managing stress and regulating emotions. However, research has often overlooked how cultural contexts affect the selection of coping strategies.

Utsey et al. (2007) identified several coping approaches among African Americans that reflect their cultural influences:

- Cognitive Coping: Actively evaluating risks to manage emotional responses to stress.
- Spiritual Coping: Relying on beliefs in a higher power to maintain optimism during difficult times.
- Collective Coping: Seeking strength from family and community support in times of adversity.
- Ritual Coping: Engaging in spiritual practices to honour ancestors and provide structure during distress.

The research underscores the essence of reflecting on cultural influences in the choice of coping strategies, suggesting that no single approach should be universally deemed “good” or “bad”. Instead, coping strategies should be assessed based on their effectiveness for the specific stressors an individual faces (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

Coping is a crucial concept in understanding stress and mental health because research suggests that the way individuals adapt to their circumstances is significantly

influenced by their coping strategies (Gautam, 2024). According to Herman-Stahl and Peterson, the coping strategies people use can moderate the impact of negative events on their psychological well-being. Specifically, active coping strategies are associated with better adaptation to negative events, while avoidant strategies are linked to poorer adjustment (Gautam, 2024). The literature indicates that many children are dealing with absent fathers, whether due to divorce or other reasons, especially in developed countries. Despite this, there is a lack of comprehensive research on how children cope with absent fathers (Abbey & Dallos, 2004). Much of the existing research focuses on children of divorced parents in the United States, which limits broader applicability and highlights the need for more diverse studies in this area (Kalil, 2003).

Gender differences in coping with absent or undisclosed fathers have been documented. For example, girls growing up without their fathers often experience low self-esteem and struggle with social relationships, which can impact their attitudes towards sex and condom use and lead to issues such as teenage pregnancy and HIV infection (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). Conversely, young males may adopt hypermasculinity as a coping mechanism to address stressors such as an absent father or low socioeconomic status, which can result in increased violence and conflicts at school (Spencer et al., 2002). Additionally, the understanding of father-child relationships varies across different cultures. Many approaches originate from the developed Western world and may not be applicable to the context of developing African countries (Morrell et al., 2003). This discrepancy may arise because the causes and implications of absent fathers can differ significantly between contexts, suggesting that solutions and coping strategies should be tailored to the specific cultural and situational factors at play.

2.7.3 Children with Single Caregivers

Various disciplines have explored the experiences of single mothers and their children, each from a distinct perspective. Sociologists examine the social factors that contribute to single-parent families, including changes in family norms and values across different ethnic and racial groups (Murray et al., 2001; Yorks, 2022). Economists analyse the financial implications of single parenting on both individuals and society, as well as its impact on societal sustainability (Murray et al., 2001). Family scientists investigate the interaction between family characteristics and structure (Murray et al., 2001).

Psychologists focus on the personality traits of single mothers and the psychological development and adjustment of their children, emphasising intrapersonal and intrapsychic processes (Murray et al., 2001). In South Africa, research on children of single mothers is relatively scarce. The existing literature tends to focus more on how single mothers manage their daily lives rather than how their children cope. It has been noted that children in single-parent families are often significantly affected by poverty (Alfred, 1996). Financial constraints often force single mothers to work longer hours, resulting in less time spent with their children. According to Magqaza (2001), this lack of supervision is particularly detrimental for boys, correlating with poorer school performance, behavioural problems, and early dating. Lang and Zagorsky (2001) argue that single-parent families place children at a disadvantage, resulting in economic and social deprivation that hampers their development and transition to adulthood. Jackson et al. (2000) highlight that financial strain on single parents often leads to depression, which can negatively affect their parenting abilities. Consequently, the absence of a father can significantly impact the social and economic conditions of children. Research by the South African Institute of Race Relations reveals a strong correlation between educational success and growing up in a stable home with both parents present (Holborn, 2011). Similar findings in American studies also show that absent fathers are linked to poor educational outcomes, antisocial behaviour, and disrupted employment (Holborn, 2011). This evidence suggests that while absent fathers are not the sole cause of challenges faced by young people, having both parents present can positively influence their future prospects.

2.8 Aim of the Study

The research aimed to explore the lived experiences and perspectives of young adults raised by single caregivers and their impact on their well-being.

2.9 Objectives of the Study

The study was driven by the following research objectives:

- To gain insight into the daily lives and experiences of young adults raised without a father figure,
- To explore how young adults perceive and describe the impact of father absence on their emotional and psychological well-being.
- To identify the coping mechanisms adopted by the young adults.

2.10 Research Questions

The study addresses and provides insights into the following questions:

- What are the daily experiences and challenges faced by young adults living without a father figure?
- How do young adults perceive the impact of father absence on their emotional and psychological well-being?
- What are the coping mechanisms and resilience factors that young adults with absent fathers employ to overcome the challenges they face?

2.11 Definition of the Key Terms

2.11.1 Absent Fatherhood

Absent fatherhood encompasses both physical absence and emotional neglect, where a father does not meet the physical, psychological, and emotional requirements of a child (Nock & Einolf, 2008). In this context, an absent father refers to a biological father who is alive but completely uninvolved in his child's life in all aspects.

2.11.2 Fatherhood

According to Hornby (2010), fatherhood is defined as the dynamic relationship between a father and his child, characterised by the father's active presence and involvement in the child's life.

2.11.3 Psychosocial Wellbeing

Biddle (2006) asserted that psychosocial encompasses social competence, relational satisfaction, and emotional well-being in interactions with others.

2.11.4 Young adults

According to Highley (2019), young adulthood is a distinctive stage of development that typically spans from ages 18 to 25, characterised by important developmental milestones.

2.12 Chapter summary

The aforementioned literature highlights that fatherhood in the African context is not defined by biology or life sciences; one does not have to be biologically related to a child, but rather it is shaped by the fatherly roles a male parent fulfils for the child's

development. However, various factors such as migration, labour, changing family structures, and colonisation have led to a reconceptualization of fatherhood in the contemporary context. In comparison to other countries, South Africa has a notably high number of children growing up in father-absent homes. The absence of a father has been shown to affect not only children but also young adults. Additionally, the psychosocial wellbeing of those affected by absent fatherhood appears to be negatively impacted, potentially resulting in the development of certain personality traits, which may vary depending on the individual. Due to the negative effects of absent fatherhood, some young adults from these families are often seen as incomplete individuals. However, this perspective should be reconsidered in light of John Bowlby's Attachment Theory, which emphasises the significance of secure attachment with at least one caregiver in the child's development.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an overview of the research methodology used in this study. It outlines the research approach and design, with a particular focus on the phenomenological approach adopted. Additionally, the chapter provides a detailed description of the data collection methods, procedures, ethical considerations, the background of the study location, and the data analysis techniques employed.

3.2 Research approach

The study employed a qualitative research approach with a descriptive design. This approach focuses on gathering information in the form of compiling verbal narratives rather than statistics (Welman et al., 2005), and it investigates the emotional and social aspects of individual experiences related to a distinct occurrence (Hancock et al., 2001). This approach utilises methods such as interviews, observation, focus groups, and other in-depth techniques. A qualitative approach was chosen for this study because it allowed for a more flexible and in-depth exploration of the subjective experiences of father absence, particularly among individuals who have directly experienced this phenomenon. Additionally, if valuable insights are not being captured, this approach enables researchers to swiftly adapt questions, alter the setting, or modify other variables to enhance responses (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011). The application of interviews enabled the researcher to structure them in a way that best aligned with the study's objectives.

3.3 Research Design

In this study, a phenomenological approach was adopted as the research design. Cooper and Greenaway (2015) define research design as a series of procedures that guide the researcher in collecting and interpreting data. Essentially, the research design outlines how, where, and when data will be collected and analysed, serving as a blueprint for answering the research questions. For this study, the phenomenological design was considered suitable because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of young adults who have encountered or are currently experiencing father absence, offering a rich and nuanced understanding of their perspectives (Groenewald, 2004; Schwandt, 2007). A key advantage of this approach was its focus

on uncovering the meanings and experiences of young adults regarding the impact of absent fathers (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Additionally, this approach enabled a detailed and comprehensive description of the participants' experiences. The phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to explore, as accurately as possible, the lived experiences of young adults regarding their fathers' absence, while avoiding any pre-existing frameworks and instead concentrating on the participants' direct experiences (Fouka & Mantzourou, 2011).

3.4 Study Location

This study was conducted in the Ehlanzeni District Municipality, which is one of the three districts in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. The seat of Ehlanzeni is Mbombela. The district includes the following local municipalities: Thaba Chweu, Mbombela, Umjindi, Nkomazi, and Bushbuckridge. The population is predominantly black African (94.0%), with smaller proportions of coloured (0.6%), Indian/Asian (0.4%), and white (4.7%) individuals. The main languages spoken in the region are SiSwati, XiTsonga, Northern Sotho, English, and Afrikaans (Stats, 2015). Figure 1.1 shows the map of Ehlanzeni District.

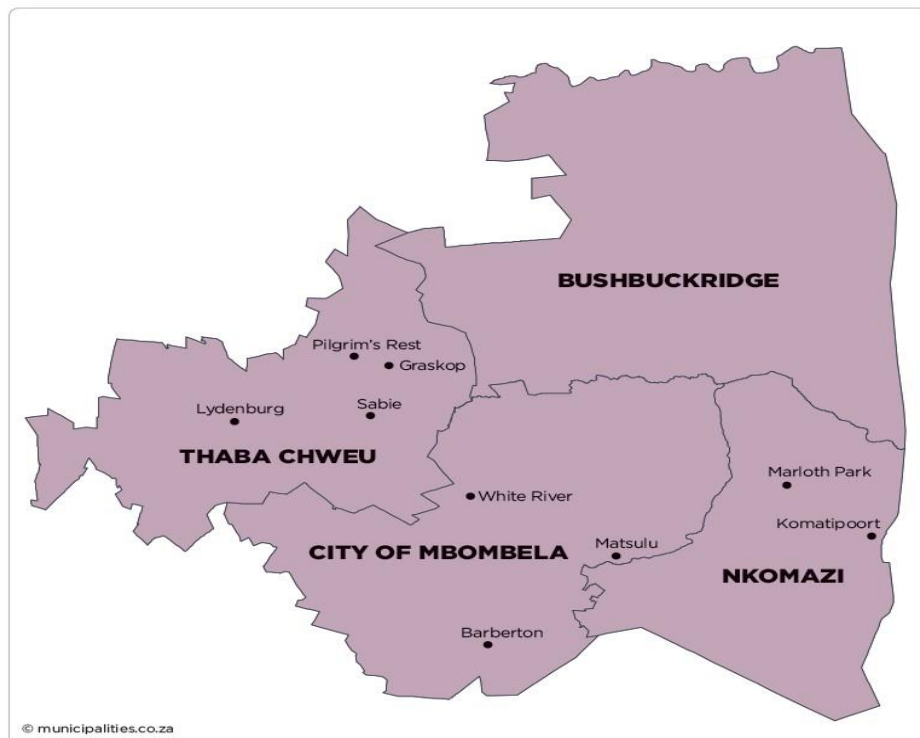


Figure 3.1: Map of Ehlanzeni District, Mpumalanga province

Source: municipalities.co.za (Ehlanzeni District Map, 2012)

3.5 Sampling and Sample Size

The researcher utilised snowball sampling to gather data. This method involves participants in the research investigation referring the researcher to other individuals who share the relevant characteristics or experiences needed for the study (Neuman, 2006). Through the employment of this sampling technique, the researcher could gain access to participants who would not have responded to traditional recruitment methods, and could reach participants who are affected but may prefer not to be public about their experiences. Father absence can be stigmatised, and this type of sampling helps to overcome reluctance to participate and yields rich, in-depth responses. The population of interest for this study consisted of 25 young adults aged 18-25 from absent father homes residing in Ehlanzeni District in Mpumalanga province. The interviews were conducted in English. All participants were drawn from single-parent units, characterised by single mothers or grandmothers, thereby lacking a paternal influence. Over the course of their life, each participant had resided with a different family member. They were all from socioeconomic backgrounds that ranged from poor to middle-income households. Despite the nullification of paternal involvement, all the participants knew the identities of their fathers, and some even stayed in the same place with their absent fathers. Snowball sampling was ultimately chosen consequent to the inherent complexities in the process of participant recruitment and selection. This strategy allowed the researcher to recruit individuals who might have been otherwise hard to locate, given the sensitive nature of the study (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). With regards to this study, participants were asked to refer those they know who fall in the same category.

3.5.1. Inclusion criteria

Participants in this study were young adults aged 18 to 25. The young adults were residents of the Ehlanzeni district. Young adults who were raised without their fathers participated in this study.

3.5.2. Exclusion criteria

Those excluded from participating in this study were young adults who did not fall within the age range of 18 to 25. Those who had absent fathers whose fathers had passed.

3.6 Measuring Instrument

An interview schedule was utilised to collect data from participants through individual interviews. This schedule consisted of open-ended questions. In this study, the researcher conducted semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with individuals. According to De Vos et al. (2011), an interview schedule involves pre-coded questions designed to provide clear and concise prompts to participants. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method that combines a predetermined set of open-ended questions with the flexibility to explore specific themes or responses in greater depth (Huberman & Miles, 2002). This approach ensured that all the study objectives were addressed during the interviews. The researcher prepared a written interview guide in advance, which included carefully crafted open-ended questions and a list of topics to be discussed (see Appendix A). The interviewer adhered strictly to the guide, asking questions in the specified order. The topics in the guide were aligned with the research questions and the conceptual model underpinning the study. This technique was applied to obtain more comprehensive and detailed information from the participants.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Mpumalanga (Appendix D). Following this, the researcher explained the study's aims and objectives to the potential participants, provided them with consent forms, and obtained their permission to conduct the interviews. Prior to the interviews, participants gave their informed consent (Appendix B). Each participant was interviewed separately in a private and quiet setting where they felt comfortable, ensuring privacy and preventing access by outsiders. The researcher was the only individual able to link participants' identities with their voice recordings.

The length of the interviews was approximately 30-45 minutes, allowing for in-depth discussions and were held in locations where participants felt at ease. With participants' permission, most of the interviews were audio-recorded. Two were not recorded due to the participants' preference. During the sessions, participants were asked various questions to elicit their experiences as young adults raised in households without fathers. The interviews began with open-ended questions such as, "What is the lived experience of being raised without a father?" Participants were

encouraged to discuss a wide range of topics, with the interviewer asking follow-up questions only for clarification. Upon completing the interviews, the researcher reviewed all audio recordings, transcribed the collected data, and analysed the information to draw conclusions and report the findings.

The transcription of the audio data was conducted in a private space, using earphones to prevent others from hearing the recordings. Participants' identities were anonymised during transcription by removing names and any identifiable details. In the presentation of findings, participants were referred to using pseudonyms in verbatim quotes. Written consent forms and any documents encompassing participants' identifiable data were stored in a secure, access-controlled environment, adhering to stringent data protection and security standards. Recorded data was to be securely stored with password-protected access and destroyed after five years.

Table 3.1: Research timeline

Stage	Task	Start Date
Research design and planning	• Research questions development and compose a comprehensive research proposal.	April 2023
Review Literature	• Undertake a comprehensive review of the extant literature.	May 2023
	• Compile a preliminary draft.	June 2023
Accumulate and document relevant data	• Finalise sampling plan.	July 2023
	• Develop interview schedule.	August 2023
	• Pre-test data collection.	September 2023

	• Collect data and write up.	November 2023
Data analysis	• Prepare data for analysis.	January 2024
	• Analyse data.	March 2024
	• Draw conclusions.	June 2024
Writing up	• Final draft.	August 2024
	• Review draft	September 2024
	• Final editing	November 2024
	• Submitting to the exams office.	January 2025

3.8 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed as a methodology for data analysis. This method is commonly used to examine qualitative data. This method was utilised in the present study to derive meaning from the participants' accounts and to explore young adults' experiences of absent fatherhood. Through thematic analysis, the researcher condensed the categorised data into emergent themes to provide a structured comprehension of the participants' experiences. As stated in Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis involved the subsequent steps:

3.8.1 Phase 1: Familiarisation

The researcher engages intensively with the data to develop a comprehensive understanding. During this engagement process, the researcher conducts repeated readings of the data, identifying potential themes and searching for underlying meanings. In this study, the transcripts were reviewed repeatedly to gain an in-depth understanding of the entire content.

3.8.2 Phase 2: Coding

Assign initial codes to the data, identifying emergent patterns and themes. During this process, codes were organised as part of the data analysis. These codes were identified from the content deemed relevant and significant to the investigation.

3.8.3 Phase 3: Generating Themes

This phase takes place after the data has been coded and organised. A comprehensive listing of the various identified codes across the dataset was carefully constructed. The focus at this stage shifted from individual codes to analysing broader patterns within the data. Themes were generated by identifying meaningful connections among the preliminary codes. A thematic categorisation was conducted, wherein relevant codes were grouped accordingly. This suggests that the codes were subjected to a holistic analysis to identify potential themes. This enabled a systematic and collective analysis of the codes to elucidate potential themes.

3.8.4 Phase 4: Themes Refinement

Refine and integrate themes to ensure coherence and distinctness. During this stage, a researcher examines the themes to determine whether they reinforce or challenge the research questions.

This phase also evaluates the extracted themes that are particularly compelling and considers the reasons behind any discrepancies in the codes.

3.8.5 Phase 5: Themes Definition and Naming

Clearly define and label the final themes as a constituent element of the data analysis methodology. Definition and naming of the themes signify understanding the core meaning of the unique theme and interpreting its significance. The researcher clarified and organised the themes in a clear and methodologically consistent approach, aligning them with their correlated storytelling data. In a complementary move, the researcher offers a richly textured interpretation of the themes, teasing out their subtle nuances and complexities.

3.8.6 Phase 6: Results Compilation

Phase six ensued after the exhaustive compilation of themes identified throughout the preceding phases and the writing of the project report. This phase commenced with

the organisation of the themes, followed by the discursive narrative practice in the write-up, where the validity of the data was emphasised.

Halpren (1983) suggested that the results or findings section should systematically address each theme. The researcher will detail the frequency of each theme's occurrence, its significance, and provide examples from the data as evidence. The conclusion will summarise the key insights and demonstrate how the analysis has addressed the research question.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

3.9.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent is characterised by Fouka & Mantzourou (2011) as a process of informing participants about their rights and the nature of the study in which they are considering participating. It ensures that individuals understand the aim and objectives of the study and their role as participants before giving consent to participate, with their decision being guided by their values and preferences (Emanuel et al., 2000).

Participants were guided through a thorough explanation of the study and their right to voluntarily choose whether or not to participate. They were informed that their decision would be respected, whether they chose to participate or not. After the aims and objectives of the study were clarified, participants provided their informed consent in writing by signing a standardised consent form.

3.9.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Anonymity involves protecting the identities of study participants to prevent them from being linked to their data (Rajasekar et al., 2006). To ensure anonymity, the names of participants were replaced with numerals, shielding them from potential harm. The researcher adhered to strict confidentiality protocols to protect participants' identities and maintain their trust.

Confidentiality pertains to the protection of personal information. It involves the researcher knowing the identities of participants but ensuring that this information is not disclosed to others (Fouka & Mantzourou, 2011; Walford, 2005). Maintaining confidentiality includes securely storing and managing personal data and disposing of it properly after a specified period (Wiles et al., 2006). The researcher was responsible

for safeguarding participants' details, ensuring that no person had access to the personal information provided.

3.9.3 Discontinuance

Discontinuance refers to a participant's withdrawal or termination from a research study (Fouka & Mantzourou, 2011). In accordance with ethical guidelines, participants were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher emphasised that discontinuing participation would not result in any penalties.

If signs of distress or discomfort had been observed, the researcher would have immediately paused the interview, assessed the participant's willingness to continue, and suggested psychological support services from local clinics and organisations. A thorough explanation of the procedure was provided to participants to ensure their informed consent and understanding of the research process.

3.10 Ensuring the trustworthiness of the study

Given the qualitative nature of this study, the researcher emphasised trustworthiness and honesty through the following key components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

3.10.1 Credibility

Babbie (2010) defined credibility as the "alignment between the constructed realities in participants' minds and those attributed to them" (p. 277). In qualitative research, credibility refers to how plausible and reliable the research data and its analysis are from the participants' perspectives (De Vos et al., 2014). It is equivalent to internal validity, which assesses how well the study's results reflect actual experience. Central to qualitative research is the understanding that reality is shaped by the meanings people give to their daily social interactions. The aim of qualitative research is to capture and understand phenomena from the participants' viewpoints, making them the ultimate judges of the study's credibility (Anney, 2014). The researcher used a valid data collection method, semi-structured interviews, in which participants were able to detail their own experiences without interference. When data was collected, the researcher minimised biases by using data triangulation. During data analysis, the researcher used thematic analysis, a method that aligns with the research design and

verified the accuracy of the data. Throughout the process, the researcher maintained a reflective and open-minded approach.

3.10.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of qualitative research can be applied to other contexts or settings beyond the original study site, such as outside the Ehlanzeni District (Finfgeld-Connet, 2010). It is akin to external validity, which concerns the applicability of the study results to different contexts. Walliman (2011) argued that achieving transferability in qualitative research is challenging because the results are often shaped by the subjective perspectives of individual participants. However, Cope (2014) suggested that transferability is possible if the study's findings are both meaningful to the participants and relevant to other individuals in different settings.

Readers can assess the transferability of the study's findings by determining if they apply to or fit into other contexts. Transferability depends on the study's objectives, particularly if the research aims to generalise results (Cope, 2014). In this study, transferability was limited because the findings do not represent individuals from different ethnic groups or diverse contexts. However, through the detailed descriptions of the interviews, other scholars will be able to draw conclusions about the study's findings and their applicability to other contexts.

3.10.3 Dependability

Dependability, as described by Anney (2014), refers to the consistency and stability of a study's methods and findings. It is similar to reliability and measures the extent to which the study could yield similar results if replicated with similar participants and under similar conditions (Shenton, 2004). In this study, dependability was addressed by thoroughly documenting the research procedures, allowing other researchers to replicate the study and potentially achieve comparable results. This documentation also helps verify that the research process adhered to established protocols (Shenton, 2004).

