

**A PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF PARENTAL  
BEREAVEMENT IN AFRICAN ADOLESCENTS**

by

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- God for providing me with the essence of life.

## DECLARATION

I declare that the “**A PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT IN AFRICAN ADOLESCENTS**” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Zolelwa T Mabotja

February 2015

## **ABSTRACT**

The study focuses on the emotional experiences of parental bereavement of African adolescents who live in a rural environment. Findings revealed that the loss of a parent is very devastating for African adolescents. The adolescents received inadequate assistance from family, peers, community members or educators. It is essential after this study to uncover ways in which these adolescents could be assisted to cope with the loss of a parent who had been providing love, care, financial and material support, as well as safety and security.

To gather data the researcher drew meaning from eight participants' lived experiences from transcriptions of interviews with the participants. The participants, seven girls and one boy, were adolescents between the ages of twelve and fifteen years, who had lost their fathers.

This study recommended that educators be equipped to take a major role in dealing with children in bereavement, since there are no educational psychologists or other professionals based in the school or neighbourhood. The community needs to be made aware of the plight of bereaved adolescents and should be introduced into giving positive and constructive assistance to these young people.

Key words: Adolescence, bereavement, grief, mourning, rituals, educator's role in bereavement, school's role in bereavement.

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## CHAPTER 1 ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

*We can't prevent the birds of sorrow from landing on our shoulder.*

*We can prevent them nesting in our hair.*

*(Old Chinese proverb, in Perkins 2007:7)*

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The term bereavement refers to a state one finds oneself in after having lost a loved one through death (Mwamwenda 2004:79). Although it is a common experience, losing someone through death causes grief which is a deep emotion, often difficult to handle. Mwamwenda (2004:79) states that the death of a parent becomes more traumatic for adolescents than adults because these young people “have not yet learnt the survival skill of adjustment.”

In Sub-Saharan Africa there is a notable increase in the number of young people who have faced the loss of one or both parents through death (Nyamukapa, Gregson, Lopman, Saito, Watts, Monasch & Jukes 2008:133). The 2010 General Household Survey revealed that there were about 3,84 million orphans in South Africa and most of these orphans were located in Kwa-Zulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape (Meintjies & Hall 2010:1-2). In most Black communities some of these orphans are taken care of by the extended families that are headed by elderly people and women who already live in poverty, and others live in households headed by children most of whom are adolescents (UNICEF 2012:1). These caregivers barely succeed in providing for the physical needs of the children in their care. The emotional needs are often totally neglected.

Parental loss is regarded as the most devastating of all the losses suffered by adolescents, resulting in them becoming destabilised (Clarke, Pynoos & Goebel 1996:101; Stokes, Reid & Cook 2009:178; Jakobsen & Christiansen 2011:176). In order to understand the impact of parental loss during adolescence, we need to look at why parents are meaningful to adolescents. According to Bowlby's “Attachment

Theory” babies bond with their parents (primary care givers) through being fed, nurtured, held, protected, and communicated with (Weymont & Rae 2006:1; Jacobsen & Christiansen 2011:176; Howarth 2011:25). Children’s survival, long term mental health and ability to form relationships depend on these primary attachments. Therefore, the death of a parent is very traumatic for the adolescent as it subjects the young person to a sudden and unexpected separation from a parent (Howarth 2011:23). Death deprives the adolescent of the natural process of getting independence from the parent (Stokes et al. 2009:178). Furthermore, the adolescent is subjected to a new environment and to adjust to new relationships of love and care (Murray 2011:88). Alternatively, the adolescent may be denied love and care by the surviving adults, who are also suffering from loss and grief or ill-health and poverty that prevents them from taking care of the adolescent (Kosminsky & Lewin 2009:339).

The effects associated with the impact of losing a parent include affective, cognitive, behavioural and physical manifestations that include physiological and somatic problems (Li, Naar-King, Barnett, Stanton, Fang & Thurston 2008:148). These authors further explain that “affective manifestations include depression and despair, dejection, anxiety, guilt, anger, hostility and loneliness. Cognitive manifestations include preoccupation with the deceased, low self-esteem, self-reproach, helplessness, hopelessness, a sense of unreality, and problems with memory and concentration. Behavioural and social manifestations include agitation, crying, fatigue and social withdrawal” (Stroebe, Stroebe & Schut 2000:11, as cited in Li et al. 2008:148). To add to the consequences of bereavement mentioned above the adolescent may also suffer from significant disturbances in school performance, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, lack of stability and control through changes to finances, daily routines and future plans, poor health, school drop-out and living on the streets (Stokes et al. 2009:178; Nyamukapa et al. 2008:133-134). Bereaved adolescents may also be involved in high risk behaviours including alcohol and drug abuse (McCarthy 2006:112-113).

In most African communities the situation of losing a parent is aggravated by the vulnerability of adolescents who live in a rural environment characterised by dire poverty (Cluver & Gardner 2007:319). When a parent dies the adolescent does not only lose care and love that the parent gave, but is exposed to economic and financial



hardship, and as a consequence denied access to basic resources that the young person still needs for his growth and development.

To assist bereaved adolescents to develop into mentally healthy adults, it is necessary to understand the nature of bereavement among adolescents, especially African youth in rural settings. De Witt and Lessing (2010:461) are of the opinion that there are more studies that focus on the physical and medical needs of children and not on their psychological needs. Matumba (2003:62) also noted that studies on bereavement often overlook the importance of rituals and customary practices in enhancing healing in order to resolve grief. Thus the researcher undertook this study to understand bereavement from the perspective of black adolescents who live in rural settings as they relate the accounts of their own feelings and experiences after the death of a parent.

Although in Africa there is a notable increase in parentally bereaved adolescents, there seems to be little research that has been published on the effects of loss during adolescence (Cluver & Gardner 2007:319; De Witt & Lessing 2010:461). De Witt and Lessing (2010:461) further maintain that studies in Sub-Saharan Africa often focus on developed communities and urban settings. These approaches and practices might be of little value in rural and developing settings because orphans from developed communities or urban settings might differ from those of developing or deep rural areas. Besides poverty and hunger that characterise the rural areas there are no professional support services based in the neighbourhood to give psychosocial and emotional support to adolescents. The school appears to be the only stable institution where young people can get support (Jessop & McCarthy 2006:149), but educators may not have the necessary skills to deal with matters of bereavement (MacLeod 2010:162).

The concern that bereavement practices and approaches fit for developing or deep rural environments remain under-developed, call for more researchers to address this area. Moreover, in rural areas the number of adolescents who have lost a parent or both parents is increasing and there is inadequate support given for psychological aspects of bereavement (De Witt & Lessing 2010:461). As a result, the focus of this

study will be the understanding of the emotional experiences of bereaved black African adolescents who live in a rural environment.

## **1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM**

In the analysis of the problem attention was given to my awareness of the problem, after which a preliminary literature study follows. In the last instance the problem is stated and changed into the research question underlying this study.

### **1.2.1 Awareness of the problem**

My family experience contributed to my awareness of the plight of adolescents in bereavement. After I lost my sister through death when I was twenty years of age. I embarked on a lonely trip of understanding loss and bereavement. I was in distress because I had no one to talk to about death, my feelings and how the loss affected me. It seemed as if everybody expected me to be fine as no attention was given to me, my feelings and my coping with the circumstances. The emphasis was on my parents. This sentiment is confirmed by Shear (2009:746) that family, friends and relatives pay attention to comforting bereaved adults whilst children are left to deal with their emotional feelings alone.

During my tenure as an educator in the Black community, in Gauteng, I worked with children in middle and late adolescence. Some of these children suffered bereavement because they lost a parent or parents at an early stage in their lives, while others did so at a later period. They were experiencing problems related to coping with bereavement.

From my observation and class discussions held during Life Skills and Communication classes in the two schools where I was an educator, most of the children experienced hard times in the hands of family members and other adults who themselves probably did not understand the nature of bereavement in adolescents. The atrocities they experienced included the following:

- Young girls were sexually abused by their uncles and the girls were afraid to report such occurrences because they assumed no one would believe them.
- Money inherited from their parent's estate which was due to them was used by the relatives who pretended to be taking care of the adolescents.
- Some of the adolescents suffered neglect from their families and found it difficult to cope with academic pressure. They would be forced to drop-out of school, either to seek employment or lead aimless lives and others ended up prostituting.
- Promiscuous behaviour characterised their sexual relationships.
- Boys would opt for relationships with 'sugar mommies' (older women) and girls with 'sugar daddies' (older men) in exchange for financial favours.
- Some of them would opt for parenthood at an early age because they would get child grants from the government or hoped to be supported by the father of the child, who would in most cases be an elderly married man.
- When they showed symptoms of bereavement, like anger; aggression; withdrawal; dropping-out of school; drug and alcohol abuse (Stokes et al. 2009:178), adults would not assist them to cope with the bereavement instead they would be labelled as naughty; cheeky; attention seeking or delinquent.

During my practical work as a student psychologist, I worked with a child, in her late adolescence who was from a rural environment and was experiencing grief because of multiple losses including the loss of both parents. She was left at the mercy of her relatives who did not give her social, emotional or financial support. She spent most of the time in hospital suffering from a number of ailments. These ranged from severe headaches, backache and loosing feelings in her legs and she would be unable to walk. On several occasions she would be admitted in hospital because of these seemingly psychosomatic problems and depression. After sessions of therapy she recovered from what seemed to be psychosomatic problems and depression. Nyamukapa et al. (2008:134) state that death trauma may cause chronic illness.

It appears in the situation stated above that inadequate material, financial and emotional support were received by the adolescent who had a burden of multiple losses, and as a consequence her physical, psychological and emotional well-being

were negatively affected. This is supported by Mahoney (2008:2) when the author suggests that grief cannot be prevented, but the negative effects can be reduced by giving adolescents the support they need in order to become optimally developed adults.

As the understanding of grief in adolescents, especially African adolescents in a rural context, is underdeveloped the researcher decided to undertake a research project in a rural settlement in Donkerhoek in the East of Pretoria, South Africa. This area is characterised by abject poverty. From my observation lack of material, financial and emotional support is prevalent, thus the bereaved adolescents cannot be given the necessary support they needed to become well-functioning adults. Most parentally bereaved adolescents depended on social grants after the death of the parent. They lived in tin houses with their mothers, with extended families or in child headed households that were characterised by poverty and hunger.

Most of the young people in this rural settlement live in fear especially at night because the structures they live in lacked safety and security. The schools, health clinics and religious based organisations are the only institutions that are available to work with children. Schools focus on educational needs of children, health facilities focus on the medical needs and the church focuses on the religious activities. It seems as if there is very little or no attention given to the psychosocial and emotional needs of bereaved adolescents anywhere in the provincial structures. In this study I will endeavour to explore the emotional experiences of parental bereavement of African adolescents who live in a rural environment as perceived by themselves with the intention of looking at how the adolescents can be assisted to deal with bereavement.

### **1.2.2 Preliminary literature investigation**

To enhance the understanding of bereavement in adolescents some background information on bereavement needs to be given.

Early views on grief go back a long way. Parkes (2001:26) traces it back to theorists such as:

*Burton (1621) when he refers to grief and sorrow as "the epitome, symptome*

*and chief cause” of melancholia or, as it would be termed today, clinical depression; Heberden in 1657 who found “grief” acceptable as a cause of death; Vogther in 1703 who came with the idea that ‘grief itself can take a pathological form’ and he prescribed a variety of medications for pathological grief; Rush in 1835 saw grief as the cause of death as people would literally die from a “broken heart”, emphasized the dangers of bereavement and advised bereaved people to avoid reminders of their loss and to take “liberal doses of opium”; Charles Darwin (1872) associated grief of human beings to grief in animals when they cry aloud when they were separated from those to whom they were attached; Freud recognized that depression is sometimes caused by bereavement.*

The above theorists viewed death as a crisis that may result in physical, emotional and psychological distress. This view is confirmed by various researchers who came after them. They viewed losing a parent through death as a devastating experience for adolescents that traumatises and complicates their normal development (Weymont & Rae 2006:1; Stokes et al. 2009:178; Jakobsen & Christiansen 2011:176). Parental loss changes the life of an adolescent (Noppe & Noppe 2004:163) that has an intense lifelong effect on the young people’s psychosocial well-being (Li et al. 2008:147; Shear 2009:746).

There are different reactions to loss and bereavement. These depend on a number of factors including the process of bereavement, maturity of a person, cultural differences and bereavement interventions.

### **1.2.2.1 Process of bereavement**

People react differently to grief (Shear 2009:746) and may go through different stages in the grieving process (Perkins 2007:27). Adolescents may also go through these stages during their bereavement.

Kübler–Ross (1969), for instance proposed five stages of grief that a person goes through, often more applicable to dying persons: denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. The stages are neither rigid nor linear

because people in general grieve in their own way and phases of grief are neither prescriptive nor sequential (Parks 2001:746; Botha 2006:25; Shear 2009:746). Sorensen (2008:18) warns that the grief stages should equip people working with adolescents to recognise grief but not to measure the stage the adolescent is in because the grief process is not sequential. Since the feelings of grief do not follow a particular pattern this subjects some people to a shorter grieving period whilst others could grieve over a longer period of time. Age and developmental phases have to be considered when bereavement in adolescents is handled.

### ***1.2.2.2 Maturity and bereavement***

The quality of bereavement in adolescents differs from that in children and adults and in most instances research focuses on the bereavement of adults and children (Noppe & Noppe 2004:163). Adolescents are still in their developmental phase enroute towards adulthood.

The adolescent phase of development can be divided into three stages – early adolescence, middle and late adolescence. Each maturational phase is characterised by a major developmental task according to Stokes et al. (2009:178). The primary developmental tasks include emotionally separating from parents, forming a positive self-image, fostering a sense of self and belonging and developing a sense of mastery (Noppe & Noppe 2004:159). Parents assist adolescents to successfully go through the developmental tasks by providing them with warmth, love, feedback and guidance (Noppe & Noppe 2004:149). Separation from a parent is therefore devastating because death is the ultimate challenge to each of these processes. Death therefore disrupts their natural developmental process by deviating their attention to bereavement (Stokes et al. 2009:178). As a result the bereaved adolescent may have relationship problems, problems of identity as well as self-esteem problems.

Whereas adolescence is a time of transition from childhood to adulthood, bereavement is a time of psychosocial transition between one set of significant relationships to another (McCarthy 2006:3). Due to these developmental challenges grief experiences may be severe in adolescents. Their grief feelings may not be the same as those of

adults and children, a sentiment confirmed by Noppe and Noppe (2004: 163), nor is it the same in various cultural groupings.

### ***1.2.2.3 Cultural differences and bereavement***

Matumba (2003:62) noted that studies on bereavement often overlook the role played by rituals and customary practices and the therapeutic value they carry for bereaved people. When people lose a loved one they suffer grief in a similar way irrespective of their culture (Parkes 2001:35; Hardy-Bougere 2008:66). As such grief is the emotional response to bereavement that does not have a bearing on any culture. Other responses to bereavement are peculiar to different cultural practices, such as the external practices of mourning rituals (Hardy-Bougere 2008:67). For example in the African culture mourning rituals are practised before the funeral, during the burial and after the funeral. These activities include viewing the body, holding a night vigil (umlindelo), attending the funeral, cutting of hair, doing cleansing ceremonies, distributing possessions of the dead and visiting the grave (Perkins 2007:45-52). Other activities, like brewing African beer, using snuff and slaughtering a goat are also practised to appease the ancestors so that they must be good to the living (Jali 2000:42).

People working with adolescents should be aware of the context of cultural beliefs and practices of the communities in which they work in order to be sensitive to bereaved young people (Hardy-Bougere 2008:66).

### ***1.2.2.4 Support for the bereaved adolescent***

Grief is regarded as a normal and healthy response to loss and it can be resolved in healthier and positive ways. Adolescents are no exception. Despite the challenges brought by parental loss, the bereaved adolescents can resolve grief in healthier ways and lead to meaningful lives if appropriate support was made available (McCarthy 2006:17; Mahoney 2008:1). Unfortunately support is often not available to bereaved adolescents because at times adolescents do not express grief for fear of being perceived different or regressing and it is assumed that they are coping (Reed 2008:5).

Grief may then become complicated and the bereaved adolescent may turn out to be a very troubled young person (Stokes et al. 2009:179).

According to Balk and Corr (2001:210) interventions with bereaved adolescents have included support groups, self-help groups, activities and support that help with the traumatic after-effects among survivors of profound loss experiences. Noppe and Noppe (2004:160-161) also include mental health counsellors and social support from family members and peers. In the African context the extended family and community members give material, labour and emotional support (Foster & Williamson 2000:277; Nyamukapa et al. 2008:134; Li et al. 2008:152). The authors add that the extended family are the core supporters of the bereaved youths whilst community support is often enjoyed by adults. The school as a safe place for bereaved adolescents could provide material and emotional support. Some adolescents in South Africa receive a child grant from the government (De Witt & Lessing 2010:467) and the no fee school assists these young people to attend school without payment (Operario, Cluver, Rees, MacPhail, & Pettifor 2008:184).

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Given the increase of bereaved black African adolescents in rural settings, the possible negative impact that parental loss may have on the adolescents' psychological and emotional well-being, and the underdeveloped research that has been conducted to investigate bereavement practices fit for such adolescents, the researcher saw a need to conduct research that will examine adolescent's emotional experiences after the loss of a parent. Focus was on the life experiences and perceptions of adolescents. Therefore the research question underlying this investigation was:

How do African adolescents in a rural community emotionally experience bereavement after the death of a parent and how do they cope with bereavement?

More specifically the study addressed the following sub-questions:



- What is the emotional experience of African adolescents as a result of parental bereavement in a rural context?
- How do African adolescents who live in a rural environment deal with bereavement following the death of a parent?
- What kind of assistance do African adolescents in a rural context receive for parental bereavement?
- What assistance do African adolescents need specifically from educators for parental bereavement?

#### **1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the nature of bereavement as experienced by parentally bereaved adolescents in a rural setting. The purpose was to understand the fundamental issues of bereavement in order to guide future interventions in rural environments.

To achieve this aim this study purported to do the following:

1. Conduct a literature study on the phenomenon of bereavement for adolescents.
2. Conduct an empirical study to understand and describe the emotional experiences of parentally bereaved African adolescents in a rural setting.
3. Compile findings on the emotional experiences of adolescents that would inform people working with adolescents about how adolescents feel after the death of a parent.
4. Give recommendations to educators on how to assist adolescents who experience parental bereavement.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH**

Fouché (2005:268) describes a research design as the general plan that guides a study on how the research will be conducted to study a certain phenomenon. The

descriptive research design for an in-depth study of bereavement in adolescents was used.

A qualitative approach was used in this study. Bogdan and Biklen (2007:274) define qualitative research as an approach used for collecting descriptive data in a natural environment with participants using their own words to express their experiences. This allows the researcher to work in depth on a number of issues in real life situations to understand the perspective of people being studied. In this study the researcher worked with adolescents in bereavement sampled from schools in a rural settlement in Donkerhoek, East of Pretoria in South Africa. A more detailed discussion of the research design and approach will be done in Chapter 3.

### **1.5.1 Ethical considerations**

Ethics are the moral standards that address how a researcher ought to behave as a researcher (Holloway 2005:17). Before collecting data the researcher submitted an application to the UNISA Research Ethical Committee and approval was subsequently granted (see Appendix A). This research was therefore, conducted following the guidelines as set by the committee. Ethical considerations that were considered in this study included informed consent, protection from harm, confidentiality, anonymity and right to privacy, ethical treatment of the participants, as well as freedom to withdraw.

In this study the researcher obtained consent from caregivers/ guardians or surviving parents and assent from adolescents to ensure that the above requirements are observed by the researcher:

- The surviving parent or guardian of the learner gave consent by reading and signing the letter after the process was explained by the researcher (see Appendix F2).
- The learner gave assent by reading and signing the letter after the process was explained by the researcher (see Appendix G2).

The researcher also requested permission from relevant bodies because the researcher would use their site (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit 2004:73). The following organisations gave permission after the process was explained in the application:

- Gauteng Department of Education (see Appendix B),
- Gauteng North District (D1) (see Appendix C),
- The School Governing Body (see Appendix D), and
- The School Principal (see Appendix E).

These parties were also informed about the purpose, methods and outcomes of the study. Ethical considerations will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

### 1.5.2 Trustworthiness

For research to be regarded as true and real Lincoln and Guba (1985) in De Vos (2005:346-347) proposed four constructs that must be observed, namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability). These are explained as follows:

- Credibility will be achieved if the researcher accurately identifies and describes the population and setting, placing boundaries around the study.
- Transferability questions if the findings of the study can be generalised to other populations.
- Dependability addresses consistency of findings if research were to be repeated to the same participants.
- Conformability questions if the research findings can be confirmed by another researcher if the same research was undertaken.

The above constructs were applied to this research to ensure trustworthiness of this study. A more detailed discussion of trustworthiness will be done in Chapter 3.

### **1.5.3 Research method**

Research methods are the technical aspects of research including techniques/methods used, such as surveys, interviews and observations (Bogdan & Biklen 2007:35). Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gather data focusing on the adolescents' emotional experiences of bereavement, with adolescents expressing their experiences in their own words and in their natural environment. The aim was to understand the meaning participants give to the phenomenon of bereavement. A more detailed discussion will be done in chapter 3.

