

Fatherlessness among young black South African men



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

MBOBO SIYABONGA

MBBSIY002

Department of Psychology

University of Cape Town

Supervisor: Dr. Mandisa Malinga

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ABSTRACT

Scholars confirm that a huge proportion of black South African men are not participating in their children's upbringing, as a result, children face various challenges that impede their wellbeing. This study is of the view that there is still a need for further investigations to explore the effects of fatherlessness on children's wellbeing and to gain new perspectives on father absence within the context of black societies in South Africa. With that in mind, this study aimed to explore the impact of fatherlessness on the psychosocial wellbeing of young black South African men. The objectives of this study included investigating the following: (1) young men's experiences of growing up without their biological fathers; (2) the psychosocial effects of growing up without a biological father on young black men; (3) the ways in which fatherlessness shapes the development of a gendered (masculine) identity among young black men; and (4) to understand the ways in which fatherlessness shapes young men's participation in cultural practices that facilitate their transition to manhood (e.g. *ulwaluko*).

A qualitative approach research approach was adopted for this study. Semi-structured interviews (face to face) were used for data collection, and both purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods were used to recruit participants for this study. The interviews were conducted with twenty-four (24) young black men (participants) who shared their experiences of growing up without the presence of their biological fathers. These participants resided in Langa township (Western Cape). The interviews were conducted during the third wave of Covid-19, so all the protocols to safeguard the spread of Covid-19 were observed. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. It further drew on the psychosocial developmental theory by Erik Erickson (1963) as a lens through which it reflects on young men's developmental processes and the ways in which such development is shaped by the absence of biological fathers.

The findings suggest that many of the participants' conceptions of the roles of fathers were in line with the traditional views of fathers as financial providers, protectors, and disciplinarians. The results of this study also gave insight into challenges faced by young black men who grew up without their biological fathers. These challenges were related to their cultural identity, which then affected their capacity to build intimate relationships, affected them when they were undergoing *ulwaluko*, and affected their constructions of masculinity. Fatherlessness was also shown to have a negative impact on the education and psychosocial wellbeing of the young black men in the study.

Keywords: *Fatherhood, fatherlessness/father-absence, ulwaluko, masculinities, identity, young black men.*

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.” 1 Samuel 7:12

First and foremost, I thank God for the strength, patience, and wisdom he has given me throughout this study.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

An increasing number of studies that examine fatherhood and father absence in Africa have been conducted in the last two decades (Flishing, 2005; Peeters, 2007; Richter, Chikovore & Makusha, 2010; Nyanjaya & Mosango, 2012; Okeke, 2014; Schwalb & Schwalb, 2014; Makusha & Richter, 2015; Mncanca, Okeke & Fletcher, 2015; Ratele, Shefer & Clowes, 2012). These studies confirm that father absence is prevalent in Africa, more especially in South Africa (Makusha & Richter, 2015). The matter is extensive and disturbing as figures revealed that over thirty per cent (30%) of women are raising their children without the presence and support of biological fathers (Mlotshwa, 2016). In 2012, South Africa was counted as one of the countries in Africa and in the world, which has a high percentage of father absence and fatherlessness, followed by Namibia (Freeks, 2016; Mlotshwa, 2016; Richter, 2012; Makusha, & Richter, 2016).

Some studies have indicated that in this phenomenon of father absence, black¹ children are more likely to be affected (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). It is reported in the General Household Survey (2016) that about forty-three per cent (43%) of black children in South Africa live only with their mothers, whilst only three per cent (3%) out of a population of 3,895,000 live with their biological fathers only. Only three in ten (29 %) live with both parents (GHS, 2016). After black children, follows coloured² children who are also less likely to live with both biological parents (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). The GHS (2016) reports that fifty per cent (50%) of coloured children live with both biological parents, twelve per cent (12%) live with neither of their biological parents; thirty-five per cent (35%) live with their biological mothers only, and under three per cent (3%) live with their fathers only. These figures clearly show the high prevalence of father absence amongst the black and coloured population in South Africa.

The latest GHS (2019) showed that, in black population, 86% of children's fathers are alive, yet it is only 32% of those fathers that are living with their children. Fifty three (53)

¹ In this research the term 'black' is used to refer to black (native) African people; it excludes coloured, indian and white population.

² In this research the term "coloured" is used to refer to a mixed ethnic race of African people; it excludes black, indians and white population.

percent of biological fathers are reported to not be living with their children. However, it must be noted that even though some fathers may not be living with their children, it does not mean that they are not involved in their children's lives. Fathers who are not staying with their children in the same household may care for children and spend some nights with them (regularly or irregularly) (Shaw, 2019). The GHS (2019) also revealed that from 2016, the number of men living with their children increased. The latest survey showed that 36% of men lived with their children. But statistics on co-residence are a limited proxy for father involvement. Co-residence statistics also do not account for the fact that some of the fathers who live with their children are abusive or totally uninvolved in their children's lives. These statistics might also reflect an increased vulnerability of men based on the loss of jobs that resulted from Covid-19 and more men having to return home (Makusha, 2021).

African scholars have provided various definitions of father absence: *absent and unknown*; *absent but known* and *unknown and deceased*. Understanding different types of father absence will be beneficial in this study because it will help us to be precise in what we are dealing with throughout this study. Padi, Nduna, Khunou and Kholopane (2014) defined these types of father absence as follows: *Absent and unknown*, refers to an instance where a child has little or no information about his or her father or have never met the father before. According to Thwala (2017), in some situations, a mother may also not disclose the father's identity. The refusal to disclose the father's identity may be due to various factors including man denying being the one who impregnated, being impregnated by a married man, incest, or the mother (or her family) being reluctant or refusing to have contact or a relationship with the father (Padi, Nduna, Khunou & Kholopane, 2014).

Absent but known, refers to an instance where a child knows the father but there is a lack or no contact and interaction between the father and a child. This type of father absence, according to Clowe (2013) and Langa (2010), depends on the physical presence; the quality time spent by a father with his child; or overall emotional engagement between father and a child (Padi, Nduna, Khunou & Kholopane 2014).

Unknown and deceased, applies to a father who died while a child was still very young. A child does not have memories of the father and therefore feels that he do not know him (Thwala, 2018). Fathers can be fully, partially, economically, or emotionally absent from their families and children (Manyatshe, 2013). For this study, we use father absence to refer to when

a biological father is alive yet absent (physically, emotionally, or economically) in his children's lives.

McCarthy and Edwards (2011) define a father as an individual who occupies the position of a male parent. Even though the widely accepted definition of a father includes any male parent including those who are not biologically linked to the children, the focus in this study is only on biological fathers. This study seeks to examine and understand the psychosocial effects of fatherlessness among young black men whose *biological fathers* are not physically present, are not psychologically supportive, and do not offer any financial provision or play any positive social role in their lives. This study further examines how father absence influences the boys' development of their gendered identity, masculinity in particular.

Whilst several studies reflect on the negative impact of father absence, Langa (2017) emphasizes the important roles that mothers play in the absence of biological fathers. He argued that mothers can fill the void created by a father's absence and play an important role in raising well-adjusted boys. Parallel to the above arguments, some participants in the study by Mosholi (2018) regarded their single mothers' determination and hard work as motivation to them. Therefore, it cannot be presumed that the absence of a biological father will necessarily result in maladjustment in children's lives. Responsible, and positive social fathers cannot be discounted, as Makusha (2013) argued that paternal or maternal uncles (oomalume), grandfathers (oobabomkhulu), older brothers and mothers' partners can singly or collectively contribute positively to children's wellbeing. Positive social fathers can also provide for children's education and provide children with paternal love and moral guidance in the absence of biological fathers (Mosholi, 2018). When it comes to social fathers, it must also be noted that some of them may only support children economically. This type of fathering is constructed only around being a breadwinner (Dowd, 2000.) According to Malinga (2015), these economic fathers often do not live in the same house with their children. As a result, children may lack the guidance, mentorship, and psychological support which they need from fathers.

Although Langa (2010) and other scholars rightfully argue that children who are growing up without fathers, specifically, boys, can adjust and do well in life, numerous scholars still maintain that both parents are important in children's growth (Mosholi, 2018; Thwala, 2018). Dickersen (2014) presented some concerns as some fathers are not contributing to their children's growth, yet they are still alive. Dickersen (2014) further argued that, as the rate of

father absence is rising, an increasing number of children are growing up without proper mentorship and masculine role modelling. Hence it is argued in the literature that most boys who lack good male role models in their lives are more likely to face a crisis in the development of their gendered identity (Richter, 2006). Osmond (2010) further argued that father absence may impede some boys' capacity to develop a masculine identity and impede their transition into adulthood.

Several studies are in line with Dickerson's (2014) argument that men serve as models for boys on how to become men who have a positive impact in society, as mothers cannot do this alone. Moreover, Siswana (2016) suggested that fathers demonstrate to boys how to relate with women. Thus, arguing that men who did not experience the loving and caring father-mother interaction are more likely to see women as objects and abuse them. This was also verified in the participants' narratives from the study by Osmond (2010), that due to lack of guidance and modelling from their fathers, they ended up subscribing to toxic versions of masculinity, which included them abusing their girlfriends and proving that they are men through violence. Considering that some sons lack modelling and guidance from their fathers, Griswold (1993) argued that fathers are a fundamental basis in the preparations of their sons for transitioning into manhood. The concept of 'masculinity' according to Friedman and Downey (2002), refers to configurations of roles, attributes and conducts which are normally associated with men.

As stated earlier, several studies on father absence have been conducted in Africa, especially South Africa (Mosholi, 2019). As a result, there is a body of existing literature on father absence in the context of South Africa. However, there is still need for further research on the phenomenon of "father absence" to be conducted, especially the impact it has on young men's psychosocial and cultural lives. The existing South African studies on father absence confirm that fatherlessness is alarmingly high among the black population in the country. Thus, further studies are needed to provide new insights into the phenomenon and address existing gaps (Mabusela, 2014). For instance, Thwala (2018) argued that there is a lack of social studies on the influence of father absence on boy children's identity formation within the context of black societies in South Africa; and most studies do not explore the boys' accounts on culture and father absence.

This study does not denounce the significant body of research that have been done on *ulwaluko* and masculinities. For instance, scholars such as (Clowes, 2013; Hunter, 2005;

Ratele, 2006: 2008) have recognized that some traditional performances such as *ulwaluko* can be linked with certain masculinities that hold harmful notions that facilitate violence, conflict, unsafe sexual practices, perpetuate gender and inequality, substance abuse and criminal/gang activity. This study is however of the view that, since father absence is still very high in South Africa, studies of this nature need to be done continuously so that the existing gaps may be addressed. Qualitative studies of this nature that will focus on *ulwaluko* and masculinities within context of father absence amongst black societies are needed, as they will bring more insights on the experiences faced by young black men who are growing up without their biological fathers.

This study, therefore, attempts to address such research gaps by conducting a qualitative exploratory study with fatherless young black men to understand the psychosocial effects of father absence on boys/young men. It is also hoped that this research will provide new insights into the impact of father absence on the psychosocial wellbeing of young black South African men.

1.2 Aim of the study

This study aims to explore the impact of fatherlessness on the psychosocial wellbeing of young black South African men.

1.3 Objectives

- To investigate young men's experiences of growing up without their biological fathers.
- To explore the psychosocial effects of growing up without a biological father on young black men.
- To investigate how fatherlessness shapes the development of a gendered (masculine) identity among young black men.
- To understand the ways in which fatherlessness shapes young men's participation in cultural practices that facilitate their transition to manhood (e.g. *ulwaluko*)

1.4 Research questions

- What are young black men's experiences of growing up without their biological fathers?
- What are the psychosocial effects of growing up without a biological father on young black men?

- How does fatherlessness shape the development of masculine identity amongst young black men?
- In what ways fatherlessness impact young men's participation in processes such as *ulwaluko*?

1.5 Rationale of the study

Freeks (2017) views father absence and fatherlessness as a global tendency and a worldwide phenomenon. Research on father absence has been conducted from a variety of countries such as Brazil, Seychelles, United State of America, Russia, Grenada, Chattanooga, and others (Freeks, 2011). Scholars have discovered that father absence is one of the issues in the world which are likely to cause psychosocial problems for some children (Freeks, 2011, 2013, 2015; Richter, 2012). For instance, in USA, the literature reveals that about sixty-five per cent (65%) of suicides come from father-absent households; seventy per cent (70%) of juvenile youth come from households without fathers; forty per cent (40%) of the children do not live with their biological fathers; eighty-five per cent (85%) of boys with behavioural issues come from fatherless homes; ninety per cent (90%) of street children come from father-absent households and seventy-one per cent (71%) of school dropouts also come from households that are without a biological father (Goodsell & Meldrum, 2010).

Similarly, in South Africa, fathers are not different from fathers elsewhere, and father absence is also regarded as one of the societal issues that raise concern (Morrell, 2006; Freeks, 2017). In South Africa, many children, more especially, black children are growing up without their fathers' care and guidance because most fathers are absent (Morrell, 2006). Thus, various scholars view father absence as a crisis because rates of father absence or fatherlessness in this country are alarmingly high (Richter, 2012). Therefore, this study will specifically look at the psychological and social impact of fatherlessness among young black men. This study argues that there is a need for further investigations to explore the effects of fatherlessness on children's psychosocial wellbeing and to gain new perspectives on father absence within the context of black societies in South Africa.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction. This will provide a background, the aims of the study, objectives, research questions and the rationale of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. It will provide an overview of the literature on the studies previously done by other researchers on the factors that causes father absence, the effects of

father absence amongst young black South African men, as well as explore how father absence shapes the masculinity development of these young black men.

Chapter 3: Research methodology. In this chapter, I will discuss the methodology and sampling procedures that will be used in the study and the data analysis procedure. Ethical consideration as well as a reflection on my part and impact as the researcher in the process.

Chapter 4: Interpretation and discussion of data. In this study, I start by describing the research participants. In the description, I include the following: age, language, occupation, and the participants' primary caregivers. I then present the findings of this study and interpret the data gathered to form themes.

Chapter 5: Conclusion, limitations, and recommendations. Finally, in this chapter, I provide the summary of the findings relative to the aims and the objectives of this study, as well as explaining to what extent the theoretical framework used in this study helped in achieving the aims and the objectives of this study. Also, I provide the implications and the recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section explores the cultural, social, and historical factors that contribute to fatherlessness and the influence of father absence in the lives of young black men globally, and more specifically in South Africa. The challenges that some young black men experience as an outcome of growing up without their biological fathers will also be reviewed in this study. This review further examines how fatherlessness shapes the development of masculine identity of boys.

2.2 Fatherlessness globally, and in South Africa

As stated earlier, fatherlessness or father absence is a global issue. Even though father absence is regarded as a worldwide tendency, some findings indicate that it is most common in Hispanic and black societies and families (Lundberg, 2017). In some part of the USA, it is reported that homes with a single parent have become more predominant, and the study by Dickersen (2014) concurs with the report by Gottfried (2007) that USA is the world's leader in fatherless homes. The study conducted by Cory (2009) in USA revealed that almost twenty-three million children in America (one of every four) are growing up without their biological fathers. As a result, about a half of youth in the black societies in USA are reared in a household of a single parent (mothers), as a large proportion of biological fathers are absent (Cory, 2009). Capps, McCabe, and Fix (2012) indicated that USA is one of the countries that have the highest black population outside Africa. Freeks (2017) argues that South African fathers, especially black fathers, are not that much different from fathers in America, as a large proportion of these fathers are absent in their children's lives, though the factors contributing to father absence in these contexts may differ.

The absence of biological fathers in children's lives is also very high in African countries (Padi, Nduna, Khunou & Kholopane, 2014). For instance, Namibia is regarded as one of the African countries that have a high prevalence of father absence (Mlotshwa, 2016; Makusha, & Richter, 2016). In Namibia, marriage rates are low, and the number of female-headed households is high (Hubbard, 2014). As a result, roughly about only a third of children live with their biological fathers (Makusha & Richter, 2015). In the study by Oseko (2018), it is also reported that about forty-five per cent (45%) of all Kenyan children do not live with both their biological parents. Twenty-two per cent (22%) of Kenyan children live with their mothers, and several fathers are still alive but are absent in the lives of those children. Clark

and Mathur (2012) reported that there is about sixty per cent (60%) likelihood of single motherhood among Kenyan women by the age of 45. As a result, Kenya is also counted as one of the African countries with a high prevalence of father absence (Oseko, 2018).

Literature indicates that spending a substantial proportion of childhood without the presence of a biological father is also a much common experience for Tanzanian children from the rural areas (Lawson, Schaffnit, Hassan, Ngadaya, Ngowi, Mfinanga, & Mulder, 2017). A study by the Rufiji Health and Demographic Surveillance System in Tanzania, found that about forty per cent (40%) of children were fatherless in some manner by ten years of age between 2001 and 2011; fatherlessness normally started at the age of five years (Gaydosh, 2015). Zambia is also counted as one of the African countries that are going through an increase in single mothers or “single-headed households” owing to various factors. Zulu (2017) reported that in 2010 about twenty-three per cent (23%) of households in Zambia were female-headed, with the Western province having the highest per cent of thirty-five (35%) and lowest in Lusaka and Luapala rural areas, both standing at nineteen per cent (19%).

Fatherlessness is reported to be common in various studies of fatherhood in Zambia; this is because most of the fathers are absent in the lives of their children; those who are available are classified to be outside of the households, just providing money and food (Brudevold-Newman, Dias, Folotiya, Mooya, Ranjit & Ring, 2018). This is consistent with the Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Surveys (2018) data which shows that most of the Zimbabwean areas have a comparatively high level of children who are living without the presence of their biological fathers, and the percentage is estimated around forty-five (45%) or more (Brudevold-Newman, et al., 2018). As much as most fathers are absent in their children’s lives, it should also be noted that in the context of Africa, there have been father-figures who contribute to the growth of children and play the role of fathers in the absence of biological fathers (Mlotshwa, 2016). Literature suggests that father figures are important in African countries such as Namibia, Kenya, Tanzania, and others due to the migration of some men to various cities (Gaydosh, 2015; Mkhize, 2006), often leaving mothers parent on their own.

As stated earlier, South Africa is one of the countries with the highest figures of father absence in the world (Freeks, 2016). One of the factors is that marriage rates in South Africa, especially within the black population, are low; most men frequently delay marrying until they have at least fathered one or two children, potentially by different women (Makusha, 2013). Statistics revealed that there has been an increase in the number of absent fathers in South

Africa even after the end of apartheid (Holborn, & Eddy, 2011). For example, Freeks (2017) indicated that father absence in 2011 escalated from forty-two (42%) to forty-eight (48%) per cent. Furthermore, between 2010 and 2011, more than 1.1 million births were registered, but sixty-four per cent (64%) indicated that information about biological fathers is lacking; these are some of the reasons that lead to single-parenting (female-headed households) (Freeks, 2013). Another concerning factor related to fatherless children is that more than 5 million of children that were born between 2009 and 2012 are younger than the age of five years, and in ninety-three per cent (93%) of cases, both parents are alive (Mkhize, 2013).

2.3 Factors that influence the absence of fathers

Several scholars, when discussing fatherlessness or father absence, globally and in South Africa, discuss it within the context of changing definitions of fatherhood (Townsend, Madhaan, & Garey, 2006; Perry, Harmon & Leeper, 2012; Eddy, Thomson de Boor, Mphaka, 2013). Fatherhood refers to a broad range of negotiated and enacted gendered practices and roles which are developed, constructed and sustained by societies and cultures within given historical contexts (Taylor, Mantell, Nywagi, Cishe & Cooper, 2013). Shared ideas of what it means to be a man with children change over time and differ from one context to another (Taylor et al., 2013). Over the previous years, studies on fatherhood across different cultures globally and in Africa have increased (Flishing, 2005; Peeters, 2007; Ritcher, Chikovore & Makusha, 2010; Nyanjaya & Mosango, 2012; Okeke, 2014; Schwalb & Schwalb, 2014; Makusha & Ritcher, 2015), resulting in changes to the definitions of fatherhood over the years (Malinga, 2015).