The researcher focused on maintaining consistency throughout the research process. This included ensuring that the research methods and techniques were comprehensible and aligned with the study's objectives. No changes were made to the study's procedures once they were established. To further ensure dependability, the researcher developed clear and logical questions connected to the research purpose

and design. Additionally, to avoid variability in data collection, the researcher personally conducted all interviews.

3.10.4 Confirmability

Qualitative research acknowledges that every researcher approaches a study with a unique worldview. Confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings of a qualitative study can be verified or corroborated by others, paralleling the concept of objectivity (Anney, 2014). In this study, confirmability was achieved by ensuring that the results reflected the participants' experiences rather than the researcher's personal views.

To enhance confirmability, several strategies were employed:

- **Triangulation:** Various methods, such as exploring concepts and constructs from various theoretical perspectives and collecting data from different cultural contexts, were used to cross-verify data and
- **Audit Trail:** A detailed record of the research process was maintained. This audit trail allows readers to trace each step of the research, following the documented methodology and decisions made throughout (Shenton, 2004).
- **Data Interpretation:** The findings were strictly interpreted based on the data collected from participants to reduce the impact of the researcher's opinions or fabrications.
- **Reflexivity:** The researcher engaged in reflexivity, actively reflecting on and setting aside personal background that could potentially influence the study. This practice was crucial in minimising bias during data collection and analysis.

These measures collectively ensured that the investigation outcomes were a true reflection of participants' perspectives and not unduly shaped by the researcher's biases.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the qualitative nature of the study. It also detailed the study design, population, location, sampling method, data collection procedures, and analysis techniques, along with the ethical protections in place for participants. The following chapter presents the study's findings.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The study's findings are discussed in this chapter. This chapter begins by presenting a demographic table that includes details about the participants, including their gender, age, and place of residence. This section also explores the six main themes: subjective experiences of being raised in a father-absent home, the role of a father, the psychological impact of being raised in the absence of a father who is alive but not present, behavioural effects of fatherlessness, social effects on an individual's wellbeing and coping mechanisms.

4.2 Demographic Table

The demographic information of the participants is presented in this section. The study comprised 25 participants aged between 18 and 25 years, who were sampled for this study; both males and females, residing within the Ehlanzeni District, were represented. The quotes will be cited using the participant's sequential number as a guide; for instance, "participant 1" will be used to refer to the first participant.

Table 4.1: Demographic profile of the participants

Participants no	Gender	Age	Place	Home language
1	Female	24	Ngodini	SiSwati
2	Male	22	Ngodini	SiSwati
3	Female	25	Lekazi	SiSwati
4	Male	19	Ngodini	SiSwati
5	Female	23	Sincobile	SiSwati
6	Female	25	Tekatakho	SiSwati
7	Male	20	Dwaleni	SiSwati
8	Male	23	Thembelihle	SiSwati
9	Female	24	Hluvukani	XiTsonga
10	Male	18	Sincobile	SiSwati
11	Female	22	Nkomazi	SiSwati
12	Female	19	Mataffin	SiSwati
13	Female	22	West Acres	English

14	Male	22	Kamagugu	English
15	Male	19	Valencia	English
16	Female	24	Dwaleni	SiSwati
17	Female	24	Lekazi	SiSwati
18	Female	23	Kamagugu	SiSwati
19	Female	23	Valencia	English
20	Female	19	Karino	SiSwati
21	Female	21	Karino	English
22	Female	21	Nkomazi	SiSwati
23	Male	18	Nkomazi	SiSwati
24	Male	22	Tonga	SiSwati
25	Male	19	Mbombela	English

4.3 Themes and Sub-Themes

Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed six predominant themes, and four of the main themes have sub-themes. The identified themes and sub-themes underwent further analysis using content thematic analysis. The six predominant themes that emerged from the study were the subjective experiences of being raised in a father-absent home, the role of a father, the psychological effect of being raised in the absence of a father who is alive but not present, behavioural effects of fatherlessness, social effects on an individual's well-being and coping mechanisms. The following section presents a discussion of the themes and sub-themes. To enhance the confirmability and credibility of the study's findings and their interpretation, direct quotes from the participants' transcripts will be included in the presentation of the results.

Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Subjective experiences of being raised in a father-absent home	The two themes were not further subdivided into subthemes; however, the young adults shared various lived experiences and provided diverse definitions of what the role of a father entails. Some had similarities to an extent.
The role of a father	

The Psychological Impact of a Living Father's Absence	1. Stress 2. Anger issues 3. Trust issues 4. Abandonment and rejection
Fatherlessness and Behavioural Patterns	1. Social interaction and relationships 2. Academic achievement 3. Substance use 4. Teenage pregnancy
Social effect on an individual's well-being	1. Identity 2. Self-worth 3. Independence and decision-making 4. Economic hardships
Coping mechanisms	1. Support from friends and family members 2. Professional help 3. Journaling 4. Spiritual beliefs 5. Defensive humour 6. Denial 7. Impersonation 8. Consuming alcohol

4.3.1. Theme 1: Subjective Experiences of Being Raised in a Father-Absent

Home

In the present study, participants reported different experiences. The majority of participants commented about their challenging experiences stemming from the multitude of requirements and roles their fathers needed to fulfil. Additionally, the pressure of seeing friends, family, and peers who had loving and involved fathers made their experience even more agonising since it left them with a lot of unanswered questions and a wound that made it difficult for them to feel or behave around men. This is demonstrated in the following extracts derived from the interviews with the participants:

“Well, it was hard growing up without a dad because I have cousins who have dads, I have lot of relatives who have dads so me going to visit them and having to experience having a dad in the house was a bit weird for me because I don’t know how to act around a man.” (Participant 2)

“Growing up without him has been difficult because I had no one to turn to in case of financial support I was just happy I went to bed with something on my stomach and appreciated that.” (Participant 5)

“Growing up with absent father was quite difficult. It hurts when you’re with your friends and randomly have a conversation about families, you’d hear how they happy with their fathers while you’re not happy.” (Participant 7)

“I did not have it easy because even my mother was staying at work only coming during holidays, it was difficult for me I was always wondering about how life would have been if my dad was with us at least. My mother was loving though” (Participant 9)

“It was difficult, I grew up with so much anger and resentment towards everyone and that made me come off as a disrespectful child.” (Participant 19)

“Growing up without my father was a bit difficult, a bit maybe because I am a girl child and I have my mom.” (Participant 20)

“Growing up with an absent father was very hard” (Participant 22)

“Growing up without a father was a painful and isolating experience that left a gaping hole in my heart” (Participant 25)

Moreover, these young adults mentioned that they needed a father figure mostly to equip them with various life lessons that would make more sense if they were introduced by a man, precisely a father instead of a woman whom is the mother, instil discipline, general guidance and for fathers to support them financially and emotionally be available, as a mothers were unable to fulfil roles and responsibilities of both parents. Regardless of having present mothers, the need for another parent, a father to be specific, was something that the participants were longing for. These beliefs were influenced by the lived experiences of the participants as demonstrated in the following extracts:

“I went through lot of obstacles in life and I wish he was here to somehow guide and show me the way but he’s not there.” (Participant 5)

“I often felt lost and alone, struggling to find my place in this world without a father’s guidance and support” (Participant 25)

“I don’t know man, but there’s stuff that she couldn’t face and handle regardless of her own strengths and confidence in handling a growth of a male child that I was.” (Participant 24)

Although most of the participants described absent fatherhood as a difficult experience, some of the participants expressed a different experience because the presence of a mother or a role model played a significant role. Even the ones who described the experience as difficult did not dispute that the presence of a mother or having someone to look up to was very significant and had positively shaped them into being the kind of young adults they are in the present day. The participants acknowledged other male relatives present in their lives as father figures; this includes their uncles from the maternal side. The following extracts concur with the aforementioned statement:

“I had a supporting mother even my grandparents from my maternal side were always available for me, him being absent was not something that I really concerned myself a lot about. I can’t really conclude that it was hard” (Participant 1)

“When I was still a child it was okay growing up without a father I was and I am still staying with my grandmother, loving grandmother, so she makes sure I have that love, the love I could get from my father. She filled that gap so I couldn’t feel much pressure.” (Participant 3)

“I wouldn’t say growing up without a father was difficult especially when I was younger because my uncles (my mother’s brothers) helped to raise us within their means.” (Participant 4)

“The presence of my mother played a vital role; I only started filling the void of an absent father when my mother passed away.” (Participant 8)

“It was not difficult; my mom was there most of the time and that made it easy for us to grow up without a father.” (Participant 10)

“I have gents, older than me from my neighbourhood, which are doing really well in their lives (careers), one of them we’re pretty much close, he’s been there for me from Grade 10 up to this day he’s always the first person I tell

whenever I've achieved something or whenever I need manly advise from someone.” (Participant 24)

“I strive to find these qualities in other role models and relationships” (Participant 25)

One of the participants mentioned that father absence is a topic that he does not give attention to, and this led to him struggling to put his feelings into words. This is reflected in the following statement:

“Growing up without a father to be honest I don't know how to put it” (Participant 24)

Being exposed to various environments where there were fewer or close to no present fathers made it seem normal to be raised in a household with an absent father by a single mother to some of the young adults, because that was the reality they knew. In most black communities, children are raised by their single mothers, if not their grandparents; the interviewed participants mentioned how this is a normal thing for most of their friends. This affirms that indeed father absence is a popular phenomenon in the black community, such that in some children it appears as a normal thing. The citations support the view of the participants:

“As a child, I was really unbothered because quite frankly, not many of my friends had active fathers too.” (Participant 4)

“A funny thing is that in my family most of us didn't have present fathers and it was the same thing even with my friends.” (Participant 8)

The preceding extracts support the idea that each young adult's experience of a father's absence was unique and was expressed in diverse ways. The majority of young adults believed it was challenging and had an effect on them, depriving them of numerous possibilities that others who had two parents enjoyed. Some of the participants acknowledged the difficult component of it; however, with enough support, it becomes manageable, while others did not seem to have had negative experiences but felt as though it was normal, as in their communities, they were not the only ones going through a similar situation. The prevalence of single mother-led households is on the rise and forces young adults to normalise absent fatherhood, which may also result in some of the males being unavailable in the lives of their own children when

they become adults and females, clueless on how to give a child a proper upbringing even when a father is available. Moreover, support networks, such as relatives beyond the immediate family, such as the uncles and grandfathers or role models, appear to have had a reinforcing effect on coping with an absent father, offering temporary relief for the absent father figure and mitigating feelings of isolation or feelings of missing the absent father. These relatives not only help the children directly but also relieve the single mothers from other duties, which enables them to be more available for their children without worrying about everything.

4.3.2 Theme 2: The Role of a Father

When the young adults were asked about what they believed absent fatherhood had deprived them of, they mentioned some of the things cited in the following extracts. The responses shed light on what participants believed to be the responsibility of a father. The participants gave a description and mentioned the role and responsibilities of a father through detailing what they required their fathers to do for them in the following manner:

“A part of me believes that certain things like the daily minor inconveniences we all experience would not affect me as much as they do if I had a father to run to, don’t get me wrong I do acknowledge my mother’s presence but there’s only so much she can do.” (Participant 19)

“Lack of guidance missing out on valuable life lessons, guidance, advices and mentorship.” (Participant 21)

Participant 25 gave an in-depth explanation, mentioning the roles of a father in addition to just having a mother. This is derived from personal insight and understanding of the participant as is shown in the subsequent extract:

“A father is more than just a provider; he is a role model, teaching values and character traits that shape our understanding of the world.” (Participant 25)

The majority held the belief that the active involvement of a father is essential in nurturing a child’s irrespective of the efforts of their mothers. The following extracts highlight this:

“I know how to be a good child, but I don’t know how to be a good father or husband because the only thing I know is having a present mother and be a good child. Eish, bro it breaks my heart man.” (Participant 8)

“There’s a reason why it always had to take a two to grow and sustain a household, traditionally... I’m sure we all can agree to the idea that fatherly perspectives on things sharpen a lot of perception to how we end up viewing things generally in life, it goes for everyone” (Participant 24)

The study participants shared their perceptions of a father’s role by highlighting the specific needs they believed should be fulfilled by their fathers. While mothers or grandparents may try to compensate for this role, they can never fully replace a father; only the father’s presence, or someone fulfilling paternal responsibilities, can meet those needs.

4.3.3 Theme 3: The Psychological Impact of a Living Father’s Absence

The present study found that participants had stress, anger issues, and trust issues, as well as feelings of abandonment and rejection. Whenever children lose trust in someone, they are likely to associate the actions of one individual with others who share similar characteristics; for example, it was prevalent that they mostly did not trust males because they felt like it was a behaviour of all males. This is the same even with the anger issues, which, at times, were directed at people who did not do anything wrong.

4.3.3.1. Sub-Theme: Stress

Some participants reported that being raised without their fathers affected their well-being. They shared experiencing psychological distress, including stress and/or depression, as a consequence of growing up without a father figure present. The participants emphasised being negatively affected, they further reported their feelings of being in dark spaces, feeling disconnected and lonely. One participant largely described the experience as a lifetime trauma while crying. The participants explained:

“Like being a product of an absent father actually affects you really bad, it affects you mentally as much as we try soldering on thinking that we are strong, we don’t care it really affects you mentally because I fell into depression in 2020

and towards the end of 2021 because we were home, we had nothing to do.”
(Participant 2)

“It is very important to have a present father because this thing really gives you lifetime trauma.” (Participant 6)

“My mom was there most of the time and that made it easy for us to grow up without a father.” (Participant 10)

As mentioned in the aforementioned excerpts, some participants expressed feeling depressed due to the absence of their fathers. The amount of stress they had experienced affected how they viewed life, regardless of the presence of a mother and the things they had. A mother may be available and present, even supporting the child, but that is never enough for some of the participants because, according to them, a father's involvement is essential. However, most of the participants seemed to have either accepted the situation or were in denial because they indicated that since they had a present mother and other family members present, this did not affect them as much as others.

4.3.3.2 Sub-Theme: Anger Issues

One emotional impact reported by many of the young adults was a sense of anger directed at their absent fathers; they perceived paternal absence as a significant relational failure. Some participants channelled this anger towards other people, particularly males they saw as similar to their estranged fathers, believing all men were alike. Several participants mentioned that a source of their anger was the realisation that their absent father was actively involved in the lives of his other children. Additionally, some respondents expressed feelings of hatred toward their fathers for neglecting them, while others were unsure of their emotions. One participant, however, shared that despite the pain, he still loved his father. These young adults disclosed how father absence affected them:

“I think I got angry, and I have anger issues, I don’t trust men easily... I hate him with all my being, to me he is just a sperm donor.” (Participant 5)

“(Participant cried and silent for a while) I don’t know, I always convince myself that I am not angry... Maybe I am angry I just don’t want to admit because I tell

myself that I am better off without him, I don't need him that's what I tell myself. I guess it affects me I just don't wanna admit." (Participant 6)

"I grew up with so much anger and resentment towards everyone and that made me come off as a disrespectful child." (Participant 19)

"That has resulted in me having so much anger towards men" (Participant 22)

"My feelings about my father are a toxic mix of emotions- sadness, anger, confusion, hate..." (Participant 25)

"I do not know." (Participant 10)

"I think one thing that contributed to me being hurt in most times is that I love my father regardless of his absence, I have never hated him nor angry I am just hurt." (Participant 8)

The responses indicate that absent fatherhood had an effect on some of the characters the participants displayed in diverse ways, as it affected their ability when reacting to situations and their behaviour around certain people. As reported, most of the participants effectively managed their anger; conversely, others experienced such intense anger or hatred towards their fathers that they projected these feelings onto others.

4.3.3.3 Sub-Theme: Trust Issues

Some of the participants quoted experiencing difficulties with trust in their relationships. Trusting their partners was a hard thing because of the generalisation that nobody can be trusted, and this generalisation seemed to be a common feeling among many of the female participants; they viewed others, particularly men, as vengeful and therefore susceptible to betraying them at any moment. Therefore, most of the female participants were always ready for their boyfriends to leave them at any time.

As illustrated in the subsequent excerpts:

"...I don't trust men easily even on relationships I struggle a lot. I have trust issues with everyone I meet be it friendships or relationships." (Participant 5)

"I have trust issues when it comes to men. I have never been in a stable relationship and always at fault." (Participant 6)

The male participants had the very same issues. They have trouble putting their trust in others, and this affects the relationships they form. The following extracts demonstrate the trust issues mentioned by the participants:

“My dad would make promises about the smallest things and still not deliver even when you didn’t ask him, I now don’t trust easily.” (Participant 8)

“I struggled with trust...I struggled to trust others” (Participant 25)

Some participants were so impacted by absent fathers that they found it difficult to trust because they felt neglected. The participants’ unfavourable opinions about other people, even those who appear to have good intentions, are a result of the generalisations about their dads’ abandonment. The majority of participants believed that their partners were untrustworthy simply because they were men, regardless of how they portrayed themselves. Others, meanwhile, do not seem to have let the desertion affect their judgment because of their background. They behaved in a way that matched the way that people or their partners had introduced themselves to them. Most young adults appear to have been given assurance by their present mothers and taught how to differentiate counterfeits from the real ones and those worthy to be trusted, from everyone.

4.3.3.4 Sub-Theme: Abandonment and Rejection

Some of the participants perceived the absence of their fathers as a form of rejection or abandonment. The simple fact is that these fathers do not try to establish relationships with the participants. This is particularly valid for the individuals who lost their mothers and were left on their own, and those who were staying in the same locations with their absent fathers. The following excerpts illustrate that:

“I didn’t understand lot of things that was happening. I felt a deep sense of loss and abandonment” (Participant 13)

“it was only in High school when I started feeling like a reject.” (Participant 18)

“It sometimes makes me feel as though I am unworthy of love.” (Participant 19)

“I really felt abandoned and not worthy of love.” (Participant 23)

“My childhood was marked with was marked by feelings of abonnement and rejection... growing up I felt abandoned, rejected and unloved” (Participant 25)

One participant at some point even thought she was the reason for the separation of her parents as they divorced after her birth. These thoughts are presented in the following extract:

“I always thought I was the reason my parents separated” (Participant 22)

The participants described their fathers as showing little interest in getting to know them or taking responsibility for them, leading them to believe that their fathers' behaviour stemmed from a lack of love or care. According to their personal accounts, the participants felt that their fathers made a conscious decision to be absent from their lives. They claim that their fathers are not attempting to get to know them or build relationships, which leads them to believe that their fathers don't love or care about them. One possible explanation for these emotions could be a lack of knowledge regarding the father's absence from their life.

4.3.3 Theme 4: Fatherlessness and Behavioural Patterns

The general consensus among researchers was that the involvement of a father is essential for the developing child. This would mean that if a father were absent, some of the characteristics a father is responsible for may not develop or develop at a slow pace. A significant proportion of the participants believed their social interaction, relationships, and academic achievement were also affected. Therefore, it is a significant step to look at substance use and teenage pregnancy as behavioural effects of fatherlessness.

4.3.4.1 Sub-Theme: Social Interaction and Relationships

It was reported that the absence of fathers appears to lead to various behavioural changes in individuals who perceived it as abandonment. These changes were observed in different contexts, including peer and romantic relationships, as well as in wider social interactions. Some participants mentioned feeling uncomfortable in environments where fathers were present, often uncertain of how to behave in such situations. Additionally, the participants reported engaging in behaviours considered morally inappropriate for their age, such as alcohol and drug use, promiscuity, and early sexual activity. These actions were attributed to a lack of supervision and discipline, which the participants felt should have been provided by their fathers, particularly when mothers were occupied with other household responsibilities. This is supported by these statements from some of the young adults:

“I have lot of relatives who have dads so me going to visit them and having to experience having a dad in the house was a bit weird for me because I don’t know how to act around a man. Not a man like that but an elderly person that they find to respect, like this is dad’s seat I don’t know that because I never experienced that for example, before we go to bed, he hugs them I don’t know that, in my head I am like ‘what is he doing because we wanna sleep’ so yeah it was mostly like that.” (Participant 2)

“I always felt unloved and unworthy of any man’s love, that includes my uncles even though they always supported us. I always question gestures from others and their intensions of being nice towards me.” (Participant 20)

Most of the female participants found it hard to maintain relationships and be comfortable in love, while others found it was easy for them to fully commit themselves, even to people who showed less commitment. The following extracts detail how the relationships of the participants were impacted:

“One thing I have noted is that I am too clingy, when I am in a relationship, I am too clingy. I feel like I’m those people where you show me bits of affection not fully affection and I would be actually on you like that because this one show me attention.” (Participant 2)

“Firstly, I do not last in relationships, I wanna give a man a chance to love me but I am scared because what if they leave like my dad. I perceive men the same as if all are runners.” (Participant 3)

“His absence affected me in terms of relationship wise; I am always scared; I am afraid of getting pregnant. It has affected the relationship I build with others.” (Participant 6)

“I fail a lot in relationships; it’s hard for me to fall in love let alone maintaining a relationship whether with a lover or friend.” (Participant 8)

“My father’s absence has contributed to my anger issues and difficulty in forming healthy relationships.” (Participant 13)

“I think I have attachments issue I push people away because I think it’s better if I’m the one letting them go than waking up to them gone” (Participant 17)

“I am scared to show affection. That is because I have always thought that I am not good enough to be loved and appreciated, despite the effort.” (Participant 20)

“I’m always guarded and people pleasing.” (Participant 22)

*“I sometimes compromise myself on the quest to prove that I am worthy of love in romantic relationships. (Does this make me a pick me? No, right!)”
(Participant 19)*

The feelings were similar to some of the male participants. Romantic relationships appeared to have been negatively affected. The following statements were confirmed by the following extracts:

“in romantic relationships I’m never a fully committing person, I think somewhat I don’t believe in the idea of true love, even though I can appreciate the idea of it as glorious as it could be seen” (Participant 24)

*“I tried to fill the void with things that didn’t work...like unhealthy relationships”
(Participant 25)*

The feeling of abandonment made it challenging for them to maintain relationships with romantic partners, friends and peers, as they were always in constant expectation of these individuals to eventually leave, just like their fathers who had. This fear of rejection caused them to end relationships early, as a way of protecting themselves from anticipated hurt.