#### ***1.5.3.1 Sampling***

Purposive sampling is a technique used to gather information from participants and settings where the specific phenomena being studied will most likely occur (Strydom & Delpont 2005:328). Purposeful sampling was used in this research because the researcher selected what she thought was a typical sample, in the case of this study, parentally bereaved African adolescents who live in a rural environment. The population of this study is in Donkerhoek, a rural settlement situated in the East of Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa. The researcher selected eight parentally bereaved learners who attend primary school. The School Based Support Team Coordinator provided a list of learners who lost a parent through death. Selection included boys and girls who were adolescents and spoke isiZulu, the language the researcher was also conversant in. Purposive sampling will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

#### ***1.5.3.2 Data collection***

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007:45) data collection techniques include observation, participant observation, reviewing various documents, open-ended interviewing and first person accounts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain information from the participants using an interview schedule to keep the interview focused. Information was captured using a digital voice recorder and this assisted the researcher to be able to concentrate. A more detailed information on data collection will be given in Chapter 3.

### **1.5.3.3 Data analysis and interpretation**

Analysis is the “process of sorting, arranging, coding, and other ways of looking for patterns in data for the purpose of coming up with findings” (Bogdan & Biklen 2007:270). Information from interviews was used in this study to arrive at meaningful findings. Such information was coded and categorized, according to the method proposed by Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006:322-326), into meaningful themes that would guide the study towards understanding the phenomenon of bereavement in African adolescents. Data analysis and interpretation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

## **1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN THE STUDY**

It is necessary to define the concepts of what is being studied in such a way that everyone reading the study will have the same idea of what is meant (Walliman & Appleton 2009:41). The following terms were used in the study:

### **1.6.1 Adolescent**

Mwamwenda (2004:71) defines adolescence (ranges between twelve to about twenty one years) as a challenging period of human growth and development characterised by physical, social, emotional, physiological, and psychological change. It is a period of searching for and consolidation of identity. An adolescent, therefore, according to the author is neither a child nor an adult, but a period of life between childhood and adulthood, on the threshold of adulthood. According to Balk (2009:4-5) adolescence ranges between the age of ten to about twenty three years. In this study African adolescence would refer to black adolescents from primary schools in a rural community, aged between twelve and fifteen years.

### **1.6.2 Grief, mourning and bereavement**

According to Clarke et al. (1996:101) grief, mourning and bereavement are used interchangeably and with a lack of consistency throughout the professional literature, by mental health professionals and lay people. Although the meanings of grief,

mourning and bereavement overlap, it is still important to differentiate between these concepts in order to understand their meanings.

### **1.6.2.1 Grief**

Goodman, Cohen, Epstein, Klietherms, Layne, Macy and Ward-Wimmer (2004:4) describe grief as the “intense emotional distress we have following a death” of a loved one. According to Servaty-Seib (2004:126) grief is an uncontrollable emotional reaction to the state of bereavement. It then follows that when we grieve, we express our reaction to the state of bereavement (Botha 2006:25).

### **1.6.2.2 Mourning**

Whereas grieving is defined as the internal emotional response to bereavement, mourning involves the external active processes of coping with bereavement and grief (Servaty-Seib 2004:126). It encompasses family, social and cultural rituals that are practised following the death of a loved one (Goodman et al. 2004:4).

### **1.6.2.3 Bereavement**

Bereavement is a state of sadness one finds oneself in after losing a loved one (Goodman et al. 2004:4; and Li et al. 2008:148). Bereavement encompasses both the emotional aspects of grief and the process of mourning and represents a natural social process of coping with an emotional response to death (Clarke et al. 1996:101). Although it is a natural and universal experience people find bereavement distressing and experience a variety of emotions (Mwamwenda 2004:79 & Li et al. 2008:148). Hardy-Bougere (2008:66) adds that bereavement is an emotion shared between family members and can be a group experience.

## **1.7 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS**

The study will have the following structure:

### ***Chapter 1: Orientation to the study***

This chapter introduces the reader to the study. It focuses on the background to the problem, the awareness of the problem as well as the preliminary literature review. It defines the problem and highlights the aims and objectives of the study. The chapter also looked at the research design and methodology and also defined the key concepts.

### ***Chapter 2: Literature review***

Presented in this chapter is the existing published literature pertaining to bereavement in adolescents by discussing bereavement in general, African bereavement and bereavement in adolescents.

### ***Chapter 3: Research Methodology***

Provided within this chapter is how research will be conducted. An in-depth description of the research design and research approach used for this study will be presented. Included will be a discussion of the sampling technique used, data collection methods, data analysis and interpretation, trustworthiness as well as ethical guidelines and considerations.

### ***Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretations***

Chapter four reports on the findings derived from empirical research conducted on parentally bereaved African adolescents in a rural environment presented in narrative format using verbatim quotations from interview transcripts. Findings will also be compared with the literature review.

### ***Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations***

This chapter provides the reader with a summary of the research and conclusions derived from the empirical study. Limitations of the empirical study and implications for further study are also discussed. Lastly, possible solutions will be recommended

to assist bereaved adolescents who live in a rural environment to deal with bereavement.

## **1.8 CONCLUSION**

The focus in this chapter was on reasons why the researcher wanted to undertake the study. The purpose was to explore and understand bereavement in rural African adolescents who have lost a parent through death. A brief background to the research strategies was also given. The next chapter will deal with literature review on bereavement in general, bereavement in the African culture and bereavement in adolescents.



## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of the preceding chapter was to give an orientation to the present study. According to the literature presented in Chapter one, adolescents who lose parents at a younger age are on the increase. Parental loss brings about extreme trauma in these young people that further complicates their normal development (Stokes et al. 2009:178). The loss of a parent impacts on their emotional well-being and support is often not available to adolescents because at times they do not express their grief and, as a consequence, people wrongly assume that they are coping (Reed 2008:5).

In this chapter, the researcher will explore the existing literature that is relevant to the research problem thus enabling the researcher to make a more in-depth investigation in order to get more insight into the topic of interest (Walliman & Appleton 2009:40). The purpose of this study is to explore how black African adolescents in rural areas, who have lost a parent through death, experience bereavement and what support can be given to them, especially by educators in order to deal with bereavement. Therefore, in this chapter, the researcher will examine current knowledge regarding bereavement in general, bereavement taking cognisance of African tradition and bereavement in adolescence.

The researcher will first discuss a Western-centred way of doing things, then delve onto African practices and lastly, embark on bereavement in adolescence, in general with reference to African adolescents

### **2.2 BEREAVEMENT IN GENERAL**

Bereavement is the state of having lost a loved one through death (Goodman et al. 2004:4; Li et al. 2008:148). Everyone who has loved someone and lost that person through death will experience bereavement. Although it is a natural and universal experience, people find bereavement distressing and experience a variety of emotions

(Mwamwenda 2004:79). Hardy-Bougere (2008:66) adds that bereavement is an emotion shared among family members and can be a group experience.

Mwamwenda (2004:80) states that bereavement is characterised by activities such as crying, having distressing thoughts about the dead person and feeling saddened by the loss of the person who died. Furthermore, there arises a need to talk about the dead person, develop intrusive thoughts about the dead person and the bereaved person becomes preoccupied with images of the dead person feeling distressed by remembrance of the person.

Bereavement encompasses both grief and mourning (Servaty-Seib 2004:126; Mwamwenda 2004:79) but both these terms have particular meanings. According to Leming and Dickinson (2007:136), grief is an uncontrollable emotional reaction to the state of bereavement. Although grief is considered an emotional state, several authors are of the opinion that grief extends beyond emotions and includes psychological and physical responses to loss (Rando 1993, as cited in Servaty-Seib 2004:126; Li et al. 2008:148). The above authors postulate that psychological responses to loss are associated with affective, cognitive, spiritual, social and behavioural manifestations. According to Stroebe et al. (2000), as cited in Li et al. (2008:148) the affective modes could include depression, feelings of despair, dejection, anxiety, guilt, anger, hostility as well as feelings of loneliness. Cognitive responses could include constant thoughts about the deceased, problems of low self-esteem, self-reproach, self-blame, despondency, a sense of unreality, and lack of concentration. Social functioning could be affected when a person is easily agitated, cries often and ultimately withdraws from society.

Whereas grief is associated with the internal processes of bereavement that are similar in all cultures, mourning is associated with external processes that include the practicing of rituals and customs peculiar to a particular ethnic group (Goodman et al. 2004:4; Mwamwenda 2004:79; Hardy-Bougere 2008:67). As suggested by several authors in Servaty-Seib (2004:127), reactions to the bereavement process are influenced by “personality traits, cultural background, the developmental level of the bereaved, the nature of the relationship with the deceased, mode of the death, availability of support, as well as the previous concurrent stressors.”

## 2.2.1 Process of Bereavement

People respond differently to grief and may undergo different stages in the grieving process (Perkins 2007:27). Authors such as Kübler-Ross (1969), a leading expert in the stages of bereavement, in her book, 'On Death and Dying', describe the grieving process in stages. Other authors such as Worden (1996, 2002) in Servaty-Seib (2004:128) and in Li et al. (2008:147) describe the grieving process as a series of tasks that have to be accomplished before the bereaved person can fully adjust to the loss. However, the stages and phases are not followed in a rigid or sequential manner because people in general grieve in their own way (Servaty-Seib 2004:127-129; Perkins 2007:27). Sorensen (2008:18) warns that the stages or phases of grief should only be noted in order to equip people supporting adolescents to recognise grief, but not to measure the stage the adolescent is in because children can skip a stage or regress to earlier stages during the grieving process. The five stages that a person goes through in coping with loss as proposed by Kübler-Ross (1969) include denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

According to Kübler-Ross (1969), denial and isolation are the first reactions that are experienced by people in grief. During denial, the bereaved is unable to accept the loss. He or she does not believe that the loss is happening to him or her (McLean 2006:4) as "denial functions as a buffer after expected shocking news, allows the patient to collect himself and, with time, mobilize other less radical defenses" (Kübler-Ross 1969:35). Kübler-Ross (1969:37) explains that most people go through this stage but gradually recover as the reality of the loss dawns on them.

Following denial, the bereaved may experience anger in the form of blame directed towards God or other people for the situation (McLean 2006:4). Questions like "Why did this happen to me? How dare God do this to me?" may be asked by the person going through grief (McLean 2006:4).

During the third stage, the bereaved may resort to bargaining, making promises to God to do good if the mishap can be taken away (McLean 2006:4; Smith, Jaffe-Gill & Segal 2010:2). Upon realising the ineffectiveness of bargaining, the bereaved enters

into a deep depression, characterised by profound sadness. The bereaved may cry often, have feelings of emptiness, despair, deep loneliness and feel emotionally unstable (Kübler-Ross 1969).

Acceptance is the final stage of grief. During this stage, the bereaved accepts the loss and eventually learns to be at peace with what has happened (McLean 2006:5; Smith et al. 2010:2). Worden (1996, 2002), as noted in Servaty-Seib (2004:126), McCarthy (2006:34), Leming and Dickinson (2007:138) and Howarth (2011: 24) developed four tasks of mourning that a bereaved person must accomplish. During the first task, the bereaved must accept the reality of the loss by overcoming denial and accepting the reality of the death (Howarth 2011:24). Howarth further contends that children can be assisted to accept that a parent has died by being told accurate information about the death so that they are not confused. Some activities that can assist in making death real may include viewing the body, attending the funeral, visiting the grave, talking about the deceased, viewing photographs as well as distributing the possessions of the deceased (Leming & Dickinson 2007:138).

Secondly, the bereaved should work through the pain of grief. When the bereaved is in denial, he or she will try to avoid pain by rejecting the emotions and feelings that he or she feels. In order to get relief the bereaved must fully experience the pain and the emotional effects of the pain, for instance, crying (Leming & Dickinson 2007:138; Perkins 2007:38; Howarth 2011:24).

During the third task, the bereaved has to adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing by assuming new social roles (Leming & Dickinson 2007:138). He or she can take additional responsibilities by performing some of the roles of the deceased or can allocate the roles to others who can fulfill them. An example would be to learn how to drive if they had a car and to drive themselves to work instead of being dependent on someone else (Leming & Dickinson 2007:138). This part of the grief tasks gives an opportunity of growth in the bereaved person as he or she moves on with life (Howarth 2011:24).

Lastly, the bereaved must emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life by, for instance, investing in relationships. This proves to be challenging to the

bereaved as he or she might feel disloyal or unfaithful to their deceased loved one. Some people find it difficult to reinvest in new relationships, saving themselves from experiencing additional pain should death occur again. At this stage, life begins anew as new friendships develop (Leming & Dickinson 2007:138). The child can complete this task by relinquishing the attachment to the dead person and engage in the present relationships. For example, the child can learn to live with a stepparent.

In order for mourners to integrate their loss in a healthy manner, they must successfully complete the tasks or processes discussed above, in no particular order (Servaty-Seib 2004:129). Notable in all the stages or phases discussed above is that bereaved people move between the stages until they adjust or adapt to the loss. In contrast, it is sometimes difficult for people to progress from a particular stage (Perkins 2007:28), thus experiencing complicated grief.

Grief is regarded as a normal, healthy and predictable response to loss (McCarthy 2006:17; Mahoney 2008:1). People who go through all or some of the stages of grief experience normal grief. Researchers have suggested that people suffer “complicated grief” if the steps in the grieving process are not successfully completed. Literature has not yet reached consensus on a clear definition of normal and complicated grief (Botha 2006:25).

From the above stages, we can conclude that bereavement may take either a shorter or a longer time depending on the individual characteristics such as the personality of the bereaved, the nature of the death of the deceased, the social circumstances of the bereaved as well as the support available to the bereaved (Perkins 2007:33). Since it is humanly natural to feel great sadness when a loved one dies, the grief process is an internal experience that can be generalised to all people, including adolescents, irrespective of culture (Hardy-Bougere 2008:66). However, the external practices of mourning are culturally bound and are more prevalent in the African culture.

### **2.3 AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE OF BEREAVEMENT**

Hardy-Bougere (2008:66) explains that culture refers to shared ideologies and beliefs, as well as norms and customs of people. Because people’s cultures are diverse, the

author perceives that bereavement practices are also diverse and such practices depend on that particular group. Koenig and Davies (2003) in Paletti (2008:19) state that culture determines what it means to be bereaved and to recover from bereavement. It follows then that the external expression of grief and coping mechanisms are motivated by the cultural traditions, beliefs and values of the bereaved group (Yawa 2010:20).

Certain reactions to bereavement may be viewed as normal within certain cultures and as abnormal in others. Some societies' traditions, rituals, and belief systems encourage overt expression of grief and others discourage it (Yawa 2010:33). For instance, the process of bereavement in Western culture seems to be internally focused whilst in the black culture it is more externally focused (Yawa 2010:33). According to Yawa (2010:33), the mourning process in African culture is communally based as the bereaved are expected to undergo bereavement rituals that are part of that specific group as opposed to the individualistic perspective prevalent in the Western culture. Since this study focusses on African adolescents in a rural environment, it is important to be informed about how death and bereavement are understood in African culture.

In an African context, death and bereavement are understood in the background of different mourning rituals that are practiced. Rituals are a set of traditional activities peculiar to a particular group and performed for the restoration of normality within the individual, family or group (Mpono 2007:82; Hardy-Bougere 2008:67). The above authors maintain that rituals have a therapeutic benefit, as they are to assist the bereaved to adjust and accept the reality of death.

It is important that we must first understand the meaning of death in an African context. From an African perspective, people do not really die but remain with the living in ancestral form (Onukwugha 2002 in Russell 2005:14). As a result, in African culture, it is regarded appropriate to use words, such as "has passed on" or "has departed from the earth" instead of "died" because it is believed that the life of the individual does not end but has changed into spiritual form (Onukwugha 2002, in Russell 2005:14). When a person dies, according to Ngobese (2004) in Yawa (2010:27), he or she is not dead but has gone to the world of forefathers. Consequently, believing in

life after death maintains the relationship between the dead and the living. Thus, the notion of ancestors assists in the grief process because the bereaved receives psychological relief as the hope of meeting with the dead in the next world reigns. Jali (2000:42) notes that it is believed that ancestors play an important role of protecting the family against danger and assist the bereaved family to be prosperous.

In the South African context, the process of bereavement has similarities and differences within black culture (Yawa 2010:84). In her study on bereavement in Xhosa, Zulu and Tswana ethnic groups, Yawa found that the bereavement period lasts for a year in the Xhosa and Zulu cultures, whereas in Tswana it lasted for less than a year (Yawa 2010:84). During this time, various rituals and activities befitting the group are held.

Black people approach the grief and mourning processes communally before, during and after burial (Yawa 2010: 25). As soon as the family learns of the death, members of the community are informed, whereupon mourners sit in an identified hut until the day of the funeral. She adds that members of the community visit the family everyday leading to the day of the funeral to assist with labour, bring condolences and prayers for emotional and spiritual support (Yawa 2010:76). Activities such as these performed by the community allow members of the community to express their feelings of support towards the bereaved family in a structured way (Rando 1988:262-263). Thus, the healing process is enhanced when the reality of death is experienced as community members gather every day at the bereaved residence.

A day before the funeral, preparations include the slaughter of an animal, like a cattle as a token of respect to accompany the dead person (Yawa 2010:74). In the Xhosa culture, for example, Yawa (2010:53) states that the skin of the slaughtered cow is used as a cover of either the corpse or the coffin. The meat will also be shared in a meal prepared for relatives and community members. The corpse is brought home late in the afternoon on the eve of the funeral and there is viewing of the body. A night vigil “umlindelo” is also held. Rando (1988:226) states that, during the night vigil, the bereaved get a chance to be exposed to the deceased in another form, a practice that assists the bereaved to confirm the reality of the death.

In her study, Yawa (2010:75) found that burial times are not the same in the Xhosa, Zulu and Tswana ethnic groups. The Xhosas prefer burial during midday “when the shadow of the person standing corresponds directly with the person” as it is believed that is a sign of “completeness,” thus the correct time for burial. The Zulus prefer burial in the afternoon “when the cows are coming back from the grazing field ... (so that) the man of the house should be accompanied by his flock.” The Tswanas prefer burial in the morning. Some people believe that early morning is a good time because witches that “move about in the afternoons looking for corpses to use for their evil purposes ... are asleep in the morning” (Dlukulu 2010:60).

Going to the funeral is a communal event in the African culture. Rando (1988:266) states that funerals accelerate the healing process because they give the bereaved person a chance to make the loss real, to think about the deceased and to express feelings.

Common rituals following the funeral include cleansing ceremonies, like the “washing of spades,” the implements that were used to dig the grave (Yawa 2010:76). The ceremony is performed to thank people who were assisting the family, as well as for therapeutic support, to wash away the “bad luck” (isinyama) associated with death. People who come in contact with the deceased also need to be purified to remove bad luck (Dlukulu 2010:63). Although it was previously mentioned that a person does not die but passes on, the bereaved hate that a person is no longer in their mist, hence they consider death to be “bad luck” (Yawa 2010:74).

Another ritual is the cutting of hair by the mourners. In the Zulu culture, cleansing is also done by burning this hair with the clothes of the deceased (Richter & Müller 2005:1006). According to Matumba (2003:44), the cutting of hair by young people is done as a symbol of mourning that indicates that one is moving on with his or her new life after the loss. Eyetsemitan (2002), as cited in Dlukulu (2010:63) explains that “life is concentrated in the hair, shaving symbolises death, and its growing again indicates the strengthening of life.”



Other activities, such as throwing snuff, brewing traditional beer and slaughtering are practiced to appease the ancestors so that they must be good to the living (Jali 2000:42).

Richter and Müller (2005:1007) point out that there is no emotional or counselling that is available to both adults and children in the African society especially in the rural environment. Through the activities of mourning rituals, the bereaved learns to adjust slowly to the reality of death and to understand that death is not an end but the start of a new cycle (Hardy-Bougere 2008:67).

Through rituals and ceremonies, mourners receive psychological relief and they perform these traditional activities to appease the ancestors (Yawa 2010:28-29). Mbizana (2007:10) indicated that, in the Zulu culture, the mourning period for the bereaved family is usually a month. Married women engage in a special mourning period of twelve months, during which they wear a black attire (inzila). A ritual (ihlambo) must be performed before this attire can be removed by the widow. Hardy-Bougere (2008:67) observed that rituals and mourning bring about a sense of normalcy to the bereaved. The above author believes that, through the activities of rituals, a bereaved person is assisted to slowly adjust to the fact of death and to understand that death is not an end but the start of a new cycle.

## **2.4 ADOLESCENT BEREAVEMENT**

McCarthy (2006:3) defines adolescence as a period in life between childhood and adulthood. It is a challenging period of human growth and development which is characterised by physical, social, emotional, physiological and psychological changes that a young person goes through.

Adolescent development should be seen in light of Bowlby's "Attachment Theory" (see section 2.4.2 below). The attachment theory, therefore, implies that the relationship a child has with the parent may determine how the child copes with challenges of development. Noppe and Noppe (2004:154) postulate that "secure attachments can provide an effective base for exploring the world and attempting to establish a mature identity".

## 2.4.1 Developmental aspects and the meaning of bereavement in adolescents

- **Physical aspects of development**

Mwamwenda (2004:60) states that during adolescence young people experience physical changes characterised by biological growth and sexual maturity. Furthermore, their physical and sexual development has strong implications for their social and emotional development. According to Noppe and Noppe (2007:147), the feedback adolescents get from parents, peers and other people important to them concerning their physical looks is important to them. Furthermore, this development has an impact on their self-esteem depending on what type of feedback they get from others about how they look and later reflects on the quality of their social relations, long-term health and sexual relationships (Noppe & Noppe 2004:147-148).