Fatherhood has no universal term; however, it speaks to a role that is understood and exercised in different ways (Morrel, 2006). Morrel (2006) presents three types of fatherhood which include biological, economic (breadwinner), and social fatherhood. Biological fatherhood involves the fathering roles which are played by the biological fathers of the children, and according to Van den Berg and Makusha (2018), this role begins from conception and continues throughout the life course of the child. However, as seen among many African societies, one does not need to be the biological father to accept the fatherhood role and act as a father towards one or more children (Morrel, 2006).

Economic fathers are those who contribute to the upkeep of a child; they do so by providing financially, paying the child's school fees and buy them clothes, whilst social fathers consist of a variety of men who live with and/or care for children who may not be their

biological children (Morrel, 2006). Social fathers have taken on the responsibility and role of the biological fathers and they are physically, financially and (sometimes) emotionally engaged in the lives of the children who are growing up without their biological fathers. These fathers might be in the situations of formal adoption, or in a relationship with the mother of the children, or a member of an extended family who has taken on the role and responsibilities of caring for children. For example, a man's brother might see himself as having the responsibility of father when his male sibling is out of work, or because he is the older son (Morrel, 2006). Thus, Rabe (2018) argued that fatherhood can be discussed as an abstract concept, but it is more important to understand it as experienced daily. It is rooted within dynamic society, family structures and practices (Payne, 2019), economic realities (Rabe, 2016), gendered and cultural expectations (Reynolds & Zontini, 2016) and historical developments (Morrell, 2006).

African societies are changing, as is the rest of the world (Freeks, 2017). As a result, most African communities are facing the challenges posed by the absence of fatherhood (Magangi, 2018.) In South Africa, most young fathers reflect with sadness on how they never had the opportunity to know their fathers or never had someone who played the role of a father in their lives (Tau, 2020). They acknowledge that they do not have the experience and guidance concerning the roles and responsibilities of a father (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). So, a comprehensive understanding of the nature and forms of fatherhood in the South African context is vital (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012), along with an understanding of how fatherhood has been shaped by African (South African) history, cultural traditions, colonisation, and current social factor- high unemployment. In fact, previous studies have found that father absence in South Africa is linked to various cultural, economic, social, and historical factors (Molongoane, 2015). Mkhize (2006) argued that divorce (which can lead to custody battles that are often resolved in favour of a mother), and the inability of a man to provide financially in the family are also some of the reasons that contribute to father absence.

Other reports on the causal factors of fatherlessness include incarceration, death, or HIV/AIDS (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor, & Mphaka, 2013). According to Molongoane (2015), it is important to understand the factors that shape father absence, so that necessary interventions can be established and be put in place to minimize the absence of fathers from their children's lives and buffer against its impact. Yi (2019) also argues that in South Africa, historical backgrounds must be considered, and other relevant factors need to be reviewed to better address the problem of father absence. Therefore, in this study, migrant labour and

unemployment, HIV/AIDS, death, rejected/denied paternity, and culture are considered as some of the factors that influence the absence of fathers.

2.3.1 Migrant labour and unemployment

Complex social, historical, political, and economic processes have played a huge part in influencing fatherlessness in South Africa. For example, the Native Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 in South Africa imposed discrimination in obtaining land (Mbongwa, Vink & Zyl, 2000). The Native Land Acts left the black South African societies in extreme poverty as Africans lost possession and power over their family land to colonizers (Pienaar & Van Fintel, 2014). As a result, the confiscation of homelands from blacks enforced black South African fathers to leave their families behind, whilst they go to work in the cities far away from home (Molongoana, 2015). Again, towards the end of the nineteenth century, minerals in various places of South Africa were discovered, and that discovery changed the South African landscape. For instance, the Gold Reef in Witwatersrand had a low quality of gold deposits, and the only way for a white capital monopoly to gain profit was to establish a system that would employ black men as cheap labourers (Rabe, 2018).

Rabe (2018) further reported that in the 1970s, migration was becoming more established and an increasing number of mine labourers lived away from their households. The Urban Areas Act, established under apartheid, prevented most black mine workers from living with their families. Due to the lengthy periods of disengagement from their families, many black men would end up having double families, one from the rural areas and another one from the urban areas (Ramphela, & Richter, 2006). As a result of the little income that black fathers received, they habitually neglected their families from the rural areas, leaving women and children uncared for (Ramphela, & Richter, 2006). Migrant work consequently affected and even to date, continues to influence the involvement of fathers in their children's lives (Molongoane, 2015).

Fatherlessness remains a fact of life for many black children even in post-apartheid South Africa. The high unemployment rate is still one of the factors that continue to perpetuate father absence (Molongoane, 2015). Considering the current high levels of unemployment and poverty in South Africa, Madhavan, Gross, Richter, Norris and Hosegood (2012) argued that there are still many black children who do not live with their biological fathers nor receive any economic care from their fathers. Some fathers have migrated to find employment in places far from home (Molongoane, 2015). It must also be noted, however, that even though some fathers

may be physically distanced from their families or children due to labour migration, some fathers may continue to support their children and families financially or emotionally (Santa Ramirez, 2019; Yi, 2019). Therefore, it cannot always be assumed that all fathers who work far away from their families will be disengaged from them.

2.3.2 HIV/AIDS and death

HIV/AIDS in South Africa have resulted in the loss of parents and caregivers to illness and death (Sekgale, 2017). Studies report that in 2004, forty-eight per cent of adult deaths were caused by HIV/AIDS (Hosegood, Vanneste & Timaeus, 2004). The South African census (2001) reported that about thirteen per cent (13%) of South African children have lost one or both of their parents before the age of 18 due to HIV/AIDS. Literature on fatherhood and the HIV/AIDS pandemic is prevalent with reports on biological fathers who are absent from their children's lives (Montgomery, Hosegood, Busza, & Timaeus, 2006). Denis and Ntsimane (2006) argued that the absence of parental involvement in children's lives can be caused by desertion inspired by fears which are linked with the course of the disease; or death stemming from the disease (Sekgale, 2017). The HIV/AIDS pandemic is thus one of the factors which has significantly shaped parental involvement (Yi, 2019). The estimation of the total number of people living with HIV/AIDS was 7, 03 million in 2016. For adults aged 15-49 years, 18, 9% of the population was estimated to be affected HIV/AIDS (Stats, S.A., 2017). Therefore, death caused by HIV/AIDS has been shown to affect the number of fathers who are present in their children's lives.

Mfecane (2008) argued that men in South Africa continue to engage in multiple sexual relationships as a means of achieving hegemonic masculinity. Having sex with multiple women constitutes a significant part of some men's masculine identities in South Africa (Mfecane, 2008). Scholars have revealed that young men's sexual behaviours are sometimes linked to their conformity to traditional-hegemonic masculinities, such as risk-taking (Ngidi et al., 2016), self-reliance (Okoror et al., 2016), and emotional control (Malinga & Ratele, 2016), and that they get mocked or punished when they do not subscribe or conform to traditional masculine norms (Ratele, 2014). This, therefore, according to Mfecane (2008) puts pressure on some of these young boys and men to engage in sex as a demonstration of masculinity. Some of these boys/ young men despite knowing about HIV and AIDS, continue to engage in multiple sexual relationships as means to demonstrate their 'manhood'.

Studies further reveal that amongst men, some interventions against the spread of HIV and AIDS, such as the use of condoms, faithfulness, and monogamy are not considered favourable, as they are seen contradict the hegemonic conceptions of what it means to be a man (Mfecane, 2008; Leclerc-Madlala, 2005). In the study by Mfecane (2008), participants shared that they lost their jobs because of their HIV/AIDS positive status. This is in accord with the findings by Levinsohn, McLaren, Shisana and Zuma (2011) who argue that in the past people would lose their jobs and were stigmatized at workplaces and outside workplaces due to illnesses such as HIV/AIDS. As a result of such job losses, it became difficult for some men to fulfil the financial and material provider roles that were/are considered masculine (Mfecane, 2008). As it is mentioned elsewhere in this study, some societies would then regard these men who are unable to financially provide for their children as absent fathers, limiting their role and involvement to financial provision. It must be noted that there has been a transformation in the labour policies in South Africa and other countries, where the business sector has risen to challenge the HIV/AIDS stigma in several ways; some of those ways include the formulation workplace policies and programmes that promote inclusivity (Magwaza, 2009; GNP, 2018).

2.3.3 Rejected/denied paternity

Molongoane (2015) and other scholars note rejection, unknown or denied paternity as some of the major causes of fatherlessness in South Africa. It is reported that at some point fathers may know the paternity but reject the child because he does not want to take care of the child due to various reasons (Molongoane, 2015). Chikovore and Makusha (2010) mentioned several reasons that are associated with biological fathers denying their children paternity. For instance, Yi (2019) argued that in some cases, fathers may deny the paternity of children because they do not trust their partners. Also, fathers may interpret the mother's pregnancy as an effort to defraud them, compel them into a devoted romantic relationship or as money extortion from them (Nduna, et al., 2011). Thus, in some cases, when a father does not want to establish a romantic relationship and does not trust his partner or is afraid of having a family at a young age, he may deny the paternity of children (Hunter, 2006; Molongoane, 2015).

2.3.4 Culture

Lobola is a cultural process in which payment is made by a potential husband to the head of the prospective wife's family in consideration of customary marriage (Yi, 2019). The reason for lobola payment is to show a token of reverence, appreciation and respect to the prospective

wife and her family; it is said to signify women's value; and strengthen their pride and dignity (Mosotho, Louw, Jacobus & Calitz 2011). These days *lobola* is paid in cash and often, it can aggregate to numerous thousand Rands (Yi, 2019).

Therefore, in most Black South African societies, a father's access to their biological children is linked to the payment of *ilobolo* and/or *inhlawulo* (Mkhize, 2006). If lobola could be either paid immediately or bit by bit, and that would depend on the contract between two families; then the child would be considered as belonging to the father's family. Also, in most South African traditions, if a woman gets impregnated by a man out of wedlock, a man cleanses the so-called "shame" by paying *inhlawulo* (Mkhize, 2006). A father may reject paternity if he is unable to pay *inhlawulo* (often understood as 'damages') or *lobola*, and as a result, may be denied access to his child in some families (Chikovore, & Makusha, 2010).

In some cases, a father who has not paid *ilobola* or *inhlawulo* may still be present (financially or any other kind) in his children's lives. Furthermore, some mothers (due to various reasons) may be left with no choice but to accept any form of support a man is willing to give to his children (Thwala, 2018). However, Nyanjaya (2015) sees a challenge when a father provides material needs and fails to provide discipline and guidance for his children's maturity. According to Nyanjaya (2015), a father's financial support to his children is not enough. Fathers should also be emotionally and psychologically present in their children's lives and contribute to the holistic development of their children (Dickersen, 2014).

2.4 The impact of fatherlessness

Scholars who are focusing on fatherhood have proposed numerous ways in which fatherlessness is detrimental to children and the negative consequences it has on the development of children (Molongoana, 2015). Studies have reported that several social and psychological effects are experienced by children who grow up without their biological fathers. For example, Mosholi (2018) pointed out the negative impact of fatherlessness in homes, referring to studies that argue that children who are growing up without fathers in the USA are more prone to commit suicide. In South Africa, Eddy *et al.*, (2013) reported that the effects of father absence such as suicidal ideas and delinquency were notable in black children who are younger than the age of 12. These findings are based on the study by Omar on a small-size sample of male children who were growing up without a biological father, following which a court referred them for psychological interventions (Eddy, *et al.*, 2013).

Again, aggressive behaviour is found to be one of the outcomes that can be caused by father absence in children, especially boys. De Carlo (2012) argued that boys of nine to ten years old who are raised by single mothers can be more aggressive than boys who are raised by both parents. Mosholi (2018) reports that the aggression can continue with the boys as they grow to become young men and ultimately men. Thus Mosholi (2018) argued that it is important for fathers to be present and establish stable wellbeing for their children and families. However, having a present responsible father does not mean the aggressive behaviour will be escaped by boys, but risks can be minimised (Mosholi, 2018). As a result, significant debates exist around the negative effects of father absence. Langa (2017) and other scholars argued that there are boys who grow up without biological fathers but show little or no developmental problems, as there are other (father) figures who are filling the roles of biological fathers.

Nevertheless, several studies still point out that a wide range of psychosocial ills such as mental health problems, drug abuse, crime and misconduct on children might often-time be linked to the absence of biological fathers (De Carlo, 2012; Dickersen, 2014; Mosholi, 2018). Molongoana (2015) argued that statistically, boys who are growing up without fathers are likely to perform inadequately at schools or drop out and deviate from societal norms or rules; they are at an increased risk of delinquency than other boys who have present supportive fathers. Osmold (2010) outlines that this may be the effects of a lack of father guidance, and thus several boys end up succumbing to peer pressure. For example, a study by Ramphele (2002) in Cape Town found that boys who were growing up without their biological fathers were more likely to follow their peers and join violent gangs as they lacked emotional support and father guidance. Osmold (2010) further argued that some children who are born to unmarried mothers may grow up exposed to their mothers' different romantic partners, which may cause instability at home and in children's wellbeing.

Further studies have argued that sons who have grown up without their biological fathers have been deprived of the opportunity to establish a father-son connection (Osmold, 2010). An absent bond or connection between a father and a son due to fatherlessness, according to the study by Siswana (2016) who writes about fatherhood in the Eastern Cape, may lead to a lack of guidance in the transition of some boys to manhood. Furthermore, Siswana (2016) reported that the lack of a biological father does not only deprive boys of father guidance in transitioning into adulthood, but may also result in the psychological distortion of self and anger among some boys.

Even though many children grow up without their fathers in South Africa, the presence of biological fathers has so much significance on children's holistic development (Makusha, 2013). Biological fathers are important in transmitting cultural values to children and promoting identity development as most children, especially boys, identify with their fathers even when the fathers are absent from the households (Madhavan & Roy, 2011). Makusha (2013) argued that as much as most societies in the African context expect fathers to provide financially for their family or children, their roles are not only limited to financial provision. Fathers also guide children, mostly male children, in relation to their emotions and behaviour and to initiate them into the world (Nyanjaya, 2015). Makusha (2013) argued that both parents are important in providing children with nurturance and caring, moral guidance, emotional and psychological support. These functions are vital in children's well-being and development. Hence, when fathers or mothers are absent, children get affected.

2.5 Fatherlessness and constructions of masculinity

According to Magodyo (2013), masculinity is a historical and cultural phenomenon. Morrell (1988) speaks of many constructions of masculinity, such as hegemonic, traditional masculinity, black masculinity, homophobic masculinity and hypermasculinity. According to Friedman and Downey (2002), these patterns of masculinities are socially constructed. Child development theorists and researchers have extrapolated that a son's identification with his father who provides positive fathering helps in the shaping of the development of positive masculine and cultural identity among boy children (Osmold, 2010). For instance, South African literature, especially focusing on the Eastern Cape, suggests that men are the creators and carriers of the cultural identity and heritage of their children (Siswana, 2016). Therefore, if children (especially boy children) are disconnected from their biological fathers, it can also mean that there is disconnection from their source of identity.

Kipnis (1991) argued that fathers do not only create and establish identity for their boy children, but also model to their sons how to be a responsible man, and how to relate to women. Kipnis (1991) did not discount mothers' role modelling for their sons, but he argued that it is difficult to do it alone; both parents must be present and responsible. Osmold (2010) argued that a son who was never exposed to a positive interaction between his parents is likely to have a distorted view of how to treat a woman. Such boys are likely to 'buy into' hegemonic masculinity, which Langa (2017) explains as the predominant cultural stereotype of manliness.

This includes, for instance, the dominant social construction of men as brave, strong, aggressive, and resilient in many black societies (Mlotshwa, 2016).

Hegemonic masculinity is associated with men's socially constructed power over certain groups such as children and women, aggressive and risky sexual behaviours which involve men demanding sex from women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). For instance, in the Eastern Cape, before boys could be taught lessons about sex, romantic relationships and manliness by society, biological fathers at home are expected to be the first people to teach their boy children about sex, relationships and manhood (Siswana, 2016). As a result, some boys who have grown up without their biological fathers find it difficult to access information about sex and romantic relationships (Siswana, 2016). Some boys end up subscribing to socially dominant constructions of masculinity and rape and rage against children and women as they have never experienced any sex and relationship lessons or lessons about manhood from their biological fathers at home (Magodyo, 2013).

Osmold (2010) purported the need for male identification as is reflected in many cultures, especially, societies in which boys experience rites of passage into manhood. For instance, in the Eastern Cape, in the process of *ulwaluko*, boys identified their manliness with their biological fathers' culture. As noted earlier, *ulwaluko* refers to the ritual performed to facilitate the transition of boys into men. In South Africa, the male initiation ritual is commonly practised amongst Xhosa, Pedi, Sotho, Hlubi, Ndebele, Venda, and Tsonga-speaking populations (Shisana & Simbayi, 2002). Among Hlubi, Sotho and Xhosa speaking people in the Eastern Cape, this ritual is divided into three stages: separation; transition; and reintegration. This practice is intended to signify the official separation of boys from their mothers and celebrate their transition into manhood (Corneau, 1991; Siswana, 2016).

Biological fathers are needed in this process to give their sons courage and motivation through all the physical, emotional, or psychological pain that may be encountered during *ulwaluko* and to mentor their sons about manhood (Ntombana, 2011). Father absence in this process may therefore hamper a proper mentorship (Magodyo, 2013). For example, in the Eastern Cape, some young men who have already undergone the process of *ulwaluko* visit the site of *ulwaluko* as they are allowed; it is therefore common for some of these young men to deceive the initiates referred to as '*abakhwetha*' that as soon as they complete *ulwaluko* they have to release the "bad luck" referred to as "*isinyama*" out of their bodies through sleeping with multiple women (Dispatch, 2006; Magodyo, 2013). As a result, and due to the desperation to

release “*isinyama*”, numerous cases of young men in the Eastern Cape who have raped women and molested children have been encountered and reported (Magodyo, 2013). Thus, fathers are needed to help their boy children during the process of *ulwaluko* to filter out negative messages and cultivate good lessons (Magodyo, 2013).

Ntombana (2011) argued that father absence during *ulwaluko* may also result in hypermasculinity among young men as some of the lessons taught by some men to “*abakhwetha*” may include the ‘myth’ that men should possess power and be feared in society by other men, women, or children. Magodyo (2013) argued that one of the ways to attain power and be feared for some young men who have just undergone the process of *ulwaluko* may include bullying children, women, and other men, and being involved in multiple sexual relationships without taking any precaution. Again, in this process of *ulwaluko*, social-fathers’ contributions are not discounted, as they can greatly help in the absence of biological fathers (Magodyo, 2013). But various scholars such as Mfecane (2016) argue that biological fathers are needed in this process as their boy children mostly relate to them more than they would to social fathers, highlighting the significant role that biological fathers play in shaping young men’s constructions of and performances of masculinity.

2.6 Theoretical framework

This study draws on the psychosocial developmental theory by Erik Erickson (1963) as a lens through which it reflects on young men’s developmental processes and the ways in which such development is impacted by the absence of biological fathers. This study aims to investigate the psychosocial effects of growing without a biological father. Thus, the psychosocial approach will be used within this investigation because it will empower the reader to have an insight into both psychological and social impact resulting from the relationship between a father and son, or lack thereof. It will provide an understanding of male personality or identity formation.