4.3.4.2 Sub-Theme: Academic Achievement

Alongside the social dynamics and relationships highlighted by some participants, academic performance emerged as another area worth exploring. Some participants believed that their paternal absence had a positive effect on their academic performance, as they were motivated to excel and prove that, despite lacking the necessary educational resources, they were still capable of achieving outstanding results. The subsequent textual excerpts provide evidence of this:

*“I always make sure that I give it my all to prove a point to my father that I can make it without him, and to think that my mother worked hard for me to be where I am now and getting the things that I have access to, I can’t disappoint her.”
(Participant 2)*

"I ensured that I become the best version of myself by working hard, studying up to the level I am at now." (Participant 8)

"Yes, a positive one rather. It has pushed me to be an over achiever." (Participant 19)

"I've always felt maybe if I worked harder, he'll love me." (Participant 22)

Among the participants, there is one who mentioned that despite her mother's efforts, sometimes her mother did not afford to pay school fees, which prevented her from getting her progress report at some stage. This is what she said:

"Most of the times she wouldn't be able to pay my school fees, and I wouldn't get my report when others are getting theirs because my school fees were always delayed because she didn't afford paying." (Participant 6)

Some of the participants mentioned that they lacked motivation to study or do well in their academics. The following extracts supports the statement:

"I have struggled a lot with motivation, focus, and emotional support. This was significantly visible after losing my mother because she was my reason to work hard." (Participant 23)

"I struggled to find motivation and focus, often feeling lost and alone in my studies" (Participant 25)

One of the participants mentioned that after completing his grade 12, he registered at a university, but due to a lack of funds and not having a bursary, he was forced to drop out and start job hunting to assist his mother. The young adult said:

"I decided to drop out and look for job so that I can maintain myself." (Participant 7)

The excerpts aforementioned demonstrate the impact on the participants in the academic realm. Many felt a strong pressure to reach their full potential, while others faced significant challenges, with one participant eventually having to drop out. Some struggled with paying school fees, but their mothers provided support and managed to cover the costs despite the difficulties.

4.3.4.3 Sub-Theme: Substance Use

The use of alcohol and drugs seemed widespread among some participants, with reports suggesting a lack of supervision from their mothers, who appeared to be focused on survival and meeting the family's needs. Some participants appeared to begin abusing alcohol at a young age, possibly as a coping mechanism, as shown in the following statements:

"I drink every weekend, I smoke, I do a lot of things, it's so bad." (Participant 2)

"I tried to fill the void with things that didn't work, like substances" (Participant 25)

In contrast of the aforementioned scenarios, most of the participants had strict mothers who tried to instil discipline in them and somehow always made time to check-in. This is highlighted in the following excerpt:

"I made sure that I play away from drugs and alcohol. My mom was really present; she made sure that she advised me about everything before she passed away". (Participant 8)

These demonstrations illustrate that these young adults had diverse experiences and reacted to it differently as well. Effective monitoring at home by the mother, despite being overwhelmed by the need to ease the emotional distress caused by the perceived abandonment, plays a significant positive role in their development.

4.3.4.4 Sub-Theme: Teenage Pregnancy

The lived experience of being brought up in a father-absent environment has been identified as a contributing factor to teenage pregnancy among the participants. Some linked their early sexual activity to the absence fatherhood in their lives. Additionally, promiscuous behaviour was reported, and it was also attributed to the absence of fathers. However, the majority of participants acknowledged the positive influence of their mothers, who helped deter them from being sexually active at a younger age.

This can be seen in these quotes:

"I have engaged in sexual activities while I was young, I think I was doing grade 9 and it was not good at all and mind you I ended up being in a toxic relationship and had a baby with the guy I was dating while I was still in high school who somehow also happens to be absent in my daughter's life." (Participant 5)

“His absence affected me in terms of relationship wise, I am always scared, I am afraid of getting pregnant. It has affected the relationship I build with others.”
(Participant 6)

“I started having real sex grade 7, imagine, lol. And it seemed completely normal to me...only now that I see ukuba, damn! I don't know how to link it with my father issues but yea” (Participant 24)

Participant 12 mentioned that the urge of always wanting to give men a chance even the ones who are her father's age was due to her need for a father. The following statement confirm this:

“every man that tells me that he loves me even if I can see that they are old I don't feel guilty for giving them a chance, and I think it's because I don't have a father figure, someone masculine in the house that I could look at and be inspired by and be scared to a point where I understand that his mates are his mates and they're not in any league to be with someone my age.” (Participant 12)

Most of the participants seem like the presence of strict mothers and personal decisions really helped them in keeping their virginity until young adulthood. This phenomenon is exemplified in the subsequent excerpts:

“I think it did not impact that at all because my mom was very strict, I lost my virginity at 18, my mom was very strict.” (Participant 2)

“I have no experience of that, as I do not relate to it. I did not engage in sexual activity at an early stage.” (Participant 4)

“At my old age I am still not engaging in sexual intercourse, hahaha I am even scared of doing it.” (Participant 8)

“My mom took a responsible and proactive approach by educating me and my siblings about sexual activities and their consequences at a young age.”
(Participant 21)

“I was very firm in my decision making in not engaging in sexual activities at a tender age” (Participant 22)

“engaging in sexual activities at an early age hasn't affected me at all”
(Participant 25)

The aforementioned extracts confirm that some of the young adults were sexually active at an early stage because of a lack of discipline that a mother sometimes fails to instil due to being preoccupied with many activities, ensuring that their children have food and a shelter. Moreover, the presence of a mother is essential; being a present parent means ensuring that, as well as providing shelter and food, they also build positive character in their children.

4.3.5 Theme 5: Social Effect on Individual's Wellbeing

Along with the emotional and psychological effects, the participants noted that their fathers' absence also affected their social well-being. Some, especially the males, expressed struggling with issues of identity, feeling disconnected from their roots due to the perceived abandonment by their fathers. Despite these challenges, many of the participants were able to thrive in life, viewing their experiences with absent fatherhood as a driving force that pushed them to make better decisions and become more independent.

4.3.5.1 Sub-Theme: Identity

The participants expressed that they saw identity and role confusion as major consequences of growing up without a father, with some even using their mothers' surnames. A few participants expressed:

"My father's absence only started affecting me in my teenage years and young adulthood. Surprisingly it did not have much of a bad effect; it had the opposite effect on me. In as much as he has been a "deadbeat", I live and want to live a similar life to his. He is a polygamist." (Participant 4)

"I am using my mother's surname, which is not even hers but of her stepfather so sometimes when I have to introduce myself, I have challenges because I am using a surname that is not mine, I don't even know our traditions and values." (Participant 8)

"Identity questions: wondering my heritage, values sense of self (imvelaphi yami) not knowing how to define oneself and develop sense of belonging without my dad." (Participant 21)

“
I often felt lost and alone, struggling to find my place in the world without a father ‘s guidance and support...this led to struggles with identity” (Participant 25)

4.3.5.2 Sub-Theme: Self-Worth

To some participants, father-absence has brought positive lessons in their lives; they learned to base their self-worth on how they felt about themselves, rather than relying on others, despite their fathers' absence. Most of the participants appeared not to have been affected in their self-worth because of their upbringing. However, they admit that they were affected generally:

“Used to think that and then growing up I realized that you can’t force a person to be in your life. They know that they have a responsibility, so if they can’t, if they go to bed knowing that I have a responsibility that I am not taking care of, so why should I bother.” (Participant 2)

“I don’t think his absence affected my self-worth; I don’t blame myself about his absence because he ran away when I was still small.” (Participant 3)

“His absentia has not affected my sense of self-worth to such an extent that I took it upon myself to grow and establish a big family that will carry the name that we call ourselves with.” (Participant 4)

“I have a lot of self-doubt, and also I always tend to think I’m not worth of anything great.” (Participant 12)

Most of the participants’ self-worth was not affected; they invested in building themselves. They acknowledged that the topic of father absence is very sensitive to them, such that they can even cry at times. The subsequent excerpts provide evidence of this:

“I’ve worked so hard on my self-esteem and sometimes I would think I’m not worth it for guys to love me or treat me with respect and love because my own father left me while I was young and did not even see a need to check up on me until this day.” (Participant 5)

“I never doubted my self-worth, but this experience has really affected me because every time I talk about this topic, when I have to talk about my dad, I

always want to cry...but it was never a thing that I would feel like it's my fault he is absent. I don't blame myself.” (Participant 6)

“Sometimes I had to pretend as if am also happy with my father as if he plays a father the father role in life just to avoid judgments but when am alone reality comes ...Sometimes I felt like am not good enough to be his son but in disguise been motivated to stay strong and stand for myself back.” (Participant 7)

“For the longest time I felt like I have to overcompensate and overextend myself to feel loved and accepted.” (Participant 22)

“I am always doubting myself, I have low self-esteem” (Participant 20)

“I don't know, but I'm quite content right now with who I am, quite frankly, am also open to who I could become.” (Participant 24)

A subset of participants displayed that they have self-doubt, and this has built a need for them to be validated by others and always feel reassured. The following extracts confirm this:

“I often felt lonely and insecure, questioning my worth... I often feel like I am not worthy of love or attention. I struggle with feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy.” Participant 13)

“I struggled to find my sense of worth...I searched for validation in all wrong places” (Participant 25)

“I am always doubting myself, I have low self-esteem” (Participant 20)

Participant 18 mentioned that she decided to tie her worth to academic validation because she believed that education was faithful enough not to leave her:

“A girl tied her worth to academic validation because it is the only kind that doesn't involve another person who can lie or leave” (Participant 18)

4.3.5.3 Sub-Theme: Independence and Decision-Making

Some participants mentioned that being brought up in a paternal-absent household served as a motivation for independence. They felt that their paternal absence taught them to take responsibility for their lives at a tender age and to rely on themselves

“

rather than depending on others. This is what the participants said about independence:

I struggle a lot with making my own decision I need validation from someone else.” (Participant 8)

“I think if I have to be a man and lead a house I will struggle, I feel like I am not strong enough to be a man that will make his decision. Especially when I have to make big decisions.” (Participant 9)

“Now I developed a sense of independence and responsibility at a young age. I can fully take care of myself.” (Participant 14)

“Him not being around did not affect me much but it made me stronger and independent.” (Participant 16)

“I am fixed on preparing for the future, to be independent, just in case I get married and my husband ups and goes” (Participant 18)

“Resulted in me having so much anger towards men and being very much independent as a way of me gaining full control of what and doesn’t hurt men” (Participant 22)

This following participant after realising that his worth is dependent on himself, chose to invest in himself to become the best version of himself. He said the following:

“I’ve had to work to develop emotional intimacy, communicate effectively, and assert myself” (Participant 25)

A significant proportion of the participants were able to make their own choices and be independent, some lost their mothers while they were young and had to grow up and be independent. Only a few mentioned that they struggle with making decisions, two males felt as though they needed a role model from their fathers.

4.3.5.4 Sub-Theme: Economic Hardships

The majority held the belief that their father’s absence had a negative effect on their home’s financial situation. They were convinced that if present fathers helped their partners with household responsibilities, the family would not have faced as much financial struggle. Many of their fathers were financially stable, and having two incomes would have positively improved their financial circumstances. However, some

felt that their single mothers did a good job besides that, their absent fathers did not have money. This is narrated below:

“My mom sometimes can’t keep up with the finances. You know she has to go about, for example registration money first year because I wasn’t funded, if he was around, he would have been able to help her out in some way cause we know he has money.” (Participant 2)

“I had no one to turn to in case of financial support I was just happy I went to bed with something on my stomach and appreciated that.” (Participant 5)

Some of the participants mentioned how father's absence negatively affected their finances, even their academics. One participant had to drop out and help his mother. For some as tough as it was their mothers still managed to do the best. The following extracts validate this:

“Financially we struggled a lot, my mom tried a lot, to an extent that she wanted me to go to a school in town, she was trying to make me not feel less than my father’s other kids... My mom didn’t have money, we were broke so, most of the times she wouldn’t be able to pay my school fees and I wouldn’t get my report when others are getting theirs because my school fees were always delayed because she didn’t afford paying.” (Participant 6)

“His absence affected me financially. Everything was fine in high school years because my mother was financially stable. Now that I was in tertiary and my mother isn’t working good paying job, she was beginning to do debts.” (Participant 7)

“I could say things were kind of tough. At most my mother was not permanently employed, but she and my grandmother managed to put me in a predominantly white school which could be perceived as “too expensive” for someone who came from a household that depended on social grants and my mother’s timeto-time jobs.” (Participant 4)

“We have faced financial hardships and had to make sacrifices, we had to move from living luxurious live to middle class life which all of us (me and my siblings) took time to adapt.” (Participant 13)

“

“Since we highly depended on him financially, his absence made us struggle for a while. Especially in my upbringing. We could not afford to pay bills (school fees, electricity, etc.) and basic necessities.” (Participant 14)

So bad that my mother had to give up on so many of her dreams to make ours a reality.” (Participant 22)

Some of the participants felt that their finances were not affected; the financial situation at home would have probably been the same even if the father was present, the young adults responded this way:

“Financially we were not much affected because he is broke, my mother and granny put things together so that I can go to school, eat and dress well.” (Participant 3)

“my father’s absence didn’t affect the home situation” (Participant 25)

Socioeconomic conditions of the family were experienced in both negative and positive ways. While most participants mentioned financial hardship due to a single mother having to shoulder the family’s financial responsibilities alone, some felt that it did not negatively impact the family unit. For these individuals, single mothers were able to meet their children’s financial needs independently, often with the support of other family members.

4.3.6 Theme 6: Coping Mechanisms

The following extracts detail the various coping measures which were put in place by the young adults in reaction to the challenges they have encountered. All the participants expressed having different coping mechanisms, some of which were common among the participants. Two participants felt the need to consult their spiritual beliefs, some relied on their single mothers, extended family members and friends for comfort while there are those who explored counselling services.

4.3.6.1 Sub-Theme: Support by Friends and Family Members

Studies have shown that having people to support you eases the burden and lessens the pain, such as friends, extended family members or even the mother, mostly the mother. Whenever the father is absent and the mother is fully present the pain of not having a father and the negative effects become less, close to none, according to the

participants. The participants concurred with the finding that they appreciated the presence of their mothers, extended family members and friends during the interviews, this is demonstrated in the following extracts:

"I wouldn't say growing up without a father was difficult especially when I was younger because my uncles (my mother's brothers) helped to raise us within their means." (Participant 4)

"My mother is my best supporter, and we talk about everything, I understand what she has been through, and she also understands my feelings and how I prefer things to be." (Participant 5)

"My friend is my support structure for emotional comfort. I trust her and can talk with her about anything." (Participant 6)

"The presence of my mother played a vital role; I only started feeling the void of an absent father when my mother passed away." (Participant 8)

"It was not difficult; my mom was there most of the time and that made it easy for us to grow up without a father." (Participant 10)

"My siblings" (Participant 22)

"My uncle, his brother, and his family help me to feel as a part of the family because they are always there for me and supports me, especially with academics" (Participant 20)

"Sometimes Bless, the gent from my neighbourhood. But with him am careful, I don't drop grenades, it's always minor stuff" (Participant 24)

"I found solace in the unwavering love and support of my grandmother. Her warm embrace and gentle guidance became a beacon of hope in my life." (Participant 25)

4.3.6.2 Sub-Theme: Seeking Professional Help

Some of the participants did not invalidate their feelings, they cried when it was hurting and attended therapy sessions to help deal with the pain. The following extracts validates this:

"I cry a lot...and also attend therapy." (Participant 8)

“

“My psychologist.” (Participant 22)

Aforementioned are extracts from the interview transcripts that divulge that a few of the participants consulted professional mental health personnel.

4.3.6.3 Sub-Theme: Journaling

In some instances, participants chose to write down how they feel, even went to the extent of being creative and writing poems. The subsequent extracts provide evidence of this:

“I have always recited poems at school, I then had motivation about what to write.” (Participant 4)

“My therapist advised me to journal my feelings, I even found a new skill in me of writing poems” (Participant 8)

The results show that the participants frequently use writing as a means of communicating their feelings and the hurt they experience from their father's absence. This finding is intriguing because it emphasises the value of therapy approaches that are affordable and might help young adults whose fathers are absent.

4.3.6.4 Sub-Theme: Relying on Spiritual Beliefs

Two of the participants mentioned during the interview that as they are Christians, they believe a lot on the power of their God to rescue them. They prayed to their God about their feelings. It has been discovered that spirituality and religion are strongly associated with hope. In this situation, turning to God is a coping mechanism. This is what some of the participants shared:

“Yoh, I didn't know I just, I pray to God, like I was so living in anger.” (Participant 2)

“I cry a lot, I pray because I received salvation when I was really young.” (Participant 8)

“I've always been grateful for the mother God then gave me, see the brighter side of the narrative ...it could've been worse... I end up praying, crying while at it.” (Participant 24)

The aforementioned extracts attest to the belief that opening up about your feelings can enlighten a person's burden. Having a spiritual belief can be useful at times when people are heartbroken, dealing with anger or any other personal issues.

4.3.6.5 Sub-Theme: Defensive Humour

Humour was used by participants as a defence mechanism to deal with the misfortunes of life, some had conversations with friends and family. The general consensus in the present study was that the young adults had friends and relatives who were relating to their experiences so they would talk about it, make jokes and laugh about it. There are those who mentioned that at times they would even laugh with their mothers:

“We always laugh about it with my mom...he did well by leaving” (Participant 3)

“Since I am not the only one in my circle with an absent father, this has always been something we joke about, I even gave my father a name.” (Participant 8)

“joke about it but never really spoken about how much it has affected me.” (Participant 17)

Defensive humour appears to be a common mechanism participants employed when dealing with fatherlessness.

4.3.6.6 Sub-Theme: Denial

One recurring sub-theme among the young adults was the denial of the importance of a father or fatherhood. While several of the individuals denied having any affection for their fathers, they frequently grew emotional while discussing them and their facial expressions revealed that they would cry when talking about their fathers. This is indicative of real feelings being denied. An intriguing example came from Participant 6, who at first presented her family and surroundings as the ideal setting for an interview, but then during the interview ended up crying and admitting that she was really affected, she was just not aware of the extent of the pain. Some of the participants said:

“Financially we struggled a lot, my mom tried a lot, to an extent that she wanted me to go to a school in town, she was trying to make me not feel less than my father’s other kids... My mom didn’t have money, we were broke so, most of the times she wouldn’t be able to pay my school fees and I wouldn’t get my report when others are getting theirs because my school fees were always delayed because she didn’t afford paying.” (Participant 6) [The participant was very emotional while talking and ended up crying.]

Another participant also mentioned that she is not affected at all until she was asked about her coping measures, she then said the following:

“I use the bad habits as coping mechanism, drinking, smoking and seeking love on the streets.” (Participant 3)

The two aforementioned extracts confirm that participants are really affected and not aware, sometimes choosing not to give it attention.

4.3.6.7 Sub-Theme: Impersonation

One participant had to pretend to being someone he was not just to fit in and avoid people feeling sorry for him. He acted as if he had a present father while he does not. This is presented in the following extract:

“Sometimes I had to pretend as if am also happy with my father as if he plays a father the father role in life just to avoid judgments but when am alone reality comes ... Sometimes I felt like am not good enough to be his son but in disguise been motivated to stay strong and stand for myself back.” (Participant 7)

The aforementioned extract confirms that growing up without parental guidance is really a challenging thing, so the participants needed to have strategies they employ as a mechanism for addressing these challenges and trauma as some described it. They all had different coping methods that they personally had to try out and find whether it was working or not, there was no guidance from an adult.

4.3.6.8 Sub-Theme: Consuming Alcohol

One participant mentioned that the only way for her to cope was to drink alcohol and smoke. Sometimes it was going around looking for people to love her. This mechanism that just started as a way of numbing the pain ended up being an addiction. She also ended up being heartsore by throwing herself at men who did not care about her. The participant said:

“I use the bad habits as coping mechanism, drinking, smoking and seeking love on the streets.” (Participant 3)

One of the participants used to find comfort in substances but later had forsaken this path through growth. This is what the participant said:

“I tried filling the void with things that didn’t work like substance abuse.”
(Participant 25)

The participants knew this was a negative coping mechanism but still chose it and this is the participant who first mentioned that she was not affected at all by her father’s absence but here it appears that she uses such measures to cope.

4.4 Conclusion

The participants’ responses indicate that absent fatherhood significantly influenced their development. The absence of fathers seemed to impact the participants in various ways, with many reporting challenges in their upbringing due to the absence of emotional and financial support they felt should have been provided by their fathers. However, some participants appeared to have compensated for their fathers' absence by identifying other influential figures they viewed as mentors. Additionally, the participants noted that their psychosocial well-being was affected, experiencing absent fatherhood as a stressful event that shaped their thoughts, emotions, and overall perspective on life. Several participants described growing up with a constant fear of abandonment, struggling to trust others because the father, who was supposed to protect them, had chosen to be absent. Furthermore, most participants felt that the family's financial situation suffered from the loss of a second income, though a few did not notice any significant impact. Overall, the findings suggest that the absence of fathers had a complex and multifaceted effect on the participants, influencing their lives both negatively and positively. The next chapter will explore these findings in greater detail.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the study's findings which support and disprove existing literature. Six main themes emerged out of the data namely; the subjective experiences of being raised in a father-absent home, the participants' perceptions on the role of a father, the psychological impact of a living father's absence, fatherlessness and behavioural patterns, the social effect on an individual's wellbeing, and the coping mechanisms employed by participants. The experiences, opinions, and perspectives of young people with the absence of their living fathers are covered in this chapter. The thematic analysis shows how these young adults cope with difficult circumstances and consider the presence of other carers as a support system, it also highlights the inherent need humans have from birth to form a close emotional bond with a caregiver, a connection that typically develops within the first six months of a child's life, provided the caregiver offers appropriate care.

5.2 Subjective Experiences of Being Raised in a Father-Absent Home

The perceptions of the young adults on being raised in a father-absent home indicated that the experiences varied per individual. In this investigation, the majority of the young adults interviewed reported that this was a difficult experience for them and expressed negative emotions. These findings concur with those of Hawkins (2015), Johnson (2013) and Makofane (2015), who asserted that fatherlessness could cultivate a mindset of hopelessness and acceptance, hindering young people's ability to develop the drive and resilience required to overcome obstacles and achieve goals. For most, it was challenging growing up without a father because they had to watch longingly as other children had supportive father-child connections, while questioning themselves about the reasons behind the absence of their own fathers. The young adults then felt that they were below average to their peers from father present homes as they had a person fulfilling the roles required by them as well. This can be noted from their responses that they repeatedly mentioned, the love and presence of a father is necessary, or sometimes a mother cannot fulfil all roles no matter how present they are.