- **Cognitive aspects of development**

Noppe and Noppe (2004:148) point out that adolescents are in the process of developing “in abstract thinking, the ability to see the perspective of others, a focus on the future, increasing capacities for problem solving, and a decline in absolutist constructions of right and wrong”. The above authors add that, although adolescents experience abstract cognitive reasoning, they still need a lot of parental guidance as they may still regress to their less advanced cognitive reasoning states.

Noppe and Noppe (2004:151) suggest that, since adolescents are in the formal operational thinking stage, they have developed cognitively, and as such, like adults, they are able to understand death on an abstract and hypothetical level. However, the above authors further argue that bereavement becomes traumatic to adolescents because as much as adolescents understand death they are not yet adults, and as such, lack the social and emotional maturity to fully process the experiences of bereavement (Noppe & Noppe 2004:151). Reed (2008:4) adds that adolescents are not able to solve problems and interpret situations associated with bereavement as well as adults do, and as a consequence healing may be delayed.

- **Social aspects of development**

Attachment to the family and parents, peer group relations and acceptance are very important during adolescence as it gives a sense of belonging. Involvement in peer group relations is the vehicle used by adolescents to establish their independence from the family and parents; however, this does not imply that their attachment to parents is not important (Noppe & Noppe 2004:149). The above author states that, during this stage, adolescents are more prone to being influenced by negative peer models, thus close supervision from parents is necessary because it provides good guidance for the proper development of the adolescent.

The death of a parent during adolescence deprives the young person the natural process of separating from the parent (Stokes et al. 2009:178). The adolescent is left alone to adjust to new relationships of love and care.

- **Emotional aspects of development**

According to Mwamwenda (2004:69), when adolescents relate to their parents, peers, school and society, they experience a variety of emotions and go through a lot of uncertainty as they face challenges of identity formation. They are also concerned about developing their sense of identity and improving their self-esteem and, as a result, adolescents worry about a lot of things including their physical appearance, their sexuality, what they wear, as well as relationships with the opposite sex (Mwamwenda 2004:63). As a result of emotional instability, adolescents like to experiment and may be involved in risk-taking behaviours such as substance abuse, promiscuity and being involved in violent crimes (Perkins 2007:31). During this time, parental guidance is essential because adolescents are emotional, unstable and susceptible to peer pressure (Noppe & Noppe 2004:149).

### 2.4.2 Impact of parental death on adolescents

In order to understand the impact of parental loss during adolescence, it is important to understand why parents are meaningful and important to adolescents. Weymont and Rae (2006:1) as well as Jakobsen and Christiansen (2011:176) link the importance of parents to Bowlby's "Attachment Theory" which is based on the notion that babies bond emotionally with their parents (primary caregivers) through being fed, nurtured, held, protected, and communicated with. They further suggest that children's survival, long-term mental health and the ability to form relationships depend on these primary attachments. Parents, in general, assist adolescents to successfully master the developmental tasks of adolescence by providing security, warmth, feedback, general understanding, as well as by defining reasonable expectations for behaviour and setting appropriate limits with realistic consequences (Noppe & Noppe 2004:149).

With a strong primary attachment the child gains confidence, feels secured and loved, but when the attachment is weak, the young person becomes insecure and is filled with anxiety (Weymont & Rae 2006:1). The above authors further maintain that the death of a parent breaks the primary attachment and the emotional pain associated with such a loss is described as "life threatening" affecting the adolescent's psychological development, as well as causing mental health problems that could last into adulthood (Weymont & Rae 2006:1).

During identity formation, adolescents look up to their parents and their ways of doing things. Stokes et al. (2009:178) state that, during adolescence, parents have great influence on the adolescents' identity formation. Furthermore, adolescents take an interest in their parents' ways of doing things. Therefore, they may incorporate or reject some elements of their parents' behaviour in their own identities. Separating from the parent through death may therefore bring about difficulties for adolescents to realise who they are or desire to be (Stokes et al. 2009:178).

Muuss (1996) in Stokes et al. (2009: 178) points out that, during adolescence, young people are negotiating the developmental tasks of defining their identity, individuating from the family, and establishing a place within their peer group. These developmental processes may influence adolescents, who are in the process of coping with the death

of a parent. The abrupt separation from the parent may have a negative effect on the adolescent's future relationships with the remaining parent and friends as the adolescent may become rebellious (Stokes et al. 178:2009).

Adolescents are also in the process of emotionally separating from their parents (Noppe & Noppe 2004:159; Stokes et al. 2009:178). Stokes et al. (2009:178) state that adolescents are beginning to negotiate the task of separation and individuation from their parents. Peer relations and the need to be accepted by peers becomes more meaningful and important to the adolescent (Noppe & Noppe 2004:159,161; McCarthy 2010:30). Stokes et al. (2009:178) postulate that, at this stage, adolescents often become more rebellious and defiant as they fight for their independence. When a parent dies, the adolescent experiences an abrupt separation from the parent, feels incomplete and abandoned as they are deprived of the natural process of separation from the parent and emotionally reallocating with the peers (Noppe & Noppe 2004:160). Noppe and Noppe (2004:161) and Stokes et al. (2009:178) conclude that being abruptly separated from parents may have implications on how the adolescent will relate in future with friends and adults as the adolescent did not get a chance to deal thoroughly with emotions that go with separation and individuation.

Parental loss, therefore, brings about severe pain and uncertainty to young people. Sussillo (2005:500-501) points out that, when a parent dies, the adolescent experiences the abrupt detachment of parental ties. Sussillo further explains that the adolescent is so devastated that he or she feels that life will never be the same again because the normality the young person used to enjoy when the parent was alive has dramatically changed.

### **2.4.3 Consequences of parental loss**

The effects associated with the impact of losing a parent include feelings of pain, guilt and anger as well as dealing with embarrassment reactions or silence of others (Stokes et al. 2009:177). Stokes et al. (2009:178) also state that there may also be increased levels of psychiatric symptoms, such as anxiety, depression, chronic illnesses and feelings of low self-esteem.

Feelings of pain indicate that the adolescent is actively experiencing bereavement and such feelings should not be ignored because they will keep on resurfacing (Smith et al. 2010:3). After the death of a loved one, guilt feelings may come because one may regret not saying or doing things that he or she thinks they should have (Smith et al. 2010:2). Anger is another emotion felt by adolescents after losing a parent. Adolescents get angry over the death and this anger may be directed at anybody, even at God, for example for allowing the death to happen (McLean 2006:4).

Sometimes adolescents will grieve alone and will pick up on the silence of other people (Perkins 2007:10). Fear and feelings of inadequacy sometimes stop adults from assisting adolescents (Perkins 2007:7) and peers sometimes find it difficult to deal with bereaved adolescents because of their own immaturity, and as a consequence, they react inappropriately and such reactions would be misinterpreted by the bereaved adolescent (McCarthy 2010:30).

Li et al. (2008:152) state that when an African adolescent loses a parent, they do not only lose attention, care and love that parents gave, they also suffer from a lack of resources as well as support for their basic needs. Some African children lose their households and go to live in extended households with relatives who are often without resources (Li et al. 2008:152, Foster & Williamson 2000:279). Other caregivers have shown preference for their own children at the expense of the adolescent without parents (Thupayagale-Tshweneagae & Mokomane 2012:29).

Li et al. (2008:153) indicate that the notion of living with relatives seems to be faced with challenges. The above authors assert that, due to the increase in HIV/AIDS related deaths, the number of young people without parents is increasing and these young people are then left in the care of frail elderly persons (grandparents) who lack adequate resources to provide support to adolescents. Furthermore, Li et al. (2008:153) and Foster and Williamson (2000:280) state that besides the increase in the deaths adults are increasingly migrating to urban areas in search of better economic conditions. Consequently, some of these young people remain in child-headed households where the adolescents themselves are responsible for their younger siblings (Li et al. 2008:152; Foster & Williamson 2000:279; Operario et al. 2008:182). Makame (2002) in Li et al. (2008:153) asserts that adolescents "living in

child-headed households or with grandparents have the most serious psychological problems because of the lack of necessary and adequate social and emotional support in these households.”

Li et al. (2008:153) observed that some African children are often forced to leave school because of financial problems and others need to take care of their younger siblings. They assert that, as a result of dropping out from school, these children miss an opportunity of getting counselling and life skills from school, as well as of socialising with their peers. Elegbeleye (2013:174) adds that children who drop out of school often think about missed opportunities as they look at their hopeless future and this brings about psychological stress that may result into psychological disorders.

Li et al. (2008:153), Nyamukapa et al. (2008:139) and Elegbeleye (2013:174) also point out that because of poorer economic conditions young people, whose parents have died, are exposed to risky sexual experiences at an early age as they lack guidance from parents. Parentally bereaved adolescents lack role models who are responsible for proper socialisation and this may result in antisocial behaviour in adolescents (De Witt & Lessing 2010:468).

Nyamukapa et al. (2008:133) observed in a study conducted on African children in Zimbabwe that psychological distress resulting from parental loss may be influenced by adverse conditions before and after the death of a parent or caregiver. Young people go through traumatic changes. They experience "adjustment problems, low future expectations, poor health, reduced school attendance and performance, school drop-out, and living on the streets" (Nyamukapa et al. 2008:134). In their opinion, Nyamukapa et al. (2008:134) attribute failure to attend school to lack of financial resources to pay school fees, to buy uniform, as well as to have clean clothes – a situation that makes young people ashamed of how they appear to others, and as such negatively affecting self-esteem. Furthermore, because of the emotional burden adolescents may also experience disturbances in school performance, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, as well as lack of stability and control because of changes to finances, daily routines and plans.

In a study by Thupayagale-Tshweneagae and Mokomane (2012:29) on African adolescents in South Africa one youth indicated that, at school, other classmates made hurtful comments to them. Another adolescent said she was forced out of school because her aunt told her that there was not enough money to feed her and pay for the domestic worker. Therefore, she had to give way for her cousin to finish school. Other youths had embarrassing moments at school when they were singled out in front of other learners for special treatment by educators whose intention was to do good, by giving them money for school uniforms and other things (Thupayagale-Tshweneagae & Mokomane 2012:29). Stigmatisation and discrimination may cause children to drop out of school and this may negatively affect the psychosocial well-being of the child (De Witt & Lessing 2010:473).

The above problems are most notable in African adolescents whose communities are characterised by poverty, lack of resources as well as lack of professional support from psychologists and social workers (Nyamukapa et al. 2008:134).

According to Li et al. (2008:152), most African parentally bereaved adolescents are vulnerable because they are from an environment that is characterised by poverty and therefore, losing a parent who is a provider of basic needs, makes them become stressed and anxious. They are uncertain and have concerns about food, clothes, safety and security needs. Cluver and Gardner (2007:321) view poverty as a “risk for emotional and behavioral distress.” Adolescents experience homelessness and living in tin houses where there are no toilets, electricity or water.

De Witt and Lessing (2010:468) state that poverty also contributes to low self-esteem. In the study that they conducted on South African orphans, they found that orphans experienced a sense of being different from others who the adolescents viewed as better off. The orphans in the study lacked food, clothing, personal hygiene, school funds and school materials.

Perkins (2007:31) is of the opinion that since adolescents have to cope with their physical and social changes in the path of their development, it may not be always clear whether their conduct is an expression of grief or merely typical of adolescent behaviour.



#### 2.4.4 The process of bereavement in adolescents

As mentioned in section 2.2.1 above, in order for mourners to go through normal grief it is necessary to go through the processes of grief and complete the tasks of grief. Howarth (2011:23) states that young people also need to go through the stages and tasks of grief in order to successfully adapt to the loss. However, Li et al. (2008:147) points out that the progression through these processes of grief differs from adults because young people are emotionally too immature to process the pain of bereavement, thus may grieve more intensely.

Perkins (2007:67) points out that some adolescents have limited ability to talk and express their feelings. They have fear of being seen as being different so they do not show emotion, thus they may be wrongly perceived to be coping (Reed 2008:5). The way they behave, whether by becoming withdrawn or aggressive will be an indication of how they are feeling. Adolescents could, therefore, be given an opportunity to process and express their feelings and process through what she calls “grief work” (Perkins 2007:67). “Grief work” includes activities that she says assist young people to “talk through and treasure memories; process and express strong feelings (and) come to terms with what has happened.” Some of the activities that enhance healing from bereavement include:

- Compiling a collage of photographs because viewing photos will enhance healing as the adolescent will remember happier times.
- Making a booklet wherein the adolescent writes about the good times that were spent with the deceased.
- Offering an opportunity for the young person to express oneself in poetry, painting and in composing music.
- Collecting contents in a memory box that will be reminders of the deceased person.
- Making a family tree so that the adolescent can get to understand that life does not end with the death but continues with the living (Perkins 2007:68-76).

Grief is regarded as a normal and healthy response to loss (McCarthy 2006:17; Mahoney 2008). As mentioned above (see section 2.2.1) people who go through the stages of bereavement and complete the tasks of bereavement will experience normal grief (Servarty-Seib 2004:129). Adolescents are no exception to this rule. Perkins (2007:38) suggests that, if adolescents are given the opportunity to grieve properly, there is a possibility that the adolescent's grief will be resolved. Perkins further asserts that grief is resolved when it has been experienced and expressed, by going through the emotions associated with bereavement. Consequently, the young person will be in a position to integrate the loss, keep pleasant memories about the deceased and move on (Perkins 2007:38).

However, when the bereaved adolescents are unable to experience the processes and normal tasks of bereavement adequately, they can be negatively affected and, consequently, delaying the emotional well-being of the adolescent (Howarth 2011:30). Li et al. (2008:147) is of the opinion that young people are more susceptible to unresolved grief "because of their developmental vulnerability, intellectual immaturity and emotional dependency."

There are determinants that will affect the young person's grieving or healing process. According to Perkins (2007:34), Noppe and Noppe (2004:158-159) and Nyamukapa et al. (2008:133) determining factors include the young person's characteristics, the number of previous deaths that were experienced by the family, the cause of parental death, physical and emotional functioning of the surviving parent or guardian, as well as major adjustments after the death. Major adjustments are influenced by changes in the place of residence, availability of financial resources and emotional support services to the bereaved adolescent. The above aspects may be so traumatic to the bereaved young person affecting their well-being and causing psychosocial distress including depression, anxiety, as well as self-esteem problems (Nyamukapa et al. 2008:134; Elegbeleye 2013:174).

#### 2.4.5 Needs of the adolescents

Perkins (2007:42) and Elegbeleye (2013: 177) suggest that grieving youths need at least one adult who can provide them with love and support. Perkins (2007:42) states that ideally the adult should amongst other things assist with the following:

- *information on what has happened and why;*
- *information on what will happen next;*
- *reassurance that they will be cared for and are not to blame;*
- *asking questions, and having them answered as honestly and openly as possible;*
- *being involved in the grieving process as much as they want to;*
- *expressing their feelings;*
- *talking freely about the deceased;*
- *having a support network;*
- *reassurance that their world has not completely disintegrated;*
- *being with adults who also share their feelings and who will allow children to offer them comfort and support.*

(Perkins 2007:42)

#### 2.4.6 Support and coping with bereavement for the grieved adolescent

Social support is support that comes from other people, such as family, friends or organisations (Elegbeleye 2013:175). Elegbeleye (2013: 175) and Onuoha, Munakata, Serumuga-Zake, Nyonyintono and Bogere (2009:985) state that when one receives support during stressful times the level of psychological distress reduces. Conversely, when there is no support, major mental disorders may come about. Elegbeleye (2013:175) remarks that African children often lack supportive resources and this could be harmful to their psychological well-being.

Just like adults, adolescents cope with bereavement by going through the internal processes of bereavement (see section 2.2.1). Stokes et al. (2009:180) is of the opinion that professionals do not find it easy to engage adolescents because adolescents are hesitant to seek assistance from counselling services, and those who succeed in reaching counselling services end contact before having achieved a desirable outcome. Bereaved adolescents, therefore, may ignore professional help even if it was available. Stokes et al (2009:180) attribute avoidance of adult help to the developmental task of seeking independence from adults.

Yawa (2010:76-77) highlighted that when a family member dies children are told about the death and they are involved in the rituals necessary in the bereavement process. She adds that children's participation in rituals, including activities such as cutting of hair, will expose them to and teach them to respect their cultures.

Matumba (2003:40-41) and Shear (2009:746) state that during bereavement attention concerning physical and emotional support from family, friends and relatives often centres around adults and inadequate attention is given to the mourning of the young person. This situation leaves the children to manage on their own.

When practitioners work with adolescents, a connection should be made between the stage of adolescence, the experience of grief as well as the influence of culture predominant in adolescents as these are important aspects (Lopez 2011:12).

Perkins (2007:64) states that bereavement will also affect negatively on the performance of adolescents at school and their social interaction because of the emotional burden they carry because of grief. In contrast, others might put their energy into forgetting about their sad experiences while at school.

Jessop and McCarthy (2006:148) suggest that school is regarded as a major social context where bereaved youth can get support. According to them, young people spend most of their time at school and, therefore, the school provides an obvious setting for interventions to address both learning and social-emotional concerns. Thus, teachers need to be aware of the effects of parental bereavement in adolescents in order to assist them to cope with parental loss.

Perkins (2007:65) is of the opinion that the school may be the only stable place where a child may be able to talk about grief because at school there are trusted adults who are not emotionally involved with death and who will be prepared to listen. The above author also suggests that other learners and the school personnel could be informed of the bereavement so that they can be sensitive to the situation. Perkins (2007:66) also advises that to be prepared for the bereavement of learners the schools should have a policy that manages bereavement.

Nelson and Nelson (2010) quoted in Lopez (2011:11) state that adolescents are in search for their own identity, thus regard peers as central in their lives and, as such, are prone to be easily influenced by friends and cliques. In order to succeed in dealing with their fears and feelings, adolescents need support, encouragement and validation from their peers (McClellan 2006:7). According to Noppe and Noppe (2004:161) a support group may assist in removing the feeling of loneliness that is experienced by the bereaved adolescent and also to bring about a sense of belonging and identity needed by the adolescent. Noppe and Noppe (2004:162) state that successful coping is when a bereaved adolescent is able to talk about their feelings, can solve problems that they encounter as well as seek the necessary support they may need.

In more rural traditional communities, the extended families play a pivotal role and if children are not being fostered by the extended family, already vulnerable children are at risk of dangerous behaviors and situations (Foster & Williamson 2000: 277). In an African context, community and extended family members assist by giving “material relief, labour and emotional support” to bereaved adolescents (Foster & Williamson 2000:277). Foster and Williamson (2000:277) observed that the support that is given is based on volunteering. Although community members get involved in caring for the bereaved youth, the extended family remains as the core unit that gives support (Foster & Williamson 2000:277; Nyamukapa et al. 2008:134; Li et al. 2008:152). Due to the increase in HIV/AIDS deaths and adults increasingly migrating in search of better economic conditions, extended families are under stress (Li et al. 2008:153, Foster & Williamson 2000:277). Foster and Williamson (2000:278) suggest that in addition to the extended family there should be institutions like “children’s villages” and “adoptive placements” to house children without parents. Foster and Williamson (2000:281) are of the opinion that it is sometimes not attainable to address the psychological impact of bereavement in young people, especially where basic needs are not met because “in some contexts a blanket and food may be more appropriate than counselling.”

Operario et al. (2008:184) state that the policy of “no fee” schools in poor environments that were introduced by the South African Government gives access to learners who

have lost a parent to attend school. De Witt and Lessing (2010:467) in their study on orphans in South Africa noted that some adolescents receive children's grant of R210.00 and others do not receive it because adults responsible did not apply for it. Furthermore, grant money is not only used to benefit the adolescent, but used for the whole family.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

The death of a parent is traumatic for adolescents because they have many issues to handle. As indicated in the discussion above adolescents are at a developmental stage with challenging developmental aspects. These young people have to cope with their developmental tasks in their journey from childhood to adulthood. When these young people lose a parent through death, they are faced by not only the challenges of transition from childhood to adulthood but also adjustment problems after the death of a parent. The abrupt separation from a parent brings about a new sense of vulnerability (Sussillo 2005:500-501), and the grief experience becomes very severe. Thus, adolescents need emotional and material support from family, peers, community members, school and other professionals as they go through the process of bereavement. It is important for people working with adolescents to understand how the loss of a parent affects an adolescent in order for them to be sensitive to the needs of the bereaved adolescent.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the researcher conducted a general literature study in order to gain background knowledge on bereavement in general, African bereavement as well as adolescent bereavement and the coping strategies adopted by adolescents in a time of bereavement. The support offered to assist bereaved adolescents, especially African adolescents, was also discussed. The death of a parent is traumatic for adolescents who have to cope with challenging developmental aspects. Challenges and changes brought about by losing a parent brought a lot of uncertainty to adolescents resulting in negative emotional experiences. Despite the challenges, adolescents manage to find positive ways of dealing with bereavement by going through intrapersonal experiences of grief and external mourning rituals. The literature study also revealed that adolescents need to be emotionally supported in order to make their lives more meaningful.

The empirical research will provide information on how the research on emotional experiences of parentally bereaved adolescents was conducted. An in-depth description of the research design and methodology used for this study will be given. Included will be a discussion of the sampling technique used, data collection methods, data analysis methods and the way the findings will be presented. Ethical considerations which were applied in this study will be discussed.

Noting the research problems of how do African adolescents in a rural community emotionally experience bereavement after the death of a parent and how do they cope with bereavement, the focus in this study is to investigate:

- What is the emotional experience of African adolescents as a result of parental bereavement in a rural context?
- How do African adolescents who live in a rural environment deal with bereavement following the death of a parent?