2.6.1 Psychosocial developmental theory

The psychosocial approach is a mode of thinking that explains how internal and external worlds interrelate (Jefferson, 2008). This framework posits that interactions of these worlds take place through the psychological process of projection, internalization, and identification (Mlotshwa, 2016). This theory contains eight developmental stages; each stage builds on those which have preceded. However, in this study, I will focus on the *identity versus role confusion* developmental stage, as this stage is mostly related to what this present study seeks to

understand. In the *identity versus role confusion* psychosocial developmental stage, children (normally adolescents) are seeking to develop their identity. In this stage, identity means a special arrangement of the self (Yi, 2019). The arrangement helps to incorporate various roles, goals, culture, needs, fears, inclination, and skills into a clear and coherent model that stipulates how a growing child will live, love, work and their beliefs in the changing world (Jacobson, 2011; McAdams 2009).

The successful resolution of the *identity crisis versus role confusion stage* - according to Yi (2019) - depends on how the individual has resolved the previous crises of childhood. But also, scholars maintain that both parents play a crucial role in shaping the children's successful resolution in this stage (Gray & Steinberg 1999). For instance, according to Gežová (2015), in this stage mothers can help their boy children to establish identity through ease and encouragement when boy children are facing frustrating situations; while fathers help in forming a male character for his son and start to teach paternal cultural values and identity roles to boy children. In most African traditions, some biological fathers start to prepare their boy children for young adulthood and help with the formation of boys' self-identity and cultural identity in this stage. Often-times children, especially boys, attach their cultural identity to their paternal side and carry their father's clan name (Mosholi, 2018). Makusha (2013), further argued that a father's clan name in most South African black cultures represent a sense of identity, membership, and belonging to a wider extended family.

Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, scholars such as Thwala (2017) and others argue that in African countries when biological fathers are absent, social fathers support the children, especially boy children to find a resolution over an identity crisis through offering proper guidance, and mentorship (Thwala, 2017). However, as stated earlier, the presence of responsible social fathers does not warrant overlooking the importance of biological fathers (Nyanjaya, 2015). Gežová (2015) argues that it is impossible to disregard the biological father's role in boy children's development, especially in the pubescent and adolescent stages. A child finds an advisor in the father and according to Magodyo (2013), in African perspective, a biological father represents for the son a model of himself.

According to Mlotshwa (2016), *role confusion* occurs when individuals find it difficult to establish a secure identity. This phase is crucial because it establishes the framework on which a child can enter adulthood (Erikson, 1963). Identity formation establishes a balanced psychosocial world for the child, especially boy children and a basis for a positive transition

into the next stage, which is *intimacy versus isolation* (Mlotshwa, 2016). Thus, being stuck in *role confusion* can affect children's transition and ability to form romantic relationships and invest in others (Erikson, 1963). Various scholars agree that parental guidance and mentorship is vital in this stage; fathers are much needed to help their boy children to shift well into the *intimacy versus isolation stage* (Yi, 2019). Mlotshwa (2016) argued that it becomes more difficult for some children, especially boys who have no fathers to support them in successfully resolving an identity crisis. As a result, they can get stuck in *role confusion*, and their psychosocial wellbeing may later be affected (Erikson, 1963).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature on fatherlessness among male children. Several historical (apartheid and others), cultural (*ilobola and inhlawulo*) and social (unemployment, HIV/AIDS and others) factors have been cited as some of the causes of father absence in South Africa. As noted in this chapter, growing up without a biological father is one of the social challenges for children, especially, boy children. Scholars have revealed that psychosocial challenges, such as identity crisis, hegemonic masculinity, delinquency, and abuse of substances can often times be the outcomes of growing up without a biological father. However, some of the literature suggested that growing up without a biological father does not mean a child will fail to adjust well in life. For instance, Langa (2017) and other scholars argued that some single mothers can do well in raising well-disciplined boy children. Other scholars such as Makusha (2013) argued that fathering within the context of Africa goes beyond men's biological contribution to the conception of a child, to include the responsibility to provide, protect and offer emotional support.

Whilst social fathers play a great role in the development of children, scholars such as Thwala (2018) maintain that the significance of biological fathers in the development of children should not be discounted. These scholars also argue that biological fathers play a crucial role in boy children's development (Magodyo, 2013; Mlotshwa, 2016); especially when they are at the stage which Erikson (1963) regards it as *identity crisis versus role confusion stage*. Thus, both western and African scholars' viewpoint on the effect of absent fathers indicates that most children who do not have an existing and consistent connection with their biological fathers are often-time vulnerable to negative psychosocial outcomes.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology describes the methods used to conduct this study (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2012). The research methodology consists of the research design, sampling, sampling procedures, data collection and data analysis methods which were used in the study and guided the researcher throughout the research process (Kothari & Nagrath, 2011).

3.2 Research design

In social sciences, the research design consists of two major approaches, which are the quantitative and qualitative approaches (Thwala, 2018). This study adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a collection of methods that focus on description and interpretation and might lead to the development of new concepts or theory, or an evaluation of an organisational process (Kothari & Nagrath, 2011). A qualitative approach is intended to understand human and social actions or behaviour directly from the participants' viewpoints and experiences, as it is experienced in a certain social background or context. This approach was befitting for this study because it provided an in-depth understanding of the experiences faced by young black men who grew up without their biological fathers. This study intended to understand how fatherless young Black men make sense of their world and the challenges they have in the world. Thus, a qualitative approach was suitable as it allowed us to explore the world as participants perceived and experienced it.

3.3 Sampling

Participants for this study were young black men between the ages of eighteen (18) and thirty five (35) who grew up without their biological fathers. Participants were recruited from a local township in the Western Cape, South Africa. This group of participants was selected because they informed an understanding of the central phenomenon of the study, which is father absence. Secondly, they were able to speak to and share their experiences of growing up without a biological father. Non-probability sampling was used for the study. This study specifically used purposive sampling to recruit the participants from a population of fatherless young black men in Langa township. This sample was targeted to provide the richest data, and in so doing, fulfil the purpose of the study and the goals of the research. Forty-three per cent (43%) of black children in townships are fatherless, and therefore that is signifying a higher occurrence of father absence in urban areas (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor, & Mphaka, 2013).

Considering the above statistics, the researcher saw it fit to conduct this study in the specified township, focussing on the Black population.

I have spent some months in Langa township, working in one of the schools. With my presence at that school, I had several encounters with boys who were growing up without their biological fathers. Some of them had lost motivation in school and joined gangs, whilst others were using substances such as ‘tik’³ and alcohol. Based on the increasing father absence in the townships, and my encounters with several fatherless boys in Langa township, I saw the need to conduct this study in townships, mainly at Langa township. The intended sample size of this study was twenty-five (25) fatherless young black South African men, however, due to withdrawals of participants because of the distressing nature of the study, time constraints and other factors, twenty-four (24) participants were recruited to voluntarily participate in this study. In the end, the study recruited one less participant than initially planned. It is important to note that not having met the intended sample size did not affect the outcomes of this study.

To recruit participants for the study, I prepared an advert that explains clearly what my study was about and what the study involved and distributed them in Langa township. During the distribution of flyers, one of the participants informed the researcher of his interest in participating in the study and further informed that his friend might be interested as well in participating in the study. Apart from the interest shown by the said participant, the distribution of flyers did not draw as many participants as was needed. In addition to purposive sampling, I used snowball as a method of recruiting. Snowball sampling is a method in which a researcher seeks to take advantage of the social networks of identified participants by requesting that the participants recommend potential candidates for the study (Leedy, & Ormod, 2010). Sedgwick (2013) argued that participants can be hesitant to participate in a study when they are randomly approached. But, when they are referred by people they know, they are likely to show an interest in the study.

I then approached the school I worked at and requested to present the study and its purpose to learners. I asked young men who were interested to participate in this study to contact me. Since the school is independent, I sent an email to the school principal and deputy principal, requesting permission to collect data from their students. In the email, I explained

³ Methamphetamine, locally known by the street name ‘tik’ in South Africa due to the “ticking” sound produced when smoked (Asante & Lentoer, 2017).

the risks and the benefits of the study. Those learners who were present at the school and indicated having experienced fatherlessness were below the age of 18; hence I did not collect data in the school but collected it from the township more broadly as the study was targeting participants who were above the age of 18.

This study sought to examine and understand the psychological and social effects of fatherlessness among young black men whose biological fathers were not physically present and psychologically supportive, and do not offer any financial provision or play any positive social role in their lives. While most of the participants included in the study met the criteria for participation, there were a few participants who did not entirely meet the requirements of the study. For instance, Masilithembe and Masizane's⁴ fathers were present at the time of their interviews. However, their fathers had been absent since they were young due to migrant work. This study allowed for a broad definition of fatherlessness as understood by participants.

3.4 Data collection

I collected the data using interviews, namely, semi-structured interviews. This method of data collection was believed to be beneficial to this study in terms of allowing the gathering of in-depth information from the participants (Leedy, & Ormod, 2010). In semi-structured interviews, a researcher follows an interview guide while allowing an opportunity for probing questions that will be intended to obtain some clarity, should there be a need (Letsoalo, 2016). Semi-structured interviews allow the interview to occur or develop naturally.

Thus, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews befitted this study as they allowed the researcher to draw the experiences and challenges from young black men who grew up without biological fathers. These participants became the subjects and not the objects of the study in that they had the agency to freely express themselves whilst guided by interview questions so that they remain relevant to the topic of this study. The interviews were set to take approximately 45 to 60 minutes, however, most of the interviews lasted 15 to 30 minutes. Although the interviews were relatively short, the researcher found that the information provided by participants was rich. All the interviews were organized and scheduled for a time that was suitable for both parties (the researcher and participant). The interviews were conducted at the place or venues suggested by the participants in Langa township. However, some places were unfriendly for the interviews; for instance, one interview was conducted at

⁴ These names of the participants mentioned here are not real names but pseudonyms.

the park, there was too much noise from the moving cars. The data was collected over a period of four months (from January 2021 to April 2021) due to scheduling difficulties with participants.

I audio-recorded the interviews using a password-protected mobile device. I then transcribed them into written form and later translated the transcripts into English. Participants were informed that they could switch to any language they preferred. When it comes to audiotaping, at the beginning of each interview, the participants were informed about the use and the importance of the audio recorder. Tape-recording can make the coding process easier, as it reproduces the interviewing situation, and it also can recognize any discrepancies that the interviewer may have missed when interviewing the participants. Therefore, audiotaping the interviews of this study was to ensure the process of transcription is accurate and allowed me to capture nonverbal gestures. Since there is an outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, when collecting data, level one regulations were followed and UCT data collection protocols during covid-19 pandemic were followed. These included practising social distancing, wearing masks, and practising all hygienic measures as prescribed. I made available a disposable mask for each participant I was meeting, in case the participant did not have one.

3.5 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data in this study. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as the procedure that allows the researcher to unearth the data and allow the structuring and organization of the most salient themes at different levels. Coding is a basic analytic strategy used in thematic analysis and is defined as a method of carefully studying texts to check for the continual themes and sub-themes, topics, or relationships. The thematic analysis allows the interpretation of in-depth experiences of participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, it was suitable for this study and helped us to gain an in-depth understanding of the father absence as experienced by the young black men interviewed in this study. The following steps, outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), were followed in analysing the data collected.

3.5.1 Data familiarization

At this step, I familiarized myself with the data, and this began when I was conducting individual interviews with the participants of the study during the process of data collection. This interaction with the data made it more useful for the data analysis process as I have already attained enough understanding and knowledge of the data collected. This was beneficial

because I got absorbed and more acquainted with the data. I familiarized myself with the data through the process of transcribing data, by repetitively listening to the audiotaped recordings and writing down word-for-word into a word document for accurateness. I also read and reread the data while capturing important facts, and in some cases words that emerged more frequently. Braun and Clarke (2006) stressed the most significant part about data transcription is that the data needed is reserved, from the verbal description, and in a manner that is accurate to the original meaning. Features such as punctuation are then added to uphold the meaning of the original data.

3.5.2 Generating initial codes

This second step is regarded as code generation (Braun and Clarke, 2006). After familiarization with the data, lists of ideas were generated. In this step, initial codes from the data were produced. Codes identified a feature of the data that appeared to be interesting to the researcher and referred to the fundamental factors of the raw data. Braun and Clark (2006) state that the researcher code for as numerous prospective patterns or themes as much possible to make sure that all the interesting items are met and captured. All authentic data extracts were then coded and classified together with each code.

3.5.3 Searching for themes

Searching for subjects after developing the initial list of identified and recognized codes with matching data extracts is imperative (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I started searching for predominant themes, through sorting the recognised codes and themes that could conceivably work better together. After the data had been coded and classified, the various codes were then grouped and identified under one theme. Collating the relevant coded data extracts under the identified theme was undertaken. The researcher analysed the codes and considered how different codes were to be combined to form an embracing theme. Developed themes were then arranged into themes and sub-themes.

3.5.6 Reviewing the themes

In this step, themes that emerged from the data were reviewed and refined. All the arranged extracts for every theme were read and considered as to whether they appear to establish a rational or coherent pattern. Then for the themes that did not relate to the aims of this study, I

took them off, and ultimately ended the process, when I was content with all the codes, and themes (some with sub-themes.)

3.5.7 Defining and naming the themes

In this step, the themes were defined and refined. According to Letsoalo (2016), defining and refining themes is to identify the core of what every theme is about and determine what feature of the data each theme captured. Therefore, I defined and named the final themes with appropriate and clear headings, as I was preparing for the write-up. In this step, I captured the meaning of the data and the story it was narrating, as well as how it answered the research questions and how it fitted the aim of this study.

3.5.8 Writing the report

In this step, the researcher made the final analysis and wrote the report of the dissertation. As a researcher, I provided a coherent, consistent, non-repetitive, and interestedly explanation of the story the data told, within and across the themes. The quintessence is to tell what a convoluted story is generally collected from data in a manner that is clear, succinct and coherent to the readers and in a way that can convince them of the quality, validity and merit of the analysis. I chose excerpts from the data that caught the essence of the themes that were presented. The excerpts, according to Braun and Clarke (2006) need to be embedded within an analytical story that outlined the story being told about the data.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance (attached as an appendix E) was sought from the Psychology Department's Research Ethics Committee at the University of Cape Town. Ethical clearance was central in this study because human beings and their dignity are involved. For the safety and well-being of the participants, the below ethical issues were considered and met for this study.

3.6.1 Informed consent

De Vos (2011) argued that informed consent ensures that individuals participate voluntarily in the study, having full knowledge about the risks and the goals of the study. Informed consent, according to Wilson and MacLean (2011), is written permission from participants to allow the researcher to conduct interviews with them. The researcher gave an informed consent form (attached as an appendix A) to the participants, through which they formalised their consent to participate in the study. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, how

data collected from them was going to be utilized, what was required of them, the themes or subjects that were expected to be covered and how much time the interviews would take.

According to Morrow (2005), multiple factors can affect the gathering of information from participants, as well as the analysis of data. These factors can be the researcher's own emotional engagement and level of investment in the topic under study; the researcher's assumptions about the topic; and feelings that develop from reading pre-existing literature. It was therefore possible for the participants to find some of the questions distressing. In case the participant wanted to withdraw due to certain triggered emotions, they were informed that they can withdraw from the study at any point without any negative outcome. I also informed the participants (the students) at the school that, I was an independent researcher from UCT, and this research was independent of the school. Therefore, had students refused to participate in this study, there was never going to be any negative consequences to them at the school. Also, a detailed list of free resources was shared with participants in case they needed professional interventions following the interviews.

3.6.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

The information provided by participants has been kept safe and can only be accessed by the researcher and their supervisor. The participants' real names do not appear in this thesis, instead, pseudonyms were used. The information remains anonymous to ensure that no one can trace the information to the participants. According to De Vos (2011), confidentiality is viewed as a continuation of privacy which refers to agreements between persons that limit others access to confidential information. Thus, to meet confidentiality, all the information provided, including the signed consent forms is stored securely and kept in a lockable compartment that only the principal investigator and supervisor have access to. Only the supervisor and the researcher will be able to identify the subjects.

3.6.3 Data translation

Edward Sapir (1884 – 1939) and Benjamin Whorf (1897- 1941) proposed that language has the power to reflect the culture and influence people's thinking; they are of the view that the way we think and view the world is determined by our languages (Anderson & Lightfoot, 2002; Crystal, 1987; Hayes, Ornstein, & Gage, 1987). The interviews for this study were conducted in isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho, and English; participants switched between these languages during the interviews. These interviews were then translated from these languages to English.

The data were analysed after the translation. But to avoid missing the important meanings for analysis and interpretation, from time to time during the analysis, I would go back to read the data in the original languages and compared it with the translated data. With that, I made sure that the data was not misinterpreted, and that allowed me to maintain a high level of accuracy in the presentation of participants' narratives.

As the researcher that was collecting data from participants, I am confident to say I am fluent in all four languages. I lived for seven years among isiZulu language speakers; and lived with Sesotho speaking people for a period of 11 years. In school, I studied isiXhosa as my home language from primary until I finished in high school; and I studied English as my first additional language from primary until university level. I therefore understood almost all cultural meanings attached to participants' responses. As Durdureanu (2011) would argue, it is important that the researcher understands that translation is not only about the transmission of systematic words, grammar, and phrases but also about understanding the deeper meanings communicated by participants. Thus, when I did not understand certain phrases or words, especially the *tsotsi taal part*, I would ask the participants to give the meaning and the clarities during the interviews. For instance, there was a participant that said "*itayima yamorita kudala*"- 'which means my father has passed on', and I did not understand this phrase. Therefore, I had to ask for the meaning, and this was to ensure that phrase is used accurately in the context of meaning.

3.6.4 Data verification

According to Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006), it is often complicated to evaluate whether the research is assessing what it aims to study when the data cannot be measured and quantified, but is instead based on the participants' lived experiences and perceptions (Mazibuko, 2021). The psychosocial developmental theory by Erik Erickson (1963) was used as a base for this study. Adding to this framework, the various arguments, opinions, facts, and literature were consulted to compare, support, explain and contextualise this study within the context of the specific black population of this study. As a result, various theoretical, methodological and contextual perspectives were taken into consideration in making sense of the data in relation to the context within which participants are located.

During the data collection, a mini-pilot study was conducted to ensure that the questions I asked were relevant and would adequately address the research questions. Through this, credibility, trustworthiness, and dependability were further ensured. Credibility according to

Lincoln and Guba (1985), is the assurance in the truth of discovering, containing precise understanding of background and context, whilst dependability is regarded as the consistency of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.6.5 Reflections on the research process

The data collection for this study started with three participants, who then referred other potential participants to me. But before I could meet these referred potential participants, I was briefed by the participants who referred them to me. They informed me that some of the potential participants do not like sharing personal experiences and sensitive issues with strangers, I must anticipate some challenges. Indeed, I encountered challenges with some participants who could not make it to the interviews whilst others would withdraw because they felt like some of the questions were distressing. As the researcher, when participants seemed to be distressed by some of the questions, I would share to them the resources of professional help at the facilities closest to them, and I would keep on informing that they can withdraw from the study at any time. But, they all refused to seek help from these helping facilities, claiming that they will be fine.

Also, even though it would be clearly explained in the consent form that participating in the study has no direct benefit for them, some participants still expected direct benefits in the form of an incentive. Some of these participants argued that they feel like they are being used as they have been involved in various interviews, yet they do not get any benefits. But I did explain the objectives and the aims of the study so that the participants would understand what is expected of them and why this study was important. Again, when it comes to their cultures, especially the *ulwaluko* aspect, I was afraid that the participants would be reluctant to share sensitive information about *ulwaluko*, as these processes are not often openly discussed. Indeed, they were reluctant to answer some questions as they argued that it is against their cultures to share things that pertain *ulwaluko* with strangers. However, the informed consent form and understanding the essence of confidentiality made it easier to establish trust with each participant.