The highlighted results are similar to some of the studies in South Africa on this topic. For instance, Tau (2020) explored the perceived impact of absent fatherhood and

found similar results, that the majority of the participants experienced growing up without a father in their lives as difficult. The participants cited that they required a father figure to receive guidance from them, for the fathers to provide protection, security, love, emotional and financial support and to fulfil all fatherly roles and responsibilities that a mother cannot fulfil.

While single mothers play a vital role in raising young adults, certain aspects of masculinity and manhood require the guidance of a father figure (Makofane, 2015). There are aspects of development that requires a man, especially in boys, there are things they would only feel comfortable discussing with a man rather than a woman. Schwarzwald (2014) supported this notion by suggesting that males tend to mature slower than females in childhood, partly due to the single mother's natural affinity for understanding and addressing the needs of their daughters. This highlights the importance of paternal involvement in childcare, particularly for boys, who benefit from male models and guidance during their developmental years.

The bond between a child and their caregivers is a fundamental concept in Bowlby's attachment theory (1958). According to this theory, children need to have an attachment figure nearby, someone who is accessible and attentive, to form secure attachments with them. However, if secure attachment is unavailable the child experiences anxiety and behaviourally is likely to exhibit attachment issues. Some of the young adults in the present study stated the difficulty of fulfilling roles, where their single mothers were emotionally distant from them because of being overburdened with concerns beyond just surviving and making ends meet. Most of the female young adults highlighted that they found themselves very clingy to the opposite sex due to not having secure attachments with a single parent.

Related to the aforementioned finding, father absence can be challenging for both the growing child and the single mother (Morwe et al., 2015); raising a child can be demanding and requires collaborative effort by both parents (Richter et al., 2010). Being the sole provider for most of the mothers appeared to have been an issue that resulted in a great deal of stress; the single mothers had several responsibilities that required their time and attention which then prevented them from being fully present by spending valuable time with their children. Mothers were expected to go work harder in trying to provide and this meant taking more job opportunities, while others worked extra shifts and hours. This limited their time for parental connection and

attachment, even if they were home, they still needed to rest due to the strain caused by overworking themselves.

On the contrary, not all the young adults found this experience as difficult as most did, in fact even the ones who described this experience as challenging still acknowledged that it was also endurable with better background and support in the form of uncles and grandparents or other relatives. According to Armstrong (2015), growing up in a father-absent environment is more common and less debilitating than often assumed. Moreover, this absence does not necessarily put children or young adults at a disadvantage. As McCarthy and Bonhoeffer (2015) pointed out, alternative role models such as pastors, neighbours or other community members can fill the void by providing support and guidance. Whenever a father is absent and the mother is both present and transparent about everything, things become better. In a black rural community fatherless homes are a common occurrence, there are participants that mentioned father absence is common in their communities even within their own families and friendships. They emphasised that this was not a foreign concept but normal. The findings are congruent with that of Molongoana (2015), in her study she mentions that father absence is common in South Africa and the presence of extended family members who assumed the responsibilities of the absent fathers had positive impact in the lives of the participants.

In summary, there are two ways noted in which absent fatherhood can be experienced, both positively and negatively. It can also be seen as having no impact at all by people who are surrounded by extended family members, who assume that the roles and responsibilities traditionally assigned to father. Additionally, it can also be seen as empowering because it affords the developing young adult the opportunity to take on some responsibility early in life, which strengthens their independence and willpower. This sense of duty is consistent with White's (2017) claim that young adults from households without fathers are more prone to take on fatherly responsibilities in order to support their single mothers. As they have experienced the pain of seeing their mothers extending themselves to support them, ensuring they have food, clothes and a shelter. These findings concur with those of Freeks (2017) who found that father absence is common in South African communities. Mothers cannot manage to be fully present in the lives of their children. Whenever a parent is financially present only, the child may be exposed to mischievous behaviour and due to not having someone

present following them, they will realise too late that these children are in deep trouble. Based on the participants' experiences and the body of current literature, it would be patronising to assume that anyone could fill that role as long as they are a man. It seems to rely on the degree of emotional bonding that exists between the child and the family member assuming the role of a father.

5.3 The Role of a Father

The conceptualisation of the father's role by the young adults emerged as the second theme. The young adults reported a constant desire to build ties with their absent fathers and how father absence impacts most aspects of their lives. Most of them mentioned that fathers are responsible for the provision of a safe and secure environment for their children to strive and develop well. Therefore, they emphasised that they needed their fathers for many things other than financial. This finding aligns with John Bowlby's attachment theory (1987), which emphasises the need of a father to perform his duties. Bowlby (1987) stated that fathers are more likely to interact with children in a playful manner and that children do not require only the love and security received from a mother but also need the experiences that a father can provide. Mancini (2010) discussed the attachment theory and mentioned that a father's presence is important for providing attachment, security and warmth. Armstrong (2015) mentioned that children reared in an environment where there is no biological father but loving and caring social fathers can benefit positively. This then supports the necessity to study the role of a father and the importance of understanding this phenomenon. Similarly, a study by Shenk et al. (2013) found that being raised without a father figure is painful because some of the roles of the father are to teach their offspring how to love, learn, protect and care for others.

According to Zharima et al. (2025), a father's role traditionally was limited to that of a moral teacher and disciplinarian, who spent little or no time at all with his children because it has always been classified as a mother's role. Responses from the young adults has revealed how much the young adults longed to have a father who will teach and discipline them when necessary. They mentioned also the desire to spend time with their fathers. This finding is consistent with the studies that redefined the role of fathers by noting the transformation since the 1600s, fathers are now regarded as having liable, equal responsibilities with mothers in caring for their children (Rohner & Veneziano, 2001). Craig (2006) found that the majority of today's fathers enjoy caring

for their children and doing tasks which were previously classified as women's responsibilities, such as bathing, feeding and dressing their children.

Participants of the current study mentioned that their needs from the fathers were beyond the finances as for some, their financial situation at home was not affected. Similarly, Tau (2020) found that particularly for the male participants, not having a father deprived them of the opportunity to have a figure that will encourage self-determination rather than being over-indulged because mothers are overprotective. Relatedly, studies have indicated that the absence of a father has an impact on how boys and girls develop their masculinity and femininity (Perrin et al. 2009). Findings of the present study indicated that in some instances boys were compelled to assume the position of the father or the male figure in the house, they became the head and protector of the family, while the mother was working, they were expected to be the one responsible for protecting the others. One of the male participants shared that for him being the man of the house sounded as though it was a huge responsibility that he feels he was not prepared enough for. This then has a negative impact on the mental health of the child because they may feel as though they are not enough and when expected to fulfil these roles they may end up in distress because of overthinking issues.

The aforementioned findings were corroborated by Freeks and Lotter (2009), Williams (2008), and Palkovitz (2007), who all noted how much grief and anguish the absent father brings to the family. Even when an individual has not been exposed to such a life seeing their peers having the privilege of a present father does not stop them from wondering and questioning things, such as why they do not have present fathers, as well as what could be wrong with them? In some cases, these absent fathers are present in the lives of their other children, the siblings of the participants, and these young adults are able to see them.

5.4 The Psychological of a Living Father's Absence

The findings derived from the data indicated the necessity to look at the effects of being reared in an environment where there was no present father or fatherhood especially when the young adult is aware that the father is alive. Nyanjaya and Masango (2012) revealed that children from father absent homes are more likely to have psychological issues that negatively impact their wellbeing, such as stress, melancholy, anger, and

loneliness. This is consistent with the present study's findings, other participants mentioned that growing up in homes without a father present was stressful and had an impact on their cognitive abilities. A sense of being "not good enough" and rejection were mentioned by a few, most of them were troubled by the absence of their fathers but did not take the absence of their fathers as their fault. According to their accounts, they had uncertainty regarding their fathers' motivations for abandoning them as well as a dread of being rejected as children.

Most of the young adults had anger issues, they developed anger towards their absent father which later was vented on other people, especially males. A huge challenge that was consistent among all participants was trust issues, they mentioned that trusting their partners was difficult because of the generalisation that nobody can be trusted, and this seems to be a common feeling among the female participants. Research suggests that impulsivity and anger management issues are prevalent among some young adults, often manifesting in intense outbursts towards their romantic partners, even in response to minor conflicts (Sevin, 2015; White, 2017; Ramatsetse & Ross, 2023). This phenomenon is further elucidated by Wilhem (2014), who posits that individuals who experience rejection, particularly during childhood and adolescence, may redirect their anger towards their intimate partners.

The majority of the participants appeared to rationalise or explain away the seeming desertion that followed to their own inadequacy of "not being good enough" for their fathers. This is a result of the feelings and thoughts that if they were worthy of love and attention, their fathers would have stayed. Some believed that because of their fathers' alleged abandonment, they were unworthy of affection. While others mentioned that they were not much affected, but their responses and actions unconsciously suggests the opposite. Research by Biblarz and Stacey (2010) reveals that children often internalize feelings of unworthiness stemming from paternal absence, which they perceive as abandonment (Carling et al., 2012). This perception of rejection can profoundly impact their self-concept, fostering a pervasive sense of unworthiness.

Related to the aforementioned findings some of the young adults interpreted the father absence as an act of abandonment and rejection. Some of the young adults' mothers passed away and they expected their fathers to at least step in but still they chose not to be present, nor support them during this difficult period. According to Atkin and

Rubin (1976) suggest that feelings of rejection and abandonment are common among individuals who experience father absence.

Conversely, Culpin et al. (2013) suggest that the relationship between a father's absence and stress is negligible in other contexts but the possible abuse that these children might experience while their father is present. Studies have shown there are several fathers who exhibit physical presence but neglect emotional and financial obligations. This is as bad as not having a father because the questions of unworthiness are still present, worse some of the children live in fear because such fathers are even abusive emotionally and physically. One of the participants who once had a present father at some point in his life mentioned that the absence of his father brought peace more than anything because he was a drunkard and abusive. According to Forzad and Gubi (2020), there is a possibility that some children will become stressed due to parental conflict, but having their father away provides them with comfort since they are not pressured to take sides. In some families the parents may always be fighting each other or have ended their marriage but chose to be civil with each other and stay in one house, on any day or time there may be fights which the children might find themselves being a part of indirectly. The present study's conclusions suggest that, in situations where there are family conflicts, paternal absence may cause feelings of comfort rather than stress for the wellness of the individual.

A significant number of the young adults at first stated that their lack of paternal involvement had less, close to no impact on their self-worth, leading them to feel unworthy of love since their fathers would not have turned them away if they were. They understood that their fathers had their own issues that they needed to deal with, their absence had nothing to do with them. Moreover, a subset of participants attributed their feelings of unworthiness to the absence of paternal validation and affirmation. However, when the interviews progressed it was evident that they were in denial as well as some not being aware of their true feelings. Extending the work of Cooper (2009) and Sheslow (2008), suggesting that young adults' self-esteem is negatively impacted by the absence of their fathers, particularly when rejection is involved.

According to their assertion self-doubt and the inclination to appease others are additional effects of being raised without a father, as the development of a stable sense

of self is significantly hindered in young adults. The common characteristics young adults with absent fathers experienced were evident in the interviews had with them, trying to appease others as a dominant response. Brooks (2008) echoed similar findings, emphasising that the frequent absence of a father figure causes faith problems in young adults. These individuals struggle to trust the world and themselves, expecting rejection from others in the same way that they experience rejection from their own fathers. Most of them confirmed struggling a lot with relationships because of this. This forced some to sometimes even push others to leave them.

Kevorkian (2010) corroborated these results by pointing out that some young adults tend to question their own decisions, most notably in social settings among their age group. They experience feelings of inadequacy in comparison to their ability, which contributes to this in part. Detachment from primary caregivers may lead to decreased self-confidence, conversely, children who experience nurturing relationship from both parental figures are prone to grow up to be people with strong self-esteem and confidence (Luo et al., 2011). Children need both parents to be present, support them, motivate them, and celebrate with them little achievements. When they do not have someone to build that confidence in them, they question themselves from childhood to adulthood. They need a supporter who will push them into achieving more than they initially thought they could. However, when they are on their own, they even depend on friends when having to make decisions. They fail making their own decision. A male participant even mentioned that he doubts his capability of being a head of a house. He thinks he is too soft and has not been properly equipped for that role.

The results of the present investigation align with those of Ramatsetse & Ross (2020) who discovered that of all her participants, none of them tried committing suicide nor have suicidal ideas. The participants mentioned that they understood it has nothing to do with them but with their absent fathers. They held the belief that the absent fathers are the ones with issues and required help. A significant number of the participants acknowledged being affected, some realised during the interviews that indeed this affected them, and they were not aware of the effect. However, they still understood that this is a personal issue of their fathers, it does not mean there is something wrong with them that needs to be changed or anything similar to that. Therefore, they did not see any reason to hurt themselves nor end their lives because of this.

5.5 Fatherlessness and Behavioural Patterns

Herein, the young adults mentioned that their struggles with initiating and maintaining relationships as it is something foreign to them. They somehow always want to associate the behaviour of their partners with their absent fathers, in a way that they do not open room for their partners to make mistakes and always expecting them to leave any day. Anxious-avoidant is consistent with Ainsworth theory (1987), which emphasises that participants may worry that they are not fully loved and may be easily frustrated. Thus, they sometimes push their partners to leave them because they are not used to being loved for no reason. Researchers Hazan and Shaver (1987) were the first to investigate Bowlby's insights in the context of romance. According to both researchers the emotional bond that exists in romantic relationships is partly a process of the same attachment behavioural system which fosters emotional connection between infants and their caregivers. These results concede with those of O'Brien and Shemilt (2003) and Schwarzwald (2014) that fatherhood entails a multitude of tasks, obligations, and responsibilities, including rulemaking, communication, behaviour management, health maintenance, education, guidance, nurturing, and love. This is indicative of what the absence of fatherhood may result in. In an attempt to fulfil their emotional needs, children of absent fathers may develop a pattern of seeking proximity to male figures, often resulting in an intense emotional reliance. Ainsworth (1989) mentioned that children develop trust based on interactions with their primary caregivers.

The current study found that other young adults found it difficult even to act around spaces where there are male figures, they always felt uncertainty in such situations. There are those who reported engaging in morally reprehensible actions for individuals of similar age, such as substance use, promiscuous behaviour and premature sexual engagement.

The absence of paternal influence frequently robs these developing adolescence of a normal childhood experiences, compelling them to presume parental functions at a tender age (Ratele et al., 2012). Children require their father and aspires to nurture a stronger bond with them (Willerton et al., 2011). It is a common thing in rural places that children with absent fathers presume the parental roles because they are raised by a single parent who is always preoccupied trying to raise funds for them to have something to eat daily, clothes and to go to school (Freeks, 2011), some do not even

have their mothers because they might have passed away. These results supported the representations made by earlier researchers, McCarthy and Bonhoeffer (2015) and Armstrong (2015), that fatherless parenting is not as onerous as people may believe but is common and typical, in fact. They claimed that since there are so many other societal role models for kids and teens to aspire to, such as pastors, other males or father figures in the family and neighbours who can assist with childrearing, experiencing father absence is not always a negative for them. These young adults exhibit coping mechanisms in place; only outsiders believe that being an absent father is a traumatic experience (McLeod & Kaiser, 2004). Some of the participants mentioned that having uncles was something helpful for them as it is believed in the African culture that even your father's brother is your father. The theory implies that father absence can influence adversities in forming and sustaining connections attributed to trust issues (Mancini, 2010).

Interestingly, most of the young adults mentioned academic achievement was affected positively by father absence because they always wanted to become the best versions of self to prove a point regardless of having the necessary educational resources for schooling. These finding disputes what Stephen and Udisi (2016) and Franklin et al. (2014) noted that father absence is a significant predator of lower academic attainment and heightened risk of school withdrawal. To some extent this was sustained by one young adult who dropped out and searched for employment to assist his mother.

5.6 Social Effects on Individual's Wellbeing

The struggle with identity and the impact of using maternal surnames highlight a significant psychological struggle. Participants feel lost, questioning their heritage and belonging, which is crucial for self-identity formation. In many cultures, the father's role is pivotal in transmitting values, traditions, and a sense of belonging. The absence disrupts this process, creating a vacuum that transcends individual-level effects to family and community dynamics. Responses vary; some participants have developed resilience and self-acceptance, while others grapple with self-doubt and the need for validation. This is prevalent with Bowlby's attachment theory (1987) which suggests that a child's attachment experiences with their primary caregivers influence how they participate in societal interaction.

The paternal influence is crucial in nurturing a sense of belonging between family members. In the present investigation, it was clear from data that most children did not have any relations with their paternal family, and this further created the questions amongst participants regarding their identity. Trowbridge (2014) observed that experiencing paternal absence during childhood is a potentially debilitating experience, as it encompasses both the paternal loss and a progressive experience of rejection from closest paternal relatives, from whom one would typically pursue safeguarding measures. Almost all the participants have mentioned that they do not have any relations with their paternal families, some were even denied by their paternal grandmothers and aunts. This experience has really affected their feelings negatively.

When asked about their self-worth, a significant proportion of the participants responded affirmatively, while a minority expressed uncertainty. This aligns with Maslow's (1954) theory that fulfilling esteems needs fosters a positive self-image, whereas unmet needs can lead to feelings of worthlessness. Notably, all participants had a present maternal figure or extended family member, which contributed to their consciousness of self-worth and helped de-tach their self-value from their absent fathers. This finding supports Rogers' (2005) assertion that parental affection is instrumental to profound influence on children's self-worth.

Ainsworth (1989) categorized three attachment patterns: "secure, avoidant, and ambivalent". Individuals characterized by a secure-base attachment pattern typically exhibit elevated self-esteem levels and tend to form healthier relationships. This dichotomy illustrates how absent fatherhood can lead to both strength and vulnerability. The struggle for self-worth can affect future relationships, as individuals might either overcompensate for perceived inadequacies or fear intimacy due to past abandonment. This can create cycles of insecurity that extend beyond the individual. For many individuals, father absence has fostered a heightened consciousness of independence, suggesting that adversity can sometimes foster personal growth. However, some express ongoing struggles with decision-making, indicating a complex relationship with autonomy.

The researcher found that financial implications of absent fathers are stark. While many reports significant hardships, a few note that their mothers and extended family managed to provide stability. However, the tension between newfound independence

and the struggle with decision-making indicates that the father absence can create conflicting feelings. Some individuals still seek validation and guidance, showing that independence does not necessarily equate to confidence. This suggests a nuanced view, where the impact of absence can vary significantly based on family dynamics and socioeconomic factors. The diverse experiences shared by participants reveal that while some find empowerment in overcoming the absence, others face deep-seated challenges that affect their self-esteem and economic stability.

5.7 The Coping Mechanisms and Resilience Factors Employed by Participants

Research findings of the present investigation suggest that young adults raised without fathers have developed various coping strategies, which may be viewed as either positive or negative. These strategies include seeking support from extended family members, consulting with professionals, journaling, silence, defensive humour, and denial. According to Cramer (1998), coping is defined as the conscious and purposeful adoption of a strategy by an individual to avoid or manage perceived threats.

5.7.1 Support from Extended Family Members

A significant proportion of young adults in this investigation reported receiving substantial support from relatives beyond the immediate family. According to Knight et al. (2015), their research indicates that many participants found solace in the involvement of extended family members. These findings are significant for the current study, as numerous participants noted that emotional support from extended family has been crucial in alleviating some of their burdens. The attachment theory asserts that every child requires to have at least one caregiver to form a secure attachment (McLeod, 2009). Bowlby (1987) deliberately chose the term "attachment figure" over "mother" or "father" because he believed that, while biological mothers often serve as the primary attachment figures, other individuals such as extended family members, uncles, grandparents, and childcare providers can also fulfil this role. Participants who grew up with supportive uncles or grandparents reported that their presence made their experiences feel lighter. In African culture, a father figure can include any male relative, so having uncles around helped reduce the emotional weight they carried, allowing them to feel more at ease.

Kawachi and Berkman (2001) suggest that social connections can promote overall well-being and mental health. Many participants developed strong bonds with maternal

uncles, who stepped into fatherly roles, providing guidance and fostering an environment where the participants felt comfortable expressing themselves. Kinard (2020) found that social support positively influences the adoption of effective coping strategies. It serves as a buffer mitigating the negative consequences of psychological distress by either diminishing the perceived severity of stressors or encouraging healthier responses (Crockett et al., 2007). However, only two individuals reported being open about their feelings with friends and family, highlighting that many young adults may choose to suffer in silence, complicating efforts to provide them with necessary support. As noted by Holborn and Eddy (2011), young people facing mental distress are at a heightened risk for suicide; among those experiencing sadness and depression (Patton et al., 2009). Mothers and other guardians, such as grandparents and uncles, play a crucial role by establishing nurturing environments that blend constructive criticism with a well-balanced approach to discipline and incentive. Thus, social support is vital in mitigating unhealthy coping mechanisms, and young people should be encouraged to reach out to peers, parents, or trusted adults for assistance.

5.7.2 Talking with Someone Professional

Particular individuals made the indication that they did attend therapy sessions as a manner of responding to the struggle. Multiple studies by Holborn and Eddy (2011), Human Sciences Research Council (2018) and Makusha and Richter (2018) indicated that seeing mental health practitioners was deemed a privilege that others had access to receive assistance. Given the inherent individual differences, participants developed unique coping mechanisms in an effort to lessen adverse repercussions of the challenges faced and this finding concurs with Makofane (2015) and Zulu and Munro (2017) studies which indicated that participants handled the challenges in different ways. The participant sample comprises university students and those that have already graduated. They did mention that the institutions they are/were in introduced them to counselling services where they were able to get assistance in order to accept and grieve the father they never had. This was a method of intervention that the participants mostly described as positive and helpful as it helps even with moving on. Some participants mentioned that they were unable to access mental health practitioners due to financial constraints regardless of their interest to see such a professional.