- What kind of assistance do African adolescents in a rural context receive for parental bereavement?
- What assistance do African adolescents need specifically from educators for parental bereavement?

To answer the questions formulated in this study the researcher employed a qualitative research approach.

## **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.2.1 Research design**

According to Durrheim (2006:35), a research design is a plan that guides a study by giving specifics on how the research will be conducted in order to answer the research question. The research question centres on how African adolescents in a rural community emotionally experience bereavement after the death of a parent and how they cope with bereavement. The aims of this research were descriptive in nature as the researcher intended to describe a phenomenon as experienced in the real world (Durrheim 2006:44). Therefore, a descriptive research design for an in-depth study of bereavement experienced by adolescents in a rural context, who have lost a parent, was used.

A “descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship, and focuses on ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions” (Neuman 2000, as cited in Fouché & De Vos 2005:106). Fouché and De Vos (2005:106) further explain that in “descriptive research the researcher begins with a well-defined subject and conducts research to describe it accurately”. In this study, bereavement in general and adolescent bereavement specifically was explored through a literature review with emphasis on African adolescent bereavement. The researcher also undertook an empirical investigation to explore African adolescent bereavement in adolescents who have lost a parent and stay in a rural environment.



### 3.2.2 Research approach

Due to the nature of this study, the research approach that was deemed suitable to investigate African adolescents' emotional experiences of parental bereavement in the rural context was a qualitative approach. Bogdan and Biklen (2007:274) define qualitative research as "an approach to social science research that emphasizes collecting descriptive data in natural settings, uses inductive thinking, and emphasizes understanding the subject's point of view." This allows the researcher to work in-depth on a number of issues in real life situations in order to understand the perspective of the people studied (Nieuwenhuis 2007a:51). To obtain a better understanding of why qualitative research was the preferred approach in this study, features of qualitative research, as explained by Bogdan and Biklen (2007:3-9), will be summarised as follows:

1. Qualitative research is conducted in the naturalistic setting of the participants. This implies that the main concern of the researcher is to observe and understand the participant perspective in the setting in which it occurs (Nieuwenhuis 2007a:51). This is based on the premise that "qualitative researchers assume that human behaviour is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs, and whenever possible, they go to that location" (Bogdan & Biklen 2007:5). In this research project, the researcher's aim was to interact with the participants by conducting semi-structured interviews when she visited them in the rural settlement where such adolescents lived.

2. In qualitative research, descriptive data is used because the researcher is concerned with information that is rich in detail (Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tennant & Rahim 2014:117). Due to its descriptive nature the researcher is interested in what people say in words, their descriptions as well as their opinions and feelings instead of attaching importance on numbers that make a sample (Bogdan & Biklen 2007:5; Nieuwenhuis 2007a:51; Walliman & Appleton 2009:198). In this study, data analysis focussed on what adolescents said about their emotional experiences after having lost a parent through death. In order to get a rich description of what adolescents said, the researcher recorded the interviews using a digital recorder and transcribed the interviews. In this way, the researcher would draw meaning from the transcriptions of in-depth interviews with the participants.

3. Data analysis is performed inductively in the sense that the researcher builds theories from data collected from participants rather than structuring a study around a hypothesis (Bogdan & Biklen 2007:7). In support of the above opinion, Ormston, Spencer, Barnard and Snape (2014:7) argue that qualitative researchers build knowledge from observing the world, thereby formulating theories. In this study, the researcher aimed to collect data by interviewing bereaved adolescents who would share their experiences to be analysed and interpreted data to be collected with conclusions drawn from the findings.

4. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the subject's point of view. Attention is given to how different people perceive and give meaning to their lives (Bogdan & Biklen 2007:7). Qualitative research was preferred in the present study because the researcher was interested in how adolescents perceived bereavement as well as the meaning adolescents attached to their experiences about bereavement and their emotions after the death of their parents.

Fouché and Delport (2005:75) affirm that a qualitative approach enables the researcher to gather data concerning participants' accounts of experiences expressed in their own language and environment. The researcher chose this approach because she was interested in collecting data focusing on the adolescents' emotional experiences and perceptions of bereavement, with adolescents expressing themselves in their own words and in their natural environment. From the data that the researcher collected from adolescents using semi-structured interviews and a digital recorder, the researcher would be able to capture how adolescents felt about bereavement as accurately as possible, to produce an analysis and interpretation of information and reach conclusions.

### **3.3 RESEARCH METHOD**

Research methods are the more technical aspects of research that comprise the following: surveys, interviews and observations (Bogdan & Biklen 2007:35). The above authors note that methods should be consistent with the logic contained in the methodology. In qualitative research, the researcher needs to get close to the people,

hear them talk and observe them in their day-to-day lives in order to understand the way they think about their world (Bogdan & Biklen 2007:35). In this study, the aim of the researcher was to interview bereaved adolescents in their environment to gain an overview about their emotional experiences of bereavement.

The research approach in a study helps with the decision on how to select participants (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight 2001:161). The manner in which participants were selected will be discussed below.

### **3.3.1 Sampling and sampling techniques**

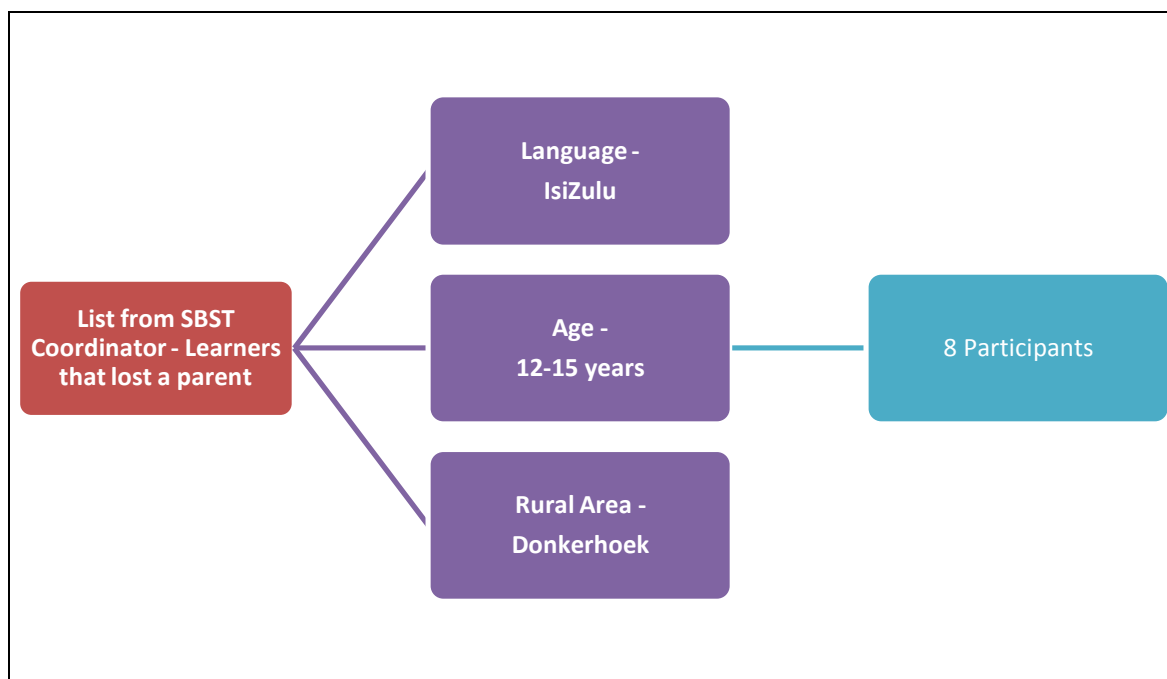
Durrheim (2006:49), Nieuwenhuis (2007:79b) and Walliman (2009:276) state that a sample is a selection of a number of cases from a population for the purposes of the study. Selection “involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours, and/or processes to observe” (Durrheim 2006:49). In addition, Durrheim maintains that sampling techniques employed should be according to the research approach chosen for the study. According to Strydom and Delpont (2005:328), in qualitative research, purposive sampling methods are used because the researcher looks for participants and settings where the specific phenomena being studied will most likely occur.

The population of this study was based in Donkerhoek, a rural area situated in the east of Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa. Eight learners (between ages 12 to 15) who stay in Donkerhoek, attending Primary School and had experienced the loss of a parent were considered to be most suitable for the study. The learners were selected through purposeful sampling (Refer: Figure 3.1).

Purposive sampling was regarded as a useful sampling technique because through this method the researcher can gather information from participants “typical” of the study (Strydom & Delpont 2005:328; Walliman 2009:279). This implies that members of a sample were selected with a purpose because they had the necessary features that would bring about the understanding of the questions the researcher aimed to study (Ritchie et al. 2014:113). Therefore, participants that may be selected for any given study are those who have direct experience of the phenomenon (Hays & Wood 2011:291).

In this study, purposeful sampling was deemed to be a suitable technique because the researcher selected what she thought was a typical sample. The purpose of this sampling was the in-depth knowledge that would present an insight into the topic of the emotional experiences of bereaved African adolescents who lived in a rural environment and had lost a parent through death. Therefore, the researcher opted to select bereaved learners who attended a Primary School. The School-based Support Team Coordinator provided a list of learners who had lost a parent. Selection would be adolescents who speak isiZulu, the language the participants could express themselves in and the researcher was well conversant in. Figure 3.1 presents an overview of the method that was used in the selection of participants.

*Figure 3.1: Selection Criteria*



Maree and Pietersen (2007:178) suggest that another important factor in qualitative research is the sample size. There are no rules for sample size because deciding on sample size “depends on what you know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (Patton 2002, in Strydom & Delport 2005:328). Hays and Wood (2011:289) recommends a sample size that will range between five to twenty five participants. For the purposes of this study, the researcher was interested in the

context as opposed to numbers hence she opted for eight participants who were bereaved and who could relate well to the intended study phenomena.

### 3.3.2. Data collection

#### 3.3.2.1 Semi-structured Interview

Greeff (2005:287) states that interviewing is the principal method of data collection in qualitative research. Interviewing is defined as a dialogue between the interviewer and the participant, where the interviewer asks questions to gather diverse information about feelings, ideas, opinions and behaviours of the participant on a given topic (Nieuwenhuis 2007b:87; Atkins and Wallace 2012:86). The aim of conducting interviews is to assist the researcher to view the world through the eyes of the participants with the purpose of getting to understand the world from the view point of the participants and to get the meaning the participants attach to their experiences (Greeff 2005:287; Nieuwenhuis 2007b:87; Yeo, Legard, Keegan, Ward, McNaughton Nicholls and Lewis 2014:178).

Three types of interviews are suggested by Nieuwenhuis (2007b:87) and Walliman and Appleton (2009:174-175). They are: unstructured interviews, semi-structured and structured interviews. In structured interviews, closed questions that are similar to a questionnaire are developed in advance and used to get precise responses from participants (Walliman & Appleton 2009:174-175). Unstructured interviews to which Greeff (2005:292) refers (also known as in-depth interviews) are characterised by the use of open-ended questions because the participant is not expected to give a direct answer to a question or the researcher to test a hypothesis, but to “understand the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience”. Walliman and Appleton (2009:175) explain that a semi-structured interview is between structured and unstructured types of interviews because there is partial pre-planning of open-ended interview questions. The researcher uses a set of “pre-determined questions on an interview schedule, but the interview will be guided by the schedule rather than be dictated by it” (Greeff 2005:296).

Greeff (2005:296) points out that the advantage of using a semi-structured interview is that it allows the participants to expand on a topic as they deem fit when talking about their story as the participants are regarded as experts on the subject. The above author adds that the researcher may only intervene by making probes or follow-ups on interesting aspects that emerge from the discussion.

In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to achieve face-to-face interaction with the participants. Using this type provided a more relaxed atmosphere for bereaved adolescents who have to relive painful experiences of parental loss. An interview schedule was used to guide the interview.

### **3.3.2.2 Interview schedule**

An interview schedule is a list of predetermined questions that is written to guide the interview to assist the interviewer to remain focused during the session (Greeff 2005: 296; Atkins & Wallace 2012:89). Greeff (2005:296) asserts that formulating the questions beforehand helps the researcher to think ahead concerning difficulties that he or she might come across. Furthermore, questions asked are open-ended in nature and focus on the phenomena being studied. Greeff adds that the researcher must make sure that questions cover the topic the researcher wishes to explore (2005:297). Atkins and Wallace (2012:89) state that drawing an interview schedule guides the interviewer to avoid asking leading or closed questions that will elicit a one word response. Although the researcher will be guided by the interview schedule, it is still imperative to allow the participant to play a primary role in determining how the interview will proceed as the participant has more information concerning his or her experiences (Greeff 2005:297).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants and an interview schedule was used to guide the interview. The schedule included specific probes pertaining to the research question being studied (see Appendix H), but the participants were free to expand on the topic as they deemed fit with the interviewer intervening for clarification. The interviews were conducted in isiZulu, the language the participants could express themselves in and the researcher was well conversant in. Although the participants came from various ethnic groups, they were all conversant

in isiZulu. Therefore, the researcher was comfortable to interview them in isiZulu as it was also the language of instruction at school. Using isiZulu would assist the participants to feel more comfortable and relaxed. During the process of interviewing, a digital recorder was used to record the interviews.

### **3.3.2.3 Digital recorder**

Using a digital recorder is advantageous because the researcher is able to capture the entire conversation that will be used in the verbatim transcription of data collected (Atkins & Wallace 2012:90). Furthermore, the researcher is able to concentrate, maintain eye contact and guide the discussion as he or she will not be distracted by, for example, note-taking (Greeff 2005:298).

Although using a voice recorder is beneficial, it has disadvantages in that the recording device can bring about unhappiness to the participants at the thought of being recorded (Greeff 2005:298). To mitigate the negative effects of recording prior to interviewing, the researcher should get permission from the participants about the use of a tape recorder, provide the participants with the purpose for using an audio recorder and give an explanation of confidentiality issues, as well as how recordings and transcripts will be kept in a safe and secure place after the study (Henning et al. 2004:74; Greeff 2005:298; Arthur, Mitchell, Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls 2014:172).

In this study, the researcher used a digital voice recorder in order to be free of distractions, to be able to capture the conversation for transcription and for ease of analysis. The use of a recorder enabled the researcher to concentrate and guide the discussion. Since the researcher was aware of informed consent, confidentiality and security concerns, she requested the participants' permission to use a digital recorder prior to interviewing and explained to the participants the purpose of using a tape recorder (see Appendix G2).

## **3.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis must be conducted in relation to a researcher's research design and approach (Nieuwenhuis 2007c:100). Walliman and Appleton (2009:198) state that it is

common practice that researchers in qualitative studies deal with small groups or individuals because qualitative researchers are more concerned with what people say in words (their descriptions, accounts as well as their opinions and feelings) than with numbers. Therefore, data cannot be analysed using statistical procedures. In this study, data analysis reflected participant perspectives on their experiences of parental bereavement. The researcher drew meaning of participants' lived experiences from the content of word-for-word transcriptions of in-depth interviews with the participants.

Data collected from participants requires the researcher to read repeatedly and understand the content in order to interpret and reach findings (Nieuwenhuis 2007c:104). To gain an understanding, Nieuwenhuis advises that one needs to organise data in a meaningful way. Bogdan and Biklen (2007:159) concur when they state that, for data to be useful, the researcher must review and organise it by dividing it into smaller and manageable units. In addition, the researcher must code and group data into units of meaningful patterns. They define data analysis as "the process of sorting, arranging, coding, and in other ways looking for patterns in data for the purpose of coming up with findings" (Bogdan & Biklen 2007:271). In qualitative research, the analytical instrument is largely the researcher whose knowledge, understanding and expertise will determine what happens to the data (Henning et al. 2004:6).

The individual interviews that were recorded were transcribed and translated into English. Thereafter, the content was analysed manually by the researcher according to the steps as proposed by Terre Blanche et al. (2006:322-326). These authors postulate that the steps do not present a fixed orderly process but helpful techniques that may be applied when analysing data. The steps are presented as follows:

- **Step 1: Familiarisation and immersion**

The purpose of this step is for the researcher to get an overview of the data in order to become familiar with the raw material and get to understand what participants are saying in relation to the research question (Spencer, Ritchie, O'Connor, Morrell & Ormston 2014:297). The process involves reading the text over several times in order to have a thorough understanding of the rich accounts provided by participants and to



search for meanings and patterns (Terre Blanche et al. 2006:323). At this stage, the researcher wants to get an “overall sense or feel for the data” (Wellington 2000:135, as cited in Watkins & Wallace 2012:222). When transcribing interview responses, the researcher leaves a wide margin on the left in order to have space to write notes and labels for text (Taylor-Powell & Renner 2003:6). The researcher read the transcripts and went over the text many times. During this process, the researcher made notes of relevant information to the study along the margin.

- **Step 2: Inducing potential themes**

During the familiarisation process, a long list of important items that are relevant to the study is identified and this information must be structured into categories or themes (Spencer et al. 2014:297). This is done by reading and re-reading the text, in the process identifying connected categories, themes or patterns (Taylor-Powell & Renner 2003:2). According to Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003:2) themes or patterns emerge from “ideas, concepts, behaviours, interactions, incidents, terminology or phrases used” by participants. Terre Blanche et al. (2006:323) support the notion that themes emerge from the data as the researcher reads and re-reads the data and that themes must have a bearing on the research questions.

Bearing in mind the ideas mentioned above, the researcher immersed herself in the data and identified relevant topics about the experiences of the participants. Coherent ideas or topics were grouped into meaningful categories and assigned descriptive themes.

- **Step 3: Coding**

When analysing data, codes are used to label data throughout the process (Spencer, Ritchie, Ormston, O’Connor & Barnard 2014:277). Terre Blanche et al. (2006:325) state that during coding, data is broken down into labelled and meaningful pieces with the intention of grouping the material into clusters that will be analysed in relation to other clusters. Phrases and sentences within the data are placed to a code, under a

theme. Therefore, coding refers to the descriptive names or labels that are given to similar and meaningful categories.

Terre Blanche et al. (2006:326) are of the opinion that the functions of “thematizing” and “coding” tend to overlap into each other because themes that have been developed may change during coding as more understanding is reached. In addition, a theme may develop sub-themes.

In this study, the researcher took phrases and sentences that appeared to belong together within the data and placed them into a code under a theme. Different colours were used to highlight the phrases in order for the researcher to easily identify similar categories.

- **Step 4: Elaboration**

After coding and categorising themes, the researcher goes through a process called elaboration which involves revisiting the data, giving the data a thorough analysis by exploring themes more closely, as well as revising the coding system (Terre Blanche et al. 2006:326). Elaboration is done because initial themes that emerged from data may appear not completely worked out and may require further development or amendments (Spencer et al. 2014:282). Terre Blanche et al (2006:326) advise that at this stage the researcher must “keep on coding, elaborating, and recoding until no further significant new insights appear to emerge”. The above authors assert that, as the researcher immerses in the interview transcripts, the researcher gets a chance to revise the coding system in order to come up with a thorough analysis.

This step assisted the researcher in this study to go over the data again to check details that she might have missed in the previous steps. In order to produce a finer analysis, the researcher revised the coding system and revisited the data and ensured that the material that belonged together was categorised under the same code, sub-theme and theme. After the researcher was satisfied that there was no new information that emerged from the transcripts, she gave a written account of her findings.

- **Step 5: Interpretation**

According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006:326), this step entails giving a written account of interpretations and findings related to the study by using themes drawn from the analysis. They advise that the researcher must revisit the material that was collected and, in the process, check if interpretation was appropriate, as well as making corrections where necessary.

The researcher also gets a chance of reflecting on her role by checking if collection of the data and forming interpretations was done properly (Terre Blanche et al. 2006:326). In addition, reflection assists in checking over-interpretation, researcher biases and prejudices when analysing and interpreting data. It is also important for the researcher to discuss with people who are knowledgeable about the topic and may give a fresh perspective.

Interpretation involves “attaching meaning and significance to the analysis” (Taylor-Powell & Renner 2003:5). Taylor-Powell and Renner advise that, to draw meaning and interpret findings, the researcher needs to ask what has been learned from the study. They also suggest that the researcher should use themes and categories to explain findings. Using quotations and examples from the interview transcripts bring the analysis to life (Taylor-Powell & Renner 2003:5).

The researcher, in this study, revisited the steps, reading and re-reading text and making amendments where necessary until she was convinced that the data was correctly structured. To check on her personal involvement in collecting data, analysing text and creating interpretations, she worked with her research supervisor. Presentation of findings was in narrative format. To provide evidence of themes and sub-themes, verbatim quotations and examples from interview transcripts were presented.

### 3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY

For research to be regarded as true and real, Lincoln and Guba (1985:290, as cited in De Vos 2005:346-347) propose four constructs that must be observed, namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. These are explained as follows:

1. Credibility will be achieved if the researcher accurately identifies and describes the subject (De Vos et al. 2005:346). In this study, the researcher identified the population and setting to place clear boundaries around the study. Prior to interviewing the researcher built rapport with each participant to create a suitable environment for interviewing. The researcher was also familiar with the research setting, as she had spent a year in the area working with learners when doing internship. Furthermore, to increase credibility, the researcher used a variety of methods to collect data. For example, the researcher collected data by using semi-structured interviews, an interview guide and a digital recorder.