When some participants shared that they used to beat their intimate partners, some indicated that they are scared that I might judge them or report them to the police, but I kept assuring them about their right to confidentiality. Also, I would also tell them that I just want to understand their perceptions and experiences of growing up without their fathers. So, I listened to their narratives with empathy and without judging them. The participants were

allowed to express themselves without any fear during the interviews. This study was expected to cause only minimal emotional harm or distress to participants. In line with this expectation, some of the participants cried during the interviews, and of course, I ended up sympathizing with them and sometimes I would be emotional as I would relate to some of the things that made them cry. After the interviews, most participants expressed that talking about their experiences of growing up without their fathers also brought relief to them. At the end of the interview with each participant, I would then refer a participant for emotional support but they did not take the offer.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the use of the qualitative approach chosen for this study was discussed. I further reflected on the methodological procedures relating to the data collection methods, sampling techniques and data analysis adopted in this study. The discussion on the research design and methodology is meant to give the reader a clear account of the processes and procedures of the study, and the background within which this study took place. According to Mazibuko (2021), this is beneficial for the readers to make their interpretations of the data. The ethical considerations were also discussed to show how respondents were safeguarded in this study. It protected the rights of the participants by safeguarding their privacy by protecting and keeping safe the information shared by the participants and by ensuring that their anonymity is maintained. Also, the consent forms were signed by participants were safely kept on a lockable compartment, where no one had access except the researcher and the supervisor. The reflection process was done, and it made me aware that I can impact the processes as I also grew up without the presence of my biological father. Therefore, my relatability to participants' experiences may have had an impact on the research processes and how I made sense of and interpreted the data. In the next chapter, I present the findings and discussions of this study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methods adopted for this study. This chapter presents data collected from 24 young black men who grew up without their biological fathers. It begins with a brief discussion of research participants' demographic information to provide the readers with the context of each participant. This is followed by major themes and subthemes drawn from the participants' narratives. These themes include: the role of fathers in their families and sons' lives; father absence and boys' academic performance and educational opportunities; cultural impact of father absence on boys' development; psychological and emotional impact; and the impact of fatherlessness on the masculinity of boys.

4.2 Demographic information

As indicated in the introduction, the data was collected from twenty-four (24) young black South African men who grew up without their biological fathers. Some of these participants either do not know their fathers or their fathers left them at a very young age. Other participants know their fathers, but their fathers were absent due to various reasons. Most participants were not born in Cape Town; they migrated to Cape Town for work and school purposes. Nineteen (19) participants are originally from the Eastern Cape, and one (1) is from KwaZulu Natal. Only four (4) participants were born in Cape Town. The demographic information of the participants in this section is further presented into the following sub-sections: age, language, occupation, and primary caregiver(s) for the participant(s).

4.2.1 Age

The ages of the participants ranged from eighteen (18) to thirty-six (36). These participants were also of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, i.e., fifteen (15) participants identified as being amaXhosa; eight (8) participants being baSotho and one (1) participant being umZulu. Among participants that spoke isiXhosa, some identified them as members of the isiHlubi⁵ cultural group. IsiHlubi is an Nguni cultural group of Southern Africa, with the majority of the population found in Matatiele and Aliwal North in the Eastern Cape. AmaHlubi people just like other ethnic groups have their own sacred ceremonies and practices which include their distinct *ulwaluko*, *imbeleko*, and others, and they speak isiXhosa.

⁵ IsiHlubi is a Nguni cultural group of Southern Africa, with majority of population found in Matatiele and Aliwal North in the Eastern Cape.

4.2.2 Language

In terms of language, the participants expressed themselves in various languages including isiXhosa, isiZulu, and some partly expressed themselves in Sesotho and English. The isiZuluspeaking participant is originally from KwaZulu Natal, he migrated to Cape Town (reside in Langa township) for work purposes.

4.2.3 Occupation

Eleven (11) participants reported being employed whilst eighth (8) were unemployed. Four (4) participants were still students (with one being a high school student whilst others were students of higher education institutions). One (1) participant did not disclose what he does for a living.

4.2.4 Primary caregiver(s) for the participants

These participants were raised by their single mothers, grandmothers, and other immediate and extended family members who played a big role in their lives.

Demographic information of the participants is presented first in a tabular format, followed by emerging themes and sub-themes. Themes and sub-themes are further discussed in terms of the theoretical framework and research questions. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms are used in place of participants' real names.

4.3 Table

Pseudonyms	Age	Language	Primary care-giver for child.	Occupation
Mongezi	18	IsiXhosa	Mother	Unemployed
Athethile	22	IsiXhosa	Mother and grandmother	3 rd Year student (HEI) ⁶
Tiso	22	Sesotho	Mother	Grade 12 learner
Mnewos	23	Sesotho	Mother and grand mother	Student (HEI)
Phakisang	23	IsiXhosa	Mother	Unemployed

⁶ HEI is used as an acronym for Higher Education Institution.

Limile	24	Sesotho	Mother	2 nd Year Student (HEI)
Athemba	24	IsiXhosa	Grandmother	Unemployed
Lolwethu	25	IsiXhosa	Mother	Unemployed
Andile Mamela	26	IsiXhosa	Uncle and aunt	Unemployed
Elethu	26	IsiXhosa	Mother	Security Guard
Xolile	26	IsiXhosa	Grandmother	Employed
Lindile	27	IsiXhosa	Mother	Security Guard
Siphe	27	IsiXhosa	Mother and grandmother	Taxi-Driver
Sive Mbuli	27	IsiXhosa	Grandmother	Security Guard
Siyabonga	27	IsiXhosa	Mother	Security Guard
Shabutle	28	IsiXhosa	Grandmother	Unemployed
Liso	29	IsiXhosa	Mother	Unemployed
Msenga	29	IsiZulu	Mother and grand-mother	General worker
Awongile	29	IsiXhosa	Mother	Truck-Driver Assistant
Azamile	29	IsiXhosa	Grandmother	Employed
Ayanda	30	IsiXhosa	Mother	Unemployed
Masilithembe	31	IsiXhosa	Mother and father	
Masizane	32	IsiXhosa	Mother and grand-father.	Security Guard
Zolani	36	IsiXhosa	Mother	Employed

4.4 The themes

The analysis of data arising from the participants' narratives is presented in this section as themes and subthemes, as they emerged through the process of thematic analysis. As already mentioned above, a list of five themes emerged, and they were clustered. The clusters represent the subordinate themes (with some having subthemes). The following themes will be discussed in the sections that follow: the role of fathers in their families and sons' lives; father absence and boys' academic performance and educational opportunities; cultural impact of father absence on boys' development; psychological and emotional impact; and the impact of fatherlessness on boys' masculinity.

4.4.1 The role of fathers in their families and sons' lives

Fathers play various roles in their children's lives and the family at large (Mosholi, 2018). Other than being a biological father, fatherhood comes with certain responsibilities and roles that may differ with family or culture but some are constant and uniform (Sekgale, 2017). The participants in this study acknowledged financial provision, emotional support, mentoring and advising, role modelling, and disciplining as responsibilities and roles that fathers are expected to play in their children's lives. Thus, participants reported various challenges of growing up without the presence of their biological fathers to play these expected fatherhood roles.

4.4.1.1 Fathers as providers

Most participants regarded financial provision as one of the major responsibilities of fathers.

Therefore, the fathers' financial engagement with the child may result in positive benefits for the child's learning opportunities, academic achievement, behaviour and psychological outcomes. According to Sekgale (2017), this may mean that if a father is unemployed and is unable to meet the financial needs of his children and family, he might feel less of a father. The participants communicated that being a father is attached to being a breadwinner in most families, especially in the rural families where women do not usually engage in paid work.

Elethu is at the age of 26 and grew up without his biological father. He grew up in the Eastern Cape, and after passing his matric he came to stay KwaLanga. He expressed the following about the role of a father.

“As men, we wish to see our fathers present in our lives, but it becomes a pity when he is not present. As I was growing up I wanted to be like other kids and receive clothes or soccer boots from my father as my mother was not working a stable job and my father wasn't there to buy me these things. I grew up loving soccer, I would wish sometimes that my father buys me soccer kits, but he was not present at home, he just came once and left for years to the cities. I wish my father played his responsibilities as a father but he did not. I wish he was there to provide, as sometimes I would see my mother struggling to provide.”

Msenga (29) who grew up without his biological father and stayed with his grandmother and mother expressed a similar experience about the role of a father. He used to feel hurt when his

peers showed him the gifts that their fathers had bought for them because his father could not buy them for him as he was absent.

“Growing up without my biological father was not easy at all. I would realize this when my friends’ fathers arrived at their homes from Gauteng. My friends would visit me with the things that their fathers bought for them, and they would show me, and that would hurt me. I would remember that I do not have a father, even though my mother would buy me things but I would also want to be like other kids and receive things from my father.”

Mnewos is a 23-year-old man whose father passed away when he was only 8 years old. Initially, Mnewos’ father was absent but at some point, he met Mnewos and bonded with him. Mnewos expressed that had his father been present in his upbringing, he would have provided for him, and he would not have financially suffered the way he did.

“My life would have been different had my father been present and been there in my life because I grew up struggling without my father. It was difficult as my mother struggled to even buy me Christmas clothes or school shoes...so if my father was present in my life, my life would have been way better as it is still difficult even now.”

The above excerpts are in line with O’Dwyer (2017) who is of the view that fathers are expected to economically provide at their homes, and when they are absent children are likely to face financial challenges. This is also in accordance with the finding by Mabusela (2014) that a father’s role is to provide for his children and to fulfil the children’s basic needs such as clothing, food, etc.; and that creates a gap in the economic needs of the family and the children when the father is absent. Hence participants shared experiences of how much they struggled financially as their fathers were absent. Sometimes fathers, according to Mosholi (2018), become physically and financially absent in their families due to issues such as unemployment and educational level. Financial struggles may lead some fatherless young men to engage in criminal activities such as robbery so that they may have money, especially when their mothers or guardians are not employed. Most participants shared views that are similar to O’Dwyer (2017) that fathers should provide for their families and children. This collective view amongst participants that fathers should provide for their families and children is influenced by the

socially constructed ideas about what it means to be a father which remains predominantly centred upon financial provision in South Africa and other parts of the world.

Sekgale (2017) argued that due to poverty and the lack of employment in South Africa, most men struggle to affirm themselves as fathers even when they are present. Based on most participants' views, when fathers are absent, children and families struggle financially. Therefore, this may mean that the high unemployment rate in South Africa limits a father's ability to provide for their families and children, making it hard for them to meet these societal expectations, and eventually some of these fathers become absent. However, according to Mosholi (2018), this is not always the case. Mosholi (2018) argued that some mothers can financially sustain their families and provide for their children without being assisted by men. Most women are getting educated, financially independent, and they can provide for their families without being assisted by social fathers. Mongezi who is at the age of 18 and grew up staying with his mother as his father was absent, expressed the experiences that are in accord with Mosholi (2018) that growing up without a father did not affect him financially as his mother was providing financially and doing everything for him.

“It did not affect me that much because, him being absent at home, made no difference because my mother provided me with everything I needed. So it did not affect me.”

Again, social fathers and guardians cannot be discounted in the South African context; in fact, Makusha (2013) argued that uncles (oomalume), grandfathers (oobabomkhulu), older brothers and mothers' partners can individually or collectively provide for children's material needs in the absence of their fathers. Athethile is 23 years old and grew up without his biological father and stayed with his grandmother and his mother. Athethile expressed that growing up without a father did not affect him as he had uncles who provided for his financial needs.

“Yes I had uncles and grandfathers who would do anything, and even buy me gifts. They played the role of my father...Yes, I had friends whose fathers were present in their lives. Yes, I wished I had that bond with my father but that did not affect me that much...Yes, when my friends spoke about the things their fathers bought for them, it would hurt me but of course, it is normal for a person to want gifts from his father. But that did not have that much impact on me, because my uncles would buy me the gifts, so there was no big deal.”

Even though Athethile grew up without his biological father, his financial needs were met by his grandfather and uncles who provided for him. Therefore, from these excerpts, it is evident that when fathers are absent, children may suffer financially, (especially when mothers are unemployed). While this is the case for some children, others do not struggle because some mothers and social fathers such as uncles and grandfathers can provide for their financial needs.

4.4.1.2 Fathers and emotional support

Molongoana (2015) argued that the role of a father in children's lives should be not limited to the material and financial provision because fathers play significant roles in the holistic development of their children. According to Mabusela (2014), some of the crucial roles that fathers play in their children's lives involve providing psychological, emotional, and academic support. This also emerged in the participants' description in which they acknowledged the importance of a father's support when boys are undergoing *ulwaluko*. Some participants communicated that when boys encounter life challenges, fathers must be present to support them emotionally.

Azamile (29) grew up without both his biological father and mother and was raised by his grandmother. In his expression, he does not limit the role of fathers to the provision of financial needs only but also communicates emotional support as one of the roles that fathers should play in their children's lives.

“Fathers are needed not only to support you financially but also to emotionally and morally support you as a child.”

Athethile expressed that his father would have supported him had he been present in his life. He shared similar views to Azamile that fathers are not only expected to support financially but also emotionally support children as they grow.

“Had my father been present in my life, he would have been there for me and been supportive. He has to be involved in everything, even if he is not financially stable but just be there for me and emotionally support me.”

Ayanda (30) who was raised by his mother, also expressed similar views as Athethile, that fathers should be present and they should support their children in all spheres of life. These experiences are also reflected in Thwala's (2018) argument that fathers must also be involved in the day-to-day support, care and rearing of their children. This would include fathers taking

their children to school, assisting them with homework, and supporting their children when they are playing sports at school. The involvement of fathers in their sons' lives shapes their sons' social development and boosts their confidence and resilience when facing stressful situations (Makusha, 2013). Ayanda had this to say:

“Had my father been present in my life, things would have been different, my father would have played his role as a father and supported me in everything and guide me with life decisions”.

Masizane (32) grew up staying with his mother and grandfather. His father was absent. He expressed that he would have preferred to face life challenges with his father being present than to face life struggles without him.

“Had my father been present in my life and struggle with me, things would have been better and they would have changed. It is better to struggle whilst your father is present in your life than hearing from people that your father is living far away (utshiphile).”

The above excerpts destabilize the construction of the traditional role of a father as only a provider. The participants contended that a father's role is not only restricted to the provision of financial and material support. Their expressions are in accord with the study by Molongoane (2015) who argued that fathers must fulfil a variety of roles such as providing moral and emotional support, psychosocial support, and the provision of care. These supporting roles are important in the holistic development and wellbeing of children. Thus, Thwala (2018) argued that the experience of fatherlessness needs to be conceptualized as multidimensional.

Even though some studies show that fathers are not involved in their families and children's lives, many of these absent fathers do acknowledge the significance of physical presence, emotional and moral support, and love for their children however due to certain factors such as unemployment and labour migration they struggle to even fulfil the nurturing aspect of their role as fathers (Malinga & Ratele, 2022).

It needs to be noted that even though fathers may be physically absent in their children's lives due to migration that does not mean they cannot be emotionally supportive of their children. They can spend time and talk with their children over the phone, encourage them and motivate them through various forms of communication when children face challenges or need their guidance and support. The current technology has made it easy for family members to

connect although they may be physically apart. So, fathers can be physically absent from their children and families, but they do not have to be emotionally absent. Johnston, Hillier, Purdon, Pears and Robson (2012) argue that the progress of technology has provided better mechanisms for connecting people with their loved ones irrespective of geographical distance. It is also important to note, however, that these technological developments and the various forms of communication do not come without costs, limiting those who cannot afford to use them.

In fact, Khunou (2018) contended that the Fourth Industrial Revolution (advanced technology) grants opportunities for fathers to be present in their children's lives. This means that they will be able to communicate easily and support their children even when they are not in the same resident with them. But the profit motive of capitalism and the inequality built into it mean that access to smart technology is limited for the unemployed and underemployed (blacks) (Khunou, 2018). Khunou (2018) further contended that data is very expensive and to maintain a smart-phone and other technologies coming out of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is not easily accessible to all. The possibilities presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution remain shaky for black men as some of them do not have the high skills needed to participate actively in the productive side of this revolution (Khunou, 2018). Yes, this Fourth Industrial Revolution might make it easy for family members to communicate and connect with each other regardless of geographical distance. But, as said earlier, it must be noted that these technological improvements that connect people do not come cheap. People who cannot afford to use or own them may be limited, which in most cases, it would be the black fathers.

4.4.1.3 Fathers as mentors and advisors

A father can be understood and experienced by children as a kind of mentor and advisor. For instance, Mosholi (2018) stipulated that the mentoring and advising role by a father includes teaching attitudes and cultural values, teaching and advising children about life, and how to deal with its challenges. According to O'Dwyer (2017), fathers should teach their children how to become good men, fathers, and husbands to their wives and children; whilst Mosholi (2018) argued that fathers mentor their boys about love and how to love their intimate partners and other people. Most participants shared that had their fathers been present in their lives, they would have taught and guided them on how to become good men, how to address some of the challenges of life as well as how to love, as argued by O'Dwyer (2017) and Mosholi (2018). Athemba expressed the following:

“In terms of an intimate relationship, let’s say if one comes from a family where both parents love each other, that love would then be passed on to the children and inspire their children how to love their partners...Again with friendships, fathers know how boys interact when they play, my father would have told me what friends are good, and he would have helped me with choosing good friends.”

Liso (29) grew up without his father and did not receive any financial or emotional support from him. Liso had this to say about having no father to guide and advise him:

“Yes it does affect my intimate relationship, know sometimes we learn from our fathers how to treat and care for women, and to me, it is difficult as I did not have a father.”

From the above excerpts, it is clear that these men would have loved to have present fathers who would advise them about the matters of intimate relationships and teach them how to love. These excerpts support the views by Copeland (2006) and others who argue that present fathers play a significant role in shaping their boys’ ability to recognize their emotions and how to express love to friends and intimate partners. Copeland (2006) further argued that boys who grow up without their fathers might have difficulties in recognizing their emotions and, later in life have difficulties expressing love to their spouses or children. It is also possible for some fathers not to be comfortable holding conversations related to intimate relationships with their sons. As mentioned earlier, some cultures limit the fathers to financial provision.

As a result, sometimes, even with fathers being physically present, children may still lack guidance from their fathers. Also, according to Mazibuko (2021), some fathers leave sex education to teachers and mothers. But most participants in this study maintained the common view of fathers as boys’ mentors and advisors about life and in matters relating to sex and sexuality. Mosholi (2018) argued that it is not always the case that the presence of a father will be beneficial to children, as some present fathers can be abusive towards their partners and children. This can also be corroborated in Limile’s excerpt below:

“...My father is not treating women well, I am looking at his marriage from the outside; his wife is not happy because when he comes back to his house he starts arguments and fights.”

The above excerpts prove that some present fathers are not good role models for their sons and the societies they exist in. It is safe to argue that fathers' behaviour plays a huge role in this high rate of gender-based violence in South Africa. So, fathers must not only be present but they must be positive and exhibit good fathering. Copeland (2006) argued that sometimes the boys' ability to solve certain life problems relies on the availability and connection with their biological fathers. Mosholi (2018) also argued that the father-son bond is important for boys because it teaches them how to form strong bonds with their peers. Magodyo (2013) argued that when the father and son bond exists, it becomes easy for fathers to discuss intimate relationships and the negative consequences of being involved in multiple sexual relationships with their boys. Magodyo's (2013) argument corresponds with the following expression by Elethu:

"I did not only need a father to financially provide but also to teach me about life so that when I encounter challenges I would remember the words of my father. Sometimes as young men, we fall into a trap of having multiple girlfriends, and we impregnate them. If our fathers are present, they would be able to tell us that we should use condoms and advise us about relationships. They would also advise us about the negative consequences of sleeping with multiple girls."

O'Dwyer (2017) regarded fathers as figures that advise boys about certain men-related matters. According to Mosholi (2018), matters that involve a penis can only be shared and discussed with fathers. For instance, Ayanda who is 30 years old was raised by his mother. He idealized his father as a figure that would have advised him when he has issues with his sexual health. His expressions coincide with Mosholi (2018) that there are certain issues (such as penis matters) that cannot be shared with women instead they are shared only with men, and Asanda (in the extract below) would have preferred to share them specifically with his biological father than any other man.