5.7.3 Journaling

The participants' accounts suggested that journaling was employed by participants as a means of distress-management. Venkatesh (2024) defined journaling as a coping mechanism used in response to distress, by establishing a therapeutic environment for individuals to form meaningful connections and express themselves to a hypothetical audience. This coping method was utilized by the participants, allowing them to write down their emotions through journaling. Psychologists also recognize this form of therapy, which has been found to be an excellent tool for alleviating distress. A substantial proportion of participants described opening to another person about their feelings as an inconvenience, thus when they open up to the imagined crowd, when journaling, they do not feel any guilt in them. Sargunraj et al (2024) stated that writing down one's emotions has been used as a therapeutic tool to aid in rehabilitation and support mental health.

5.7.4 Silence

The majority of participants employed silence as a coping strategy, rationalizing that disclosing their concerns to others would constitute a burden. These findings align with prior investigations carried out in South Africa, which implies that young individuals frequently resort to silence as a means of avoiding distressing situations and potential conflict, particularly with family members (Rouch & Ansari, 2025).

Cultural sanctioned behaviours and social expectations can contribute to the perpetuation of silence. In African cultures, children are often discouraged from questioning their elders (Nyamekye et al., 2024), and younger women are socialized to avoid challenging men (Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2013). This cultural context can render it challenging for young people to initiate conversations about their absent fathers.

The participants' reliance on silence as a coping mechanism can have coexisting advantages and disadvantages. One argument suggests, silence can serve as a means of maintaining family harmony and avoiding conflict. by contrast, it can also deprive individuals of the opportunity to process their emotions and seek support. Research suggests that silence is not always a deliberate choice, but rather a coping strategy employed by young people in an effort to maintain harmony in their homes (Nduna & Jewkes, 2011). Cultural sanctioned behaviours and expectations can serve

a significant function in constructing young people's decisions to employ silence as a coping mechanism.

The outcomes of the investigation underscore the necessity for interventions that are sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of young people. Providing a supportive and nonjudgmental environment can facilitate open discussions and promote healing among young adults who have experienced paternal absence. Furthermore, the participants' difficulties in relating to peers from two-parent households underscore the importance of providing targeted support and resources for young people from single-parent households.

5.7.5. Defensive Humour

Defensive humour evolved as a prominent mechanism for coping adopted by participants to navigate the emotional complexities associated with paternal absence. Humour can serve as a stress-reducing and anxiety-mitigating strategy (Jonesl, 2022). By employing humour, individuals have the potential to alleviate the deleterious consequences of stress and anxiety on their well-being. In this study, participants often utilized humour as a means of communicating with friends and family members about their absent fathers. According to Vanderhaiden and Mayer (2024) humour is a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses cognitive processes, affective behavioural, psychophysiological, and societal factors. Within the healthcare field, humour is recognized as both a communication tool and a resilience technique (Emmanuel-Olowonubi, 2025). For example, patients often employ humour to conceal their genuine emotions, such as embarrassment, anxiety, or uncertainty (Wanzer et al., 2005).

However, while humour can provide temporary relief, it can be employed as a maladaptive resilience technique. Martin et al. (2003) caution that certain types of humour, such as avoidant and sarcastic humour, can have detrimental consequences on psychological health and well-being. In this investigation, some participants appeared to use humour as a means of masking their emotional pain, highlighting the complex and multifaceted nature of humour as a coping mechanism.

5.7.6. Denial

Ramatsetse and Ross (2023) observed that young adults raised by single mothers without the support of fathers often exhibit a tendency of downplaying the challenges

associated with this experience. The present study concurs with these findings, as participants' responses indicated a preference to avoid focusing on the emotional effect of being raised in the absence of a father. Notably, during the interviews, the young adults exhibited intense emotional responses, including tears and laughter, suggesting that the topic remained a sensitive issue. Despite adopting a dismissive attitude, as evident in their "he's absent, so what?" mentality, participants' emotional reactions betrayed their attempts to suppress the pain associated with paternal absence (Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2015).

Denial emerged as a prevalent coping mechanism among participants, enabling them to repress emotions and sentiments related to their missing fathers. This tactic allowed participants to conceal the full impact of paternal absence (Conway et al., 2005). Consistent with previous research, denial was employed as means of emotional regulation, particularly among individuals with competitive and aggressive personality traits (Ramatsetse & Ross, 2023).

5.8 Conclusion

The objectives of the study were assessed in conjunction with the results gathered from the investigation. The findings were connected, whenever feasible, to existing literature. The findings suggest that the experience of paternal absence during childhood and adolescence can have varying outcomes, ranging from adversity to resilience, contingent upon the availability of positive influences, a supportive network, and a single mother who can provide economic and sustenance. A predominant theme emerged from the participants' narratives, highlighting the significance of support systems in navigating the challenges of paternal absence. Specifically, many participants emphasized that the absence of any support network rendered their experiences particularly difficult.

Moreover, some participants noted that, in attempting to compensate for the lack of paternal presence, some single mothers may prioritize financial provision over emotional support, inadvertently creating an emotional deficit. Thus, the presence of a mother, friends and extended family members makes the burden lighter. The findings also show that fatherlessness within children has a variety of effects on a person's psychosocial wellness which may appear when they become young adults.

For some, it affected how they viewed the world, how they formed and maintained connections with their significant others, and how they saw themselves. Most struggled with initiating and maintaining relationships while others were careful in terms of the people, they associate themselves with and how they treat others. Some were positively impacted since it helped them develop into responsible adults and master independency at a very tender age.

The findings additionally suggest that paternal absence can precipitate accelerated maturation in children, who are often compelled to assume adult responsibilities at a prematurely age. This phenomenon is frequently observed in the single-parent households, where young adults may feel obligated to assume caregiving roles in support of their mothers. Additionally, the absence of a paternal influence can significantly affect family dynamics, placing undue strain on the well-being of single mothers, who often bear the sole responsibility of providing for their children's needs, resulting in excessive workload and diminished rest periods. Remarkably, some noted absentee paternity as a benefit because most families were able to form strong bonds with one another and become loving, cohesive families. In summary, absentee fatherhood has a variety of effects on the person's wellness in the household composition. The subsequent chapter provides the findings overview, limitations, recommendations, and conclusions of the investigation.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of the Findings

Results of the investigation provides insight into the consequence of developing in a father-absent environment, emphasizing both positive and negative impacts on children raised in single-mother home environments. Given that children spend a significant proportion of their early years within the family home, the consequences of father absence may be delayed, emerging only as they navigate the challenges of young adulthood. A substantial concern is that children's psychosocial well-being often suffers, leading to issues with attachment, self-worth and identity. A proportion of young adults, unaware of their paternal history and lacking paternal surnames, struggle to connect with their families, particularly with their fathers' side. This lack of connection can lead to internalised negative feelings, which may be referred to as a "bad object."

In an attempt to shield themselves from additional emotional pain, some individuals align themselves with these negative feelings, resulting in isolation and difficulty forming meaningful relationships. A substantial proportion of participants expressed challenges in maintaining connections, often anticipating abandonment and inadvertently pushing away those who show no intention of leaving. The emotional child-single parents connection serves a crucial function in mitigating the consequences of paternal absence.

Some of the young adults received support from relatives beyond the immediate family, such as uncles, or positive community figures, such as pastors, who can assume paternal roles. Those with such support often experience more positive outcomes, this reinforces the African proverb, "it takes a village to raise a child". Young adults with substitute role models often manage the absence of their fathers more successfully. In many black communities, father absence is a prevalent phenomenon, leading some participants to perceive it as a typical experience shared by many others in their surroundings. This sense of community helps them come to terms with their situation, attributing the issue to their fathers rather than questioning their self-worth.

Contrary to expectations, the study discovered that paternal absence could have advantageous outcomes, pushing children to take on responsibilities early and strive for independence. Many young adults felt motivated to succeed and become the opposite of their absent fathers, focusing on the resources they have, rather than on

what is missing. By acknowledging the efforts of the present parent, some found inspiration to aim high, leading to academic success and a desire to support their mothers. Only a small fraction reported using negative coping mechanisms, with most participants striving for a better future despite their circumstances.

The research highlighted that some single mothers successfully instil strong values in their children, preparing them for independence despite challenging situations. These mothers often educate their children about life, encourage them to learn from past mistakes, and support their involvement in school and church. Transparency about their relationships with their children's fathers can also help children form their own views about their absent parents. This underscores the significance of support systems for single mothers, providing vital emotional, social, and financial stability for their families. Financial challenges due to absent fathers were also significant, limiting access to resources and opportunities for children, who sometimes missed out on the joys of childhood by having to contribute financially.

Collaborative parenting, even in complex relationships, can provide children with a balanced support system, addressing both physical and emotional needs. It is crucial for mothers to discuss absent fathers openly with their children, without transferring their own pain to them. Teaching effective coping mechanisms is important to avoid detrimental effects. While some participants resorted to temporary relief strategies, those with adequate support systems, friends, family, and mental health professionals, generally fared better. Coping strategies varied by gender and individual backgrounds, influenced by family values and cultural context. Men and women approached stress differently, with women often expressing emotions more openly, while men might find it harder to share feelings or seek help. Both genders relied on family, friends, and spiritual beliefs to cope, demonstrating that the coping strategies observed were consistent across the participants.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

Given the emotional sensitivity of the subject matter, it was challenging to find sample population, particularly males, who were willing to fully engage in the research. During the initial stages of the investigation, the researcher experienced difficulties in recruiting and retaining male participants, who expressed interest but did not attend the scheduled interviews. The researcher then initiated slots to thoroughly rationalise

the significance of the research project to the prospective participants and further requested those he had interviewed to share their experiences to the individuals who were hesitant to participate. Thus, at the end the researcher managed to get the required sample. The study included only 25 participants from one district, the results may not be representative of all young adults from single-parent households. Experiences may differ from one participant to the other depending on different issues such as culture, location and home background, even the nature and period of father absence. Prospective studies could address this limitation by utilising a larger sample size and may also focus on one gender per study and go in depth. It can consider diversity in different aspects including social context, class, race and gender, which would enhance the transferability of the results to a generalizable population.

Given that the study applied interviews, most of the participants were either not aware of the effects or in denial that made it hard at first to have real answers but with continuous probing participants were able to give enough answers that fully shares their perceptions on the topic as well as their realities.

Finally, the application of interviews as a data collection approach may have particular limitations, as they mainly capture the subjective experiences of participants and may overlook objective facts about the phenomenon. Additionally, interviews may not always be fully reliable, as each participant may provide a different perspective, making it difficult to maintain consistency. To address this, future research could consider incorporating different data collection approaches to strengthen validity.

6.3 Recommendations of the Study

The research outcomes support the recommendation that extended family members where possible, may intervene and be support structures for young people affected by father absence. Interventions and support systems for young adults raised without their fathers should be established within communities, schools and churches as it was indicated that some single mothers are not able to provide all the help because they are mostly preoccupied by other activities. The presence of such programmes in churches and schools, where children spend most of their time will help both the single mothers and the young adults. An afterschool programme would have positive impact on the young adults, programmes that will equip them for life beyond home and teach them some of the things a father was supposed to teach them. The study will contribute

to the development of evidence-based and support programs. It was indicated by the participants that they struggle to talk about their absent fathers with their mothers, just to maintain peace, such programmes will then create a safe environment for them.

Researchers should expand their research to encompass a broader range of cultural and social contexts, and by delving into the pre-existing family dynamics, future studies could facilitate a deeper comprehension of the adversities faced by these individuals and lay the groundwork for targeted interventions to maximize their potential.

Whenever parents/guardians view their children as old enough to understand adult issues they should be transparent about everything that has happened, especially when the children are the ones interested in knowing and are asking questions. This will be helpful when they must accept and heal. The questions will not all be answered but they will get substantial answers to accept the circumstances and begin the healing journey. This conversation can be done by the mother and child or be guided by a professional.

To eliminate one of the burdens from the mothers which is finances, the government should establish strong policies and laws that will force fathers to at least provide for their children financially, some participants reported that the maintenance court failed them as the fathers would pay when they felt the desire to, some went to the extent of resigning just to avoid paying. The study will inform policy and practise within the fields of education, social work and psychology. Fathers must be forced to have a way of providing even when unemployed, this will stop them from resigning and encourage them to work and provide for their children.

More studies should be done on this topic, and focus should be placed as well on the absent fathers who abandon their children. Find the perceptions of absent fathers regarding the phenomenon, investigate how they feel about their absenteeism and how life is for them after they have abandoned their own children.

6.4 Personal Reflection

As a product of a father-absent household myself, this research has provided a sense of validation and understanding that I was not aware I needed in my life. I found myself at some point being grateful for my experiences, the opportunities and support I have received. I am humbled by the acts of grace I have received throughout my life, especially after losing my mother. The findings have corroborated my personal

experiences, highlighting the shared challenges faced by individuals without present fathers. I can attest that if I was not of the support from my family and church I would not be here. I therefore believe this research has significant implications for supporting and empowering young adults from father-absent households. I plan to publish a paper and do presentation about it with the purpose of spreading awareness. I hope in future I will have a chance to do a study that explores the experiences of the absent fathers.

REFERENCES

- Abbey, C., & Dallos, R. (2004). The experience of the impact of divorce on sibling relationships: A qualitative study. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 9(2), 241–259.
- Abel, M. H. (2002). Humor, stress and coping strategies. *Humor*, 15(4), 365–381
- Abu-Raiya, H. and Jamal, H., 2021. The links between religious coping and subjective well-being among Israeli-Muslims who lost a beloved person through death. *Death Studies*, 45(4), pp.296-304.
- Abrams, A. N., Hazen, E. P., & Penson, R. T. (2007). Psychosocial issues in adolescents with cancer. *Cancer treatment reviews*, 33(7), 622–630.
- Adler, N., & Stewart, J. (2004). *Research network on socioeconomic status and health: Self-esteem*.
<http://www.macses.ucsf.edu/Research/Psychosocial/notebook/selfesteem.htm>
- Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. N. (2015). Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation. *Psychology Press*.
- Ainsworth, M. S. (1989). Attachments beyond infancy. *American psychologist*, 44(4), 709.
- Alexander, J. C. (1997). The paradoxes of civil society. *International Sociology*, 12(2), 115–133.
- Alleyne-Green, B., Fernandes, G., & Clark, T. T. (2015). Help-seeking behaviors among a sample of urban adolescents with a history of dating violence and suicide ideations. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 10(1), 1–11.
- Allison, P. D., & Furstenberg, F. F. (1989). How marital dissolution affects children: variations by age and sex. *Developmental psychology*, 25(4), 540.
- Ames, M. A. (2014). Where Have All the Good Men Gone?: A Psychoanalytic Reading of the Absent Fathers and Bad Dads on ABC's *Lost*. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 47(3), 430–450. http://works.bepress.com/melissa_ames/11
- Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the Quality of the Findings of Qualitative Research: Looking at Trustworthiness Criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 5(2), 276–279.
- Armstrong, C. (2015). *4 big benefits of being raised by a single mother*.

<http://divorcedmoms.com/articles/4-big-benefits-of-being-raised-by-a-single-mother>

Atkin, E. L., & Rubin, E. (1976). *Part-time father*. New American Library of Canada.

Babbie, E. (2010). Research design. *The practice of social research*, 12, 90–123.

Babbie, E. R. (2010). *The Practice of Social Research* (12th ed.). Wadsworth

Baker, C. (2017). Father-son relationships in ethnically diverse families: Links to boys' cognitive and social emotional development in preschool. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 26(8)

Balcom, D. A. (1998). Absent fathers: Effects on abandoned sons. *The journal of men's studies*, 6(3), 283–296.

Bennett, R., Hosegood, V., Newell, M. L., & McGrath, N. (2015). Understanding family migration in rural South Africa: Exploring children's inclusion in the destination households of migrant parents. *Population Space and Place*, 21(4), 310–321. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1842>

Biblarz, T. J., & Stacey, J. (2010). How does the gender of parents matter? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(1), 3–22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.17413737.2009.00678.x>

Bieber, I. (1976). A discussion of Homosexuality: The ethical challenge. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 44(2), 163–166. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.44.2.163>

Black, C. M. (2008). *Working for a healthier tomorrow: Dame Carol Black's review of the health of Britain's working age population*. The Stationery Office.

Blankenhorn, D. (1995). *Fatherless America: Confronting our most urgent social problem*. Harper Collins Publishers.

Blankenhorn, D. (2007). *The future of marriage*. Encounter books.

Bless, C. (2008). *Fundamentals of social research: An African perspective*. Juta & Company Limited.

Blos, P. (1967). The second individuation process of adolescence. *The psychoanalytic study of the child*, 22(1), 162–186.

Bojuwoye, O., & Sylvester, F. (2014). Subjective well-being of adolescent boys living in single-mother households in a Cape Town suburb, South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5.

- Boothroyd, L. D., & Perrett, D. I. (2008). Father absence, parent-daughter relationships and partner preferences. *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*, 6(3), 187–205. <https://doi.org/10.1556/JEP.6.2008.3.3>
- Boothroyd, L. G., & Cross, C. P. (2017). Father absence and gendered traits in sons and daughters. *PLoS One*, 12(7), e0179954.
- Boothroyd, L. G., & Perrett, D. I. (2006). Facial and bodily correlates of family background. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 273(1599), 2375–2380. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2006.3579>
- Boss, P., Bryant, C. M., & Mancini, J. A. (2016). *Family stress management: A contextual approach*. Sage Publications.
- Boundless. (2016). *Attachment Theory*. Boundless Psychology. <https://www.boundless.com/psychology/textbooks/boundlesspsychologytextbook/human-development-14/theories-of-human-development-70/attachmenttheory-271-12806/>
- Bowlby, J. (1958). The nature of the child's tie to his mother. *International Journal of Psycho-analysis*, 39, 350–373.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Bray, J. H., & Harvey, D. M. (1992). Intimacy and individuation in young adults: Development of the young adult version of the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 6(2), 152.
- Brooks, R. (2008). *How can parents spot low self-esteem in their children?* Great Schools. <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/low-self-esteem-in-children/>
- Brown, C. L., Love, K. M., Tyler, K. M., Garriot, P. O., Thomas, D., & Roan-Belle, C. (2013). Parental attachment, family communalism, and racial identity among African American college students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 41(2), 108–122. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.21611912.2013.00031.x>
- Brown, G. L., Mangelsdorf, S. C., & Neff, C. (2012). Father involvement, paternal sensitivity, and father-child attachment security in the first 3 years. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 26(3), 421–430. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027836>
- Budlender, D., & Lund, F. (2011). South Africa: A legacy of family disruption.

- Development and Change, 42(4), 925–946.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.14677660.2011.01715.x>
- Cabrera, A. F., Nora, A., & Castaneda, M. B. (1993). College persistence: Structural equations modeling test of an integrated model of student retention. *The journal of higher education*, 64(2), 123–139.
- Cabrera, N. J., Ryan, R. M., Mitchell, S. J., Shannon, J. D., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. S. (2008). Low-income, non-resident father involvement with their toddlers: Variation by fathers' race and ethnicity. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(4), 643–647.
- Caldwell-Harris, C. L., & Aycicegi, A. (2006). When personality and culture clash: The psychological distress of allocentrics in an individualist culture and idiocentrics in a collectivist culture. *Transcultural psychiatry*, 43(3), 331–361.
- Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). *Meaning of fatherhood in English*.
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fatherhood>
- Carling, J., Menjivar, C., & Schmalzbauer, L. (2012). Central themes in the study of transnational parenthood. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 38(2), 191–217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.646417>
- Carlson, M. J (2006). Family structure, father involvement and adolescent behavioural outcomes. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(1), 137–154. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2006.00239.x>
- Carlson, M. J., & Corcoran, M. E. (2001). Family structure and children's behavioral and cognitive outcomes. *Journal of marriage and family*, 63(3), 779–792.
- Carr, A. (2015). *The handbook of child and adolescent clinical psychology: A contextual approach*. Routledge.
- Chang, E. C. (1998). Dispositional optimism and primary and secondary appraisal of a stressor: Controlling for confounding influences and relations to coping and psychological and physical adjustment. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 74(4), 1109.
- Chauke, P., & Khunou, G. (2014) Shaming fathers into providers: Child support and fatherhood in South African media. *The Open Family Studies Journal*, 6(1)
- Choo, H., & Shek, D. (2013). Quality of parent–child relationship, family conflict, peer pressure, and drinking behaviors of adolescents in an Asian context: The case of Singapore. *Social indicators research*, 110, 1141–1157.