2. Transferability according to Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in De Vos 2005:346) questions if the findings of the study can be generalised to other populations. The above authors view generalisability to other “populations, settings and treatment arrangements” as problematic in qualitative research because of the personal nature of interviews. In this study, generalisability was a limitation because of the small sample size and homogeneity of the population. However, this sample fairly represents the population in a rural setting. Thus, a fair amount of transferability can be applied to other populations and settings that share similar characteristics. The phenomena studied were the emotional experiences of bereavement of adolescents in a rural context. The researcher put the phenomena studied in context to enable transferability to other populations that share commonality.

3. Dependability addresses the consistency of the findings if research were to be repeated on the same participants (De Vos 2005:346). According to the above author, the aim in qualitative research is not to replicate findings but to get a rich understanding of what is studied, thus the question of replication is viewed as problematic. Although the replication of findings is viewed as problematic, the researcher should be able to

give an audit trail of the research process and findings to give evidence of the research activities. In this study, the researcher discussed the processes that the researcher followed and kept the recorded and transcribed interviews in a safe and secure place.

4. Conformability questions if another researcher can confirm the research findings of the empirical investigation (De Vos 2005:347). This is to ensure the objectivity of the researcher. To ensure conformability, the researcher was not biased or prejudiced when analysing and interpreting data. To increase objectivity, the researcher used a digital recorder to keep accurate information. When analysing data, the researcher returned repeatedly to the interview transcripts to get a thorough understanding of adolescents' perceptions and to guard against being influenced by her feelings or biases. Verbatim quotations from participants' responses were included in the analysis to ensure objectivity. The researcher also checked on her personal involvement in collecting data, analysing text and creating interpretations when working with her research supervisor whose input brought knowledgeable perspective.

The researcher in this study applied the above constructs to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the study.

### **3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

When dealing with human beings in research, it is necessary to adhere to and note ethical considerations (Strydom 2005:56). Holloway (2005:17) states that ethics are moral standards that address the way a researcher is supposed to behave. The researcher has a moral obligation to be ethical even when the participants are unaware or unconcerned about ethics. Prior to data collection, the researcher submitted an application to the UNISA Research Ethical Committee and approval was subsequently granted. Therefore, this research was conducted following the guidelines as set by the Committee. Ethical considerations that were considered in this study included informed consent, protection from harm, confidentiality, anonymity and right to privacy, treatment of the participants, as well as freedom to withdraw.

### 3.6.1 Informed consent

It is necessary for researchers to obtain participants' written consent to obtain information about them and to write "anonymised" quotes in the reporting of information to protect the participants (Walliman & Appleton 2009:162). Participants and other relevant bodies must be given accurate information with regard to the purpose, methods and outcomes of the study (Henning et al. 2004:73; Strydom 2005:59; Walliman & Appleton 2009:160). Furthermore, advantages, disadvantages, potential harm to participants, as well as the credibility of the researcher must be indicated so that all concerned must fully understand the process.

Another important issue, according to Strydom (2005:59) is that participants must be made aware that participation is voluntary. This implies that they are not forced to participate in the research and may, at any point, be allowed to withdraw from the research without victimisation (Strydom 2005:59). Strydom (2005:59) also adds that all interested parties should be given permission to ask questions if there is something they do not understand.

In this study, the researcher ensured that participants and the surviving parents or guardians were informed about the purpose, methods and outcomes of the study in a language they understood best. Written consent was sought from parents or guardians and assent from learners before the research commenced.

Eight learners who lost a parent were selected from the list which was compiled by the School Based Support Team. Learners were approached individually to establish their willingness to participate in the study. The researcher explained to the learners the purpose of the research, their role and what was to be done with the information gathered from them. Learners who were willing to participate were requested to discuss their participation with their parents or guardians. If their parents or guardians agreed, the researcher would invite the parents or guardians to present themselves at a meeting convened to be attended with their children.

The researcher went through the same procedure with the parent or guardian individually. After the process had been explained to the parent or guardian, the

researcher went through the letter of consent with the parent or guardian. They were allowed to ask questions if there was something they did not understand. Their parents or guardians gave consent by reading and signing the letter (Appendix F2). After the process had been explained to the learner, the researcher went through the letter of assent with the participant. They were allowed to ask questions if there was something they did not understand. Then the participant gave consent by signing the letter (Appendix G2).

Henning et al. (2004:73) note that written permission must also be requested from organisations because the researcher will use their site and name. Therefore, the researcher requested permission from relevant organisations, including the Gauteng Department of Education (Appendix B), Gauteng North District (D1) (Appendix C), the School Governing Body (Appendix D) and the School Principal (Appendix E). These parties were also informed about the purpose, methods and outcomes of the study.

### **3.6.2 Protection from harm**

Bogdan and Biklen (2007:48) postulate that researchers must ensure that participants are not exposed to risks and harm. The above authors have indicated that if there is a possibility of any danger this should be mentioned in the consent form.

In this study, an indication was given in the consent and assent letters that there might be some psychological discomfort and stress associated with this research as the participation might bring back sad memories of losing their parent. Should the interviews cause distress and anxiety to the participants, as they recalled unpleasant events, arrangements would be made by the researcher for counselling sessions to take place and referrals made to other professionals as and if the need arose.

### **3.6.3 Confidentiality and non-disclosure**

Consideration should be given to the right of participants to privacy and confidentiality so that they may not be identified (Walliman & Appleton 2009:162). Strydom (2005:61) defines the right to privacy as “the individual’s right to decide when, where, to whom, and to what extent his or her attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour will be revealed.” The

right to confidentiality means that the identities of the participants are known to the researcher but the identities will not be revealed in the reporting of the information in order not to embarrass the participant (Bogdan and Biklen 2007:50). For example, pseudonyms may be used. The above authors further warn that researchers must not lie or record information on hidden apparatus.

Privacy considerations were adhered to by the researcher because the participants gave consent to the use of a digital voice recorder. Participants were also reassured of the confidentiality of the study. To keep information confidential, participants were allocated numbers that were used in the findings instead of their names and voice recordings and transcriptions of the interviews would be kept in a safe place.

### **3.6.4 Freedom to withdraw**

In some instances, the researcher may come from a superior position or status and this perception may intimidate the participants (Strydom 2005:57). The researcher understood that she came from a position of authority and that adolescents might feel obliged to participate. To avoid a situation where participants would feel obligated, the researcher highlighted to the participants that they could withdraw from the study at any point and that withdrawing from the study would not affect them in any way. Participants were also informed that they were not obliged to carry on with the interviews should they wish to discontinue.

## **3.7 CONCLUSION**

To achieve the research goal for this study, the researcher employed a descriptive research design and a qualitative approach in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the emotional experiences of African adolescents after the loss of a parent. Purposive sampling methods were used to select participants because the researcher was interested in adolescents who lived in a rural setting and had lost a parent through death. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants in order to gain detailed information about their experiences. An interview schedule and a digital recorder were used to keep the interview focused. To analyse data, the researcher developed categories and themes by grouping coherent concepts, ideas



or issues that emerged from the interview transcripts applying the interpretive data analysis process proposed by Terre Blanche et al. (2006:322-326). Data verification measures and ethical considerations were also presented.

In Chapter 4, reports on the findings derived from the empirical research conducted on bereaved African adolescents in a rural environment through in-depth interviews will be presented in narrative format. The narratives of the adolescents were used to discuss the findings.

## CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher conducted this study to explore the emotional experiences of bereavement of African adolescents through the death of parents and who live in a rural environment. The following subquestions as stated in Chapter 1 were explored:

- What is the emotional experience of African adolescents as a result of parental bereavement in a rural context?
- How do African adolescents who live in a rural environment deal with bereavement following the death of a parent?
- What kind of assistance do African adolescents in a rural context receive for parental bereavement?
- What assistance do African adolescents need specifically from educators for parental bereavement?

In Chapter 2, bereavement in general and adolescent bereavement specifically were explored through a literature review. Information on how empirical research was conducted and the ethical considerations for the study were provided in Chapter 3. Due to the nature of this study, the qualitative research approach was suitable to investigate African adolescents' experiences of parental loss and bereavement in a rural context. Through this approach, the researcher was able to collect data from parental bereaved adolescents using semi-structured interviews in the participant's natural environment, with participants giving accounts of their own experiences in their own words.

Data collection was undertaken in line with the ethical research principles that are applied when working with human participants. In order to conduct the study permission was granted by the Ethics Committee of UNISA (Reference number:2013 November/0653-475-9/CSLR), The Gauteng Department of Education, Northern Gauteng District as well as the Governing Body and the School Principal of the designated school. Signed parental consent of all learners and signed letters of assent

from all learners who participated in the study were obtained. It was explained to all participants that participation was voluntary and that participants who wanted to withdraw at any time during the research could do so without suffering negative consequences. Confidentiality and non-disclosure issues were also highlighted to ensure participants that their identities would not be known in publication and that numbers would be used by the researcher when reporting findings.

The focus of Chapter 4 is on analysing, interpreting and discussing data, as well as reflecting on adolescents' perspectives on their emotional experiences of parental bereavement. Findings will be presented and discussed in relation to how they collaborate with existing theories identified in the literature review and to a new body of knowledge from the research.

## **4.2 INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS**

The researcher drew meaning from participants' lived experiences from the transcriptions of interviews with the participants. All the participants were originally from poor, rural environments and their families relocated to a rural settlement that was characterised by poverty and cultural diversity.

Data was collected from eight participants. The participants were adolescents between the ages of twelve and fifteen years. As the researcher wished to ensure the anonymity of the participants, all participants were given numbers. All participants had lost their fathers, seven through natural causes and one through an accident. Seven of the participants were living with their mothers and several other children, some cohabitating with uncles and aunts, and three of the participants had step-fathers. One of the participants lived in a child-headed household with her elder sister who assumed adult responsibilities. Below is a table illustrating biographical details of the research participants that were interviewed. These details contribute to important background knowledge.

**Table 4.1: Biographical information of participants**

Participant	Gender	Age	Background	Year of death	Cause of death of parent	Current living arrangements
1	F	12	Ndebele	2012	Diabetes	Lives with 18 year old sister and two siblings.
2	F	14	Shangaan	2010	Natural causes	Lives with her mother and two siblings.
3	F	13	Ndebele	2012	Car accident	Lives with her mother and three siblings.
4	M	12	Venda	2009	Natural causes	Lives with his mother, three siblings and step-father
5	F	14	Pedi	Did not remember	Natural causes.	Lives with her mother, elder sister and her baby, three siblings
6	F	14	Ndebele	Did not remember	Natural causes.	Lives with her mother, elder sister and her daughter, paternal aunt and her child, younger sibling, brother-in-law, step-father.
7	F	14	Venda	2009	Natural causes.	Lives with her mother, elder sister and her baby, two younger siblings and her step-father.
8	F	13	Shangaan	Did not remember	Natural causes	Lives with her mother and three siblings.

The researcher interviewed seven female participants and one male participant. Some of these participants had problems expressing their emotions. This is consistent with what Jessop and McCarthy (2006:147-148) observed in that adolescents find it more challenging than younger children to express their feelings probably because they are afraid of causing emotional distress to other family members or they do not have confidants to talk to. Another limitation of expressing emotions could emanate from the lack of the necessary vocabulary to express emotions or could be culturally bound, especially with the male adolescent. Cultural implications dictate that boys are not supposed to cry because they are expected to be stronger than girls. This is supported by Jackson (2006:106) who notes that weeping can be seen as a sign of weakness or cowardice.

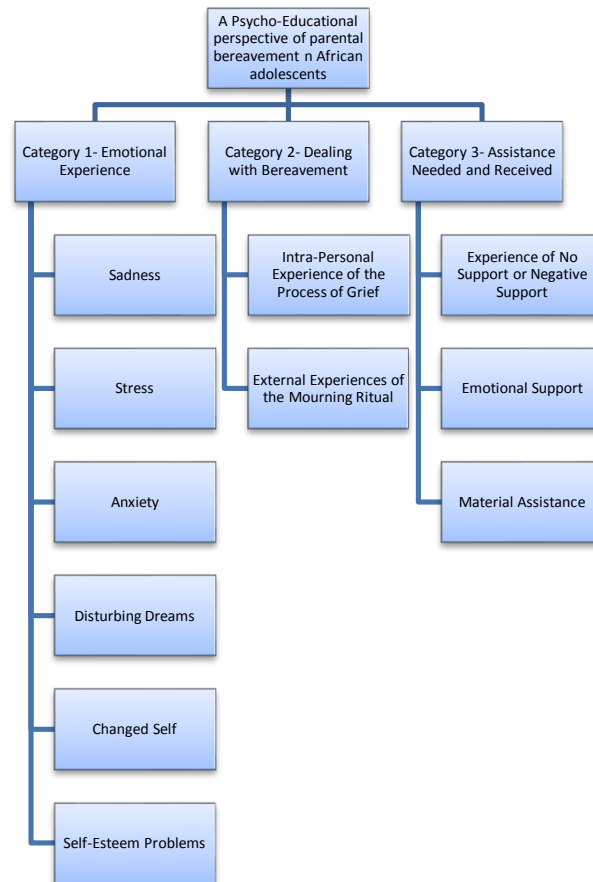
### 4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The interviewees, although coming from various South African ethnic groups, were all conversant in isiZulu. The researcher was therefore, comfortable to interview them in isiZulu, after which the interviews were transcribed and translated into English.

Data analysis was performed inductively to allow the researcher to build knowledge from data produced from participants rather than structuring the study around existing hypothesis. A thematic analysis of interview transcripts was conducted. The researcher analysed the transcribed data according to the steps as proposed by Terre Blanche et al. (2006:322-326), (refer to Chapter 3–Section 3.4 for more details). The researcher immersed herself into the transcripts to get a sense of how African adolescents expressed themselves. Important phrases and statements that relate to the research topic were noted and placed in a colour code. These phrases or sentences would provide evidence of a theme or sub-theme. Similar codes that emerged from the data were sorted and placed into relevant categories, resulting into themes and sub-themes that guided the researcher to construct new meaning and understanding of the experiences of parentally bereaved adolescents in a rural context.

The categories, themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data are presented in Figure 4.2 below.

**Figure 4.2: Categories, Themes and Sub-themes that emerged from interviews**



The above structure will be used to present and discuss findings. Written accounts of events extracted from participants' responses will be used to discuss the findings in order to give deeper meaning of their experiences. Findings of the study will also be discussed in accordance with the literature review.

#### 4.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Evidence suggests that African adolescents who live in a rural context and who have lost a parent experience a variety of emotional responses. They deal with bereavement as they go through the internal experiences of the processes of grief and the external processes of mourning rituals. Some of the adolescents in this study experienced negative or no assistance as they went through their grief experience and others received emotional, material and educational support from significant family

members, their peers, the community and the school in order to come to terms with their parental loss. The findings of this study will be discussed and compared with the literature review.

#### **4.4.1 Category 1: Emotional experiences**

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995:377), emotions are "strong feelings of any kind". Participants reported experiencing emotional distress. This was the most prominent theme that came out of the interviews, as participants expressed the intense emotional difficulties they experienced following the death of their parent. What emerged from the responses was that adolescents experienced sadness, stress, feelings of anxiety, disturbing dreams, as well as a changed sense self, which caused feelings of inauthenticity and self-esteem problems that in turn caused feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness.

##### **4.4.1.1 Theme 1.1: Sadness**

Sadness was the most prominent emotion experienced by the participants. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995:1035), sadness is defined as showing sorrow or unhappiness. Smith et al. (2010:2) regard sadness as probably the most common symptom of grief that is experienced by the bereaved. They note that after a loss, one may have feelings of emptiness, despair, yearning or deep loneliness. The bereaved may also cry often or become emotionally unstable. Participants had this to say about their experience of sadness after losing a father:

*Participant 5: I was very upset. I wished he could come back to us. Later I thought that it was impossible because he has left us. I was upset. I remained in bed everyday. I did not want to see anyone. I did not want to eat anything. It was the first time a person died in my family. I could not talk to anyone... I thought of sadness only.*

*Participant 6: I felt sad, I was upset. It was not nice amongst us. We could hardly eat. We always cried.*

Most of the participants reported lack of interest in everyday affairs. Furthermore, participants felt sad as they had lost a significant person in their lives. Adolescents depend on their fathers for love, care and security, but especially for being the providers of material resources (see Li et al. 2008:152). Adolescents described how

important their fathers were in their lives and how they were saddened by their father's death, affecting their emotional well-being:

*Participant 1: I had a lot of pain in my heart. I was sad as I thought about who would buy food for us, who would buy our necessities, who would give our mother assistance. My mother's job was not paying enough money to enable her to provide for us. How were we going to survive in Lethabong?*

*Participant 7: When my father died my heart was sore. I experienced sadness because he was the one who loved us at our home. My half-sister's father died but my father embraced her. During Christmas my father would buy clothes for everybody. When my father had differences with my mother they would discuss until they arrived at an amicable solution and we would have a peaceful evening afterwards. There was peace between the paternal and the maternal families. All these families would often visit each other.*

*Participant 2: He loved me (she kept quiet for a long time)*

*Interviewer: What changed after his death?*

*Participant 2: No one bought us clothes. Our neighbours were the only people who bought us clothes.*

The dejection felt by adolescents in this study is consistent with how people in other studies on bereavement felt after losing a loved one. Weymont and Rae (2006:1) state that young people are attached to their parents through being fed, nurtured, protected and loved and thus gain confidence, feeling secure and loved. When a parent dies, a young person experiences the abrupt detachment of parental ties and the safe base is removed (Susillo 2005:500). Hence, the adolescent feels intense emotional distress, helplessness and unprotected following the loss of the parent who has been the provider of love, food, clothing, shelter and security.

#### **4.4.1.2 Theme 1.2: Stress**

The adolescents in this study experienced stress after the death of a parent. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995:1181) defines stress as "pressure, tension or worry resulting from problems in one's life". Major adjustments in an adolescent's life (following the death of a parent) was a source of stress. These included adjustments in relationships, the place of residence, availability of financial resources and emotional support to the bereaved adolescent. Nyamukapa et al. (2008:134) and Elegbeleye (2013:174) confirm that dramatic adjustments that the



adolescent experiences after losing a parent have a life changing effect on the adolescents affecting their emotional well-being and causing psychosocial distress.

The hostility that some adolescents experienced from the paternal family is a source of stress that negatively influences their emotional well-being. Participant 3 spoke sadly about her paternal family that was abusive and mal-treated them after the death of her father. When she was asked about how she felt after the death of her father, she had this to say:

*I did not feel secured. My paternal relatives showed a lot of hostility and animosity towards us. They wanted to evict us from our tin house purporting that the tin house now belongs to them. They also claimed that we were not our father's children. They alleged we have 'eaten' our father (insinuating that we have bewitched him). We caused him to have accidents. We have bewitched him. And we did not feel safe (she was sobbing continuously).*

The maltreatment endured by Participant 3 and her family, inflicted by the paternal family, and affected the adolescent's well-being, causing psychosocial distress. The adolescent felt betrayed and was worried about the changes in her family's relationship with the paternal family. Participant 3 was particularly anxious about the future and where they would stay. In their study on the psycho-social well-being of orphans in South Africa, De Witt and Lessing (2010:474) found that about 41.7% orphans had a fear of being removed from their places of residence.

Being labelled as witches was also a source of stress that could cause self-esteem problems and influence normal emotional development. To concur with this view, Chase, Wood and Aggleton (2006:92) state that the notion of witchcraft creates conflict and hatred amongst the family and this has a negative bearing on adolescents. Participant 1 also felt vulnerable in the hands of the paternal family that was rejecting them at the prospect of becoming homeless and carrying the stigma associated with witchcraft. Participant 5 described her experiences of hostility from the paternal family as follows:

*(Describing developments during and after the funeral) Family relations at home were not right, there was no love shared amongst family members. There was in-fighting, with lots of quarrels and squabbles over my father's wealth.*

*Then I realised that my paternal family loved my father for his money. Now that he has passed on and his property was bequeathed to us, then fighting started. They (paternal family) even alleged that my mother was cruel, she bewitched my father, and she was the one who killed him. They also apportioned blame to the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) to which my mother is affiliated (her father was also affiliated to ZCC) saying that they were witches, we were not worshipping God but a human being, the leader. What is surprising is that when they are sick they go to ZCC for healing. My mother is not on speaking terms with my paternal family.*

Some participants in this study were subjected to maltreatment as a result of abusive step-fathers and this situation prolonged grief. This finding is consistent with Perkins' (2007:64) theory that sometimes having a new step-parent can be a cause for slow recovery from grief. Participant 7 reported:

*My mother receives her pay fortnightly and my step-father uses all her money. When she gets paid he only gives R50.00 or R100.00 to my mother and it's not enough to buy necessities and clothes for us and his baby. My uncle is the only one who comes to our rescue and gives us maybe R500.00 for Christmas clothes. My step-father also insults my mother and often chases us away from the house, locks the door and together with my mother we are forced to sleep outside.*

The death of a parent left the adolescent feeling vulnerable to abuse and maltreatment by the step-parent. Vulnerability brings about a lot of stress and prolongs grief for adolescents who feel helpless and unprotected following the loss of a parent.

Participant 1, who relocated to the informal settlement, lamented about how she missed life before her father died and how difficult life was in the present situation that she found herself in:

*I miss my father a lot because where we used to live (before her father's death) there were many many belongings, like a refrigerator. Life changed because we were used to watching TV, and when we went to school we would take a bus as our daily means of transport, and when we needed things he would buy them for us.*

Participant 1 expressed fond memories of her father as a provider of resources. She now experiences stress because they had to relocate and her father, who used to be a significant provider, left them with no-one to provide for them. The loss of a father brought about poverty and deprivation. There was a dramatic change in the quality of the life they had, causing a lot of stress. Initially life was adequate, but presently, they

no longer have a television set for their entertainment and they have to travel to school over a long distance on foot. The loss of a parent meant giving up a familiar way of life for something new and undesirable. The literature review supports this finding when Perkins (2007:64) states that relocating may sometimes have a negative effect on adolescents who are recovering from grief. Changes in place of residence influenced the emotional adjustment of African adolescents in this study.