"Man, growing up without the presence of my father was very difficult, sometimes there would be issues, and it will have to be the mother that helps, and again having a single parent (mother) alone as men is very difficult because there are things as men we cannot share with our mothers, we only share them"

with our fathers. For instance, I would have issues around my four- five⁷ and I would not tell that to my mother, I needed my father to share them with and get advice from him but he was absent.”

Asanda further expressed that:

“Had my father been present in my life, things would have been different, my father would have played his role as a father and supported me in everything, advise and guide me with making better life decisions.”

Masizane believed that his father would have taught and mentored him a lot about life:

“Had he been present, there is a huge role he would have played in my life. Apart from financially providing, he would support me as I grow as a man, guide me about life and help me with making the best life decisions. ...He would have chatted with me from time to time, and taught me about manhood matters, that a man should do this and not do that..... Fathers could also encourage you to look at life from a different perspective, and guide you as a man..... You know as you grow as a boy, there are things you cannot discuss with your mother; you are not comfortable doing so; you need your father to share and talk about such things; for instance, when it comes to relationship stuff, it is difficult to discuss it with your mother... At least when there is a father as you would ask advice about the intimate relationship. As a result, it was difficult for me to express myself to ladies; things would have been better had my father been present, he would have advised me on how to talk to ladies or how to propose. Things have changed now, but back in the days, as we were influenced by society, it was not easy to talk or share certain things with mothers as you would be called mtana-kamama.”

Masizane expressed that as boys, they would be laughed at and called “*mtakamama*” meaning “mother’s baby” when they shared and discussed certain menrelated matters with their mothers. According to Masizane, society expected them as boys to act strong and never express their emotions. Masizane’s experiences are in line with

⁷ “4-5” is a slang used in some parts of South Africa for a penis.

Mlotywa's (2016) argument on traditional masculinity, that some societies expect men to be most physically and intellectually competent, while restricting their emotions. This also means that men are expected to resolve their emotional problems and other challenges without showing forms of emotional vulnerability, which is regarded as taboo in some black societies. Hence, in most black societies, there is this saying "*indoda ayikhali*" which literally means, 'a man does not cry' or 'men don't cry'.

Even though participants expressed their desires for their biological fathers to be emotionally and psychologically present, it must also be noted that the participants do not downplay the advisory, guidance and mentorship roles played by father figures and social fathers in the absence of their biological fathers. It is just that most participants would have preferred their biological fathers to serve as advisors and mentors in their lives. Hence most participants expressed feelings of grief and hurt as they were sharing experiences of being abandoned by their biological fathers. Molongoane (2015) also argued that when talking about the father figures and social fathers, stepfathers and their roles must be not ignored, and according to Holborn and Eddy (2011), stepfathers can guide children, especially with issues that are related to men. Conversely, some stepfathers may be abusive towards their stepchildren, and these social fathers and male figures may not serve the children with their best abilities as they are not their biological children. This view is shared by Azamile who expressed that his father's younger brother did not do sufficiently when it comes to teaching him lessons about life because he was not his biological son.

"Utatomncinci did serve as father and taught me the life lessons but it was not enough as I was not his child. So he did not do it to the best of his ability; he did not teach life lessons with all he can. Had it been my father, as his child, he would have gone all out in teaching me about life and tell me how to behave as the new man from 'entabeni'⁸."

The participants expressed the negative effects of lacking a father who could serve as a mentor and advisor. Similarly, Mosholi (2018) argued that sometimes having no present father as a boy means a lack of direction, and someone to advise you about life, and how to deal with life's challenges.

⁸ *Entabeni* refers to the bushes where boys undergo *ulwaluko*.

Andile had this to say:

“I would not be smoking...There is what we call “tik” and “pilisi” because I had no father to guide me I ended up using these substances. When I use these substances, I would forget about my absent father, and forget about the hunger...Had my father been present in my life, I would not be smoking the dagga and the tik.”

Awongile expressed a similar view:

“If my father was present I would have listened to him, and I believe I would not be drinking alcohol and smoking right now, maybe he would have had a man to man conversation with me about smoking and tell me not to smoke.”

According to these participants, their fathers would have played a significant role in teaching them about life; some believe that they would not be smoking, whilst others believe that they would not have used drugs. This, therefore, shows that mentorship and supervision are considered necessary factors that shape the social development of boys, especially when it is a biological father who is mentoring and supervising his son. Mentorship and advising as noted in the literature review, include showing young men guidance and directing them as they grow. Thus, in the absence of their fathers, these participants shared that they did not receive the guidance, advice, and mentorship they expected, and ended up doing ‘wrong’ things.

Consistent with the findings by Richter (2006), it is evident from the excerpts from Andile and Awongile that fathers teach their boys how to behave, and that father absence amongst these men negatively shaped their decision making. Thus, in turn, they ended up using illicit substances and drinking alcohol. Langa (2010) argues that it cannot be assumed that the absence of a biological father will unavoidably result in maladjustment in children, or that the presence of a father will shape the boys to behave well and make appropriate life decisions. It has been noted earlier in the excerpt by Limile (who observed his father’s life and marriage from a distance) that some present fathers may play destructive roles in their boys’ lives, leading them to misbehave or join gangs.

4.4.1.4 Fathers as disciplinarians

According to Lesejane (2006), traditionally, a father is recognized as the head of the household, and some roles are culturally attributed to fathers. This is consistent with the findings by Sekgale (2017) who suggests that some fathers are not just the head of their households but also carry many responsibilities that are seen as exhibiting good fathering. These roles include moral authority and guidance for children and enforcing discipline so that in turn, children embody the values of good fatherhood, behave well in society, and grow to be better men (Sekgale, 2017). Most participants that come from rural families communicated that in rural areas, fathers are expected to discipline their children when they misbehave or when they start to behave in deviant ways.

Athemba mentioned that:

“I had neither father nor male figure to tell me that I should do this and not do that, it is like I was living freely without any discipline.”

Awongile expressed that both parents play a vital role in disciplining their children, but when it comes to male children, fathers usually are the ones who manage to discipline them:

“Both parents play important roles in raising their sons, but sometimes as young men, we just get out of control and it becomes difficult for mothers to discipline us; but when it comes to fathers, we listen as they are firm when it comes to discipline and using harsh hand...Sometimes as a teenager back in the days I would not listen to my mother...”

When asked about the different roles that fathers play in children’s upbringing, Masizane mentioned that mothers and fathers play different roles when it comes to disciplining their children. He expressed that a mother sympathizes too much, unlike fathers who are strict when disciplining.

“Yes there is a different role that fathers play because mothers empathize too much; whereas fathers would be strict to you as a man, and in that way, they teach you about life whereas mothers would not be strict and instead be soft.”

Limile, on fathers as disciplinarians, had this to say:

“You need the tough love. My mother was soft towards me, she would just isolate me, and I ended up being too soft of which is not good for a man, especially where I come from. I needed the father to make me strong.”

From Limile’s excerpt, it is clear that societal ideas about manhood and ‘strength’ negatively shape boys’ perception of masculinity, and such perceptions can and do serve a disruptive function which in turn may negatively influence the social development of boys. For instance, Limile is of the idea that his mother made him soft and being soft according to him is not good for a man. He expressed that he needed his father to make him a strong man. These ideas about strength among men, which in most of the times are associated with violence and toxic expressions of masculinity, must not be overlooked, and more must be done to educate societies about alternative ways of being a man, for a better future.

Sive (27) who grew up in an adopted family, stated that he had no father to discipline him, he grew up doing as he pleased. He had this to say:

“Growing up without a father was very difficult because I was free in everything. Unlike those who had fathers that will discipline them but, with me it wasn’t the case, no father was there to discipline me, I would go out all night and no one will tell me what to do and what not to do, and I did as I please.”

Xola expressed that:

“Had I grown up with the presence of my father, he would have disciplined me like a man, unlike my grandmother who wanted me to live free, and was scared of punishing me since I had no parents.”

From the above excerpts, it is evident that participants in this study believe that boys need their fathers to discipline and guide them in terms of what it means to be a man. They also highlighted challenges that single mothers and guardians encounter when managing their behaviours. This is evident in Awongile’s excerpt, that as a teenager he used to defy his single mother. Awongile is of the view that had his father been present, he would have disciplined him, and in turn, he would not be drinking alcohol. When participants speak about fathers as disciplinarians, from their gestures, it becomes clear that some of them were referring to corporal punishment as one of the mechanisms of discipline. While corporal punishment is now (legally) prohibited in South Africa (Mazibuko, 2021), it remains a common practice in many

families and societies where it is still considered a ‘necessary’ part of disciplining a child. This is to the extent that when children turn out to have behavioural challenges, parents would sometimes be blamed for not instilling enough ‘discipline’ and therefore held responsible for their children’s behaviour, as confirmed by Limile and Masizane earlier on in this section who attribute their behaviour to a lack of sufficient disciplining and ‘tough love’.

The arguments that regard fathers as disciplinarians of their boys do not downplay the saying, *‘it takes a village to raise a child’*, and neither overlook the important disciplinarian roles played by social fathers and guardians in the absence of the biological father (Mosholi, 2018). However, according to Mosholi (2018), sometimes guardians or social fathers might be scared to appear as abusive to children who do not have parents. This is supported by Xola who expressed that his grandmother was scared to punish (corporal punishment) him as he had no parents. He expressed that his grandmother allowed him to do as he pleased, and sometimes did not reprimand him when he was misbehaving. This may mean that some children such as Xola, when lacking discipline and supervision from their parents may become vulnerable to delinquency and irresponsible social life. Thus, fathers and mothers are needed to instil discipline in their children, and discipline can be instilled through positive and healthy conversation, rather than physical violence.

However, according to Osmold (2010), some boys can self-discipline themselves. This is supported by some participants who argued that fathers absence did not negatively shape how they behave because they were able to be responsible and obeyed the rules of society. However, it must be noted that as people live within the context of communities, thus it is important to have adults that will guide you as a child from time to time. Thus, Thwala (2018) contended that self-discipline is quite difficult without the help of an adult to instil it in a child. Thus, participants such as Xola, Awongile and others used to be unruly and disruptive in their families and societies.

4.4.1.5 Fathers as role models

When it comes to role modelling, Nyanjaya (2011) argued that the father has a critical role in influencing his children’s development and the enforcement of societal standards, and behaviour modelling for his children as they grow into adulthood. This argument is in line with some participants’ expression that sons learn from their fathers’ actions. A father’s presence is important for children, his behaviour is also important as it can influence boys’ behaviour and

shape who they become later in life. Hence, participants further expressed that had their fathers been present, they would have modelled to them how to love, forgive and not to quarrel with women or use violent methods to resolve issues with women or other men. It is then safe to argue that due to father absence, some young men may miss the influence from their fathers on how to 'carry' and represent themselves as men.

Masilithembe expressed how he would have preferred to have a present father who would model good behaviour rather than having a present father who is a drunkard. He had this to say about his father as a role model:

“Had my father spent time with me when he was back home from Gauteng on holidays, and stop drinking alcohol too much, I think, things would have been different. I am drinking alcohol too much today because my father was a drunkard.”

Limile expressed that a father should not only be present, but he should be a positive father as well. Limile expressed that his father being absent in his life was a great thing, 'a blessing in disguise.' He watched his father's lifestyle from a distance, and his lifestyle was not a good example to his children. Limile strongly believes that had his father been present in his life, he would have adopted his bad lifestyle. He had this to say about his father modelling negative behaviour:

“His absence is sort of a blessing in disguise because my father's lifestyle is bad. He spends his time in the taverns and clubs. He drinks alcohol way too much and comes back to his home late; he does not spend time with his wife. He is in the 50s yet he is misbehaving, and he is not respecting his wife. So if he was present, I would have been like him. You know when I was growing up; I looked at him from a distance, as we live in the same area, I wanted to be like him as he had multiple girlfriends; so he would have modelled that negative lifestyle to me. So it is better that he was not present in my life. He would have set a bad example, especially on how to treat women and people.....My father and I stay in the same neighbourhood, we are just 30 minutes away but that man would never come to visit me; He only visited me in 2021....”

The excerpts by Masilithembe and Limile show that fathers are expected to be role models and sometimes, they do model bad behaviour to their sons. As noted elsewhere in this

study, some fathers might model negative masculinity to boys by abusing their wives and children and being involved in multiple sexual relationships. This is seen in Limile's excerpt, where he expressed that at some point he wanted to be like his father and have multiple girlfriends. This is also consistent with Nyanjaya's (2011) argument that some present fathers model negative behaviours and expressions of masculinity to their sons. Thus, in turn, their sons in the future may exemplify the negative masculinity and fatherhood and abuse their own children and wives.

Commonly, in terms of the roles of a father, it is expected that fathers should be present in their children's lives and play their expected roles that include disciplining, advising, mentoring, modelling, protecting, and providing (Mosholi, 2018). Participants in this study reported the challenges they encountered as their fathers were absent from their homes and in their lives and did not play these mentioned roles. Each participant commented on the negative effects of growing up without the presence of their biological fathers, and for most of them, father absence significantly contributed to some of the social challenges they experienced including delinquency, using of substances, drinking alcohol, and bad conduct. Some participants shared that they struggle to establish lasting relationships with intimate partners and friends.

Some essential things that participants regarded as valuable but found lacking in their lives included the presence of someone to share issues related to men with lessons on social interaction with peers and about relationships with women and lessons on life in general. Mothers are then obligated to execute these roles that are expected to be played by fathers, and according to Klipnis (1991), it becomes overwhelming for single mothers to do so alone.

4.4.2 Father absence and boys' academic performance and educational opportunities

Absent fathers, as mentioned earlier, create a kind of (wounding) gap in the lives of children. According to Mosholi (2018), this 'gap' disrupts and interferes with the psychological, social, and educational development of children. For some children, the inability to further their education may be influenced by their father's absence. For instance, participants from Mosholi's (2018) study expressed that father absence hindered their academic and educational progression because they had to drop out at primary or high school so that they could financially assist their mothers. In other words, educational support is another responsibility that fathers must play in their children's lives, and it also involves financial support. According to

Mazibuko's (2021) results, educational support includes fathers arranging transport for their children, paying school fees, and even helping their children with school home works. This means that it can be difficult for single mothers as they must do everything to support their children's education by themselves. This view is in line with the findings by Ahmad (2014) who argued that sometimes, mothers struggle financially when the fathers are absent, and then some firstborn children end up dropping out of school to find employment to support their mothers.

Awongile expressed that his mother was struggling financially, and his father was not financially or emotionally present, so he had to quit school before grade 12 and look for employment to help his mother at home. He had this to say:

“If my father was present in my life, he would have helped me a lot because I dropped out at school to help my mother at home financially, but if my father was present, I would not have dropped out of school, maybe today I would be a lawyer, doctor or something else.”

Awongile believes that had his father been present and supportive, he would not have dropped out of school, he would have continued with his studies until he obtained a qualification. Elethu who completed grade 12 and did not further his studies expressed that after grade 12, he too had to look for employment to support his struggling mother and the family instead of pursuing a tertiary education. He had this to say:

“You know I studied so that I could just pass grade 12 and look for work to support my family. But if he was present; I would have gone to university or college. His absence affected my education.”

Azamile who also matriculated but did not continue with his studies thereafter expressed the belief that had both his parents been present as he grew up, they would have helped him to be focused on school and in life.

“It is not nice to grow up without a father; I wish he was present until I finished grade 12.....Had my father been present in my life, things would have been different. Growing up with both parents would have helped me to focus on school and in life.”

He further expressed that:

“I remember there was a year I was supposed to go on a school tour, but I couldn’t because there was no money at home.”

The above excerpts corroborate Richter (2012) who points out the correlation between poverty and educational persistence. This is in congruence with Mosholi (2018) who links poverty to problems in school performance, and boys’ educational persistence. In these excerpts, participants expressed that had their fathers been present and supportive, they would not have dropped out of school, instead, they would have continued studying until they completed their high school and furthered their studies in college or university and obtained certain qualifications. Poverty compelled them to drop out of school. Possibly, they will be unskilled workers, and according to Mazibuko (2021), unskilled workers are not only suffering from unemployment but also suffer from earning low wages and fewer benefits. As a result, their participation in their own children’s lives may be affected should they become parents themselves. This view is supported by Mazibuko (2021) who noted a relationship between father’s participation in his children’s lives and the children’s access to educational resources and opportunities. However, it must be noted that the father’s level of education and socioeconomic status are not the controlling factors that influence the father’s involvement in his children. In Makusha’s (2021) study, it is indicated that some fathers are active and involved in their children’s lives, even with their varying educational levels.

Persistence in education and competent performance, according to Mosholi (2018), require so much mental and emotional wellness, and parents are the first people who should help their children to retain mental and emotional wellness. Therefore, father absence makes it difficult for some single mothers to nurture their children’s emotional and mental strength that would in turn help them with their educational progress. Thus, Mosholi (2018) argued that boys who grow up without their fathers may struggle with mental and emotional wellness and that may, in turn, affect their educational progress. Participants have indicated that the issue of father absence has been a serious challenge in their academics or education, especially with some participants who had unemployed mothers. These participants expressed that they would lack the money to buy school uniforms or even attend the school educational tours. As a result, they ended up losing determination and dropped out of school before grade 12, whilst others did not further their education after passing grade 12 due to a lack of financial support.

It is therefore evident that fathers play an important role in and shape their children’s educational outcomes. Some participants spoke about how their single mothers faced financial

difficulties. For example, Awongile dropped out of school to look for employment to assist his mother financially. Unemployment in South Africa is very high, and according to Mosholi (2018), quitting school might increase Awongile's chances of being unemployed. Unemployment and poverty, in turn, may turn young men towards criminal activities such as robberies and joining gangs. This is consistent with Ramphele (2002) who linked unemployment with negative behaviour amongst fatherless boys in Cape Town.

Whilst most participants mentioned that growing up without their fathers affected their academic performance or education as they lacked emotional and financial support, other participants indicated that growing up without a father did not impede their academic performance or educational progress. These participants had *oomakhulu*, *oobabomkhulu*, *boomalume* and other family members who were involved in their lives and assisted them by assuming the expected roles of biological fathers. Furthermore, some single mothers played a significant role in supporting their children's education, and in making sure that they do well in life. This supports the study by Mosholi (2016) who argues that children may do well in school due to their mothers' hard work and determination.

Elethu indicated that his dad's younger brother played a significant role in supporting him financially because his mother was unemployed, and his father was absent. He had this to say:

"It was utatomncinci who assumed the role of my father. Tatomncinci influenced me so much, especially when it comes to education. If he sees that I do not have shoes for school, he would just buy me as my mother was not working."

Limile had this to say about his mother's role in his education:

"Whilst I was still at high school since I grew up staying with my mother, she was the one that was helping me academically and in other things. She filled the gap left by my father."

Awongile also shared a similar experience of his mother doing everything to support his education; this is what he had to say: *"For education, my mother did everything to help me."*

From these above experiences shared by participants, it is clear that emotional, financial, and psychological support by fathers is important in children's education. Malongoane (2015) is of the view that fathers' presence can play a positive role in the education of children, resulting in children doing well in school, being disciplined, obtaining good grades,

and being persistent until they achieve the qualifications of their dreams. However, some participants shared experiences that are in line with Mosholi's (2018) argument that even when the father is absent, children are still able to demonstrate a high level of perseverance and resilience. According to Sekgale (2017), social fathers and older brothers serve as the source of perseverance amongst these children.