- Clowes, L., Ratele, K., & Shefer, T. (2013). Who needs a father? South African men reflect on being fathered. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 22(3), 255–267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2012.708823>
- Cohen, D. (1998). Culture, social organization, and patterns of violence. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 75(2), 408.
- Collis, J., & Hussey, R. (2003). *Business research: A practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cooper, D., & Greenaway, M. (2015). Non-probability Survey Sampling in Official Statistics. *ONS Methodology Working Paper Series*, 4, 2–5. <https://www.pdfFiller.com/435172772--ONS-Methodology-Working-PaperSeriesNo-4-Non-probability>
- Cooper, S. M. (2009). Associations between father-daughter relationship quality and the academic engagement of African American adolescent girls: Self-esteem as a mediator? *Journal of Black Psychology*, 35(4), 495–516. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0095798409339185>
- Cope, D. G. (2014). Methods and meanings: credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. *In Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(1), 89–91.
- Cosentino, A. (2018). *Scale Development: Myths and Attitudes About Fatherhood*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526446527>
- Craig, A. G., Thompson, J., Slykerman, R., Wall, C., Murphy, R., Mitchell, E. A., & Waldie, K. E. (2018). The long-term effects of early paternal presence on children's behavior. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 27(11), 3544–3553. <https://doiorg.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s10826-018-1206-1>
- Craig, L. (2006). Does father care mean fathers share? A comparison of how mothers and fathers in intact families spend time with children. *Gender & society*, 20(2), 259–281.
- Cramer, P. (1998). Coping and defense mechanisms: What's the difference? *Journal of personality*, 66(6), 919–946.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. SAGE Publications.
- Crockett, L. J., Iturbide, M. I., Torres Stone, R. A., McGinley, M., Raffaelli, M., & Carlo, G. (2007). Acculturative stress, social support, and coping: relations to

- psychological adjustment among Mexican American college students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 13(4), 347.
- Culpin, I., Heron, J., Araya, R., Melotti, R., & Joinson, C. (2013). Father absence and depressive symptoms in adolescence: findings from a UK cohort. *Psychological Medicine*, 43(12), 2615–2626. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291713000603>
- Dai, P., Yi, G., Qian, D., Wu, Z., Fu, M. and Peng, H., 2023. Social support mediates the relationship between coping styles and the mental health of medical students. *Psychology research and behavior management*, pp.1299-1313.
- Datta, K. (2007). “In the eyes of a child, a father is everything”: Changing constructions of fatherhood in urban Botswana? *In Women’s Studies International Forum*, 30(2), 97–113. Pergamon.
- De Vos, A. S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C. B., & Delport, C. S. L. (2011). *Research at grass roots*. Van Schaik Publishers.
<https://www.vanschaiknet.com/book/view/258>
- DeBell, M. (2008). Children living without their fathers: Population estimates and indicators of educational well-being. *Social Indicators Research*, 87(3), 427–443.
- Demuth, S., & Brown, S.L. (2004). Family structure, family processes, and adolescent delinquency: The significance of parental absence versus parental gender. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 41(1), 58–81.
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022427803256236>
- Department of Social Development. (2012). White Paper on Families in South Africa. Republic of South Africa. Government Press.
- Dickerson, C. M. (2014). *The lived experience of fatherlessness in male adolescents: The student perspective* [Doctoral dissertation, Liberty University, Lynchburg].
- Dobbs, P. J. E. (2014). *The impact of fatherlessness on the way one relates to God as Father* [Master’s thesis, University of Otago]. University of Otago Archives.
<https://ourarchive.otago.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10523/4672/DobbsPeterJE2014MTheol.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Doll, J. (2012). *What does “Young adult” mean?* The Atlantic.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2012/04/what-does-youngadultmean/329105/>

- Donnellan, M. B., Trzesniewski, K. H., Robins, R. W., Moffitt, T. E., & Caspi, A. (2005). Low self-esteem is related to aggression, antisocial behaviour, and delinquency. *Psychological Science*, 16(4), 328–335.
<https://doi.org/10.1111%2Fj.0956-7976.2005.01535.x>
- Drexler, P., & Gross, L. (2005). *Raising boys without men: How maverick moms are creating the next generation of exceptional men*. Rodale Press.
- Du Plessis, E. D. (2012). *Psychosocial factors as predictors of suicidal ideation amongst adolescence in the Free State Province: A cross-cultural study* [Doctoral dissertation, University of the Free State].
<https://scholar.ufs.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11660/1357/DuPlessisED.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Duhachek, A. (2005). Coping: A multidimensional, hierarchical framework of responses to stressful consumption episodes. *Journal of Consumer research*, 32(1), 41–53.
- East, L., Hutchinson, M., Power, T., & Jackson, D. (2017). Men's Constructions of Mothering: Growing Up in Father-Absent Families. *International Journal of Men's Health*,
- East, L., Jackson, D., & O'Brien, L. (2006). Father absence and adolescent development: a review of the literature. *Journal of Child Health Care*, 10(4), 283–295. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1367493506067869>
- Eaton, L., & Louw, J. (2000). Culture and self in South Africa: Individualism-collectivism predictions. *The Journal of social psychology*, 140(2), 210–217.
- Eddy, G., & Holborn, L. (2011). *More and more children are growing up with absent fathers, and in single parent households. Fractured families: A crisis for South Africa*. <http://www.moneyweb.co.za/archive/fractured-families-a-crisis-forsouth-africa/>
- Eddy, M. M., Thomson-de Boor, H., & Mphaka, K. (2013). *So we are ATM fathers: A study of absent fathers in Johannesburg, South Africa*. Centre for Social Development in Africa and Sonke Gender Justice
- Ellis, B. J., Bates, J. E., Dodge, K. A., David, M., Fergusson, D. M., Horwood, L. J., Pettit, G. S., & Woodward, L. (2010). Does father absence place daughters at special risk for early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy? *Child Development*, 74(3), 801–821. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00569>

- Ellis, B. J., Del Giudice, M., Dishion, T. J., Figueredo, A. J., Gray, P., Griskevicius, V., ..., & Wilson, D. S. (2012). The evolutionary basis of risky adolescent behavior: implications for science, policy, and practice. *Developmental psychology*, 48(3), 598.
- Emanuel, E. J., Wendler, D., & Grady, C. (2000). What makes clinical research ethical? *JAMA*, 283(20), 2701–2711.
- EMMANUEL-OLOWONUBI, O.M., 2025. HUMOUR AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL RESILIENCE IN LOKOJA, KOGI STATE: COPING MECHANISMS AND SOCIAL INTERACTION. *Journal of Development Communication And Applied Theatre*, 2(3).
- Engle, P. L., & Breaux, C. (1998). Fathers' involvement with children: Perspectives from developing countries. *Social policy report*, 12(1), 1–24.
- Falana, B. A., Bada, F. O., & Ayodele, C. J. (2012). Single-parent family structure, psychological, social and cognitive development of children in Ekiti State.
- Fathima, F., 2024. *The Moderating Role of Emotion-Focused Coping Style and Problem-Focused Coping Style in the Relationship between Job Insecurity and Work-Related Sleep Problems among Young Employees* (Doctoral dissertation, St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam).
- Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, 2(2), 158–164.
- Finfeld-Connet, D. (2010). Generalizability and transferability of meta-synthesis research findings. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 66(2), 246–254. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2009.05250.x>
- Flouri, E., & Buchanan, A. (2001). What predicts traditional attitudes to marriage? *Children & Society*, 15(4), 263–271.
- Folkman, S. (1984). Personal control and stress and coping processes: a theoretical analysis. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 46(4), 839.
- Folkman, S., & Moskowitz, J. T. (2004). Coping: Pitfalls and promise. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.*, 55(1), 745–774.
- Folkman, S., & Moskowitz, J. T. (2007). Positive affect and meaning-focused coping during significant psychological stress. *The scope of social psychology: Theory and applications*, 10, 193–208.
- Folkman, S., Chesney, M., Collette, L., Boccillari, A., & Cooke, M. (1996). Postbereavement depressive mood and its prebereavement predictors in HIV+ and HIV–gay men. *Journal of personality and Social Psychology*, 70(2), 336.

- Ford, J. J., Nalbone, D. P., Wetchler, J. L., & Sutton, P. M. (2008). Fatherhood: How differentiation and identity status affect attachment to children. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 36(4), 284–299.
- Forward, S. (2009). *Toxic parents: Overcoming their hurtful legacy and reclaiming your life*. Bantam.
- Fouka, G., & Mantzorou, M. (2011). *What are the ethical issues in conducting research?*
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233959936_What_are_the_Major_Ethical_Issues_in_Conducting_Research_Is_there_a_Conflict_between_the_Research_Ethics_and_the_Nature_of_Nursing
- Fouka, G., & Mantzorou, M. (2011). What are the major ethical issues in conducting research? Is there a conflict between the research ethics and the nature of nursing? *Health Science Journal*, 5(1), 3–14.
- Franklin, A. J., Makiwane, M., & Makusha, T. (2015). Male attitudes towards children, fatherhood, and childrearing: A descriptive profile from South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS). *The Open Family Studies Journal*, 6(S1), 47–55.
<http://repository.hsra.ac.za/handle/20.500.11910/2120>
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2003). The value of positive emotions: The emerging science of positive psychology is coming to understand why it's good to feel good. *American scientist*, 91(4), 330–335.
- Freeks, F. (2017). Responding to the challenge of father absence and fatherlessness in the South African context: A case study involving concerned fathers from the North West Province. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, 3(1), 89–113.
<https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2017.v3n1.a05>
- Freeks, F. E. (2011). *The role of the father as mentor in the transmission of values: a pastoral–theological study* [Doctoral dissertation, North-West University].
<https://repository.nwu.ac.za/handle/10394/6988>
- Freeks, F. E., & Lotter, G. A. (2009). 'n Prakties-teologiese ondersoek na die uitwerking van afwesige vaders: 'n verkennende kwalitatiewe ondersoek in die Promosagemeenskap. *Koers: Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*=*Koers: Bulletin vir Christelike Wetenskap*, 74(3), 519-534.
- Gadsden, V. L., Ford, M., & Breiner, H. (Eds.). (2016). *Parenting matters: Supporting parents of children ages 0–8*. National Academies Press.

- Gautam, S., Jain, A., Chaudhary, J., Gautam, M., Gaur, M. and Grover, S., 2024. Concept of mental health and mental well-being, it's determinants and coping strategies. *Indian journal of psychiatry*, 66(Suppl 2), pp.S231-S244.
- Gibson, L. (2008). In defence of instrumentality. *Cultural trends*, 17(4), 247–257.
- Gillis, J. R. (2000). Marginalization of fatherhood in Western countries. *Childhood*, 7(2), 225–238. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0907568200007002007>
- Gobbi, G., Low, N., Dugas, E., Sylvestre, M., Contreras, G., & O'Loughlin, J. (2015). Short-term natural course of depressive symptoms and family-related stress in adolescents after separation from Father. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 60(10), 417–426.
- Gould, C., & Ward, C. L. (2015). *Positive parenting in South Africa: Why supporting families is key to development and violence prevention*.
<https://issafrica.org/research/policy-brief/positive-parenting-in-south-africa-why-supporting-families-is-key-to-development-and-violence-prevention>
- Greenson, R. R. (1968). On sexual apathy in the male. *California Medicine*, 108(4), 275.
- Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(1), 42–55
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F160940690400300104>
- Grossmann, K. E., Grossmann, K. E., & Waters, E. E. (2005). *Attachment from infancy to adulthood: The major longitudinal studies*. Guilford Press.
- Guajardo, N. R., Snyder, G., & Petersen, R. (2009). Relationships among parenting practices, parental stress, child behaviour, and children's social-cognitive development. *Infant and Child Development*, 18(1), 37–60.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.578>
- Hall, K., & Posel, D. (2018). Fragmenting the family? The complexity of household migration strategies in post-apartheid South Africa. *IZA Journal of Development and Migration*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.2478/izajodm-2019-0004>
- Halpern, P. (1983). Government Intrusion into the Attorney-Client Relationship: An Interest Analysis of Rights and Remedies. *Buff. L. Rev.*, 32, 127.
- Hammersley, M. (2009). Deconstructing the qualitative-quantitative divide 1. In *Mixing methods: Qualitative and quantitative research* (pp. 39–55). Routledge

- Hancock, B., Ockleford, E., & Windridge, K. (2001). *An introduction to qualitative research*. Trent focus group.
- Hawkins, C. (2015). Most SA households run by single moms. SA Breaking News 3.
- Hendricks, C. (2005). Debating coloured identity in the Western Cape. *African Security Review*, 14(4), 117–119.
- Herman-Stabl, M. A., Stemmler, M., & Petersen, A. C. (1995). Approach and avoidant coping: Implications for adolescent mental health. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 24(6), 649–665.
- Hills, A. (2016). Understanding why. *Noûs*, 50(4), 661–688.
- Hiolle, A., Canamero, L., & Blanchard, A. J. (2007). Learning to interact with the caretaker: A developmental approach. In *Affective Computing and Intelligent Interaction: Second International Conference, ACII 2007 Lisbon, Portugal, September 12–14, 2007 Proceedings 2* (pp. 422–433). Springer.
- Holborn, L. (2011). *Two thirds of the children grow up without both parents*. SAIRR.
- Holborn, L., & Eddy, G. (2011). *First steps to healing the South African family*. SAIRR.
- Hornstra M, Kalmijn M, Ivanova K (2022) Dissonant relationships to biological parents and stepparents and the well-being of adult children. *J Soc Pers Relat* 39(3):481–504. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075211031984>
- Huberman, M., & Miles, M. B. (2002). *The qualitative researcher's companion*. sage.
- Hunter, M. (2006). Fathers without amandla: Zulu-speaking men and fatherhood. *Baba: men and fatherhood in South Africa*, 99–107.
- Jackson, R. (2000). *The global covenant: human conduct in a world of states*. OUP.
- Johnson B. (2013, December 10). Growing up without a father transforms children's brains: Study. *Life Site News*. <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/growing-upwithout-a-father-transforms-childrens-brains-study>
- Jones, G., Hanton, S., & Connaughton, D. (2007). A framework of mental toughness in the world's best performers. *The sport psychologist*, 21(2), 243–264.
- Jones, H., 2022. *What Impact Does the Mental Health and Wellbeing Toolkit Programme Delivered Online Have on Employee Mental Health and Wellbeing?: A Mixed Methods Study*. University of South Wales (United Kingdom).

- Kalil, A. (2003). *Family resilience and good child outcomes*. Ministry of Social Development.
- Kalil, A., Ryan, R., & Chor, E. (2014). Time investments in children across family structures. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 654(1), 150–168.
- Kawachi, I., & Berkman, L. F. (2001). Social ties and mental health. *Journal of Urban health*, 78, 458–467.
- Kesebonye, W. M., & Amone-P'Olak, K. (2021). The influence of father involvement during childhood on the emotional well-being of young adult offspring: A crosssectional survey of students at a university in Botswana. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 51(3), 383–395.
- Kevorkian, C. (2010). Father absence and self-esteem amongst economically disadvantaged children. *Social Work Theses*, 55.
http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/socialwrk_students/55
- Kim, S., Jemmott, J.B., Icard, L.D., Zhang, J. and Jemmott, L.S., 2021. South African fathers involvement and their adolescents' sexual risk behavior and alcohol consumption. *AIDS and Behavior*, 25(9), pp.2793-2800.
- Kinard, A. D. (2020). *Resilient African-American Men Coping with the Absent Father Phenomenon* [Doctoral dissertation, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology].
- King, V., & Sobolewski, J. M. (2006). Nonresident fathers' contributions to adolescent well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(3), 537–557.
- Knight, L., Roberts, B. J., Aber, J. L., Richter, L., & Size Research Group. (2015). Household shocks and coping strategies in rural and peri-urban South Africa: Baseline data from the size study in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Journal of International Development*, 27(2), 213–233.
- Koenig, H. G. (2009). Research on religion, spirituality, and mental health: A review. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 54(5), 283–291.
- Krampe, E. M., & Newton, R. R. (2012). Reflecting on the father: Childhood family structure and women's paternal relationships. *Journal of family issues*, 33(6), 773–800.

- Kroese, J., Bernasco, W., Liefbroer, A.C. and Rouwendal, J., 2021. Growing up in single-parent families and the criminal involvement of adolescents: A systematic review. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 27(1), pp.61-75.
- Langa, M. (2010). Adolescent boys' talk about absent fathers. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 20(4), 519–526.
- Langton, C. E., & Berger, L. M. (2011). Family structure and adolescent physical health, behavior, and emotional well-being. *Social Service Review*, 85(3), 323–357.
- Lazarus, R. S. (1993). Coping theory and research: past, present, and future. *Psychosomatic medicine*, 55(3), 234–247.
- Lazzarin, A., Saracco, A., Musicco, M., & Nicolosi, A. (1991). Man-to-woman sexual transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus: Risk factors related to sexual behavior, man's infectiousness, and woman's susceptibility. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 151(12), 2411–2416.
- Lazzarin, A., Saracco, A., Musicco, M., & Nicolosi, A. (1991). Man-to-woman sexual transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus: Risk factors related to sexual behavior, man's infectiousness, and woman's susceptibility. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 151(12), 2411–2416.
- Lesejane, D. (2006). Fatherhood from an African cultural perspective. *Baba: men and fatherhood in South Africa*, 173–182.
- Letamo, G., & Navaneetham, K. (2015). Levels, trends and reasons for unmet need for family planning among married women in Botswana: a cross-sectional study. *BMJ open*, 5(3), e006603.
- Li, C. E., DiGiuseppe, R., & Froh, J. (2006). The roles of sex, gender, and coping in adolescent depression. *Adolescence*, 41(163).
- Louw, B. (2018). From Posttraumatic Embitterment. In *Proceedings of the 2nd Biennial South African Conference on Spirituality and Healthcare* (p. 246). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Lunenburg, F. C., & Irby, B. J. (2008). *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation: Tips and strategies for students in the social and behavioral sciences*. Corwin press.
- Luo, J., Wang, L. G., & Gao, W. B. (2011). The influence of absence of fathers and the timing of separation on anxiety and self-esteem of adolescents: a crosssectional

- survey. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 38(5), 723–731.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2214.2011.01304.x>
- Madhavan, S., & Schatz, E. J. (2007). Coping with change: Household structure and composition in rural South Africa, 1992–2003. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 35(69), 85–93.
- Madhavan, S., Townsend, N., W., & Garey, A., I. (2008). Absent breadwinners: Fatherchild connections and paternal support in rural South Africa *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34(3), 647–663.
- Magqaza, N. M. (2001). *Raising Male and Female Adolescents in Female-headed Families* [Doctoral dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand].
- Makiwane, M., Makoe, M., Botsis, H., & Vawda, M. (2012). A baseline study on families in Mpumalanga. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11910/3332>
- Makofane, M. D. M. (2015). “Not all men are fathers”: Experiences of African women from families with absent fathers. *Social Work*, 51(1), 22–44.
<http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/sw/v51n1/02.pdf>
- Makusha, T. (2013). *Determinants of father involvement: Children, women and men’s experiences of support children receive from men in KwaZulu-Natal* [Doctoral dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban].
- Makusha, T., & Richter, L. (2015). Black fathers in South Africa. *Fathers across cultures: The importance, roles, and diverse practices of dads*, 391–409.
- Makusha, T., & Richter, L. (2015). Father-paternity. Non-resident Black fathers in South Africa. *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*. <http://www.childencyclopedia.com/father-paternity/according-experts/nonresident-blackfathers-south-Africa>
- Makusha, T., & Richter, L. (2018). *Father involvement in the first 1,000 days*. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11910/12396>
- Makusha, T., Richter, L., Naicker, S., Swartz, S., & Desmond, C. (2019). Regarding Baba: Perceptions about fathers and fatherhood in South Africa. In Z. Mokomane, B. Roberts, J. Struwig, & S. Gordon (Eds.), *South African social attitudes: Family matters, family cohesion, values and strengthening to promote wellbeing* (pp. 209–235). Human Sciences Research Council.
- Mancini, L. (2010). Father absence and its effects on daughters. *Ohio Family Rights*,

- 1, 37. <http://ohiofamilyrights.com/Reports/Special-Reports-Page-2/FatherAbsence-and-Its-Effect-on-Daughters-pdf>
- Manlove, J., Wildsmith, E., Ikramullah, E., Terry-Humen, E., & Schelar, E. (2012). Family environments and the relationship context of first adolescent sex: Correlates of first sex in a casual versus steady relationship. *Social science research*, 41(4), 861–875.
- Maple, M., & Edwards, H. (2009). Locating and understanding voice in narrative inquiry: a journey of discovery. In V. Minichiello & J. Kttler (Eds). *Qualitative journeys: student and mentor experiences with research* (pp. 33–48). Sage.
- Martin, R. A., Punlik-Doris, P., Larsen, G., Gray, J., & Weir, K. (2003). individual differences in uses of humor and their relation to psychological well-being: development of the humor styles questionnaire. *Journal of research in personality*, 48–75
- Mashigo, P. (2010). Transforming the South African Credit Market through Group Lending Mechanisms. *Journal of Case Research in Business and Economics*, 2, 1.
- Maslow, A. H. (1954). The instinctoid nature of basic needs. *Journal of personality*.
- Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American psychologist*, 56(3), 227.
- Matud, M. P. (2004). Gender differences in stress and coping styles. *Personality and individual differences*, 37, 1401–1415.
- Mavungu, E. M., Thomson-de Boor, H., & Mphaka, K. (2013). *So we are ATM fathers. A study of absent fathers in Johannesburg, South Africa*. Centre for Social Development in Africa, University of Johannesburg. <https://www.uj.ac.za/faculties/humanities/csda/Documents/MenCare%20Absent%20Father%208pager%20v4%20final.pdf>
- McCarthy, T., & Bonhoeffer, D. (2015). *Recognizing father relevance and rectifying father absence*. <http://drtraceymccarthy.com/2015/06/15/>
- McLanahan, S. (1998). *Father absence and the welfare of children*. Network on the family and the economy.
- McLanahan, S., Tach, L., & Schneider, D. (2013). The causal effects of father absence. *Annual review of sociology*, 39(1), 399–427.

- McLeod, J. D., & Kaiser, K. (2004). Childhood emotional and behavioral problems and educational attainment. *American sociological review*, 69(5), 636–658.
- McLeod, S. (2007). John Bowlby attachment theory. *Simply psychology*.
- McLeod, S. (2009). Attachment theory. *Simply psychology*.
- Mendes, W. B., Blascovich, J., Major, B., & Seery, M. (2001). Challenge and threat responses during downward and upward social comparisons. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 31(5), 477–497.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education. Revised and Expanded from Case Study Research in Education*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Miller-Carr, C. D. (2015). *Childhood exposure to family violence among African American males: A proposed model of understanding parental experiences with their daughters* [Doctoral dissertation, Capella University].
- Mkhize, N. (2006). African traditions and the social, economic and moral dimensions of fatherhood. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 183–200). HSRC Press.
- Mkhwanazi, S., Jewkes, R., Sikweyiya, Y., Washington, L., & Gibbs, A. (2024). Young Men's Experiences of Being Fathered and Absent Father's Experience: A Case Study from Urban Informal Settlements in South Africa. *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, 1–17.
- Mncanca, M., Okeke, C. I. O., & Fletcher, R. (2016). Black fathers' participation in early childhood development in South Africa: What do we know? *Journal of Social Sciences*, 46(3), 202–213.
- Molongoana, K. R. (2015). *Experiences of father absence: The subjective accounts of young women who grew up without a father* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Witwatersrand]. <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/19423>
- Morrell, R. (2005). *Youth, Fathers and Masculinity in South Africa today*. Agenda Special focus
- Morrell, R. (2006). Fathers, Fatherhood and Masculinity. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 13–25). HSRC Press.
- Morrell, R., & Richter, L. (2004). The fatherhood project: Confronting issues of masculinity and sexuality. *Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity*, 18(62), 36–44.