Participants spoke openly about the difficult circumstances they faced because of lack of financial resources to buy basic needs like food and clothes. Participant 1 reported that:

*My heart was painful. I experienced sadness especially when thinking who was going to buy us food, who would provide for our needs, who was going to assist my mother, what would life be like when we went to live in the informal settlement. When we came to the informal settlement at first, it was nice, but last year our shoes got torn and you would find my mother without money.*

Participant 1 was lamenting that they had lost financial support that was provided by her father. Now, they stress that they cannot afford the basic things her father used to provide for. Cluver and Gardner (2007:321), in their study on psychological well-being of orphans in Cape Town, showed that poverty and starvation were major risks for emotional and behavioural distress. When asked what she did when they were experienced difficult times, Participant 1 responded:

*We would refrain from telling other people because they were going to laugh at us. My mother would borrow money from my uncle.*

This was a child-headed household as Participant 1 lived with her eighteen year old sister, her two younger siblings and her sister's child. Participant 1's mother did not live with them because she was working far away. She only visited them twice a month during weekends. This implied that on some days the children would go without food as they feared stigmatisation. Borrowing from neighbours would subject them to ridicule by their peers. This was what she said:

*Participant 1: When we first came to the informal settlement we used to play happily with our neighbour's children. We only knew our neighbours. These were the people who were my father's friends. But the children from our neighbours did not treat us well following the death of my father. They would gossip about us at school.*

*Interviewer: What would they say about you?*

*Participant 1: They said we were troubling their mother because we always borrowed money to buy paraffin. When they gossiped about us we would feel hurt and embarrassed. Then my sister refrained from borrowing money out of fear of being the subject for gossip.*

Participants expressed that they were stressed by the realisation that after the loss of a parent there was a change in the relations they had with friends. Now, they seemed to be short of friends. Some of the participants reported that they no longer played with their friends because friends had gossiped and ridiculed them about their lack of financial and material resources. McCarthy(2010:30) noted that adolescents attached great importance on their friends as a source of comfort. Consequently when their friends discriminated against them they felt abandoned and rejected by people who form an integral part of their lives. They subsequently felt lonely and dejected, a situation which prolongs their grief.

#### **4.4.1.3 Theme 1.3: Anxiety**

Another sentiment that was indicated by some participants was a feeling of anxiety. The dictionary definition of anxiety refers to “a nervous feeling caused by fear that something bad is going to happen” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 1995:44). The findings revealed that adolescents become worried and fearful when they thought of security issues in their households. Participant 3, whose mother works night shifts as a security guard, described how she felt anxious, helpless and insecure in the evenings when they remained alone with her elder sister:

*At home during the day things seem to be right, but in the evening it becomes scary when my mother leaves us alone to go to her work, because in our vicinity they dislike us. Previously, when she went to work night shift we felt secured because our father would remain with us at home. Now that he is ‘gone’ I sometimes think that people could come and attack us, steal or do atrocious things. I do not feel safe.*

The absence of adults in the household meant that there was an absence of security. This sentiment was echoed by Participant 1 when she described her experience:

*In the night we were afraid because people would knock on our door. Yet when we were in Witbank I used to stay with my mother and grandmother and no one came knocking on our doors in the night.*

Following the death of their fathers, Participant 1 and Participant 3 had to relocate to a rural settlement where they lived in tin houses. The death of the father was particularly significant because it meant that there was no provider of care and security for the young persons. These young people felt vulnerable as they used to be with their fathers who they regarded as providers of material goods, but also of security and safety. Richter and Desmond (2008:1027) note that, in South Africa, many children are at risk in their homes because the structures they live in have little security. All the adolescents in this study lived in tin houses that lacked security.

Another major source of anxiety that emerged from the findings was concern over the radical change in financial and material resources. In addition to worrying about the loss of a loved one, Participant 1 also experienced fear and uncertainty about financial resources and being uprooted from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar place of residence. She said:

*I was thinking about who was going to buy us food, who would provide for our needs, who was going to assist my mother, what would life be like when we go to live in the rural settlement.*

Richter and Desmond (2008:1026) highlight that after the death of a father some children in impoverished households in South Africa depended on social grants, and either lived with their mother, with extended families or child-headed households that were characterised by abject poverty. It was not surprising that the young people in this study were anxious about where they would get the next plate of food.

#### **4.4.1.4 Theme 1.4: Disturbing dreams**

According to Mwamwenda (2004:226) dreams are about issues we imagine, think about or feel that occur during sleep. The above author adds that these issues impact on our everyday activities and on our emotional life. These are things we value, our urges and wishes that we cannot implement. It emerged from the findings that adolescents seemed to yearn for their parents. They missed the emotional bond they experienced with their parents who were primary caregivers and played the role of nurturing them, providing food, love, security, as well as communicating with them (Jakobsen & Christiansen 2011:176). Thus, it is not surprising to find bereaved

adolescents in this study dreaming about their parents during their emotional and spiritual difficulties. These are young people who are vulnerable and are going through emotional, material and financial difficulties after losing a parent through death. Mpono (2007:40) states that dreams can be viewed as a means of communication between the living and the ancestors and according to Adams and Hyde (2008:62) dreams come during times of spiritual difficulties. This is what participants shared:

*Participant 5: The other day I had a dream about my father still alive. In the dream he said 'Don't ever quit school my child. Even when they trouble or illtreat you, just continue going to school.' Sometimes I dreamt about him chasing me, wanting to hold me, he chased me, I was running fast at that time. Then I woke up.*

*Interviewer: Do you think dreaming about him has meaning?*

*Participant 5: When I dreamt about him I would be angry and also sad. I would ask myself why does he tell me good things? Sometimes I believe in the things that he tells me in dreams, at other times I don't.*

When Participant 5 dreamt about her father, it was during the early days of bereavement and she seemed to be going through the early processes of grief. She expressed emotions of sadness and was still angered by her father's death or blaming her father for abandoning her. Instead of appearing in dreams telling her good things, she wished that he would rather be communicating with in real life. She also made meaning from dreams because she said she listened to the positive things her father was telling her and, at times, believed in the things she dreamt about. This could imply that she still felt she had a link with her father as she was able to communicate with him through her dreams. Besides dreaming about her father, Participant 5 also described how she was unable to sleep peacefully following the death of her father:

*I would not sleep well, I would often dream of frightening things. It would be like I'm seeing snakes.*

Participant 5 reported dreaming about things that brought about fear in her. It is not surprising that she dreamt about snakes considering that she was in an emotional turmoil after losing a loved one. Participant 5's situation is better explained by Adams and Hyde (2008:59) when they state that some dreams may be cause for worry to children while other dreams reassure children and remove any cause for concern.

In line with the literature review, Participant 6 was scared when dreaming but later felt happy when her mother explained the connection with her father (Adams & Hyde

2008:64). The authors are of the opinion that the emotional comfort that adolescents felt through dreams assisted them to feel better, as a consequence overcoming the loss. Participant 6 shared her experiences with her father in her dream:

*Participant 6: After the funeral he visited me through dreams saying that I mustn't be worried, everything would be fine. Ah! In the morning when I woke up I felt relieved and I told my friends that I was feeling great, we went to play.*

*Interviewer: So when you saw him in your dreams how did you feel?*

*Participant 6: I was scared because I didn't know what this meant. When I told my mother in the morning she explained that it's my father.*

Another participant who shared her experiences of dreams had this to say:

*Participant 7: ... When I was sleeping I had a dream in which I saw my father. He said, 'go take your shoes, my jersey and my shoes that I left that side,' but he did not tell me what to do with them. His other clothes remained that side. Every time I dreamt of him, when I woke up in the morning I would get money maybe in the kitchen rack or behind the house. At times when I collected the containers to fetch water from the tanks I would get money especially early in the morning, maybe I would pick up twenty rand. I would tell my mother about the dream episodes and how these were always related to me picking up money. My mother would say it was money that my father gave to me.*

*Interviewer: How does dreaming about your father make you feel?*

*Participant 7: Whenever I saw him in the night I would wake up and cry, and my mother would take me to bed with her, I would wake up in the night and cry because I missed him (as she related this she was sobbing). I missed the things he used to do for me.*

Although it had been three years since Participant 7's father died, she was still grieving for her father. The biggest challenge that she had to face was lack of financial resources and her stepfather who was mistreating her family and herself. He also took the little money they received in the form of government grants. Although dreaming about her father made her to feel sad, there were benefits that were derived that boosted her moral. Tangible results, in the form of the money she would pick up in the morning, were a source of happiness and comfort. This could imply that there was communication between her and her deceased father which seemed to suggest that her father still provided for her post-humously. Participant 7 felt that she had not permanently lost her father. This could mean that there is a link binding the living and the dead.

To the adolescents in this study, the positive perception of dreams seemed to assist with coping and such a situation could hasten the healing process. Other scholars who

have explored the aspect of dreaming, like Adam and Hyde (2008:58), are of the opinion that it is the practice of some adolescents, when reflecting on dreams, to attach meaning to their dreams which then impacts on their spirituality. Furthermore, the above authors allude that attaching meaning to dreams is used as a coping mechanism.

#### ***4.4.1.5 Theme 1.5 Changed Self expressed in feelings of inauthenticity and self-pity.***

The African adolescents in this study were so upset by the loss of their parent that they experienced a change in their internal and external world. In support of the above view, Lattanzi-Licht (1996) in Susillo (2005:500-501) states that when a parent dies the adolescent “experiences a sense of never being the same again, a changed self, no longer dealing with everyday concerns, and a new sense of vulnerability.” This is because the adolescent, who is already challenged by adolescent normal developmental changes, becomes more devastated by the new challenges that come after the loss of a parent. To an adolescent, their internal and external worlds have been affected by the death (Susillo 2005:500). Thus, life will never be the same again for the young person who has lost a parent. Some of the participants shared their experiences in this regard:

*Participant 7: I'm often feeling sick and during the day or at night I often think of my father and I find it difficult to forget.*

*Participant 5: On some days I would feel like I was not myself, like I was another person.*

*Participant 6: I felt upset, my body felt terrible.*

*Participant 4: I could not go out to play. I was not in a good state. I cried.*

Participants expressed a change in their inner being and normal behaviour. Their bodies were physically affected, they had feelings of inauthenticity and were engulfed in self-pity. They did not derive pleasure in anything to such an extent that playing with friends was no longer fun. Their internal and external worlds seemed unreal. This newly perceived self had a negative influence on the adolescents' emotional well-being.



#### **4.4.1.6 Theme:1.6 Self-esteem problems expressed in feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt and worthlessness.**

Self-esteem is how a person values himself and how he thinks the world and other people value him (Elegbeleye 2013:170). An adolescent's self-esteem is important because they need to know that they are respected by other people. McCarthy (2010:30) contends that adolescents attach great importance in being accepted and validated by their friends, whilst if they perceive discrimination, they feel remorse. Consequently, their self-esteem is negatively affected resulting in feelings of inadequacy, self doubt and worthlessness, negatively affecting their relationships.

The African bereaved adolescents in this study experienced self-esteem problems arising from how they were treated by others. In Theme 1.2 (section 4.4.1.2), Participant 1 described how they used to play with their neighbours' children and how things changed following the death of her father. The loss of a parent brought about poverty and deprivation and the adolescents were now discriminated against by peers who saw them as beggars as they would intermittently borrow money for their basic needs. Elegbeleye (2013:176) states that when people are discriminated against, they develop low self-esteem. Thus, when other children perceived them as different and gossiped about how poor they were, as illustrated in Participant 1's response below, feelings of inadequacy, self doubt and worthlessness developed. As a result, Participant 1 felt that rather than be a subject for gossip it was better 'to sleep on a hungry stomach.' She reported:

*We would refrain from telling other people, afraid that we would be made a laughing stock.*

This participant would be a victim of ridicule as a result of lack in financial and material resources. This is in line with what De Witt and Lessing (2010:468) state that poverty negatively affects the psychosocial well-being of bereaved young people and intensified low self-esteem within adolescents as they perceived themselves to be different from others.

Participant 1 was also worried and hurt that one lady called them orphans. Participant 1 perceived that it seemed as if the word was used in a derogatory manner or it could be that Participant 1 was still in denial of her new identity. The following citation illustrates the participant's feelings about labelling:

*Participant 1: A certain lady wrote that we were "orphans" and we were supposed to go and live in an orphanage where we belong.*

*Interviewer: Tell me about how you felt when she said that.*

*Participant 1: We were hurt and sad as we longed for and missed our father.*

Participant 5 described how inadequate and worthless she felt when other children showed signs of avoiding her company. This posed a challenge to her because to be accepted by peers was important to her. This is what she had to say:

*When you are bereaved they regard you as a non-entity. It is obvious that in class some learners liked me but others did not like me, they despised me... When you approach them to join a group in class, they would shift to another place, not wanting to associate with you.*

Apparent from the above discussion, some adolescents did not get validation from their peers. It also emerged from the findings that when the peer group showed signs of rejection, adolescents were susceptible to self-esteem problems, and consequently, their relationships were negatively affected. Jessop and McCarthy (2006:145) highlight that bereavement has implications for social relationships. According to these authors, the company of friends enhanced self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. However, relationships could be perceived as negative, only to find that the bereaved adolescent's friends found it difficult to understand or to deal with what is happening and, as a consequence, react inappropriately (McCarthy 2010:30). Due to their emotional immaturity, friends sometimes seemed not to know how to treat or what to say to a bereaved friend, as in the case of Participant 5, culminating in the actions being misinterpreted.

#### **4.4.2 Category 2: Dealing with bereavement**

Perkins (2007:38) states that grief is resolved when it has been experienced and expressed by going through the emotions that are associated with bereavement. Adolescents in this study went through a variety of emotions after losing a parent and

employed different strategies in attempt to deal with the loss. According to Hardy-Bougere (2008:66), adolescents go through the internal processes of grief experienced by all people in all cultures, as postulated by Kübler-Ross (1969), a leading expert in the analysis of the stages of bereavement, often applicable to dying persons, who proposed five stages of grief that a person goes through. The stages include denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. The participants in this research experienced many of these stages but there was no experiences of bargaining that were reported to. Participants also reported having gone through the external experiences of mourning and rituals. Hardy-Bougere (2008:66) notes that external processes of mourning are peculiar to a particular culture.

#### ***4.4.2.1 Theme 2.1: Intra-personal experience of the process of grief***

From the responses of participants in this research, it was evident that when dealing with bereavement, adolescents go through the stages of grief in the same way that bereaved people in all cultures do. However, the literature review states that the process of grief is different from adults because adolescents are emotionally immature to process the pain of bereavement (Li et al. 2008:147). In addition, there are determinants that affect the young person's healing process. The determinants include adjustments in relationships and in the place of residence, availability of financial resources and emotional support to the bereaved adolescent. Nyamukapa et al. (2008:134) and Elegbeleye (2013:174) confirm that dramatic adjustments that the adolescent experiences after losing a parent, have a life changing effect on the adolescents affecting their emotional well-being and causing psychosocial distress. The participants in this study reported that these dramatic changes negatively affected their emotions. Despite the difficulties experienced by the participants in this study, they seemed to have gone through the normal process of dealing with grief.

##### ***a. Sub-theme 2.1.1: Denial***

Kübler-Ross (1969:34) found that most people in grief go through the first stage of denial and isolation. During this stage. the bereaved experiences shock and does not believe that this is happening to them. Perkins (2007:27-28) states that they

experience 'immediate grief' as this usually happens during the early stages of hearing about the loss. Most people who have lost a loved one go through this stage, but do not dwell on it because they gradually recover as the reality of the loss dawns upon them (Kübler-Ross 1969:37).

The findings revealed that adolescents went through the stage of denial. This is what some of the participants revealed:

*Participant 5: I was very sad. I wished he could come back to us.*

*Participant 6: I wished he could arise from the dead.*

Right after the loss, the bereaved adolescents had problems with accepting the reality of the parent's death. They kept on thinking that there was a possibility that their fathers could come back to them. From Participant 8's response, it was apparent that she experienced denial as it emerged that she still felt the presence of her father as if he was in the next room:

*Participant 8: Sometimes when my mother called, I would respond by saying 'Papa' instead of 'Mama' and my mother would reprimand me telling me, 'don't get used to answering 'Papa' when somebody is calling you. Sometimes at night I would imagine hearing his voice and respond to him. My mother would tell me not to get used to addressing my father in the night because he was no longer on earth.*

Participant 8 was still yearning for her father. She did not attend her father's funeral and did not have time to say goodbye and consequently, did not process her grief. She did not internalise that he was dead and was not coming back.

Another participant shared her experience of loss:

*Participant 7: My sister just took me to the coffin and I saw my father. I then collapsed. When I came to myself I did not want to go where they were going to lay him but they forced me...*

*Interviewer: Why didn't you want to go?*

*Participant 7: I still wanted my father.*

Participant 7 was still in a state of shock and seeing her father in that state devastated her. Attending the funeral is one of the activities Worden (1996, 2002) in Leming and Dickinson (2007:138) advises what the bereaved person should do to overcome the

natural denial response and to realise that the person was dead and would not return to the living.

### ***b. Sub-theme 2.1.2: Anger***

Anger is an emotional state that some participants experienced and also a stage that participants go through following the loss of a parent. According to Smith et al. (2010:2) anger may be in the form of blame directed towards God, other people or self for the prevailing situation. In addition, people in grief want to blame someone for what has happened, and may go to the extent of blaming themselves or the deceased for abandoning them. Participant 4, whose father was hospitalised and died of a disease unknown to him, reported that, after he was told about his father's death, he was angry that his father had passed away. He said:

*Participant 4: I was angry, angry, I cried.*

*Interviewer: What made you angry?*

*Participant 4: That my father passed away.*

Participant 4 felt abandoned and seemed to be blaming his father for abandoning him by dying.

Participant 5 echoed these sentiments when she described her intense anger and hatred towards other people as if they were responsible for her father's death. When Participant 5 was asked about her experiences, she said that she was so angry that she felt like attacking somebody as if they were responsible for the loss of her father. She stated:

*You get angry, you really get angry. When you are angry your heart feels like you can attack / beat up somebody. And you are filled with hatred towards mankind as if somebody is responsible for your loss. That's how it was.*

Anger for the participants came in different forms. In Participant 4's situation, anger was directed at his father for abandoning him and in Participant 5's case, her anger was directed towards other people notwithstanding that they were not responsible for her father's death.

### **c. Sub-theme 2.1.3: Depression**

When a person feels depressed, he or she feels sad and lacks enthusiasm and hope (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 1995:312). This was the case with all the participants that were interviewed. The findings revealed that following the loss of a parent these young people were experiencing emotional distress to such an extent that they lost interest in their everyday activities. In line with the literature review, the adolescents experienced depression symptoms including withdrawal, wanting to spend time alone, not wanting to talk, loss of appetite as well as not wanting to play (McClellan 2006:4-5). Most of them apparently managed to work through this phase of the bereavement process and were eventually functioned well. This is what Participant 5 and 6 reported:

*Participant 5: I remained in bed everyday. I did not want to see anyone. I did not want to eat anything. It was the first time a person died in my family. I could not talk to anyone. I thought of sadness only.*

*Participant 6: My body was in a bad state, I could not even play with my friends. I would sleep right through the day thinking about my father. I would just sleep, just get on my bed and sleep (She cried for some time).*

To express their feelings and their process of grief, the participants become withdrawn after the loss of a parent. Feelings of withdrawal were evident in all the interviews. Most participants reported isolating themselves by sleeping. However, there was no mention of alcohol and drugs.

Findings revealed that crying, lack of appetite, lack of sleep, as well as experiencing physical pain were reactions to grief that were experienced by adolescents. Hardy-Bougere (2008:68) and Smith et al. (2010:1) are of the opinion that crying is a normal reaction to sadness and when a person cries, he or she releases pain, and, as a consequence, enhance healing.

Participant 4 was emotional while sharing his experiences during interviewing. Crying could be an indication that he was still grieving the loss of his father although it was three years after his death. For a brief moment, he was unable to express himself due to the emotional intensity of the loss that was apparently still felt. Participant 4 lost his father in 2010, his sibling in 2013 and his step-father deserted them in 2013. His

emotional burden could also be aggravated by the multiple losses he suffered. Susillo (2005:501) states that the traumatic effect of the death of a parent is made worse by multiple losses that a youth experiences.

As revealed in the extract (Theme1.2, Section4.4.1.2) where Participant 3 was describing the hostile relationship between her family and the paternal family, she was sobbing right through. She experienced a lot of sadness and still was grieving the loss. Crying reflects that these young people did not reject the emotions and feelings but allowed themselves to work through the pain of grief. When crying occurs after a lengthy time period, it could be an indication of depression or post-traumatic stress disorder. Smith et al. (2010:3) state that pain should not be ignored as it will keep on resurfacing and that one should actively experience grief for healing to occur.

Other sentiments expressed in the interviews could also be an indication of possible depression. Participants who echoed the above sentiments said:

*Participant 7: On the day of the burial and two days thereafter I could not eat. I did not eat because my heart was sore and I was upset, I could not stop crying.*

*Participant 5: I experienced pain and sadness. Everyday I would sleep, refusing to see anyone. Seeing people was a source of boredom and irritation to me. I did not have appetite for food. I wanted to do nothing. It was the first time I experienced bereavement.*

Participant 5 did not only experience lack of appetite, she was despondent and isolated herself by staying in bed. She experienced great sadness.