4.4.3 Cultural impact of father absence on boys' development

This study noted that fathers in most families and societies play a significant part in the cultural socialization of their children. For instance, Siswana (2016) argued that in the Eastern Cape, fathers are the carriers and creators of their children's cultural identity and heritage. This means that when the father is absent, children may also be disconnected from their cultural identity. Most participants in this study come from the rural areas of the Eastern Cape, and they indicated that being disconnected from their fathers' cultures affected them in various aspects of life. For instance, some participants indicated that due to father absence, they ended up losing their paternal cultural identity and that resulted in them encountering misfortunes. This theme is further explained through the following subthemes: father absence and its effects on boys' cultural identity, and father absence and its influence on boys' rituals and rites of passage.

4.4.3.1 Father absence and its effects on boys' cultural identity

Most participants indicated that father absence interfered with their 'true' cultural identity. These men expressed that due to father absence, they ended up following the cultures of their mothers even though the maternal side of the family, as understood in some African societies, does not determine the culture for children. It is often expected that children should follow and practice their fathers' culture. This is consistent with Osmold's (2010) views that boys' cultural identification is not their mothers' cultures but their fathers' cultures. Hence, when fathers are absent, some children's cultural identities may be swayed. Participants in this study indicated that because of their absent fathers, they ended up identifying themselves with their mothers' surnames and that affected them, as some got ill, suffered from low self-esteem and confidence, whilst others misbehaved in society because of what they believed to be a disconnection from their fathers' cultural identities.

These participants' experiences are in line with findings from Makofane's (2015) study where participants argued that when you identify with your family (paternal side), you feel that you belong somewhere even if you do not have a close relationship with that family. According

to these participants in Makofane's (2015) study, knowing your father's cultural identity completes one's life, especially in terms of character, and personality. Furthermore, these participants believed that not knowing much about and not doing things according to your father's culture as an African child may cause chronic illnesses and personality disorders, as you are not introduced to the ancestors who would then protect you (Makofane, 2015).

Elethu had this to say:

"But again I must say this, men should do things according to their father's culture so that the ancestors from their fathers may accept them. As you can see in Khumbulekhaya, old men would seek their father's roots so that they receive certain rites of passage."

The above excerpt corroborates the importance of fathers in the cultural identity of children and its significance. According to Elethu, the need for a father is evident even in "Khumbulekhaya", a television program aiming to connect people and families lost from each other. This program sometimes shows adults who were abandoned by their parents whilst young and helps them to locate them. Often, the reasons provided by participants on the show for seeking their parents are associated with the need to connect with their paternal ancestors and to learn more about their (paternal) cultural background. When speaking about sons being disconnected from their father's culture, the maternal family's cultural practices and beliefs must not be ignored, because some of these families, as mentioned in the literature, may prevent fathers from being present in their children's lives when they (fathers) do not fulfil certain cultural requirements that allow them to claim the status of fatherhood. According to the literature, most cultures require fathers to pay *ilobolo* or *inhlawulo*, which becomes difficult for some unemployed fathers.

Masilithembe believes that because of his father's absence, he ended up knowing less about his cultural identity, and not knowing the ceremonies and rites of passages that are important and sacred to his culture. He expressed that had his father been present, he would have been like other men who knew everything about their cultures because his father would have taught him about his own culture. He had this to say:

"Yes, it did but not that much, I did not know about the familial cultural practices, I did not know when to attend those family cultural practices. When there are imicimbi, I would not go to support and now I know nothing about my

paternal cultural identity, unlike other men. At least if my father was present, he would have told me everything about my cultural identity.”

Men in most African families are expected to participate in *imicimbi*, which are the traditional ceremonies. Their participation may be in the form of slaughtering the cows or being present during the ceremonies. Thwala (2018) is of the view that men’s participation in the ceremonies of their paternal families may result in them being blessed by ancestors. This means that, when fathers are absent, men are likely to be disconnected from their paternal families and ancestors, depending on the cause of the father’s absence. Thus, Thwala (2018) argued that father absence often-times may result in children not knowing their fathers’ family history, culture, and its traditional practices. This is also evident in the excerpt by Masilithembe, who expressed that due to his father’s absence he ended up knowing less about the practices of his father’s culture.

Sive expressed that he does not feel like a complete Hlubi man, because ‘isiHlubi’ is his mother’s culture. Sive expressed that participating in the traditional ceremonies of his mother’s culture instead of his ‘real culture’, his father’s culture’ has affected his dignity as a man. He had this to say:

“As a Hlubi man growing up without a father has affected me a lot. I sometimes feel like an incomplete hlubi because I had one parent, a mother, at least if I had my father, I would be a complete man, as I would have followed my father’s culture instead of this one which is my mother’s culture. Culturally, growing up without my father affects men’s dignity and it affected my dignity as a man because as men sometimes we laugh at those who do not know their fathers or who do not know their father’s culture, and I was the victim of being laughed at the time by other men.”

This excerpt corroborates Makofane’s (2015) argument that amongst other black societies, boys are laughed at and mocked by other men when they do not follow their father’s culture but follow their mother’s culture. This is a major challenge amongst African men as most of them believe that a child who has not been introduced to his father’s culture and has not earned any rites of passage from his paternal side is likely to experience certain challenges throughout their life. Thwala (2018) further argued that some boys in this position experience low self-esteem and lack of confidence which may result in them demanding respect from others through violence.

Tiso (22) was raised by his mother and though he knows his father, he was never emotionally, physically, or financially present in his life. During the interview, Tiso wanted to cry but he contained himself. He was emotional and at some point, it was difficult for him to respond, and he showed anger at the same time. Tiso expressed that as a Sotho man, it is wrong to use the mother's surname:

“Growing up without a father frustrated me as I am using the wrong surname, my mother's surname. As a man, I should be using my father's surname but that man was not there in my life so I ended losing my real identity as a man.”

These participants have highlighted that father absence has affected their identity in terms of culture. This corroborates the argument by Osmold (2010) who argues that many of the children who have grown up without their fathers suffer psychological wounds and identity trouble caused by the disconnection from their fathers' culture and sometimes caused by using their mothers' surname. Similarly, Mosholi (2018) argued that boys are traditionally expected to take their fathers' surname. Consequently, boys should identify with their paternal family side, and need to have certain rituals performed according to their biological father's clan names. This is congruent with most participants who expressed that in terms of cultural identity, they should do certain rituals according to their fathers' culture and use their fathers' surnames so that their lives may encounter no misfortunes.

Some participants even indicated that using their mothers' surnames frustrated them as they were growing older. Makofane (2015) is of the view that when fathers are absent and the children are not formally introduced to their father's culture, they are believed to encounter misfortunes and personal setbacks as they grow, even later in life. While most participants in this study commented on how father absence negatively affected them in terms of cultural identification, some participants indicated that it is not always the case that father absence will result in children not being able to participate in the cultural practices from their fathers' side. Sometimes fathers can be absent in children's lives, but the children still get identified with their fathers and have the rites of passage from their father's side performed for them (Thwala, 2018). Even in the cases where children are raised by their maternal side, according to Msholi (2018) and some participants, father absence may not be an issue. For instance, these participants indicated that it depends on the family and their beliefs. Athethile, in line with Mosholi (2018), argued that in some African cultures, when children are born, they

automatically take the mother's surname if the parents are not married or if the father did not pay *ilobola* or *inhlawulo*.

Athethile had this to say:

"I am using my mother's surname instead of my father's surname, and that is not wrong because in true African culture, as a son, born and bred from mother's side, you automatically take your mother's surname as yours if the parents are not married or the father did not pay the damages."

Ayanda expressed that he grew up identifying himself with his mother's culture as his father was not present. He expressed that being identified with his mother's culture did not affect him because his mother's culture is still his culture:

"But as an African man, it did not affect me, and did not affect my cultural identity as I did not abandon my culture because of his absence...I grew up exposed to my mother's culture and did things according to my mother's culture, and I loved that culture. It was also my culture; so I do say that my father's absence did not affect me, even though I took my mother's culture."

Confused cultural identity, which according to Moore and Barker (2012) is an unclear or lack of a sense of cultural belonging, is a societal issue for many young black men. According to Moore and Barker (2012), most childhood and adulthood problems can stem from a confusion of cultural identity. As indicated elsewhere in this study, these challenges can pertain to low self-esteem, low self-confidence and often-times, misbehaviour for some boys. Alfonso (2015) affirmed that cultural identification provides men with a sense of inner wholeness and helps to answer the questions about the purpose and meaning of life. The absence of fathers has been identified in the participants' expressions and most literature as one of the causal factors that disturb the life purpose of some children. For instance, Andile expressed that due to his father's absence he ended up viewing prison as a destination of his life.

"When I noticed that my father is not present in my life, and realized that my uncle is not my father (the one I thought was my father) and being in the situation of being kicked off from the house, that made me live my life for jail because there in jail, I know that my morning breakfast, dinner and supper meal

are guaranteed. And when I am under the situation of being kicked out in the house I would live my life for jail.”

The above excerpt confirms the significance of a father in children's lives, especially male children. The support from both parents (father and the mother), according to Mosholi's (2019) argument, is one of the main contributing factors for the betterment of children. Also, as mentioned earlier, children, especially boys, in some cultures are customarily anticipated to take their fathers' surnames and thus identify with their paternal's side of the family. According to Khunou, and Nathane-Taulela (2014), this means that with fathers being absent, children's paternal names may not be acknowledged by the mother and the family. This was also confirmed in Ntiso's excerpt, when he expressed that he ended up using the 'wrong' surname, his mother's surname, due to his father's absence. There is so much importance in the use of a father's surname by male children because culturally, boys are the carriers of heritage and cultural identity (Khunou & Nathane-Taulela, 2014). Thus, fathers are encouraged to be present in their children's lives because they are believed to be the crucial determinants of their children's cultural identity. The children are thus expected to keep and preserve this lineage through using father's surnames.

However, according to Khunou and Nathane-Taulela (2014), this applies to children born to married parents. Historically, children born out of wedlock use their mother's surname, especially in situations where fathers did not pay *inhlawulo* or deny the child (Khunou & Nathane-Taulela, 2014). From Tiso's expression, it can be concluded that young men who do not know their fathers or have a relationship with their fathers are exposed to damaging consequences. These damaging consequences, according to Sive's expression may include, being laughed at by other boys because you do not know your father, and according to Ntiso, they may include feelings of frustration. Khunou and Nathane-Taulela (2014) argued that when boys do not have an existing and constant connection with their fathers, they may suffer from feeling lost or unwanted.

4.4.3.2 Father absence and its influence on boys' rituals and rites of passage

Earlier in this study, it was indicated that most black men identify with their paternal cultures, especially in societies where children earn rites of passage and rituals. According to Sekgale (2017), these rites of passage are necessary for the holistic development of children. For instance, in isiXhosa, a ritual called *imbeleko* is held after the birth of a child. At this ceremony,

an elder in the family calls upon the ancestors from the father's side to bless and protect the child (Richter & Ramphela, 2006). Participants in the present study indicated that there were certain rituals or rites of passages from their paternal families that they should have participated in, but due to growing up with their mothers while their fathers were absent, they did not participate in these rituals. Instead, they participated in the rites of passages from their mothers' side and according to them, this is somehow affecting them. The effects, according to some participants, were in the form of suffering from certain physical challenges.

Msenga had this to say on the influence of father absence on boys' rituals and rites of passage:

“Even in terms of my culture and certain rites of passage, in the churches, as I was a churchman, I would be told that you need to find your father so that he can perform a certain rite of passage as your life is affected in some ways... As an African man that believes in certain customs, growing up without a father affected me brother because at times I would get sick, and I would be told that my father needs to come and do a certain ritual for you so that you may be healed. For instance, I used to have a bleeding nose and that, according to my culture is caused by father absence, I needed him to stop it as he would know what to do. After a lot of efforts, in church and consultations with amaXhwele, things did not get better, instead, they would tell me that it is only my father that will fix my problem.”

Msenga suffered from nosebleeds in his childhood, and this according to him, is caused by not having certain rituals performed from his father's side. Msenga expressed that even with much effort to heal his nose bleeds, including consultations with *amaXhwele*, the condition did not stop. *AmaXhwele* are practitioners of traditional African medicine to heal physical or spiritual illnesses and direct rituals at the birth of a child (Dold & Cocks, 2012). When Msenga's father showed up and performed the needed ritual for him, Msenga stopped bleeding from his nose. From Msenga's account and that of other participants, it is clear that they strongly believe that fatherlessness and not having certain rituals performed can affect their physical and spiritual health.

Shabutle (28) also grew up without his father. His mother was also absent due to labour migration. He grew up staying with his grandmother. Shabutle shared similar views to Msenga on father absence and its effects on boys' rites of passage. These arguments are similar to

Richter and Ramphele's (2006) view that in some African cultures, it is believed that if as a boy-child you are not introduced to certain paternal rites of passages such as 'imbeleko', you may get sick as you grow, and you might have bad luck when it comes to employment. He had this to say:

"Secondly, I never received the rituals that define my identity because he was not there. I received rituals and rites of passages from my mother's side of which that was wrong because you may get sick as you grow up or even have bad luck with employment."

From the participants' responses, we can conclude that rituals and rites of passages are considered important and sacred for some black people, and they mean a balanced life to some. For instance, most men identify themselves with their father's rituals and rites of passage. When the father is absent, children are likely not to participate in these rites of passage, and Ramphele and Richter (2006) argued that this may have an impact on children's wellbeing even when they are adults. Conversely, some participants who did not receive the rites of passages from their fathers' side but received them from their mothers' side reported that their lives were not affected.

Even though some participants seemed to be well-adjusted in life and have no issues that are considered to stem from not having the paternal rites of passage performed for them, most participants consider these rites of passage very important for their wellbeing. But, according to Makofane (2015), having these rituals performed for the child may mean a welladjusted life, whilst not having them performed may cause mishaps for some children (Thwala, 2018). Also consistent with Ramphele (2002) who argued that failure to perform these rituals for a child can make the child and later adult vulnerable to troubles, as the paternal ancestors have not been ceremoniously informed about the arrival of the child. This appears numerous times on *Khumbulekhaya*, mostly men seeking their fathers to have cultural rituals performed for them.

As mentioned previously, boy children in most cultures in South Africa identify with their fathers' cultures. For instance, most amaHlubi, amaXhosa and Basotho boys in the Eastern Cape participate in rites of passage that facilitate their transition to manhood and identify with their paternal version of the cultural practice of *ulwaluko*. According to Corneau (1991), the absence of a father's psychological guidance, emotional support, moral teachings, and sometimes financial support may lead to some boys feeling abandoned and hurt. These

young men may end up subscribing to toxic versions of masculinity after they have undergone *ulwaluko* as they never receive the guidance and support from their fathers. Some men may then interpret *ulwaluko* as an authority that allows them to demand sex from women, demand respect from boys who have not undergone *ulwaluko*, and to demand respect from society at large (Magodyo, 2013). So, from the above arguments, it is evident that participants needed their fathers before and after the process of *ulwaluko* to guide their understanding of the process they were undergoing.

Most participants in this study communicated that when they were undergoing the process of *ulwaluko*, their fathers were absent and did not participate in the process. This, therefore, highlights that these participants missed their fathers' lessons about what it means to be a man after the process of *ulwaluko*. Awongile underwent *ulwaluko* under the culture of amaHlubi and expressed that he faced the challenge of not having a man that would permit him to undergo *ulwaluko*. He shared that as his father was absent, he could not ask for permission from his mother. He had this to say:

“It was difficult for me, especially when I was at the age of 6 and 7, and I had needs that needed my father to attend them, but he was not there. As my father was absent, when I wanted to go to initiation school, I had no one to talk to and no man to ask permission from, and as a boy, at that time I could not ask permission from my mother, it was weird and wrong.”

Azamile who also underwent *ulwaluko* under amaHlubi culture expressed that in the year he was supposed to undergo *ulwaluko*, he could not because he lacked a male representative. So, he had to wait for the next period which was a year later:

*“When I wanted to go to initiation school, I asked permission from my grandmother and that affected me because I should have gone to the mountain in 2009, but I couldn't because in that family which *ulwaluko* was conducted, they wanted a father to represent me; so I could not go to a mountain that year because I did not have a father and that affected me so much as my peers left me and undergone *ulwaluko*.”*

Azamile also expressed that during the process of *ulwaluko* fathers should be at the front, take their sons through the process and teach them about issues that concern manhood,

and during the process, he would be hurt when seeing other initiates spend time with their fathers and being taught by them separately. He had this to say:

“Growing without my father affected me culturally. For instance, during my ulwaluko, there was that moment whereby the fathers of the initiates would be called forward. When fathers of other initiates went there to teach, and they would teach everyone but there would be times where fathers would teach their own children there separately and that hurt because I had no father... Yes, “utatomncinci” was there but he did not stay that long as he went to Gauteng during the process of ulwaluko. Utatomncinci did play the role of my father and taught me the life lessons but it was not enough as I was not his child.”

Mnewos who underwent *ulwaluko* under Sesotho culture had this to say:

“And when it comes to initiation period, it was difficult for me, as other boys there in the mountain during initiation period would be visited by their fathers, and they would be taught by them, but for me, I only had my brother of which he did not tell me everything as even though he underwent the process he had forgotten some other things of ulwaluko and he knew less and that made things difficult for me there in the mountain as I lacked a father to teach and support me.....Yes, some fathers who visited there would come to teach me but they would not tell me everything.”

From these excerpts, it is evident that a father’s participation is very important in his son’s *ulwaluko*. Some participants expressed that due to father absence, they ended up having no male representatives before and during the process of *ulwaluko*. Most participants indicated that they would have preferred their fathers rather than any other men to guide them through the process. When it comes to guiding and teaching young men about *ulwaluko*, some male representatives who are not the biological fathers, according to participants, may sometimes not make much effort as they would for their biological sons. This corroborates the importance of a father’s participation during the process of *ulwaluko*, which is also noted by Magodyo (2013) who argue that a father’s presence during the boys’ initiation is likely to establish positive masculinity for them after the process. As a result, some young men may also repeat the same mistake (being unavailable to guide and teach) with their own male children, when they undergo the process of *ulwaluko* because they had no biological fathers to guide them

about *ulwaluko*. Participants also shared that the sitting arrangement of the initiates is set according to their fathers' clan names and that when the biological father is not known, the leaders during *ulwaluko* would struggle to allocate the initiates in the right positions, and according to the Shabutle, the wrong sitting arrangement can make the initiates sick.

Shabutle had this to say

“During ulwaluko my father would have helped me with all the arrangements; and there, the sitting arrangements are arranged according to the clans of the fathers, and if there is a wrong sitting arrangement, initiates can get sick; so I wish my father was there to arrange my sitting there.”

While some participants expressed that the father's participation is very vital before and during the process of *ulwaluko*, some of the participants indicated that there are uncles, grandfather's brothers and sometimes stepfathers that play vital roles in the process. These social fathers and male figures, according to Magodyo (2013), support the initiates with the money needed, clothes, teach them the essential lessons, support them emotionally and represent them.

Lindile had this to say:

“I must say, in things like ulwaluko, even though it is painful not to have your father during the process, but there are fathers there, and in my culture during that process, a father is a father of everyone. These fathers if they know that you do not have a father, would play a fatherhood role to you and teach you about ulwaluko, and the responsibilities of a man.”

Athethile expressed that during his *ulwaluko* process, it was his uncles that supported him with everything and taught him the necessary lessons:

“During my ulwaluko process my father was not present and that did not affect me. There in the mountain, it was just us as families, and the uncles did everything and were very much supportive and it is fine he was absent.”

The above excerpts challenge Thwala's (2018) view that when a father is absent when his son undergoes *ulwaluko*, his life will be affected. Athethile's response is similar to Lindile's who argues that the absence of a father does not mean that a child will suffer and lack

a father representative as there are other male figures and fathers there that play the roles of absent fathers. But again, the presence of social fathers, according to Magodyo (2013) does not downplay the importance of the presence of the children's biological father during *ulwaluko*. Thus, most participants indicated experiencing grief because of seeing their fellow initiates being visited and supported by their biological fathers, while theirs were absent.