- Morrell, R., Posel, D., & Devey, R. (2003). Counting fathers in South Africa: Issues of definition, methodology and policy. *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies*, 29(2), 73–94.
- Morwe, K. G., Tugli, A. K., Klu, E. K., & Matshidze, P. E. (2015). Absent Fatherhood: Implications for Single Mother Families in the Odi Region, South Africa. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 44(1), 15–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2015.11893453>
- Mullis, R. L., & Chapman, P. (2000). Age, gender and self-esteem differences in adolescence coping styles. *The journal of social psychology*, 104(4), 539–541.
- Murray, C. (2001). Livelihoods research: some conceptual and methodological issues. *Chronic Poverty Research Centre Working Paper*, (5).
- Najam, N., & Kausar, R. (2012). Father Acceptance-Rejection, Father Involvement and Socio Emotional Adjustment of Adolescents in Pakistan. *Journal of Behavioural Sciences*, 22(1).
- Nduna, M., & Jewkes, R. (2011). Undisclosed paternal identity in narratives of distress among young people in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 20(3), 303–310. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-010-9393-4>
- Nduna, M., & Sikweyiya, Y. (2013). Silence in young women's narratives of absent and unknown fathers from Mpumalanga province, South Africa. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 1–10.
- Nduna, M., & Sikweyiya, Y. (2015). Silence in young women's' narratives of absent and unknown fathers from Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 24(2), 536–545. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-013-98663>
- Nduna, M., Kasese-Hara, M., Ndebele, M., & Pillay, N. (2011). Prevalence and Characteristics of Unresolved Paternal Identity in Families of a South African Community. *Journal Of Psychology In Africa*, 21(4), 589–594.
- Neuman, W. L. (2006). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (6th ed.). Pearson Education, Inc.
- Nieuwenhuis, R., & Maldonado, L.C. (Eds.). (2018). *The triple bind of single-parent families: Resources, employment and policies to improve well-being*. Policy Press.
- Nock, S. L., & Einolf, C. J. (2008). The one hundred billion dollar man: The annual public costs of father absence. *National Fatherhood Initiative*, 1–16.

- <https://www.fatherhood.gov/library-resource/one-hundred-billion-dollar-manannual-public-costs-father-absence>
- Nowak, R. (2003, May 15). Absent fathers linked to teenage pregnancies. *New Scientist*, 178(2395), 13.
<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn3724absentfathers-linked-to-teenage-pregnancies.html>
- Nyanjaya, A. K., & Masango, M. J. (2012). The plight of absent fathers caused by migrant work: Its traumatic impact on adolescent male children in Zimbabwe.
- Nyamekye, E., Mutawakil, A.R., Ntiakoh, G.B. and Zengulaaru, J., 2024. Speech norms shaping adult-child discourse in Ghana: A critical pedagogy perspective. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 10, p.101046.
- HTS *Theologese Studies/Theological Studies*, 68(1), 167–177.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1004>
- O'Brien, M., & Shemilt, I. (2003). *Working fathers: Earning and caring*. Equal Opportunities Commission.
- O'Connor, D. B., & Shimizu, M. (2002). Sense of personal control, stress and coping style: A cross-cultural study. *Stress and Health: Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of Stress*, 18(4), 173–183.
- O'Leary, Z. (2004). *The Essential Guide to Doing Research*. Sage Publication.
http://www.ru.ac.bd/wpcontent/uploads/sites/25/2019/03/402_06_OLeary_The_Essential_Guide_to_Doing_Research.pdf
- Okeke-Ihejirika, P., Salami, B., & Karimi, A. (2018). African immigrant women's experience in western host societies: A scoping review. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 27(4), 428–444.
- Osborne, C., & McLanahan, S. (2007). Partnership instability and child well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69(4), 1065–1083.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2007.00431.x>
- Page, T. (1999). The attachment partnership as conceptual base for exploring the impact of child maltreatment. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 16, 419–437.
- Palkovitz, R. (2007). Challenges to modeling dynamics in developing a developmental understanding of father-child relationships. *Applied Development Science*, 11(4), 190–195.

- Pargament, K. I., Koenig, H. G., & Perez, L. M. (2000). The many methods of religious coping: Development and initial validation of the RCOPE. *Journal of clinical psychology*, 56(4), 519–543.
- Pargament, K. I., Smith, B. W., Koenig, H. G., & Perez, L. (1998). Patterns of positive and negative religious coping with major life stressors. *Journal for the scientific study of religion*, 710–724.
- Park, H. (2007). Single parenthood and children's reading performance in Asia. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69(3), 863–877. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.17413737.2007.00410.x>
- Park, H., Byun, S. Y., & Kim, K. K. (2011). Parental involvement and students' cognitive outcomes in Korea: Focusing on private tutoring. *Sociology of Education*, 84(1), 3–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0038040710392719>
- Parke, R. D. (1996). *Fatherhood. A translation by Seong-bong Kim/Samtoh*. Harvard University Press.
- Patel, L., & Mavungu, E. M. (2016). 'Children, families and the conundrum about men': Exploring factors contributing to father absence in South Africa and its implications for social and care policies. *South African Review of Sociology*, 47(2), 19–39.
- Patton, L. D. (2009). My sister's keeper: A qualitative examination of mentoring experiences among African American women in graduate and professional schools. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 80(5), 510–537.
- Perrin, P. B., Baker, J. O., Romelus, A. M., Jones, K. D., & Heesacker, M. (2009). Development, validation, and confirmatory factor analysis of the Father Hunger Scale. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 10(4), 314.
- Petters, D. (2006), *Designing agents to understand infants* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham]. University of Birmingham Repository. <http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/~ddp/petters-phd-2006.pdf>
- Petts, R. J. (2007). Religious participation, religious affiliation, and engagement with children among fathers experiencing the birth of a new child. *Journal of Family*, 28(9), 1139–1161. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0192513X07300788>
- Pitsoane, E. M., & Gasa, V. G. (2018). The role of father-son relationship in behavioural and emotional development of adolescent boys. *Gender and Behaviour*, 16(1), 10748–10757.

- Pittner, M. S., & Houston, B. K. (1980). Response to stress, cognitive coping strategies, and the type A behavior pattern. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39(1), 147.
- Popenoe, D. (1996). *Life without father: Compelling new evidence that fatherhood and marriage are indispensable for the good of children and society*. Simon and Schuster.
- Posel, D., & Devey, R. (2006). The demographics of fathers in South Africa: an analysis of survey data, 1993–2002. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds.), *BABA: men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 38–52). Human Sciences Research Council Press.
- Rajasekar, S., Philominathan, P., & Chinnathambi, V. (2006). *Research methodology. Physics Education*, 1–23. <https://arxiv.org/pdf/physics/0601009.pdf>
- Ramisur, P. (2007). *What are the factors that militate against or facilitate parental involvement in school governance? A comparative case study of two public primary schools in the northern suburbs of Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa* [Doctoral dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal]. <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/items/9c619427-33d6-47b3-9bf5b4cbc1834598>
- Ramatsetse, T.P. and Ross, E., 2023. Understanding the perceived psychosocial impact of father absence on adult women. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 53(2), pp.199-210.
- Ramphela, M. (2002). Steering by the stars: Youth in cities. In M. Tienda, & W. J. Wilson (Eds.). *Youth in cities: A cross-national perspective* (pp. 21–30). Jacobs Foundation.
- Ratele, K., Shefer, T., & Clowes, L. (2012). Talking South African fathers: A critical examination of men's constructions and experiences of fatherhood and fatherlessness. *South African journal of psychology*, 42(4), 553–563.
- Ratele, K., Van den Berg, W., Malinga, M. & Makusha, T., eds. (2024). *State of South Africa's Fathers 2024*. Stellenbosch. Tataokhona.
- Rauch, M. and Ansari, S.S., 2025. Reframing silence as purposeful: Emotions in extreme contexts. *Journal of Management Studies*, 62(3), pp.1191-1219.
- Richter, L, Chikovore, J., & Makusha, T. (2010). The status of fatherhood and fathering in South Africa. *Childhood Education*, 86(6), 360–

365.<https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2010.10523170133>

- Richter, L. (2006). The importance of fathering for children. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds.), *BABA: men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 53–69). *Human Sciences Research Council Press*.
- Richter, L., Desmond, C., Hosegood, V., Madhavan, S., Makiwane, M., Makusha, T., Morrell, R., & Swartz, S. (2012). ID 322 *Fathers and other men in the lives of children and families* [Paper presentation]. Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality: “Towards Carnegie III” Conference, University of Cape Town, South Africa.<http://ecommons.hsrb.ac.za/bitstream/handle/20.500.11910/3164/7522.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Roby, J. L., Shaw, S. A., Chemonges, E. W., & Hooley, C. D. (2009). Changing patterns of family care in Uganda: father absence and patrilineal neglect in the face of HIV/AIDS. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 90(1), 110–118. <https://doi.org/10.1606%2F1044-3894.3852>
- Rogan, M. (2016). Qualitative perceptions of the meaning of “headship” and femaleheaded households in post-apartheid South Africa. *Social Dynamics*, 42(1), 175–195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533952.2016.1166550>
- Rogers, J. (2005). *Love worth finding: The life of Adrian Rogers and his philosophy of preaching*. B&H Publishing Group.
- Rohner, R. P., & Veneziano, R. A. (2001). The importance of father love: History and contemporary evidence. *Review of general Psychology*, 5(4), 382–405.
- Roman, N. V. (2014). Parenting in a rainbow nation: A South African perspective on parenting. In *Parenting Across Cultures* (pp. 213–229). Springer.
- Roman, N. V., Makwakwa, T., & Lacante, M. (2016). Perceptions of parenting styles in South Africa: The effects of gender and ethnicity. *Cogent Psychology*, 3(1) Article 1153231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2016.1153231>
- Rushton, C. (2004). Absent Fathers, Unexpected Sons: Paternity in Malory’s “Morte Darthur”. *Studies in Philology*, 101(2), 136–152. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4174784>
- Sargunaraj, M., Kashyap, H. and Chandra, P.S., 2021. Writing your way through feelings: Therapeutic writing for emotion regulation. *Journal of psychosocial rehabilitation and mental health*, 8(1), pp.73-79.

- Schacht, P. M., Cummings, E. M., & Davies, P. T. (2009). Fathering in family context and child adjustment: a longitudinal analysis. *Journal of family psychology*, 23(6), 790.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2007). *The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*. Sage.
- Schwartz, B. (1987). *The battle for human nature: Science, morality and modern life*. WW Norton & Company.
- Schwarzwalder, R. (2014). Boys growing up without dads remain boys for too long. *The Christian Post*. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/boys-growingupwithout-dads-remain-boys-for-too-long-124637/>
- Segal, J. (2010). The return of absent father. In K. V. Mortensen & L. Grünbaum (Eds.), *Play and power* (pp. 115–128). Karnac Books Ltd.
- Senior, B. (2010). *Childhood paternal absence and attachment styles: The impact on interpersonal trust*. Walden University.
- Seutter, R. A., & Rovers, M. (2004). Emotionally absent fathers: Furthering the understanding of homosexuality. *Journal of psychology and theology*, 32(1), 43–49.
- Sevim, M. (2015). Absent Fathers. The harmful effects of a fatherless home. *Cape Chameleon*. <https://capechameleon.co.za/absent-fathers/>
- Shaver, P., & Hazan, C. (1987). Being lonely, falling in love. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 2(2), 105.
- Shenk, M. K., Starkweather, K., Cress, H. C., & Alam, N. (2013). *Does absence matter? A comparison of three types of father absence in rural Bangladesh*. Guilford Press.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63–75.
- Sheslow, D. (2008). *Developing your child's self-esteem*. The Nemours Foundations.
- Sheslow, D. (2008). Developing your child's self-esteem. *The Nemours Foundations*.
- Shields, R. (2003). The individual, consumption cultures and the fate of community. In *Lifestyle shopping* (pp. 109–124). Routledge.
- Shiota, M. N., Keltner, D., & John, O. P. (2006). Positive emotion dispositions differentially associated with Big Five personality and attachment style. *The journal of positive psychology*, 1(2), 61–71.

- Simmons, R. G. (2017). *Moving into adolescence: The impact of pubertal change and school context*. Routledge.
- Smith, P., Khunou, G., & Nathane-Taulela, M. (2014). Are you your father's child? Social identity influences of father absence in a South African setting. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 24(5), 433–436
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2014.997013>
- Smith, T. B., & Silva, L. (2011). Ethnic identity and personal well-being of people of colour: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 58(1), 42.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0021528>
- Sobolewski, J. M., & Amato, P. R. (2007). Parents' discord and divorce, parent-child relationships and subjective well-being in early adulthood: Is feeling close to two parents always better than feeling close to one? *Social Forces*, 85(3), 1105–1112. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2007.0056>
- South African Institute of Race Relations. (2012). *Fast facts South Africa*. Republic of South Africa.
- Spencer, M., B., Fegley, S., Harpalani, V., & Seaton, G. (2004). Understanding hypermasculinity in context: A theory driven analysis of urban adolescent males' coping responses *Research in Human Development*, 1(4), 229–257.
- Stark, K., Joubert, G., Struwig, M., Pretorius, M., Van der Merwe, N., Botha, H., Kotzé, J., & Krynauw, D. (2010). Suicide cases investigated at the state mortuary in Bloemfontein, 2003–2007. *South Africa Family Practice*, 52(4), 332–335.
<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/safp/article/view/61436>
- StatsSA. (2017). *General Household Survey 2016*. South Africa.
- Steinberg, L. (2001). We know some things: Parent-adolescent relationships in retrospect and prospect. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 11(1), 1–19.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1532-7795.00001>
- Stephen, E. N., & Udisi, L. (2016). Street children in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria: Br beyond economic reason. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 12(10), 19–28.
- Stevens, M., Golombok, S., Beveridge, M., & Study Team, T. A. (2002). Does father absence influence children's gender development? Findings from a general population study of preschool children. *Parenting*, 2(1), 47–60.

- Stroebe, M. S., & Archer, J. (2013). Origins of modern ideas on love and loss: Contrasting forerunners of attachment theory. *Review of General Psychology*, 17(1), 28–39. <https://doi.org/10.1037%2Fa0030030>
- Sylvester, F. J. (2010). *At risk youth: The experiences of Adolescent boys with absent fathers* [Unpublished thesis]. Stellenbosch University.
- Tastan, N. (2013). Effect of father-child bonding on conflict resolution during emerging adulthood. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, 41(8), 1339–1345.
- Tau, R. G. (2020). The perceived impact of absent fatherhood: An exploration of young adults' experiences of father absence [Unpublished Master's thesis]. University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- TenEyck, M.F., Knox, K.N. and El Sayed, S.A., 2023. Absent father timing and its impact on adolescent and adult criminal behavior. *American journal of criminal justice*, 48(1), pp.193-217.
- Thoits, P. A. (1995). Stress, coping and social support processes: Where are we? What next? *Journal of health and social behaviour*, 35, 53–79.
- Thune-Boyle, I. C., Stygall, J. A., Keshtgar, M. R., & Newman, S. P. (2006). Do religious/spiritual coping strategies affect illness adjustment in patients with cancer? A systematic review of literature. *Social science medicine*, 36, 151164.
- Thupayagale-Tshweneagae, G., Mgutshini, T., & Nkosi, Z. Z. (2012). Where is my daddy? An exploration of the impact of absentee fathers on the lives of young people in Botswana. *Africa Development*, 37(3), 115–126.
- Trevithick, P. (2011). Understanding defences and defensiveness in social work. *Journal of social work practice*, 25(4), 389–412.
- Trowbridge, C. (2014, September 30). *Why growing up without a father isn't as bad as people make it to be?* Thought Catalog. <http://thoughtcatalog.com/cecily137trowbridge/2014/09/why-growing-up-without-a-father-isn't-as-bad-aspeople-make-it-to-be>
- Ungar, M. (2003). Qualitative contributions to resilience research. *Qualitative social work*, 2(1), 85-102.

- Utsey, S. O., Bolden, M. A., Lanier, Y., & Williams, O. (2007). Examining the role of culture-specific coping as a predictor of resilient outcomes in African Americans from High-risk Urban communities. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 33(1), 75–93
- Vanderheiden, E. and Mayer, C.H., 2024. Humour as a resource: Psychological, cultural and social perspectives. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Humour Research* (pp. 1-21). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- van den Berg W, Makusha T, Ratele K (2021) State of South Africa's fathers 2021. Human Science Research Council, Stellenbosch University, Sonke Gender Justice
- Venkatesh, S., 2024. The Role of Journaling in Spiritual and Psychological Growth.
- Von Hippel, W., Von Hippel, C., Conway, L., Preacher, K. J., Schooler, J. W., & Radvansky, G. A. (2005). Coping with stereotype threat: denial as an impression management strategy. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 89(1), 22.
- Walford, G. (2005). Research ethical guidelines and anonymity. *International Journal of research & method in education*, 28(1), 83–93.
- Walliman, N. (2011). *Your research project: Designing and planning your work*. Sage Publications.
- Wanzer, M., Booth-Butterfield, M., & Booth-Butterfield, M. (2005). if we don't use humor we'd cry: humorous coping communication in health care settings. *Journal of health communication: international perspectives*, 10(2), 105–125
- Ward, C., Makusha, T., & Bray, R. (2015). Parenting, poverty and young people in South Africa: What are the connections. *South African Child Gauge*, 69–74.
- Ward, J. (2008). *Respectably queer: Diversity culture in LGBT activist organizations*. Vanderbilt University Press.
- Wasserman, D., & Wasserman, C. (Eds.). (2009). *Oxford textbook of suicidology and suicide prevention: A global perspective*. Oxford University Press.
- Webster, G. D., Graber, J. A., Gesselman, A. N., Crosier, B. S., & Schember, T. O. (2014). A life history theory of father absence and menarche: a meta-analysis. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 12(2), Article 147470491401200202. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F147470491401200202>
- White, H. (2017). Skyrocketing levels of fatherlessness having 'devastating' effects on children: UK report. *Life Site News*. <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/skyrocketing-levels-of-fatherlessnesshaving-devastating-effects-on-children>

- Whitney, C. K., Bennett, N. J., Ban, N. C., Allison, E. H., Armitage, D., Blythe, J. L., ..., & Yumagulova, L. (2017). Adaptive capacity: from assessment to action in coastal social-ecological systems. *Ecology and Society*, 22(2).
- Wiles, R., Charles, V., Crow, G., & Heath, S. (2006). Researching researchers: lessons for research ethics. *Qualitative research*, 6(3), 283–299.
- Wilhelm, K. (2014). *What it's like being a girl without a dad?* Thought Catalog.
<http://thoughtcatalog.com/katie-wilhelm/2014/08/what-its-like-being-agirl-without-a-dad/>
- Wilhelm, K. A. (2014). Gender and mental health. *Australian & New Zealand journal of psychiatry*, 48(7), 603–605.
- Willerton, E., Schwarz, R. L., Wadsworth, S. M. M., & Oglesby, M. S. (2011). Military fathers' perspectives on involvement. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 25(4), 521.
- Williams, S. (2008). What is fatherhood? Searching for the reflexive father. *Sociology*, 42(3), 487–502.
- Wilson, A. D., Henriksen Jr, R. C., Bustamante, R., & Irby, B. (2016). Successful Black men from absent-father homes and their resilient single mothers: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 44(3), 189–208.
- Wineburgh, A. L. (2000). Treatment of children with absent fathers. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 17(4), 255–273.
- Wright, C. L. (2010). *Parental absence and academic achievement in immigrant students* [Doctoral dissertation, Florida International University].
- Wright, J. (2002). Online counselling: learning from writing therapy. *British journal of education*, 30(3), 286-298.
- Yeung, W. J. J. (2013). Asian Fatherhood. *Journal of Family Issues*, 34(2), 143–160.
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0192513X12461133>
- Yorks, J., 2022. Singled out no longer: The changing narratives and types of single-parent families. *Sociology Compass*, 16(2), p.e12951.
- Zhao, C., Wang, F., Li, L., Zhou, X., & Hesketh, T. (2017). Long-term impacts of parental migration on Chinese children's psychosocial well-being: mitigating and exacerbating factors. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 52(6), 669–677. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-017-1386-9>

- Zhao, F., & Yu, G. (2016). Parental migration and rural left-behind children's mental health in China: A meta-analysis based on mental health test. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 25(12), 3462–3472. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-0160517-3>
- Zharima, C., Mboneli, E., Tsotetsi, L., Vermaak, S., Madi, P., Nkala-Dlamini, B., Violari, A., Kidman, R., Hammock, A. and Dietrich, J., 2025. "To Have a Father, Maybe I Was Going to be a Better Person": A Qualitative Study Exploring the Effects of Biological Father Absence on Young Men in South Africa. *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, pp.1-21.
- Zulu, N. T., & Munro, N. (2017). "I am making it without you, dad": Resilient academic identities of black female university students with absent fathers: An exploratory multiple case study. *Journal of psychology in Africa*, 27(2), 172–179.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter to Participant

INFORMATION LEAFLET

Researcher: Kenny Lethuxolo Nhlope, 201906988

Supervisor: Prof. C. Gwandure

Co-Supervisor: Dr R. M. Mhlari

Telephone: 013 0020 358/357

E-mail address: Calvin.Gwandure@ump.ac.za

Dear Prospective Research Participant,

My name is Nhlope Kenny Lethuxolo, a Master's degree student at the University of Mpumalanga, in the school of Social Sciences. My contact details are as follows email: 201906988@ump.ac.za /contact number: 0796641263. Please receive my invitation for participating in my research project titled, "Exploring the perceptions of young adults on the effect of father absence on their well-being in Ehlanzeni District, Mpumalanga Province."

This investigation is designed to explore the narrative attitudes of young adults raised in father-absent environments. Additionally, the research investigates the subjective experiences and interpretations of young adults concerning the effects of father absence on their upbringing and developmental outcomes. The investigation will involve twenty-five (25) participants from the Ehlanzeni District. It will consist of interviews, with no right or wrong answers, and interviews will typically range from 25 to 30 minutes in duration. No financial remuneration will be provided to participants. However, your involvement will greatly contribute to the research, and the results of the investigation may provide new insights of the sustained consequences of paternal absence on young adults.

Prior to participation, you are expected to provide informed consent by endorsing this agreement with a signature on a formal consent document and provide accurate and truthful responses to the questions posed and indicate your availability for the interview. This investigation is for educational purposes only. It is worth noting that your involvement in this interview is voluntary, and you can retract consent at any point. Your privacy will remain protected, as your name will not be recorded, and your responses will be coded. Your answers will be combined with those of other participants, and no individual reference will be made.