The participants in this research indicated that they experienced lack of sleep and others were unable to sleep because they felt fearful:

*Participant 7: I would wake up and cry in the night because I missed my father and the things he used to provide (still crying).*

*Participant 3: (At night) I would be frightened. I was unable to sleep peacefully thinking that my father might come back. This only happened at night. I was unable to sleep, at times right through the night.*

*Participant 5: I would not sleep well, I would often dream of frightening things. It would be like I'm seeing snakes.*

Participant 5 reported dreaming about snakes. Dreaming about fearful things was not surprising considering that the adolescents were going through an emotional turmoil after losing a loved one.

The adolescents in this study experienced physical pain after the loss of a parent, most probably as a manifestation of depression. Participant 5 placed emphasis on how distressed she was to such an extent that she felt physical pain that upset her whole being:

*It was like I was physically not well. On other days I would have some energy and I would feel good. Sometimes I felt pain in my stomach, intestines and I had a headache.*

The above sentiments were echoed by Participant 7 who seemed to be still yearning for her father:

*I'm often feeling sick and during the day or at night I often think of my father and I find it difficult to forget.*

Nyamukapa et al. (2008:134) and Stokes et al. (2009:178) state that death trauma may cause chronic illness. Although the adolescents in this study cried during the interviews, they seemed to be over most of the symptoms of depression as they related what happened in the past.

#### ***d. Sub-theme 2.1.4: Acceptance***

Findings indicated that although adolescents go through intense emotional experience after the loss of a parent they are able to eventually cope and accept the loss.

From the findings, it emerged that the adolescents in this study understood the meaning of death and its finality and this would facilitate acceptance. All the participants that were interviewed were capable of abstract reasoning because they saw death as final (McCarthy 2006:43). Viewing death as irreversible would assist the participants in reaching acceptance as they would not entertain the wish that the parent would come back. They are able to deal with the reality of death although overwhelmed by the difficulties associated with it. This is what participants had to say:



*Participant 5: If they say a person is deceased it brings unpleasantness. You'll never see the deceased again, he has departed from the earth permanently.*

*Participant 2: If a person is dead it means he has departed and has left earthly things.*

From the findings, it emerged that, at first, these participants experienced intense emotions after losing a parent, but, after some time, learned to adapt to the loss. The following excerpts from the interviews highlight acceptance as viewed by the participants:

*Participant 5: (After she was told about her father's death) I cried and left home. When I returned in the evening I found everybody weeping. We all wept but eventually went silent and we slept overwhelmed with pain. The following morning we woke up and told ourselves that he has departed and he will never come back to us.*

*Interviewer: After some time?*

*Participant 5: No, life got better. I experienced pain and sadness following the loss of my parent. But you have to recover and communicate well with other people.*

*Participant 6: It was painful for a very long time, but by the beginning of 2012 I had forgotten about the pain. I was fine. I would tell myself that I've lost my father, accept that I'm indeed bereaved. And when I was spending time on my own I would still be thinking about him, about the things he would do for me, indeed he is no more.*

It is evident from the excerpts that participants were at first overwhelmed with grief but it did not take long to learn to accept. Accepting the loss of a parent guides people towards healing, because they deal with grief in a positive way. Perkins (2007:28) regards acceptance as the last stage of 'subsiding grief' for healing and moving on. Although acceptance is regarded as the last stage in the grieving process, it does not imply that a person forgets the deceased as in the case of Participant 6 who remembers her father through fond memories.

Another frequent response in relation to coping with bereavement was that the participants in this study were able to adjust to life without the deceased father. As discussed in Theme 1, some participants described how distressed they were by the hostility and maltreatment they received from the paternal family. After some time, they adjusted to the situation and moved on. This is what Participant 5 reported:

*We usually concede that they are just insane. These are the people who never loved our father genuinely, but only loved him for financial benefits. We are now*

*over them and have lived harmoniously. Now, they visit our home regularly sometimes to steal things for selling or to ask for financial donations.*

Participant 5 expressed determination to live and a willingness to survive without her father. Being able to adjust to an environment without her father enhances healing and the emotional well-being of the adolescent. Leming and Dickinson (2007:138) state that, in order to cope with losing a loved one, the bereaved has to adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing by assuming new social roles and to take additional responsibilities by performing some of the activities that were performed by the deceased. Participant 3's paternal family was maltreating the family until a protection order was arranged. Previously, the adolescent experienced hostility, felt rejected and abandoned by her father's family. But now they have learned to accept the situation and moved on with their lives without them. They were resigned to the situation and have learned to cope without the support of the paternal family. She shared her negative challenges:

*Participant 3: My paternal family would visit us and insult us. However, there is now a protection order that they should not visit our home and we should not go to their home. This helped us a lot and of late, I feel a bit secured and safe*

Participant 3's mother also got employment gaining financial independence. This situation boosted Participant 3's ego and her self-esteem improved, and consequently, enhancing acceptance and emotional well-being. This is what she had to say:

*Participant 3: My mother got herself employment, and then she would do everything that my father used to do for us.*

The above excerpts revealed that participants in this study were capable of accepting the loss of a loved one and learned to be at peace with the loss.

Another coping mechanism that accelerated acceptance and enhanced healing was the practice of traditional mourning rituals.

#### **4.4.2.2 Theme 2.2: External experiences of the mourning rituals**

Whereas grieving is the internal emotional response to bereavement, mourning involves the external active processes of coping with bereavement and grief (Servaty-

Seib 2004:126). Mourning encompasses the family, social and cultural rituals associated with bereavement (Goodman et al 2004:4).

Rituals are the procedures or activities that are always done at a dedicated time and in the same manner (The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 1995:1015). The type of rituals a person will observe depends on a person's cultural affiliation. Rando (1988:262); Perkins (2007:46); Dyregrov and Dyregrov (2010:221) express positive views concerning rituals when they state that involvement in rituals guides the grieving person to grieve formally and following a structure for the expression of sad feelings as well as to make the unreal situation of death real. Thus practicing rituals would assist participants to accept the finality and the reality of death in order to resolve grief in a positive way.

During the interviews, it came to light that some of the adolescents were not told beforehand about the rituals and the significance of practicing them. As a result, some participants mentioned benefitting from the rituals whilst others felt they were meaningless. Judging by the responses of the participants in this study, it is imperative that adults should educate adolescents about death and dying rituals in order for them to attach meaning and to practice the rituals if they wanted to. If adolescents are told and educated about rituals, it would help them to deal with loss better. In doing so, adolescents would be responsible for carrying said traditions forward once they mature.

Despite not being informed about what was going to be done and the significance thereof, cultural rituals were the most mentioned activities that African adolescents participated in during difficult times of loss. Funeral activities and rituals that emerged from the interviews were done before the funeral, during burial and after the funeral. Rituals that emerged from the interviews included activities like viewing the body, attending the funeral, visiting the grave, distributing the possessions of the deceased, as well as conducting grief ceremonies like slaughtering a cattle, holding night vigil (umlingelo) and cleansing rituals or ceremonies.

### **a. Sub-theme 2.2.1: Viewing the body**

Perkins (2007:47) and Dyregrov and Dyregrov (2010:221) argue that young people should view the body out of their own will, but they should be told what to expect so that they can make an informed decision in order for the experience to be meaningful to them. Furthermore, viewing the body would assist them to make the lifelessness of the parent real as they see the body in the coffin and subsequently accelerating acceptance of the loss whilst allowing healing to take its course.

Some adolescents reported that they were involved in viewing the body of the deceased. Viewing of the body was done in a dedicated room where the bereaved family sat with the mother sitting on a mat or mattress, a common ritual in African cultures. Participants shared:

*Participant 4: They brought him (father's corpse) round about 14h00 on Saturday. Then, they showed us in the coffin. We saw him and they closed the coffin.*

*Participant 5: (In a dedicated room) My mother sat on a mattress, we also sat next to her. At about five in the afternoon they brought him (the deceased) inside the room where we were seated, placed him next to the mattress. We were invited to view the body, but I refused to view the body because I would have a problem, his image as a corpse would remain and I would not be able to erase it.*

*Participant 6: As he layed in the coffin people viewed the body, I also took part in viewing the body inside the coffin*

*Participant 7: We were sleeping and at about four in the morning they woke us up. My sister just took me to the coffin and I saw my father. I then collapsed. When I came to myself I did not want to go where they were going to lay him.*

Most of the participants reported being given a chance to view the body although they were not prepared for the activity. They were not forced to be in the viewing procession but they just did what other people were doing. Participant 5 explained that she refused to view her father's body because she did not want the image to remain with her. Other participants reported that they were not allowed to view their father's body. This is what Participant 3 had to say:

*Participant 3: They refused to open the coffin.*

*Interviewer: What did they say was the reason for refusing?*

*Participant 3: They did not tell us why they refused.*

*Interviewer: Did you want them to open?*

*Participant 3: Yes. We wanted to see how my father was.*

*Interviewer: How did you feel when they refused?*

*Participant 3: My heart was sore and I refused to talk to them.*

Participant 3 was refused a chance to view the body and she felt rejected by adults who failed to give her an explanation. Participant 3's father died of a car accident. It is possible that his body had injuries and was not in good shape, thus they were protecting the children from viewing their father in a bad state. Perkins (2007:47) states that adults should explain to the children what to expect and give them a choice whether to view or not to view the body so that they can make death real and will not imagine shocking things about the body. According to Dyregrov and Dyregrov (2010:221) viewing should be done in the presence of the adult, and subsequently the child should be given a chance to express reaction or ask questions.

### ***b. Sub-theme 2.2.2: Holding a night vigil (umlindelo)***

Participants in this study shared their experiences of what happened on the eve of the funeral. Before sunset, members of the community got involved in the bereavement as they gathered to welcome the corpse and, during the night, hold a consolatory or memorial service to pray and talk about the deceased. There was singing and dancing and most adolescents indicated that meals were prepared for the congregants. Some of the responses given by participants in relation to the idea of “umlindelo” were:

*Participant 5: There was “umlindelo” (night vigil) the whole night. Zionist Christian Church congregants came and joined in the singing and dancing.*

*Participant 3: There was “umlindelo”. People were singing and food was prepared for everybody.*

Rando (1988:266) states that, during the night vigil, the bereaved get a chance of being exposed to the deceased in another form inside the coffin and accepting condolences from other people. Practicing this ritual assists the bereaved to confirm the reality of the death of a loved one as they see the deceased lying in state and to get comfort from prayers and what was being said about their father. Some adolescents who stayed in the “umlindelo” probably benefitted.

### **c. Sub-theme 2.2.3: Attending the funeral**

Rando (1988:266) contends that funerals accelerate the healing process because they assist the bereaved to make the loss real, to recollect memories about the deceased and also give the bereaved person an opportunity to confront and express painful feelings. Findings revealed that six of the participants expressed satisfaction at being given a chance to attend their fathers' funerals whereas two participants were sad because they were unable to attend and form a closure. One of the participants was regarded as too young and the other one did not attend because there was no travelling money. Participants described why they were prevented from attending their father's funeral:

*Participant 2: They said we were still young and my father would give us trouble in the night, we'll not be able to sleep peacefully.*

*Participant 8: We did not attend the funeral because my mother did not have money and she is unemployed. When we asked her to try get the money, she asked, 'how? I'm not working, where will I get it and how will I be able to refund the person who lends it to me.'*

At the time of interviewing, both the above participants gave the impression of having not dealt well with bereavement. Participant 2 did not have a confidant and her mother was physically and verbally abusing her. Participant 8 had not yet internalised her father's death and she reported often hearing her father's voice as if he is in the other room. Attending the funeral is one of the activities Worden (1996, 2002) in Leming and Dickinson (2007:138) advises the bereaved person should do in order to overcome the natural denial response and to realise that the person is dead and will not return to the living.

Participant 5 attended her father's funeral and she indicated that her father's coffin was laid in the grave draped in a cattle skin. In her study, Yawa (2010:53) states that, in isiXhosa culture, a cow is slaughtered for meat to be eaten on the day of the funeral and the skin is used to wrap either the body of the deceased or the coffin. From the researcher's observation, more recently, a blanket is used for that purpose. Participants shared:

*Participant 5: Very early in the morning we went to the grave yard where he was buried. ... (In the coffin) He was clad in his church uniform. The coffin was then draped in a cattle skin that was like a blanket cover, and was then laid in the grave. Thereafter they threw soil to fill the grave up.*

*Interviewer: Where did they get the cattle skin?*

*Participant 5: I don't know. Nobody was there to explain to us what was happening.*

*Participant 4: Early in the morning we woke up, took him and 'threw him away' (Buried him).*

*Participant 3: We went to bury him. When we arrived there was singing. We threw soil. People were crying and were given water to drink. Then we returned home and we ate.*

*Interviewer: Were you informed about the procedure for the day?*

*Participant 3: No one told us what to do. We just saw them proceeding with the activities.*

It appeared that Participant 7 was still in shock and denial and not ready to see the reality of burying her father. She explained:

*Participant 7: I did not want to go where they were going to lay him but they forced me. When we arrived they gave me soil and I threw it inside.*

*Interviewer: Why didn't you want to go?*

*Participant 7: I still wanted my father.*

Information given by the participants indicated that funerals took place in the morning, irrespective of ethnic group. No particular reason was given by the participants about the early morning burial time. Literature revealed that burial times in the African culture varied according to different traditional practices. For example Yawa (2010:53,63,69) observed that burial time for Xhosas is midday when the shadow of the body and the person standing collide, a sign that a person is complete. In the Tswana culture burial takes place in the morning. Some people who bury in the early morning believe that it is a good time for the dead because witches that "... *move around in the afternoons looking for corpses to use for their evil purposes ... are asleep in the morning*" (Dlukulu 2010:60)

#### **d. Sub-theme 2.2.4: Cutting of hair**

Findings revealed that some participants cut their hair as a symbol of mourning and others did not. Unfortunately, these young people were not informed why they had to remove hair. Sometimes cutting hair would have a negative effect on adolescents if

they were not informed about the significance of the ritual because the affected adolescents would look different from their peers. Participants reported:

*Participant 2: They shaved our hair with a razor, they also cut us here (pointing at her forehead) and applied some black stuff on the cut.*

*Interviewer: Did they tell you why they applied it?*

*Participant 2: They didn't tell us.*

*Participant 6: Our hair was shaved.*

Matumba (2003:44) states that the cutting of hair is done as a symbol of mourning and indicates that one is moving on to new life after the loss. In the African tradition it is believed that "...life is concentrated in the hair, shaving symbolises death, and its growing again indicates the strengthening of life" (Eyetsemitan 2002, as cited in Dlukulu 2010:63). Telling adolescents the significance of cutting hair would have a therapeutic value because they would get to appreciate its intended effect.

#### **e. Sub-theme 2.2.5: Cleansing ceremonies**

From the findings it was evident that a cleansing ritual was one of the activities performed after the funeral. The cleansing ceremony is done after the funeral to remove bad-luck associated with death. People who come in contact with the deceased need to be purified from the '*isinyama*' (*isinyama* is a condition of mishap associated with death) by washing hands at the home of the deceased (Jali 2000: 24). When adolescents reported about the cleansing activities they did not know why these activities were practiced. This is what the adolescents reported:

*Participant 5: After the funeral, when we were entering the gate, we were sprayed with water which was mixed with something which I was unable to identify. Then after ten days we returned there. They indicated that they were cleansing us. They sprayed my father's clothes with something I could not identify.*

*Participant 4: (After the funeral) We were at home and my mother said we could not leave before things were done the right way, before they conducted the cleansing ceremony.*

*Interviewer: What did they use to wash?*

*Participant 4: I don't know. Even tomorrow there is a cleansing ceremony at home after the burial of my sibling.*



In the case of Participant 5, the cleansing was performed by spraying them with water, while in the case of Participant 4, cleansing occurred through washing clothes and cleaning the house.

***f. Sub-theme 2.2.6: Distributing the possessions of the deceased***

Not many participants were attentive to what was done with the deceased's clothes except for Participant 6 and Participant 7. One would imagine that there were not many clothes to share because of household poverty or that the participants were young and, as a consequence, have forgotten about the activity.

*Participant 6: They made him (deceased father) wear some of his clothes, the others were burned.*

*Participant 5: They sprayed my father's clothes with something I could not identify. They then shared my father's clothes. They said they would sell my father's cars.*

The literature review did not give much information on distributing the possessions of the deceased. However, from the conversations held with some of the elders in the community where the study was undertaken, it seems relatives feel entitled to the clothes and get comfort from having something that belonged to the loved one. As a result, the relationship with the deceased becomes strengthened after the loss.

***g. Sub-theme 2.2.7: Visiting the grave***

Participant 2 did not attend her father's funeral; she was told about her father's death after the funeral and thereafter, visited the grave.

*Participant 2: We went to my grandmother's place and proceeded to where he was buried. They poured snuff over the grave then they made him drink the traditional beer we brought with us (by pouring it over the grave). We returned with the traditional beer that remained.*

Visiting the grave helps to maintain the connection between the living and the dead. Snuff and traditional beer were taken to be shared with the deceased parent who is now regarded as an ancestor, to appease him so that he continues with the function of protecting the family.

#### ***h. Sub-theme 2.2.8: The role of ancestral beliefs***

Some participants reported having disturbing dreams where they communicated with their fathers or saw snakes. But in the case of Participant 2 she had a visitation of a snake. Instead of attacking her, as it might have been expected of a snake, it stopped in front of her and looked at her. Jackson (2006:50) is of the opinion that “...*some natural phenomena carry meanings, or are signs or omens.*” Participant 2 described her encounter as follows:

*Participant 2: I was on my way to my grandmother’s place. I was walking through a forest when I came into contact with a snake. It just stopped in front of me and looked at me for a brief moment before it moved away. Then I ran home and reported that I saw a snake. They poured snuff into a round brown container.*

*Interviewer: When you wanted to know more about the snake what did they say?*

*Participant 2: They said it’s my father’s things. My father still wants me, he loved me, he misses me.*

*Interviewer: How did you feel about this?*

*Participant 2: My heart was sore. I was frightened by the snake, I did not know what seeing it meant. They said if I see the snake again I must pour snuff.*

Ancestors seem to come back to the world in different forms, for example as a snake in the case of Participant 2. This participant was taken aback and frightened when she saw the snake. However, she became happy and was comforted when she got an explanation that her father still wanted to be with her in order to protect her. The snuff was used to appease the ancestor so that he must continue to do the good work of looking after the family. As indicated in the literature review that rituals help mourners to receive psychological relief and these traditional activities are performed to appease the ancestors according to African cultural belief (Yawa 2010:28-29). The ancestors play an important part as they protect the family against danger and assist family members towards prosperity (Jali 2000:42).

#### ***i. Subtheme 2.2.9: Viewing photographs***

When participants were asked what made them feel better during difficult times, some of them cited viewing photos as one of the activities.

*Participant 6: Sometimes I would take the album and look at photos. I would watch TV-switch it on and off, not knowing what to do.*

*Participant 7: I had my father's photo that I kept with me. I always carried it. When I looked at the photo I would always cry.*

Viewing photos is a coping mechanism that these participants used as a healing activity when dealing with bereavement. Perkins (2007:68) states that looking at photographs is therapeutic because children are able to remember good times. Adolescents get comfort when they interact with the image, expressing their feelings and thoughts in a "non-verbal and non-threatening way" (Bertman 2008 in Van der Merwe 2011:32).

#### **4.4.3 Category 3: Assistance needed and received**

The literature review has identified various needs as well as assistance received by people who have lost a loved one. Although, in some cases, participants experienced little or negative support, some aspects that were identified in the literature review emerged in the interview process.

##### **4.4.3.1 Theme 3.1: Experience of no support or negative support**

Findings revealed that participants in this research received mostly negative or no support from various people including family members, peers, community members and educators. Receiving no support or inadequate support may hinder recovery.

##### **a. Sub-theme 3.1.1 No support or negative support received from family**

Findings revealed that some of the participants in this research received no support from the family. Some family members did not tell participants the truth about death. They deceived participants about the meaning of death by not telling the truth about dying and used euphemisms to shield participants from experiencing pain. As a consequence, participants became confused and it delayed acceptance and building of resilience. As mentioned in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4) Noppe and Noppe (2004:148), indicate that adolescents are in the formal operational thinking stage and therefore

able to understand death on an abstract and hypothetical level. However, they are not yet adults, and as such, lack the social and emotional maturity to deal with the loss of a parent. It is apparent that adolescents should be told properly about death in order for them to grieve and mourn appropriately. Participant 3 shared her experience about what her aunt said when she told her about her father's death:

*Participant 3: My aunt told me that my father 'has gone away' and that he will come back. She said 'he has gone to his home' and will come back after a very long time. I believed her.*

*Interviewer: Were you informed about funeral procedures?*

*Participant 3: No one told us. We would just watch and see people doing stuff.*

*Participant 6: My grandmother called me. She said 'don't worry, relax. Your father has departed from the earth.' Then I asked, 'where has he gone to? She said 'he has passed on.'*

*Participant 7: My mother told us and then when they told my brother who was still young they whispered in his ear when he was sleeping. My mother and my aunt said when the child was young they whisper in his ear whilst sleeping and he could receive the news as if he was dreaming. That was how he would understand.*

Some participants reported that they were comforted in being told that the deceased would come back although they (the participants) knew that it was not true. Participant 3 had this to say:

*They would comfort me telling me that he would come back, I did not believe them but I would feel better.*

Her family deceived this participant. Although she said she would feel better at the time, deception has a negative effect because euphemistic words may confuse the adolescent and, as a consequence, delay healing. This causes a dilemma because, in African culture, it is regarded appropriate to use phrases such as "has passed on," "has departed from the earth," instead of "died" because it is believed that the life of an individual does not end but has changed into spiritual form (Onukwugha 2002, as cited in Russell 2005:14).