Also, according to Ntozini, and Abdullahi (2018), the process of *ulwaluko* is expensive. There must be a ceremony called *imbeleko*, where goat or sheep must be slaughtered, and this ceremony can be performed whilst the boy is still young, though some families prefer to do it just before the boy undergoes *ulwaluko*. Also, before going to the mountains, the boys must undergo medical checkups, and that on its own needs money and everything there needs money (Ntozini & Abdullahi, 2018). Thus, fathers are needed to support the process financially as it becomes difficult for unemployed single mothers to pay for everything for their sons, especially when extended families are not involved.

Magodyo (2013) argued that before blaming fathers for being absent in the process of their sons' *ulwaluko*, factors such as incarceration, *inhlawulo*, and unemployment must be considered. It is noted earlier in the study that some men are denied access to their children because they did not pay *ilobola* or *inhlawulo* (Chikovore, & Makusha, 2010). Therefore, there are certain aspects of culture that still exist such as *inhlawulo* that put pressure on and discourage unemployed men from being actively involved in their children's lives. This means that these men may not participate in their children's lives and not participate in their sons' *ulwaluko*, and the effects will be mostly on children. Hence, certain aspects of the African cultures need to be reviewed and readjusted to accommodate the changing world, especially in the context of increasing poverty and unemployment.

4.4.4 Psychological and emotional impact

As noted in the literature review, most children who grow up without their fathers are more likely to experience emotional disturbances (Langa, 2010). Other studies have further indicated that boys who grew up without their fathers are likely to experience psychological issues and have a distorted perception of themselves and life (Mancini, 2010). Most participants in this study shared experiences that are in line with existing literature that argues that father absence is psychologically and emotionally wounding, and left them feeling abandoned, rejected, hurt,

betrayed, and unloved by their absent fathers. This theme is further explained by the following sub-themes:

4.4.4.1 Father absence and low self-esteem

From the experiences of most participants in this study, growing up without a father adversely affects how men view themselves. Sekgale (2017) shares this view and argues that men with absent fathers grow up having a disturbed view of themselves and their potential in life. Similar to Sekgale's (2017) argument, some participants indicated that missing a father negatively altered their confidence and their self-trust. For instance, one participant indicated that when he is in a crowd of men, he gets scared to speak. He strongly believes that if his father was present, he would have taught him how to speak with confidence when around other people.

“Growing up without my father affected my perspective of life, for instance, I am a shy person, and currently, I have no confidence when I have to speak in a larger crowd...It is so difficult for me to engage with many people. If he was present, he would have taught me how to speak in a large crowd.”

Another example of self-esteem issues was summed up in the feelings of inadequacy expressed by other participants. For instance, Phakisang expressed that growing up without a father has made him lack confidence in himself and sometimes he feels inadequate when facing life challenges.

“And also his absence changed the way I see myself as a man and at times, I just become too harsh on myself and sometimes I just feel useless when things get difficult.”

Shabutle also shared that lacking a father has negatively affected his self-view and made him regard himself as a worthless man at times:

“Growing up without my father has indeed affected the way I see myself as a man, and I am facing things that I find it difficult to fix, and sometimes I just judge myself about everything, and feel worthless.”

The above extracts clearly show that the absence of a father does more harm to the psychological wellbeing of children. The above extracts support the findings by Siswana (2016)

who argued that an absent father-son bond does not only deprive boys of father guidance in transitioning into adulthood but may also result in the psychological distortion of self among these boys. Other participants expressed that sometimes they condemn and judge themselves due to their fathers` absence. For instance, Ntiso expressed that due to father-absence, at times, he sees himself as an incomplete human being, and when those thoughts come, he uses alcohol and smokes cannabis to suppress them.

“Growing up without a father affected the way I see myself as a man. For instance, now I am smoking weed and drinking alcohol....I don’t regard myself as a complete man, hence I spend time smoking weed and drinking too much alcohol.”

These excerpts highlight the participants’ feelings of being incomplete as human beings (as men). These emotions that participants often struggle with because of fatherlessness often contribute to low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. These participants’ experiences confirm the view by Osmold (2010) that associates feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem with father absence. Therefore, the presence or absence of a father shapes how male children think of themselves and ultimately affect their psychological world. However, and contrary to this view, findings by Mosholi (2018) suggest that parental involvement has no significant effects on boys’ self-esteem as most boys in his study showed resilience and had a balanced psychological and emotional wellbeing even though they were not connected to their fathers. These differing views highlight the importance of conducting studies in varying contexts to understand the factors that shape the outcomes for people in these contexts.

4.4.4.2 Anger, pain, and aggression

The depth of the negative emotional impact linked with the father absence was expressed through the feelings of anger and pain. Most participants at some point or throughout their experiences felt anger and pain, and this was evident not only in the acknowledgement of the emotions but also in their voices and body language. For example, Azamile’s voice became louder at some point during the interview, his position-shifting was more sudden, and he had a facial expression of sadness. Azamile identified his source of anger and pain when he said:

“When I realized that I do not have a father, I was 12 years old and I was very angry... From time to time, I still have the anger and pain as a result of growing

up without him. When this anger rises, I just want to be alone and cry alone so that it can go away.”

Elethu noted grief and anger, as he said:

“Seeing that my father is not present in my life yet he is still alive, at some point, it has hurt me and caused anger in me.”

From these excerpts, it is evident that there is anger and grief that stems from father absence, and this anger and grief is not something that can just fade away, it is likely to continuously affect the (young) men. The study by O’Dwyer (2017) shows that the anger and pain that boys experience in childhood because of their fathers` absence can persist throughout life. As mentioned above, some men who have grown up without their fathers often view themselves as unworthy, which according to Dave O’Dwyer (2017), can lead to feelings of shame and guilt, which in turn, can lead to them repressing their needs or emotions. Some men often resort to expressing their emotional pain through anger and aggression, thus there is so much violence in South Africa, and globally.

Lindile had this say on anger and aggression:

“It was difficult to grow up without my father, as it is difficult to grow up with just one parent; it gives you a cold heart since you never experienced the love of your father. In fact, you do not get peace, even when you see your father when you are old, you will not be at peace, instead, you may want to hurt him for abandoning you.”

From Lindile’s excerpt, the absence of a father has profound developmental and emotional consequences for the children. The study by Mosholi (2018) indicated that boys who grow up without their fathers are sometimes angry and aggressive, and these boys seldom express themselves emotionally. This view is also consistent with the study by Dickersen (2014) which suggests that men who grow up without their fathers are more likely to show resentment and anger towards their absent fathers. This is shown in the excerpt by Lindile who expressed that it is possible to want to hurt your father if he shows up when you are old. It is also possible that some boys who grow up abandoned by their fathers may suppress anger and later unleash it on the wrong people, especially if they do not get professional psychological help. It must also be noted that it may be difficult for some young fatherless men to get professional help due to the fact of scarce resources in South Africa, and some might have little

knowledge about the help of this sort, or they may view seeking psychological help as a sign of ‘weakness’.

4.4.4.3 Emotional pain and unanswered questions

As mentioned earlier, children who grow up without their biological fathers are more likely to experience emotional challenges later in life (O’Dwyer, 2017). Sekgale (2017) further argues that sometimes boys who grow up without their fathers would envy the gifts and other things that their peers receive from their present fathers. This in turn may hurt those boys who – due to father absence and their mother’s financial struggles to provide on their own – do not receive gifts and other forms of financial support. Such experiences of emotional distress were shared by some of the participants in this study as they expected their fathers to play various roles in their lives, such as buying them clothes and gifts.

Xola shared that as he was growing up, he had friends whose fathers were present in their lives. He expressed that it hurt him to see his friends bonding and receiving sweets and guidance from their fathers, while his father was absent.

“As I was growing up, I had many friends whose fathers were present in their lives; that was emotionally hurting because I would visit my friends’ homes and see them bonding with their fathers; receiving sweets and guidance from their fathers... When I go home I would remember that I do not have a father and that would hurt me.”

Dickersen (2014) argued that emotional challenges may be experienced by children who are curious to know their fathers and to know how their fathers are doing in life. This is consistent with the findings by Sekgale (2017) who argued that some of the emotional challenges that children who grow up without their biological fathers encounter sometimes stem from their curiosity about who their biological fathers are, and what made their fathers abandon them. As a result, it is also possible for some of these boys to grow up having so much anger and hatred and externalize it by being a bully and defiant boy in schools and their neighbourhoods. Some of the participants in this study expressed that they have unanswered questions, which they would like to ask their fathers.

Azamile expressed that:

“Sometimes I ask myself questions like, “where is this man, what is he doing, why has he abandoned me?” People would tell me that my father is well-off; he has everything yet he abandoned me. Why?’

Liso also shared the following:

“Again I still have some unanswered questions even up to date....Sometimes, I wish here so that I could ask him, am I really his biological son or I am just a child of another man? So I still have such questions in my mind.”

These extracts are in line with the study by Osmold (2010) which indicated that men who never knew their fathers seem to be carrying a weight of resentment and emotional scars as an effect of deep-seated unanswered questions. These unanswered questions sometimes may cause these boys to have suicidal ideas if they are not resilient enough (Dickersen, 2014). This clearly shows that father absence does not only affect the economic and material needs of children but also affect them emotionally.

4.4.4.4 Negative view of life

Growing up with a present and supportive father has a positive impact on the whole growth and development of children. Present and responsible fathers may influence their children to strive for a better life (Mosholi, 2018). When children receive love from both parents, they may have a positive perspective on life in general (Mosholi, 2018). O’Dwyer (2017) argues that boys who grow up without their biological fathers can view themselves as undeserving of being loved and as deserving to be abandoned, which can result in feelings of shame and worthlessness, which in turn, can lead them to have a negative view of life. This distorted view of life, according to Dickersen (2012), often causes behavioural challenges such as delinquency and joining gangs among some boys. As much as these behavioural challenges have effects on these boys’ lives, they also have some negative impact on the wellbeing of societies. Some boys may find it easy to kill other people and steal other people’s property. Thus, psychosocial theorists argue that father absence does not only affect the children but also, ultimately affects the societies and the country at large (Mabusela, 2014). Andile, who was rejected by his father shared that due to his father’s absence, he ended up living his life for imprisonment, he believed that in prison his food is secured.

“When I noticed that my father was not present in my life, and realized that my uncle is not my father (the one I thought was my father) and being in the situation of being kicked out of the house by my aunt, that made me live my life for jail because there in jail, I know that my morning breakfast, dinner and supper meal are guaranteed. And when I am under the situation of being kicked out of the house, I would live my life for jail.”

Athethile expressed that at some point in his life, when he saw his friends bonding with their fathers, he would wish for that experience, and in turn due to his father’s absence, he lacked the sense of meaning in life.

“You know back then when I see friends with their fathers, I would wish for that, and it affected me, such that I did not want to do anything, I hated life, and I did not see the purpose of living...I did not want anything to do with life”

Another participant who grew up under poverty-stricken conditions blames it on his absent father, and he also views life as unfair:

“I see life as something that is not fair. I mean, I had no father whilst some of my friends had their fathers present in their lives. The worst part was that at home we were so poor and I blame him for that.....that is not okay and it is not fair.”

From the above narratives, it is evident that the absence of a father is likely to affect boys’ socio-emotional development particularly by altering their view of life. In fact, according to O’Dwyer (2017), father absence increases the negative external behaviours amongst boys. Therefore, it is safe to argue that father absence may put boys at risk of joining gangs, especially if their mothers are unemployed and they do not have a strong support system. The study by O’Dwyer (2017) revealed findings that are consistent with the above experiences of participants that highlight the relationship between father absence and risky behaviours among boys. Mosholi (2018) appeals for the involvement of extended family members in raising children, especially when mothers are not employed, to serve as a buffer against father absence.

4.4.5 The impact of fatherlessness on boys’ masculinity

Throughout this study, it is noted that fathers who provide positive fathering help in the shaping and development of positive masculinity amongst boys (Osmold, 2010). It is also noted that

fathers do not only establish an identity for their boys, but also model to their sons how to be responsible men, and how to relate to women and others. Siswana (2016) argues that boys who grow up without their biological fathers are likely to struggle in establishing and maintaining relationships with intimate partners and friends. Some men, as mentioned in the literature review, subscribe to hegemonic forms of masculinity, and abuse their intimate partners as they lack their fathers' positive role modelling (Osmolod, 2010). Some participants in the present study shared that not receiving their fathers' guidance has resulted in the adoption of destructive forms of masculinity for them. This, in turn, led some of them to rage against their friends and abuse their intimate partners.

Awongile shared the following:

“Yes, it does affect my relationship with my girlfriend because sometimes I beat my girlfriend when we have some misunderstanding. But if he was present, he would have taught me how to treat women and tell me that women should not be beaten. But now he was not present to teach me about that. I only get these lessons bit by bit from outside that women must not be abused.”

From Awongile's excerpt, it is evident that boys expect to see their fathers guiding and teaching them how to treat and love their intimate partners. This excerpt, therefore, shows that some young men are aware of their negative and toxic masculinities, but the issue is that they struggle to control their anger. When these young men cannot control their anger which stems from fathers' absence, they may not only end up abusing their intimate partners or friends but they may end up killing them, eventually end up being arrested. Ntiso also shared similar experiences and attributed his negative behaviour to father absence. He grew up beating people and his friends. Also at school, he was bullying other students.

“Growing up without my father affected the way I relate with other people. It affected my relationship with my friends. Maybe if he was present he would have taught me to get along with people. As I was growing I used to be troublesome in my society, I would not listen to anyone. I used to beat my friends and everyone around. I was so naughty around them and bully them at school”

Yet again, aggression is one of the persistent themes in the literature, with Osmold (2010) commenting that boys are likely to act out and behave aggressively, often externalizing their anger towards friends. This is in accordance with the findings by Mlotshwa (2016) who

argued that boys who grow up without their fathers often turn their anger outwards and act it out on friends and those who are close to them. This is also further shown in this study by Xolani who expressed that due to his father's absence, he acts out his anger towards his friends by beating them.

“When it comes to male friends, I beat them; some would come and say to me the way I beat them is supplemented by certain anger, and I would agree because the anger comes from growing up without a father.”

The experiences of participants indeed provided evidence suggesting a negative influence on their masculinity because of growing up without their fathers. Due to the father absence, some participants lacked models to draw positive images of masculinity from. Thus, they adopted behaviours associated with toxic masculinity which included ill-treating and raging against women and other men. From these participants' excerpts, it is safe to argue that father absence is ultimately a contributing factor in this high rate of gender-based violence in South Africa because some young men subscribe to toxic behaviours that include abuse of women and other people because of growing up without biological fathers and lacking positive role models. However, not all participants responded in this way. Participants were asked the following question: *“Do you think growing up without your father affects your current relationships, your intimate relationships?”* In response, some participants indicated that father absence did not negatively influence their relationships with friends or intimate partners. Ntiso expressed the following:

“When it comes to my girlfriend, I do not beat her instead I loved her to the point that I impregnated her to prove that I love herTo me, impregnating her was a way of showing love to her. I love her and our families are supporting each other.”

Despite Ntiso's response, most participants shared experiences that confirm Mosholi's (2018) findings that father absence may lead to feelings of anger among boys, which may result in various forms of abuse towards their intimate partners and other people around them and may also result in their involvement in multiple sexual relationships. This toxic masculinity, according to some participants, resulted from lacking mentorship and guidance from their fathers. Some participants did, however, express dissimilar views. According to these participants, children can grow up to be better and treat others well even when their biological fathers are absent, they can draw examples from positive models of masculinity around them.

Azamile expressed that:

“In terms of how well I treat ladies, I learnt it from a certain man in my area that was not cheating on his girlfriend nor beating her until they got married.” According to Azamile’s comment, there may be male figures that indirectly or directly influence boys to do better, in the absence of their biological fathers. Mosholi (2018) also argues that there may be social fathers and father figures that play the role of absent fathers and positively influence boys to do better in life. Again, even when the father is present, it does not mean that he will play a positive role in mentoring and providing a positive model of masculinity (Mosholi, 2018). Limile as shown earlier on expressed that his father being absent from his life was a good thing in that he would have modelled negative behaviour to him if he was present. As much as fathers are needed in the upbringing of boys, if they are abusive, they will negatively impact their development. Fathers must be present and model positive behaviour for their children.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter gave a full and detailed discussion of the findings of the study and integrated this with existing literature. The analysis of this study revealed that the absence of biological fathers in their children’s lives impacted their wellbeing in various ways. The discussion first noted that certainly, fatherlessness affects the financial wellbeing of the families and the children, especially when mothers are not employed or when they do not earn enough from their jobs. The impact of father absence was also noted in the boys’ academic performance and educational opportunities. Some of the boys became ill-disciplined in school as they lacked the discipline and guidance from their fathers, whilst others had to drop out of school so that they could financially assist their single mothers. When it comes to discipline, the analysis of the study revealed that some boys tend to listen and obey when they are being reprimanded by their biological fathers. As a result, when fathers are absent some boys disrespect their mothers or guardians, and some end up joining the gangs. However, this finding does not overlook the fact that some mothers can discipline their male children and instil good morals.

In the discussion of this chapter, it was also noted that father absence creates a void in the lives of some young men who end up feeling unloved, abandoned, and rejected by their fathers. As a result, some of these boys subscribe to negative masculinities and abuse their intimate partners and friends. Due to anger that stems from feelings of being rejected and abandoned by their fathers, some young men end up losing their purpose in life and see the prison as a destination. However, the analysis also showed that some young men, regardless of

growing up without their fathers, arise victoriously, empowered, strong and self-reliant. Some mothers and social fathers and father figures were noted as the factors that contribute to the resiliency of these young men. Though this should not be read as discounting the role and importance of biological fathers, it is an important finding in the South African context where many children are living without their biological fathers. More studies need to focus on the role and extent of involvement of social fathers and other men who step in to support young men and boys whose fathers are absent.

The positive father-son bond in the discussion of this study is revealed to be one of the major factors that contribute to the better development of the boys. The psychological and social well-being of boys who grow up having present and positive fathers, according to the findings of this study, is likely to be balanced. Even in terms of education, these young men may do well as they receive support from both parents. Also, the father-son bond is revealed to be an important factor for the cultural identity of some young boys. Thus, when fathers are absent, some boys encounter challenges that affect their social and emotional wellbeing. Also, the cultural wellbeing of the child is affected because the non-existence relationship between a father and a son may result in sons not knowing about their history concerning their paternal roots, totems, beliefs, identities, values, and norms. Thus, the presence and the various roles played by present fathers are noted as great influences for the good development of the children.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to explore the impact of fatherlessness on the psychosocial wellbeing of young black South African men. As much as there have been many studies conducted on the phenomenon of “father absence”, there is still a need for more studies that will explore father absence and its influence on the holistic wellbeing of the children within the many varying contexts that shape children’s lives. The high rate of father absence amongst the black population is one of the reasons that made this study to be directed to the black population. The objectives of this study were: to investigate young men’s experiences of growing up without their biological fathers; to explore the psychosocial effects of growing up without a biological father on young black men; to investigate how fatherlessness shapes the development of a gendered (masculine) identity among young black men; to understand the ways in which fatherlessness shapes young men’s participation in cultural practices that facilitate their transition to manhood (e.g. *ulwaluko*).

This qualitative study was conducted through face-to-face interviews, with young black men who grew up without their biological fathers. The data collected through face-to-face interviews were analyzed to identify the emerging themes. Five themes were identified, and they focused on: the role of fathers in their families and sons’ lives; father absence and boys’ academic performance and educational opportunities; cultural impact of father absence on boys’ development; psychological and emotional impact; and the impact of fatherlessness on boys’ masculinity.

This chapter summarizes the findings in reference to Erikson’s (1963) theory of psychosocial development, which is outlined earlier in this thesis and seeks to explain the developmental issues experienced by children when certain challenges in their developmental stages are not successfully resolved. The limitations and the recommendations of this study are also outlined in this chapter.