We appreciate your cooperation and participation in this investigation.

Yours faithfully

Handwritten signature of Kenny Nhlope in black ink.

Signature

Kenny Nhlope

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

1. I _____ (full names) hereby provide my informed agreement to partake in this investigation voluntarily.
2. I acknowledge that I can opt out from this investigation at any point free from prior notification to the researcher.
3. I acknowledge that the knowledge I provide will be utilized solely for academic and scholarly purposes.
4. I understand that my personal data will be kept confidential, and my actual name will not be disclosed in any research reports or publications.
5. Prior to giving my consent, I have received and carefully reviewed the information leaflet pertaining this investigation.
6. I confirm that I was afforded the chance to enquire and receive adequate responses regarding the investigation, and all the necessary details were disclosed to me.
7. I commit to providing accurate and truthful responses with all due diligence.
8. I acknowledge the knowledge of my rights to refuse to respond to any questions if I feel any discomfort.
9. I voluntary consent to take part in this investigation by signing this form.

Participant's signature: _____

Researcher's signature: K.L. Nhlope

Date: _____

Student: Kenny Lethuxolo Nhlope.

Tel: 0796641263

E-mail: 201906988@ump.ac.za

Enquires regarding the research project kindly contact the Supervisor Prof. C. Gwandure or Co-supervisor Dr R. M. Mhlari at UMP. The Supervisors' contact details are listed:

Supervisors

Tel: 0130020358

E-mail: Calvin.Gwandure@ump.ac.za

Co-supervisor

Tel: 0130020357

E-mail: Rudzani.Mhlari@ump.ac.za

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

Demographic details

Name of participant:

Gender:

Age:

Occupation:

Place of residence:

Period of father absence:

Please answer the following questions noting that there is no wrong or right answer.

Questions:

- Could you briefly share your experience navigating childhood and adolescence without paternal presence?
- What difficulties did you encounter as a consequence of paternal absence during your developmental stages?
- To what extent did paternal absence contribute to financial instability or hardships in your household?
- What are the coping mechanisms you have employed in response to all the challenges you have faced?
- Are there any additional insights you would like to contribute to the discussion?

Appendix D: Ethical Clearance



Ref: UMP/Nhlope/11/2023

Date: 3 November 2023

Kenny Lethuxolo Nhlope [201906988]
School of Social Sciences

RE: APPROVAL FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR THE STUDY:

*Exploring perceptions of young adults on the effect of father absence on their well-being in Ehlanzeni District,
Mpumalanga Province*

Reference is made to the above heading.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (Faculty of Economics, Development and Business Sciences) UMP, approved the ethical clearance of the above-mentioned study. Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e., Questionnaire/Interviews 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.

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

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ogujiuba Kanayo".

Prof. Ogujiuba Kanayo
Chairperson: FREC,
Faculty of Economics, Development and Business Sciences
University of Mpumalanga

Appendix E: Editor's Certificate



26 January 2025

CERTIFICATE

Kenny Lethuxolo Nhlope

Dear Kenny

Thank you for using Impela Editing Services to edit your Master's thesis entitled "*Perceptions of young adults on the effect of father absence on well-being in Ehlanzeni District, Mpumalanga Province*".

I have proofread for errors of grammar, punctuation, spelling, syntax and typing mistakes. I have formatted your work and checked the references (this means checking the formatting) according to APA 7th edition referencing.

Please note that Impela Editing accepts no fault for work changed after issuing this certificate.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Bond'.

Helen Bond (Bachelor of Arts, HDE)

Appendix F: Plagiarism Report



Masters

ORIGINALITY REPORT

17% 15%

10%

5%

SIMILARITY INDEX

INTERNET SOURCES

PUBLICATIONS

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1 ukzn-dspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source

3%

2 hdl.handle.net Internet Source

2%

3 shsu-ir.tdl.org Internet Source

1%

4 ulspace.ul.ac.za Internet Source

1%

5 Kalakgosi, Ontiretse. "First Year University Students' Experiences of Father Absence Within Their Households.", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2024

1%

Publication

6 vital.seals.ac.za:8080 Internet Source <1 %

7 researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source <1 %

8 repository.up.ac.za Internet Source <1 %

pdfs.semanticscholar.org Internet Source <1 %

10 Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper <1 %

11 uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source <1 %

12 Anna J. Markowitz, Rebecca M. Ryan. "Father Absence and Adolescent Depression and Delinquency: A Comparison of Siblings Approach", Journal of Marriage and Family, 2016
Publication <1 %

13 wiredspace.wits.ac.za Internet Source <1 %



14 Submitted to University of Witwatersrand Student <1 %
Paper

15 Vann-Gauthier, Dafna P.. "Exploring Father
Absent African American Women's Insecure
Attachments in Committed Relationships",
Grand Canyon University, 2023
Publication

16 [core.ac.uk](#) Internet Source <1 %

17 [etd.uwc.ac.za](#) Internet Source <1 %

18 [univendspace.univen.ac.za](#) Internet Source <1 %

19 [open.uct.ac.za](#) Internet Source <1 %

20 [scholarworks.waldenu.edu](#) Internet Source <1 %

21 [vdocuments.mx](#) Internet Source <1 %

22 Submitted to University of the West Indies Student <1 %
Paper

23 dspace.nwu.ac.za Internet Source <1 %

24 dc.etsu.edu Internet Source <1 %

25 Brown, Sibhon. "The Lived Experience of Daughters Who Have Absent Fathers: A Phenomenological Study.", Walden University, 2018
Publication

26 Bellamy, Shawnette T.. "African American Women Executives Obstacles to Advancement in Organizations: A Phenomenological Study", University of Phoenix, 2024
Publication

scholar.sun.ac.za Internet Source <1 %



28 Holmes, India Kewanna. "Absent Fathers and the Propensity of Criminal Behaviors Among Children Later in Life", Walden University, 2024

Publication

29 Lees, Daisy. "The Relationship Between Manager Credibility, Strategic Alignment, and Employee Motivation", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2023

Publication

30 Submitted to Union Institute and UniversityStudent Paper

31 v-des-dev-lnx1.nwu.ac.zaInternet Source

32 wikimili.comInternet Source

33 Submitted to University of SunderlandStudent Paper

34 "The Palgrave Handbook of African Men and Masculinities", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2024

35 Submitted to University of Venda Student Paper <1 %

36 nicholasinclan.me Internet Source <1 %

37 Submitted to Texas Christian University Student Paper <1 %

38 Huff, Lauren Nysha. "Women Working in Leadership Roles Who were Raised in Father-Absent Families.", Walden University, 2016
Publication

39 Submitted to Saint George's University Student Paper <1 %

40 Submitted to University of Johannesburg Student Paper <1 %



41 Frazier, Ashley Nicole. "Residential Status or Feelings of Closeness: The Effects on Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviors Over Time", The University of Iowa, 2024

Publication

42 Submitted to University of Derby Student Paper <1 %

43 wlv.openrepository.com Internet Source <1 %

44 Hanoi National University of Education Publication <1 %

45 Submitted to ICTS Student Paper <1 %

Telalini, Flora Khonje. "Nurse Educator Perspectives on Job Retention Among Government Seconded Nurse Educators in Christian Health Association of Malawi Nursing/Midwifery Colleges.", Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (Malawi), 2024

Publication

47 Pamela Jiménez-Etcheverría, Jesús Palacios. <1 %
"Psychological adjustment, attachment
difficulties, and perceptions of family
relationships in adopted and
institutionreared children: The case of Chile",
Children and Youth Services Review, 2020

Publication

48 Submitted to Widener University Student Paper <1 %

49 oro.open.ac.uk Internet Source <1 %

50 speedypaper.x10.mx Internet Source <1 %

51 worldwidescience.org Internet Source <1 %

52 www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk Internet Source <1 %

53 Nyathi, Gugulethu Theodora. "ChallengesExperienced
by Social Work Graduates upon <1 % Entering
Employment", University of
Johannesburg (South Africa), 2023

Publication



54	theses.gla.ac.uk	Internet Source	<1 %
55	ukdiss.com	Internet Source	<1 %
56	Submitted to University of Lancaster-Main Account	Student Paper	<1 %
57	Submitted to University of the Western Cape	Student Paper	<1 %
58	edoc.pub	Internet Source	<1 %
59	gala.gre.ac.uk	Internet Source	<1 %
60	repository.nwu.ac.za	Internet Source	<1 %
61	www.coursehero.com	Internet Source	<1 %

62 Eun-Mi Baek, Hye-Sun Jung, Suyoung Kwon, Jee-Hyun Hwang, Ji-Young Park. "Effects of perceived risk of COVID-19 on fear among visiting workers: Mediating role of perceived stress", Medicine, 2024

Publication

Submitted to Goldsmiths' College Student Paper <1 %

64 Submitted to Institute of Tourism Studies Student Paper <1 %

65 Submitted to Midlands State University Student Paper <1 %

66 Young Risher, Natasha. "Perceptions of Black Adults Regarding Effects of Father Absence Due to Loss and the Impact It Had During Adolescence.", Sam Houston State University

Publication

67 s-space.snu.ac.kr Internet Source <1 %

68 twu-ir.tdl.org Internet Source <1 %

69 Submitted to Higher Education Commission
Pakistan

Student Paper

<1 %

70 Songo-Mokantla, Lerato. "The Experiences of
Social Workers Practising Community Work
in an HIV and AIDS Awareness Programme",
University of Johannesburg (South Africa),
2023

Publication

<1 %

71 Submitted to University of Maryland, University College

Student Paper

<1 %

72 ir-library.mmarau.ac.ke:8080

Internet Source

<1 %

73 www.uj.ac.za Internet Source

<1 %

74 Antoniadis, Chantellé. "Departmental Heads'
Mentorship Experiences of Novice Teachers'
Professional Development in Low
Socioeconomic Schools.", University of Pretoria
(South Africa), 2024

Publication

<1 %

75 Submitted to Iowa State University Student Paper <1 %

76 Submitted to Oregon Institute of Technology Student Paper <1 %

77 Submitted to University of Bolton Student Paper <1 %

78 Submitted to University of Hull Student Paper <1 %

79 Submitted to University of Leeds Student Paper <1 %

80 Submitted to University of Northampton Student Paper <1 %

81 elibrary.buse.ac.zw:8080 Internet Source <1 %

etd.aau.edu.et Internet Source <1 %

83 www.annualreviews.org Internet Source <1 %

84 www.researchgate.net Internet Source <1 %



85 Dieter Hackfort, Robert J. Schinke. "The Routledge International Encyclopedia of Sport and Exercise Psychology - Volume 2: Applied and Practical Measures", Routledge, 2020

Publication

<1 %

86 Manqebo, Tsotetsi Portia. "Experiences and Coping Strategies of Black Single Fathers in Orange Farm, Gauteng", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2023

Publication

<1 %

87 Mzikazi Nduna, Mambwe Kasese-Hara, Misheck Ndebele, Noleen Pillay, Leseho Manala. "Prevalence and Characteristics of Unresolved Paternal Identity in Families of a South African Community", Journal of Psychology in Africa, 2014

Publication

<1 %

88 library.bsl.org.au Internet Source

<1 %

89 ntnuopen.ntnu.no Internet Source

<1 %

90 pureportal.strath.ac.uk Internet Source <1 %

91 www.frontiersin.org Internet Source <1 %

92 www.jlidd.jp Internet Source <1 %

93 Kala, Tasleem. "Conceptualising a Parent Guidance Programme in Support of Children with Colour Vision Deficiency", University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2024
Publication

94 Kanako Ishida. "The Role of Ethnicity in Father Absence and Children's School Enrollment in Guatemala", Population Research and Policy Review, 2009
Publication

95 Nkosi, Nozipho Evodia. "Exploring Social Work Supervision Within the Social Development Practice Approach", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2023
Publication



96 Vetter, Caroline. "Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy for
United States Veterans

<1%

with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.", The Wright Institute, 2021

Publication

97 article.sapub.org Internet Source

98 docs.neu.edu.tr Internet Source

99 ir.gzu.ac.zw:8080 Internet Source

100 ir.unimas.my Internet Source

101 journal3.um.ac.id Internet Source

102 lup.lub.lu.se Internet Source

103 openscholar.dut.ac.za Internet Source

104 wikieducator.org Internet Source

105 www.jshsr.org Internet Source

106 (3-5-15) [http://41.89.160.13:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle,
sequence=1](http://41.89.160.13:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/sequence=1)
Internet Source

107 Dzavo, Isabel. "An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Selected Air Pollution Abatement and Cleaner Production Interventions in the Reduction of Air Pollution at a Cement Manufacturing Company in Gweru, Zimbabwe.", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2024
Publication

108 Mthembu, Zanele. "Electronic Cigarettes: A Route for Social Exclusion and Adverse Inclusion Among Young Women in Universities.", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2024

Publication

109 Nel, Marinei. "Analysing Risk and Resilience of Rural School Youth by Means of the First Sand Tray", University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2023

Publication

110 Thosago, Mmamoletji Oniccah. "The Savings Behaviour of Households with Social Grant Recipients in Freedom Park, Soweto", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2021

Publication

111 digitalcommons.liberty.edu Internet Source

112 ebin.pub Internet Source

113 edepositireland.ie Internet Source

114	kipdf.com	Internet Source	<1 %
115	ma	Internet Source fiadoc.com	<1 %
116	mfma.treasury.gov.za	Internet Source	<1 %
117	www.diversite.eu	Internet Source	<1 %
118	www0.sun.ac.za	Internet Source	<1 %
119	Frith, Hannah, Capdevila, Rose. "Ebook: A Feminist Companion to Research Methods in Psychology", Ebook: A Feminist Companion to Research Methods in Psychology, 2022		<1 %
	Publication		
120	K.G. Morwe, A.K. Tugli, E.K. Klu, P.E. Matshidze. "Absent Fatherhood: Implications for Single Mother Families in the Odi Region, South Africa", Journal of Social Sciences, 2017		<1 %
	Publication		

121 Louw, Nadia Marie. "Co-Creating Support Networks to Assist Adolescents That Have Been Made Vulnerable with Their Transition from Secondary School to the World of Work", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2021

<1 %

Publication

122 M. Mncanca, C.I.O. Okeke, R. Fletcher. "Black Fathers' Participation in Early Childhood Development in South Africa: What Do We Know?", Journal of Social Sciences, 2017

<1 %

Publication

123 Maponga, Naina. "Psychological Stressors of and Coping Strategies Used by Single Mothers Working in the Informal Economy in Masvingo, Zimbabwe.", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2024

<1 %

Publication

124 Paul T. P. Wong. "The Human Quest for Meaning - Theories, Research, and Applications", Routledge, 2013

<1 %

Publication

125	Suhair Hussni Al-Ghabeesh, Asmaa Thabet, Ahmad Rayan, Hana Mohammad Abu-Snieneh. "Qualitative study of challenges facing emergency departments nurses in Jordan", Heliyon, 2023 Publication	<1 %
126	Tshabalala, Thabile Felicia. "Exploration of the Experiences of Social Workers in Community Work and Community Development Practice", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2023 Publication	<1 %
127	doaj.orgInternet Source	<1 %
128	docslib.orgInternet Source	<1 %
129	dspace.unza.zmInternet Source	<1 %
130	irl.umsl.eduInternet Source	<1 %
131	mzuir.inInternet Sourceflibnet.ac.in:8080	<1 %

132 www.ajol.info Internet Source

<1 %

133 www.ijmra.us Internet Source

<1 %

134 www.pharosjot.com Internet Source

<1 %

135 "Father Involvement in Young Children's Lives",

Springer Science and Business Media <1 %

LLC, 2013

Publication

136 Brooks, Samuel L. "Male Foster Caregiver Presence and the Active Fatherhood Involvement of Former Foster Care African American Fathers", Proquest, 2012.

Publication

137 Clarissa Sabrina Arlinghaus, Charlotte Wulff, Günter W. Maier. "Inductive Coding with ChatGPT - An Evaluation of Different GPT Models Clustering Qualitative Data into Categories", Open Science Framework, 2024

Publication

<1 %

138 Deborah Fish Ragin, Julian Paul Keenan.
"Handbook of Research Methods in Health
Psychology", Routledge, 2020

Publication

<1 %

139 Derek M. Griffith, Marino A. Bruce, Roland J.
Thorpe. "Men's Health Equity - A Handbook",
Routledge, 2019

Publication

<1 %

140 Dewa, Flora. "The Subtext of Literature in English
for the High School Classroom",
University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2023

Publication

<1 %

141 Gökhan Özden, Nur Ütkür-Güllühan. "Investigation of a
Donor Primary School

<1 %

Student's Perspective on the Concept of
Family: a Narrative Study", Child Indicators
Research, 2025

Publication

142 Karrie A. Shogren, LaRon A. Scott, Evan E. Dean, Brad Linnenkamp. "Handbook of Research-Based Practices for Educating Students with Intellectual Disability", Routledge, 2024 <1 %

Publication

143 Kolpak, Stanley Dean, II. "Couples Living With Hypersexuality.", National University, 2024 <1 %

Publication

144 Marc H. Bornstein. "Handbook of Parenting Volume 5: The Practice of Parenting", Routledge, 2019 <1 %

Publication

145 Mark S. Kiselica, Matt Englar-Carlson, Arthur M. Horne. "Counseling Troubled Boys - A Guidebook for Professionals", Routledge, 2011 <1 %

Publication

146 Martins, Maria Manuel Bastos. "Paternal Involvement: the Mediating Role of Parental Acceptance-Rejection and the Impact of Sociodemographic and Family Variables", Universidade de Coimbra (Portugal), 2024 <1 %

Publication

147 Miller, David C.. "Daddy and Me: Understanding the Social and Emotional Connections Between Nonresidential Black Fathers and Their Daughters", Morgan State University, 2023

<1 %

Publication

148 Nyamakope, Talent. "Factors Influencing Selfmedicating With Codeine in Pain Management - an Exploratory Cross-sectional and Longitudinal Qualitative Research Study", National University of Ireland, Maynooth (Ireland), 2024

<1 %

Publication

149 Raddi, Robert M.. "A Bayesian Inference/Maximum Entropy Approach for Optimization and Validation of Empirical Molecular Models", Portland State University, 2024

<1 %

Publication

150 Stephanie J. Hanrahan, Mark B. Andersen. "Routledge Handbook of Applied Sport Psychology - A comprehensive guide for students and practitioners", Routledge, 2010

<1 %

151 Tesner-Smith, Desirée. "Towards a Narratology of Planning - Stories of a South African Gold Mining Town", University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2023

Publication

152 ag.purdue.edu Internet Source

<1 %

153 atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca Internet Source

<1 %

154 dro.deakin.edu.au Internet Source

<1 %

155 etd.auburn.edu Internet Source

<1 %

156 getd.libs.uga.edu Internet Source

<1 %

157 mospace.umsystem.edu Internet Source

<1 %

158 research.vu.nl Internet Source

<1 %

159 scholar.ufs.ac.za Internet Source

<1 %

160 scholarworks.uaeu.ac.ae Internet Source

<1 %

161 sro.sussex.ac.uk Internet Source

<1 %

162 su-plus.strathmore.edu Internet Source

<1 %

163 www.forensicleaders.org

Internet Source

<1 %

164 www.frpn.org Internet Source

<1 %

165 www.mdpi.com Internet Source <1 %

166 www.ue.edu.pk Internet Source <1 %

167 www.zeigler-hill.com Internet Source <1 %

168 Corcoran, Jacqueline, Walsh, Joseph. "Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis in Social Work Practice", Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis in Social Work Practice, 2022 <1 %
Publication

169 Marc H. Bornstein. "Handbook of Parenting Volume 1: Children and Parenting", Routledge, 2019 <1 %
Publication

170 Thwala, Thokozani Crommuell. "Absent Fathers and the Lack of Discipline in Township Learners : A Pastoral Challenge", University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2023 <1 %
Publication

171 William Jeynes. "Family Factors and the Educational Success of Children", Routledge, <1 % 2014

Publication

172 "Handbook of Fathers and Child Development", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2020 <1 %

Publication

173 "The Triple Bind of Single-Parent Families", Bristol University Press, 2018 <1 %

Publication

174 Baloyi, Sibusiso Jan. "Exploring Intimate Partner Violence Experiences Amongst Female Students in Higher Education Institutions.", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2024 <1 %

Publication

175 Cox, Molly Havnen. "The similarity of mothers' and daughters' coping style, and its relationship to disordered eating", Proquest, 20111109 <1 %

Publication

176 Duman Temel, Emine. "Mediating Role of Marital Satisfaction in the Types of Infidelity - Forgiveness, Trait Positive Affect - Forgiveness and Coping - Forgiveness Relationships in Married Men and Women.", Middle East Technical University (Turkey), 2024

Publication

177 Kuboni, Samukelisiwe. "Newly Qualified Teachers' Risk and Resilience Factors in SEN Schools for Learners with Physical Disabilities.", University of Johannesburg (South Africa)

Publication

178 Lawrence Balter, Catherine S. Tamis-LeMonda. "Child Psychology - A Handbook of Contemporary Issues", Routledge, 2016

Publication

179 Leila Patel, Eddy Mazembo Mavungu.

<1 %

"'Children, families and the conundrum about men': Exploring factors contributing to father absence in South Africa and its implications for social and care policies", South African Review of Sociology, 2016

Publication

180 McLeod, John. "EBOOK: An Introduction to Counselling and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice", EBOOK: An Introduction to Counselling and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice, 2019

<1 %

Publication

181 Moody, Jamila Jordan. "Papa Was a MissingStone: An Exploration into the Lived

<1 %

Experiences of Father-Absent African American Women", East Tennessee State University, 2024

Publication

182 Mushunje, Frank. "Social Wokers' Views of the Risky Behaviour of Adolescents Growing up Without a Father", University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2023

<1 %

Publication

183 Obure, Renice. "Life History of Men Who Experienced Childhood Maternal Absence.", University of South Florida

<1 %

Publication

184 Sikakana, Anele. "Millennials' Value Perception and Its Impact on Second-Hand Luxury Goods Purchase Intention.", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2024

<1 %

Publication

185 Yi, Hyunok. "Father Absence and Adolescents: A Youth Ministry Approach", University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2023

<1 %

Publication

186 scholarscompass.vcu.edu Internet Source

<1 %

Exclude quotes

On

Exclude matches

Off

Exclude bibliography On