The major themes from the analysis of this study show that fathers have responsibilities to play in their children’s lives. Fathers are expected to be present in their children’s lives and financially provide for them. The results have shown that when fathers are not present, families and children may encounter financial challenges. Most of the men, according to the analysis of this study, envied their peers when they speak about their fathers and the material gifts they received from their fathers. When fathers are absent, mothers have the responsibility of meeting the financial and material needs of their children, and according to the analysis, it is difficult

for some mothers to do that alone. As result, some young men end up quitting school to find work to financially support their mothers. Some participants who completed grade 12, could not further their education and did not pursue a higher education because they lacked the funds, and some blamed their fathers. They argue that had their fathers been present in their lives, they would have furthered up their education until they obtained certain qualifications. The view of fathers as financial providers is informed by societal beliefs that limit the role of fathers only to financial provision. However, the study by Mazibuko (2021) reveals that black fathers are now playing various roles in their children's lives. These roles include nurturing, changing nappies, and helping children with their homework.

According to the findings of the study by Mazibuko (2021), culture and societal norms and values have created gender role differentials that have eventually constrained women and defined mothers as nurturers while limiting fathers to being breadwinners. Thus, most black fathers do not participate in their children's lives as most of them are not employed because the unemployment rate is high in South Africa. Although most participants expressed that due to father absence, financially, in their families, they struggled, some participants acknowledged the providing role played by their mothers and social fathers. Some single mothers, according to participants did well in providing for their children; and also, *oomalume*, *ootatomkhulu* and other members of the family are playing great roles in the upbringing of the children. Financial provision is considered a vital role that should be played by fathers, but most participants acknowledged other important roles that fathers should play in their sons' lives. These roles included protection, mentorship, caring, instilling discipline in their children and role modelling.

In the analysis, it is shown that fathers are expected to advise their sons about the issues that face men and about life. For instance, some participants indicated that in their societies, fathers are expected to educate their sons about love life and sexual related issues. As a result, some young men ended up involving themselves in multiple sexual relationships. The presence of a father is very vital in male children, because in some societies in the olden days, according to participants, boys were not comfortable discussing sexually related matters with their mothers. However, it needs to be noted that times are changing, and women are fulfilling the roles that some societies used to limit them only to men. Some participants argue that mothers may struggle to instil discipline in their male children, hence fathers are needed in the son's lives so that they can instil discipline. This, therefore, corroborates that, in the absence of fathers to discipline them, sometimes young men may find it easy to disrespect their mothers and

become unruly in society. But when the father is present, male children are less likely to be unruly and misbehave as they fear the corporal harsh punishments (corporal punishment) from their fathers. However, this does not denounce the women's ability to use corporal punishment to instil discipline among the young. The findings by Mazibuko (2021) also confirms that some fathers use corporal punishment to instil respect and discipline and their children, although it was abolished because most fathers regard respect as one of the great values for the development of their sons.

Participants also emphasized role modelling as a vital component that should be demonstrated by their fathers. The participants' emphasis is in line with Mlotshwa's (2016) argument that a son learns how to be a man from his father. Participants expressed that fathers model men on how to treat and love women and other people. Thus, due to father absence, some participants ended up abusing their intimate partners and their friends. As much as it was indicated that fathers are expected to be present to serve as disciplinarians and moral teachers, role models and providers, it is also found that some present fathers may do more harm than good in children's upbringing. The results support the view by Mosholi (2018) who argued that some fathers may model negative behaviours to their children. They may model negative behaviour to their sons by being abusive to their partners, children and by being disruptive in society. So, fathers must not only be present in their families and children's lives but they must be positive, loving and caring fathers as well.

Mazibuko (2021) argued that culture is an important component in humans that embodies the values and the identity of being. Culture and beliefs are important in the lives of the children, and it was indicated that father absence is likely to disconnect children from their paternal culture. Participants revealed that in most African families, children should take their fathers' clan names, totems, beliefs, and norms. Of interest was the belief from most of the participants that when children are not introduced to their fathers' culture, they may face challenges in life. The results echo Ramphela's (2002) argument that sometimes when boys are disconnected from their cultures or never participated in certain rites of passages of their cultures, such as *imbeleko* they are likely to encounter mishaps and physical illnesses. However, some participants indicated that growing up as a child, doing rituals and totems according to your mother's culture will never affect your life.

It also found that the impact of father absence is not only on boys' social and cultural wellbeing, but also affects their mental health. When fathers are present in their children's lives,

they encourage their children to have self-love, respect, and self-confidence (Mazibuko, 2021). However, when fathers are absent, some male children may have issues related to mental and emotional wellbeing (Osmold, 2010). Thus, participants in this study indicated that they have some answered questions that they would like to ask their fathers. Having these unanswered questions have led to some of the young men in this study suffering from low self-esteem and a poor sense of self-adequacy. Ramphela (2002) argued that growing up without a father and being disconnected from the father's clan may generate a sense of loss and eventually result in boys having a biased view of life. This was also proved by some participants who expressed that due to father absence they felt frustrated and felt like they are trapped in the wrong cultures resulting in some of them having a negative view of life and viewing prison as a destination.

The analysis emphasized the importance of the father's participation in his male children during the process of *ulwaluko*. This emphasis is in line with the study by Magodyo (2013) that fathers should be present in their children's process of *ulwaluko* to guide and support them. Fathers, according to participants, also teach their sons about what it means to be a man. It is therefore shown that when fathers are absent, children may lack males to represent them and guide them during the process of *ulwaluko*. Even though mothers are now fulfilling many of the roles that were traditionally limited to fathers only, there are roles that mothers are culturally restricted from, and are reserved for men and fathers. One such role is the representation of boys during *ulwaluko*. Social fathers and male figures who support and represent young men during *ulwaluko* are also acknowledged by participants as they do play crucial roles in the absence of the young men's biological fathers. Though, some participants did stress that they would have preferred their biological fathers to participate and be present as they underwent *ulwaluko*. The results of the analysis revealed that, during the process of *ulwaluko*, some young men find it hurtful to see other initiates interact with their fathers, being visited and taught by them, when their own biological fathers are not present. This finding highlights the impact of father absence and the ways in which it may be psychologically and emotionally distressing for young men.

Erikson's (1963) theory of psychosocial development was a useful reflection tool in this study. This theory speaks about the stages that children go through as they grow or develop. This study focused specifically on *the identity versus role confusion* developmental stage, as this stage was the most relevant to this study and its focus on identity development. The theory highlights the importance of roles played by parents in their children as they undergo these stages of growth. It was discovered that both parents play a vital role in influencing the

children's successful resolution on *identity versus confusion developmental stage*. In some African societies, biological fathers prepare their boy children for young adulthood and help with the formation of boys' gendered social and cultural identity, making fathers an important part of successfully resolving this stage for young men. It is clear then, that even though mothers, uncles, stepfathers, brothers, and grandfathers may raise well-adjusted young men, biological fathers remain important figures in the lives of black African men whose identity is informed by their cultural understanding of themselves which is tied to their paternal cultural roots and traditions.

5.1 Limitations of this study

Methodological strategies are likely to affect the interpretations of the research. Also, according to Marshall (1996), a study that has adopted a qualitative approach uses a small sample size. The findings of this study were based on interviews with 24 participants. Though not a small sample size in the context of qualitative research and considering the depth of the interviews conducted, the views of participants in this study are not representative of the views and experiences of the whole population of young black men who grew up without their biological fathers. Durrheim (2006) argues that the strength of working with a smaller sample sizes when conducting qualitative research and analysis is the detailed and rich data that it provides. However, according to Molongoane (2015), the limitation of qualitative research is that it restricts the generalization of the findings. I too, caution against the generalization of the findings presented in this study to broader populations. It is important to reflect on the ways in which context shapes views and experiences, so the participants' backgrounds should be taken into consideration when making sense of the findings.

Another limitation that characterized this study was the recording of interviews as some participants shared concerns about being recorded, though they did consent to the audiorecording once their questions were answered. Even though I explained to the participants that the recorded interviews will be kept in a lockable compartment, and no one will have access to them, except me as the researcher and the supervisor, it needs to be considered that some participants may have censored themselves in their responses.

5.2 Recommendations of this study

As it is mentioned elsewhere in this study, cultures and beliefs do shape the fatherhood and men's engagement with their children. In some cases, some cultural beliefs and expectations may limit fathers as some families may deny men access to their children as a result of not

fulfilling such cultural expectations (e.g. *ilobola* or *inhlawulo*). Some aspects of culture need to change and be reformed to accommodate children as they are the essential concern in this father absence issue. The reformation of culture to suit the needs of the children will happen only if the government develops policies that will not allow the cultures to prevent the fathers from having access to their children.

Most people are restricting the role of fatherhood only in the provision of material needs, and that needs to be reconsidered. Fatherhood needs to be redefined not only attached to the provision of material needs but also attached to other benefits of fathers in the children's lives. Also, the high rate of unemployment should not be discounted because it is indicated that some absent fathers do want to be present in their children's lives, but unemployment makes it difficult for them. This means that government has a role to create enough job opportunities for its citizens, and this will minimize the father absence and make sure that fathers assume their roles in their children's upbringing without being hindered by unemployment. Also, the government should educate its citizens about the effects of father absence on families and children, and then come up with strategies that will motivate fathers in becoming more present in the children's upbringing.

The studies of fatherhood should not only focus on father absence but also pay attention to those present biological and social fathers who provide positive fathering to their children. Representation matters, and as such, these studies of present and positive fathers should have photos of fathers bonding with their children, and this will appeal to the consciousness of absent fathers to be involved in their children's lives. Some participants reported that they sometimes abuse their peers or intimate partners due to a lack of or poor role modeling, or even pain and anger from not having their fathers in their lives. Preventative programmes are required that will focus on educational and mentoring programs for men that challenge dominant ideas about masculinity and emotional suppression, therefore allowing men to feel and seek help, and potentially become good partners parents.

Father absence is also complex in South Africa, and according to Makusha (2013), the work that has been done on fatherhood in the African continent is still in the early phase. Therefore, there is still a need for more research and debate on fatherhood and father absence in the South African context and the African continent at large. The future research must be guided by African theoretical frameworks and perspectives, so that our understanding of father absence in the South African context and the African continent at large may be informed by

frameworks that are relevant to these specific contexts and the cultures that shape them. Participants of this study were of different cultures, and they made sense of father absence according to diverse cultures. Therefore, studies of this nature in the future should be explored under diverse contexts, and this is informed by the fact that participants of this study had different experiences of father absence.

5.2.1 Future studies

Some participants in this study did not respond negatively to father absence, instead, they showed resilience and positively adjusted to young manhood. This means that future studies should also include more African men that have shown resilience so that other children who are growing up without their fathers get motivated to do better and adjust well. Mosholi (2019) is of the view that past researchers have been focusing more on the negative aspects of growing up without a father and disregarded the positive and adjustment factors in absent father homes. Therefore, this study is of the view that future studies should investigate the mechanisms of resilience amongst young black South African men towards father absence. Also, future studies should explore the factors that serve as a buffer for some young men who even without present biological fathers, can still draw on relevant models of positive masculinity.

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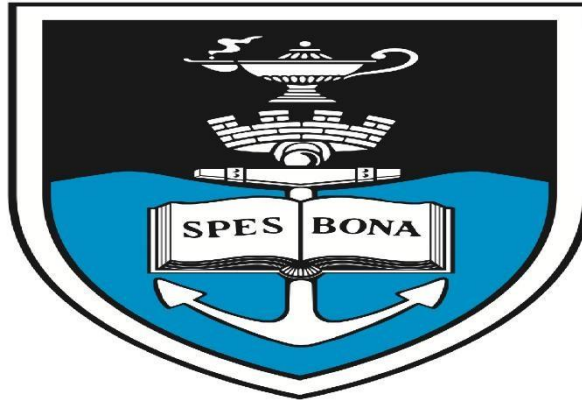
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study titled “*Fatherlessness among young black South African men.*”

The purpose of the study

Dear.....

I am a student who is currently studying **master’s in psychology by research** at the University of Cape Town. The aim of this research is to explore the impact of father absence on the psychosocial wellbeing of young black South African men. Therefore, I am looking for you to participate in a short interview lasting no more than 60 minutes. The interviews will be conducted in a language that you are comfortable with. The researcher will audiotape the interviews using the password-protected mobile device, translate them to English and transcribe them into a written form. Please note that the information from the interview that you provide will be shared amongst my supervisor and with anyone who wishes to read this

thesis. There will be an identifying information in what will be written up in the thesis. However, your personal information will remain anonymous and no one will be able to trace the information back to you. When the study has been completed, the audio-taped identifying information will be permanently destroyed by means of permanent deletion from the password secured devices and the hardcopies such as signed consent form will be burnt. Your name will not appear in the thesis, instead pseudonyms will be used. You can also freely withdraw from this research at any time without any negative outcomes. All information provided, including the signed consent forms will be stored securely and kept in a lockable compartment that only the supervisor and the principal investigator will have access to. Please note that I am an independent researcher from UCT, and this research is independent from the school. Therefore, if you decline to participate in this study, there will be no negative consequences at the school.

Benefits and risks

It is possible for you to find some of the questions distressing as the questions focus on your upbringing without a biological father. Should you feel distressed at any juncture because of the study, you can inform the principal researcher who will share with you a detailed resource of professional help at any facilities closest to you (see attached referral list with the necessary details). The study has no direct benefits to you but will provide new insights on father absence within the context of South Africa.

Contact details

Should you have any queries following this interview, please contact the principal investigator, Siyabonga Mbobo (Psychology, UCT) at mbbsiy002@uct.ac.za or on 0787455901 Alternatively, contact my supervisor, Dr Mandisa Malinga (Psychology, UCT) at mandisa.malinga@uct.ac.za or on 021 650 4997. Also, if you have concerns about your rights as a research participant contact Rosalind Adams (Psychology, UCT) at Rosalind.adams@uct.ac.za or on 021 650 3417.

Consent

I..... give permission for Mbobo Siyabonga Hloni to use the relevant information in her/his research. I am aware that I can withdraw at any time and that all information will be protected and kept in a lockable compartment. I am aware that my identity will be protected in the written outcomes of this research.

Signed Date:

I also give a permission to be recorded using an audio recording device during the interview.

Signature.....Date.....
(Participant)

Signature..... Date.....
(Researcher)

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Demographic Information:

1. Can you please tell me about yourself?
 - First Language
 - Age
 - Grade
 - Occupation (if not a student)

Childhood experiences of growing up without a father:

2. Can you tell me about growing up without a biological father? (What was it like?)
 - a. At what age did you notice that you did not have a biological father?
 - b. How did you feel when you noticed that you did not have a biological father?
 - c. Had your biological father been involved and present in your life, do you think your life would have been different? If so, in what way?
 - d. Did your peers or some of them have present fathers in their lives? If yes, how did that affect you, if at all?

The effects of growing-up without a biological father:

3. Do you think biological fathers have an important role in their sons' lives that is different from mothers?
 - a. If so, what makes their role different from that of mothers?

4. What is the role your father would have played, had he been present in your life and home during your upbringing?
5. Do you think growing up without your father affects your current relationships? Your intimate relationships?
 - a. How?
6. How did growing up without a father affect you as an African (Xhosa) man?
 - a. In what way did it affect your cultural identity as a man?
 - b. Did it affect, in any way, how you see yourself as a man?
7. Do you think growing-up without biological father has influenced your own perspective of life in any way?

Other questions:

8. Did you have any male figure or social father? If yes, what was his influence on your life?
9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience of growing up without a biological father?

APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Referral List

As it is likely for this study to trigger some emotions or cause harm to you, I know that experiences vary. As to some it may pose minimum or no emotional harm whilst to others it can trigger emotions and cause some distress. As such, I would like you to notify me instantly should you experience any emotional distress because of your participation in this study. Please find below a list of free services that you may be able to contact should you wish to seek psychological support. Most of these facilities are free, however some have a minimal cost (inform of donation), in which case I will be of help.

- MOBIEG (24-hour free online helpline): help@mobieg.co.za Website: www.mobieg.co.za
- Good Hope Psychological Service (with free services):

Website: ghps.co.za

STELLENBOSCH

Stellenbosch Provincial Hospital

Merriman Avenue +

27 (0)21 887 7913

ghps@telkomsa.net

PAARL

TC Newman Memorial Hospital

36 Rosary, Charleston Hill

(+27) 21 877 6400

POSTAL ADDRESS

PO Box 2075

Dennesig

7601

- LifeLine Western Cape (with free services):

23B (Unit 1 – 4) Waverley Business Park Kotzee Road

Mowbray

7925

Counselling Line: 021 461 1111; Office: 021 461 1113

General Enquiries: info@lifelinewc.org.za

Website: lifelinewc.org.za

- Hope House:

Bergvliet: 021 715 0424 or 071 328 3715

bookingsbergvliet@gmail.com

14 Silverhurst Way

Kuils River: 021 903 0521 or 071 410 1091/

hopehousekuilsriver@gmail.com

6 Lang Street

Table View: 021 522 9228; blaauwberg.hopehouse@gmail.com

1 South Road, Table View Online

sessions: 084 557 752

- FAMSA Western Cape: OBSERVATORY OFFICE

9 Bowden Road, Observatory

Tel: +27 21 447 7951 / 082 231 0373

Appointments: +27 21 447 0170 / 082 231 4470

Fax: +27 21 447 0174

E-mail: famsa@famsawc.org.za

Website: www.famsawc.org.za

APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR A RESEARCH STUDY

Are you between the ages of 18 and 35? We are conducting a study about *'Fatherlessness among young black South African men'*. We are looking for young black South African men who grew up without their biological fathers to participate in this research. Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of (biological) fatherlessness on the psychosocial wellbeing of young black South African men. Procedure

Individual semi-structured face-to-face interviews will be conducted at a venue of your choosing and will last no more than 60 minutes. Please be aware that these interviews will be recorded using an audio-recording device, and later transcribed and analyzed.

Ethical considerations

All the information you provide during the interviews, will be kept confidential. The audio recordings and the transcripts will be kept safe in a password-secured file that only the principal investigator and supervisor will have access to. Any hardcopies provided, including signed consent forms will be kept in a lockable compartment and only the principal researcher will have access to. The participants' names will not appear in the thesis, instead pseudonyms will be used. The information will remain anonymous and no one will be able to trace the identifying information to the participants. You are also allowed to withdraw your participation from the study at any time without any negative consequences. When you choose to withdraw from the study, all the data you already shared will not be used in the study instead it will be destroyed.

Covid-19 protocols

Since there is an outbreak of covid-19 pandemic, during the interview sessions, level one regulations and UCT psychological research guidelines will be followed to safeguard covid-19 spread. These include practising social distance, masks wearing, screening vial covid-19 app or manually, and practicing all hygienic measures will be practiced.

Contact details

Should you be interested in participating in this study or have any questions about this project, please contact the principal investigator Siyabonga Mbobo (Psychology, UCT) at mbbsiy002@uct.ac.za or on 0787455901. Alternatively, contact my supervisor, Dr Mandisa Malinga (Psychology, UCT) at mandisa.malinga@uct.ac.za or on 021 650 4997. The researcher will then come to your chosen meeting place. Also, should you need assistance with the travelling fare when meeting the researcher, the researcher will be of help.

YOUR PARTICIPATION WILL BE HIGHLY APPRECIATED!!!

APPENDIX E: Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



Department of Psychology

University of Cape Town Rondebosch 7701 South Africa
Telephone (021) 650 3417
Fax No. (021) 650 4104

18 December 2020

Siyabonga Mbobo
Department of Psychology
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch 7701

Dear Siyabonga

I am pleased to inform you that ethical clearance has been given by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities for your study, *Fatherlessness among young black South African men*. The reference number is PSY2020-058.

I wish you all the best for your study.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Ward
Professor
Chair: Research Ethics Committee