Participant 4 shared his experience of emotional abuse and feeling vulnerable in the hands of his stepfather:

*When my stepfather received his salary he would refuse to apportion some of it to my mother to buy some basic things for the household. He (stepfather) had the liberty of using our grant money as he deemed fit, the money we were supposed to use to buy food. When he got his salary he would return to the house, fight with my mother, swear at her and would instruct us to get out of his house (sobbing continuously).*

As Participant 4 was sharing his story, he was continuously sobbing and seemed to be engulfed by intense emotion. In his responses, Participant 4 indicated that he wanted time “to play” because he felt he had a lot of responsibilities including “throwing away the rubbish from the dustbin and fetching water”. Besides his abusive stepfather, Participant 4 is the only man in his household and thus, he could be carrying the emotional burden of seeing himself as a man who should be protecting his mother.

From the findings, it is apparent that adolescents need to be supported and loved by parents as well as their stepparent. Participant 7 described negative experiences with her stepfather:

*My step-father hurt my sister. He used to chase us from the house telling us to sleep outside. My sister was pregnant at the time. He pushed my sister and my sister did not want to leave. She screamed asking, ‘why are you pushing me?’ He then stabbed her with a sharp object.*

In some cases, the participants experienced negative support from the surviving parent. Participant 2 experienced stress at the hands of her mother. Her mother seemed to be still going through the process of grief as she showed signs of anger. This is what she had to say:

*My mother would beat me up. During the process of physically abusing me she would refer to my father, ‘your father used to protect you, now he is dead’. My heart was sore.*

The situation between Participant 2 and her mother put her in a vulnerable state. Her pillar of strength and provider of love, care and security had died. She was now experiencing lack of safety and this brought about sadness in her life, negatively affecting her emotional well-being.

Participant 8 also shared her experience of absence of support from the surviving mother. Her mother refused to go and apply for the government grant that would assist them. She described her experience:

*My mother told me that she would go and apply when she has money, and when we requested her to apply, she would shout at us and tell us not to hurry her. She would go when she wanted to and she just ignored attending to the application.*

The participants in this study often experienced absence of support or negative support from the paternal family. Some of the participants described how the paternal relatives were maltreating them. Witchcraft and mistrust were mentioned as the main causes of conflict in the family. Participant 3 lamented that her paternal relatives were hostile and showed a lot of animosity towards them. Paternal family rejected Participant 3's family and alleged that her mother bewitched her father. As she was describing their behaviour, she was sobbing and this indicated that she was still deeply hurting:

*They wanted to evict us from our tin house purporting that the tin house now belonged to them. They also claimed that we were not our father's children. They alleged we had 'eaten' our father (insinuating that we had bewitched him). We had caused him to have accidents.*

Another participant who felt abandoned because of the rejection by the paternal family was Participant 5. She experienced guilt because the paternal family alleged that her mother was a witch. This is how she described her experiences:

*(Describing developments during and after the funeral) Family relations at home were not right, there was no love shared amongst family members. There was in fighting, lots of quarrels and squabbles over my father's wealth. Then I realised that my paternal family loved my father for his money. Now that he has passed on and his property was bequeathed to us, then fighting started. They (paternal family) even alleged that my mother was cruel, she bewitched my father, and she was the one who killed him. They also apportioned blame to the ZCC saying we were not worshipping God but a human being. My mother is not on speaking terms with my paternal family.*

As mentioned in the previous themes (ref. 4.4.1.2 Theme 1.2) Chase et al. (2006:92) note that the idea of witchcraft is prevalent in African communities.

### ***b. Sub-theme 3.1.2 No or little support from peers***

According to McCarthy (2010:30), peer relationships are important to adolescents but sometimes relations will be perceived to be negative by the bereaved adolescent when friends show signs of isolating or rejecting them. The above author states that, because of emotional immaturity, friends may feel awkward and do not know how to relate with or what to say to the bereaved adolescent. When they avoid the bereaved adolescent, it appears as if they are rejecting him or her. Some of the participants in this research reported receiving negative support from peers. Participant 5 indicated that she felt lonely and was mostly hurt by the attitude of some of her friends when they intentionally or unintentionally showed signs of rejection following the death of her father:

*When you are bereaved they regard you as a non-entity ...they despised me ... when you approach them to join in class, they would shift to another place, not wanting to talk to you.*

Borrowing from neighbours would subject the bereaved adolescents to ridicule by their peers. This is what Participant 1 said,

*But the children from our neighbours did not treat us well following the death of my father. They would gossip about us at school. When they gossip about us we would feel hurt and embarrassed.*

Stokes et al. (2009:185) view adolescence as a stage where young people value peer relationships, hence they might find sharing grief experiences with adults difficult since their main task during adolescence is to separate from their families in search of establishing their own identities. This implies that, when the adolescent becomes aware of a strong peer support base, the young person's emotional well-being will be enhanced, and conversely, when they lack validation from their peers, self-esteem problems as described in Theme 1 (Section 4.4.1.5) will be experienced.

### ***c. Sub-theme 3.1.3 No or little support from community members***

Some community support had a negative bearing on the participants. Some participants said they were laughed at and ridiculed by their neighbours because these

adolescents lacked financial and material resources (Refer Sub-theme 1.5.2, Section 4.4.1.5). These adolescents were negatively affected by the treatment they received from some of the community members.

*Participant 1: ...Then my sister refrained from borrowing money out of fear of being the subject for gossip.*

From the response of some of the adolescents and the researcher observation of the notion of “*ubuntu*” seems to be on the decline in communities probably because many homes, like the homes in the rural environment where this research was conducted, have little resources. According to Smit (2007: 172 - 173), “Ubuntu” means “authentic caring, sharing and acceptance, the traditional notion that ‘every child is my child’”. This implies that, whatever little there is, will be shared. In the rural environment where the study was conducted, most households are destitute without any breadwinner or have breadwinners who earn very little, thus subjecting the community to abject poverty. This situation aggravates the position of an adolescent who has lost a parent who was a provider by creating a slow recovery from parental loss.

#### ***d. Sub-theme 3.1.4 No or little support from school***

The adolescents in this study needed to be given emotional support by educators, as opposed to being scolded at. Participants had this to say:

*Participant 1: I would like teachers to give us support. When we have problems or are experiencing difficulties at our homes they must not scold us, but make us open up to them and tell them about the difficulties we are experiencing. What I don't like is that they (educators) reprimand us, demand to know why is it that we don't have things that other children have... Teachers must not force children to buy things for school when they don't have money.*

*Interviewer: Things like what?*

*Participant 1: Shoes, picture books and school uniform*

*Participant 6: (Reporting about what others said) Other children said that they did not like being singled out at assembly.*

Being singled out at assembly when they were given food parcels or uniforms brought about self-esteem problems as they would worry how other children viewed them. This situation brought more feelings of alienation from their peers. Thupayagale-Tshweneagae and Mokomane (2012:29) (in their study on South African AIDS



orphaned adolescents) found out that even though the donations “were viewed as generous the recipients did not like being singled out,” because this brought about feelings of discrimination as the adolescents felt different.

#### **4.4.3.2 Theme 3.2: Positive emotional support**

##### **a. Sub-theme 3.2.1 Positive emotional support received from family**

Adolescents revealed that they received emotional support by communicating feelings of grief to family members and extended family members they considered confidants. These confidants included siblings, mothers and grandmothers. When asked about how she coped with the difficulties she was facing, Participant 1 mentioned that the strategy she used was to talk to her sister and also indicated that she would be able to talk to her mother if needed. According to her, these are people she trusts and who will not divulge information to others:

*Participant 1: I am comfortable talking and addressing issues with my sister because I live with her. I think it is better to talk to a person you trust, somebody who is really trustworthy and who will not divulge information about you.*

*Interviewer: Who else would you be able to talk to?*

*Participant 1: My mother.*

Judging from the above discussion, it seems Participant 1 had her sister as a confidant because of the proximity to her sister. However, it appears that she would have loved to confide in her mother. But unfortunately, her mother worked far away from them and only came home twice a month on weekends. Other participants confirmed the above sentiments by stating that they received support from siblings, the surviving parent and grandparents:

*Participant 5: I talked to my mother and sister only.*

*Participant 7: My grandmother and my sister were a source of strength, they would make food for me and I would sleep with them. They would comfort me and tell me not to cry. (Later on she added) I usually speak to my aunt. Talking to her assists me emotionally, I get comforted.*

*Participant 6: I would talk to my mother and to both my grandmother and grand-aunt.*

*Participant 2: ...My grandmother, she loved me and I lived comfortably with her. It was the two of us and she did not insult me.*

Perkins (2007:42) is of the opinion that young people need to know that there is at least one adult who could be a confidant. Perkins explains that the confidant should be someone who could help the adolescent by giving information about what had happened, indicating processes and highlighting activities that would happen, giving support and reassurance that the adolescent would be cared for, as well as being available to the adolescent to ask questions and express their feelings.

Some of the participants from this research talked about the importance of visits from the maternal family who provided emotional support when they visited and checked on them. To the participants, this showed that they were loved and cared for, and that made them experience warmth and happiness. Participants fondly expressed their experiences:

*Participant 1: We were assisted by my maternal family. ...On other days they would just visit to check on us, bring more things. We would be filled with joy.*

*Participant 3: On some days they would take us to play on parks.*

Some of the adolescents expressed a wish about how they wanted to hear stories and fairy-tales related by family members because stress would be reduced.

*Participant 3: I wish they would make us not to think about him by telling us nice stories so that we could laugh and have fun, and in consequence forget.*

From Participant 3's perspective, being told stories would make her feel comforted and she would be content.

Participants in this research expressed a need to be loved. When asked how she would assist a friend who had lost a parent, this is what Participant 3 had to say:

*I would console her and tell her not to cry, one day she'll get a step-father who will look after her and take care of her. My step-father takes care of me and takes me as her own child.*

From the above excerpt, it is apparent that adolescents need to be loved by their parents as well as their stepparents. Whereas some participants had negative experience from stepfathers, Participant 3 had a positive experience from being loved by her stepfather. As part of coping and adjusting to a new situation, adolescents need

to establish new relationships with people who will be loving and caring (Leming & Dickinson 2007:138).

***b. Sub-theme 3.2.2 Positive emotional support received from peers***

This study identified various issues that participants needed from their peers. The most expressed need was a need to talk to their peers, sharing jokes and light stories that would make them forget about their miseries:

*Participant 5: If I were to talk to a friend following the loss of a parent I would comfort her by telling her jokes and do fun things with her so that she forgets about trying times.*

In line with the literature review, findings revealed that adolescents found comfort in talking and confiding in peers after the loss of a parent (McCarthy 2010:30). When asked what adolescents did when they experienced difficult times or what made things less difficult, this is what some of the participants shared:

*Participant 7: Friends were nice to me, although on some days when I'm with them I would cry. A friend of mine has also lost a father through death. We used to share everything.*

*Participant 3: My friends would play with me and we would have fun.*

*Participant 5: I would go to my friends, we played. When we played I would forget about my stressful situation, we played.*

*Participant 6: When I feel sorrow I would just sit and it would remain very painful. I would regularly go out and play with my friends and this would make me forget my pain. That's how I console myself, by going out to play with my friends.*

Being with friends and playing was one of the coping mechanisms that assisted participants in feeling better. Getting attention from peers had a positive effect on these young people's emotional well-being as they experienced acceptance. The above excerpts reveal that when friends play with bereaved adolescents, talk to them and generally spend time with them, the feeling of isolation and loneliness goes away and they feel accepted and loved. Feeling accepted by peers made the adolescents comfortable and filled with joy, resulting in improved self-esteem and contributing towards the young person's healing. Literature states that, during adolescence, young people are most happy in the company of friends (McCarthy 2010:30).

**c. Sub-theme 3.2.3 Positive emotional support received from community members**

Findings revealed that, on the days leading to the funeral until the “*umlindelolo*”, the community, congregants and the priests visited the adolescents’ families to give emotional and spiritual support by holding prayers. Smit (2007:174) contends that religion and spirituality appears to be used as a strategy for coping and giving meaning to death. This is probably true, especially in African culture in a rural context where there is no counseling given to the bereaved. Participants described support that they received from the community:

*Participant 7: People from the church came in the night. They prayed, sang and they were also dancing.*

*Participant 6: People came to assist with the cooking, and they were many.*

*Participant 5: Our neighbours came to shower us with condolences. They were saying, don't weep. They consoled us with comforting words. They promised to buy sweets for my sister's child and she was consoled and they lived up to the expectations. ...Throughout the week neighbours came to assist with cooking for my mother, cleaning and other preparatory activities.*

The mourning process was communal as members of the community visited our family during the days leading to the funeral to give condolences and prayers and to assist with cooking and funeral preparations. Unfortunately, whenever participants mentioned community involvement, with the exception of Participant 5, it was not directed to the young people but to adults. Shear (2009:746), in her study of grief and depression in bereaved children and adults, notes that family, friends and relatives focus on comforting bereaved adults leaving children to manage on their own.

**d. Sub-theme 3.2.4 Positive emotional support received from school**

In a rural environment characterised by poverty, the school remains a safe place with a stable environment where adolescents could get support (Jessop & McCarthy 2006:148) but the problem is that educators may lack skills to assist children going through bereavement (MacLeod 2010:162). Findings revealed that adolescents had

some expectations from educators to assist them to cope with grief. This is what the participants said:

*Participant 5: At school educators should be patient with learners. They should refrain from giving them corporal punishment in favour of giving encouragement. If a child is misbehaving they should not beat them, but talk to them giving the necessary guidance. ... They must guide the learners such that they are free to confide in them instead of just scolding the learners.*

*Interviewer: If a child is quiet and unable to express how he or she is feeling, what do you think adults should do?*

*Participant 5: When you (the educator or adult) look at the child's face you will be able to tell if there is a problem. Then you talk to the child that she or he must tell you what is troubling her or him. The child will be able to tell and then when she or he sees you, the child will confide in you so that you can help.*

Participant 5 expected educators to comfort her and to have skills to give positive guidance. She seems to be having trust in the educator. Perkins (2007:65) states that educators can be trusted adults who can give support to bereaved adolescents.

Feelings of grief can affect the adolescent's performance at school because the emotional grief can interfere with effective learning (Perkins 2007:64). From the excerpts of participants in this research, it is apparent that some participants experienced some hardship at school because the emotional burden that they experienced from grief could be so overwhelming that it left them unable to concentrate in class, hindering academic success. When asked about school, Participant 2, who did not attend her father's funeral and was physically abused by her mother, had this to say:

*Participant 2: I did Grade 1, 2, 3 and 4, then I came to this school and repeated Grade 4. I failed at home (in Giyani) and repeated when I came here.*

*Interviewer: What do you think made you fail Grade 4?*

*Participant 2: I often found myself in deep thoughts, thinking about my father.*

*Interviewer: With whom did you talk to when thinking about your father?*

*Participant 2: I talked to no one. Even at school I could get no one.*

Participant 2 found it difficult to concentrate as she was overburdened by deep thoughts of her deceased father. Although some participants failed, others did well in their grades. This was the response from the Participant 3, who passed her grades:

*Participant 3: Teachers in class comforted me and said things would be fine. At that time we were writing tests at school.*

*Interviewer: How did you perform in the tests?*

*Participant 3: I was doing well and I passed that year. I would forget about bereavement, but after school! (Starting to cry again).*

As she was talking, she was still working through the pain of grief. She expressed that the school was a source of comfort to her and has helped her to heal.

Findings also revealed that at school the grieving adolescents also experienced happiness because friends that the young people could freely talk to and play with were available. Perkins (2007:64) states that adolescents are able to put all their energy into forgetting and focus on the joy of attending school and playing whilst at school. Participant 1 described the enjoyment she derived from attending school:

*Attending school gave me pleasure, I worked diligently in class.*

Perkins (2007:64) and Stokes et al (2009:186) view the school and the classroom as places that can provide the child with structure and normality; where the young person may process the loss without causing stress to family members who may be already upset by the death. Furthermore, peers and educators may be providers of emotional support to the bereaved adolescent.

#### **4.4.3.3 Theme 3.3 Material assistance**

Material and financial security were the most urgent needs expressed by the participants. These needs emerged as also having an impact on the emotional well-being of participants in this research as they were always stressed and anxious about who would provide for their basic needs. Cluver and Gardner (2007:321) found that adolescents who experienced poverty were in danger of becoming distressed emotionally and behaviourally. Although some family members, peers, community members and educators gave material assistance, it was inadequate for participants.

##### **a. Sub-theme 3.3.1 Material assistance received from family**

Material and financial assistance was received from the maternal family. Participants shared:

*Participant 1: We were assisted by my maternal family. When my mother needed something they would supply them. My mother, when she borrowed things they would lend her.*

*Participant 3: (Referring to maternal family) They would buy us clothes, take us to play in parks.*

These participants felt that their respective maternal families loved them. The attention they received brought warmth and comfort to them and, consequently, healing enhanced.

### ***b. Sub-theme 3.3.2 Material assistance received from peers***

Findings revealed that adolescents found comfort in sharing material things with peers after the loss of a parent. This is what some of the participants reported:

*Participant 7: When I did not have spending money some of my friends would share their food with me.*

*Participant 1: My friends at school would buy me simba chips and other things.*

The above excerpts revealed that when friends bought for and shared things with the bereaved adolescent and generally spent time with them, the feelings of isolation and loneliness were diminished as the young person felt accepted and loved. Such feelings impact positively on the adolescent's emotional and social well-being.

### ***c. Sub-theme 3.3.3 Material assistance received from community members***

The loss of a father brought about poverty in the family. Difficulties experienced by the participants had a negative effect on their emotional well-being. During the early days of bereavement, some of the participants relied partly on neighbours for basic needs. The African value of 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye', literally interpreted as "a human being is a human being by virtue of others" applied in this set of circumstances. Participants reported:

*Participant 5: Throughout the week neighbours came to assist with cooking for my mother, cleaning and other preparations.*

*Participant 4: My mother got assistance from the society she had joined. They brought a bag of potatoes, a bag of cabbage, a bag of tomatoes and onions, as well as three tables.*

*Participant 7: People would give us food. There was no food in the house. They would bring us food and cook it for us.*

*Interviewer: How did you feel when people gave you food?*

*Participant 7: It was painful (crying).*

*Participant 6: Some would bring mielie-meal packets and others relish.*

*Participant 1: We would borrow money to buy paraffin from neighbours.*

Participant 1 relied on neighbours for support but, after a while, the benevolence started to wither, leaving the adolescents destitute.

#### **d. Sub-theme 3.3.4 Material assistance received from school**

Some participants in this research expressed the wish to be assisted by educators.

Participant 2 had this to say:

*Teachers should assist learners with things that they don't have. They must help them because they don't have food.*

Other participants received material support from attending school. Educators donated school uniforms, and often gave them money and food.

*Participant 1: Teachers gave us school uniform and sometimes money.*

*Participant 6: Usually at the end of the month a teacher would buy me clothes, shoes or groceries.*

The school uniforms and shoes received benefitted the adolescents by boosting their self-esteem since they then looked like other children.

## **4.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter looked into the findings of the empirical research conducted on parentally bereaved adolescents in a rural environment. Literature in support of the findings was provided.



An adolescent who is already challenged by adolescent developmental changes, becomes devastated by the loss of a loved one. Findings indicated that adolescents experienced emotional distress after the loss of a parent. Adolescents go through the intrapersonal grief process experienced by bereaved people from all cultures. Rituals and customs peculiar to their diverse cultures assisted adolescents to deal with the loss although no proper explanation was given to them as to why the rituals were followed. Adolescents got emotional support, as well as material support that enhanced their emotional well-being from family members, peers, the community members and educators. Furthermore, adolescents wished to be assisted with basic needs including food, clothing, as well as emotional support. They also expressed a need to be comforted by educators.

## **CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this study was to explore the emotional experiences of parental bereavement of African adolescents who live in a rural environment, how these adolescents dealt with bereavement, what type of assistance was received by the adolescents; and what assistance do African adolescents need specifically from educators in terms of addressing and coping with the loss of their parent. The researcher analysed data reflecting on adolescents' perspectives of their emotional experiences of parental loss and subsequent bereavement. Findings from the data collected from adolescents were then presented according to categories, themes and sub-themes. These findings were interpreted and discussed in relation to how they collaborated with existing theories that were identified in the literature review, as presented in Chapter 2 of this study, in order to understand how adolescents in a rural environment experience bereavement.

In this chapter, the researcher will present conclusions. A summary of the literature review and empirical findings will be provided based on the research questions that guided this study, as formulated in Chapter 1. Furthermore, the researcher will look at the limitations of the study as well as the implications for future research. Lastly, the researcher will suggest recommendations that emerge from this study.

### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

From the existing literature review, it is stated that parental loss through death is a devastating experience for adolescents as the traumatic event further complicates normal development in adolescents (Stokes et al. 2009:178; Jakobsen & Christiansen 2011:176). From the themes and sub-themes extracted from the interviews, it was evident that participants in this study experienced intense emotional challenges and abrupt changes in their lives after the loss of a parent.

Although participants had challenges resulting in negative emotional experiences, they adjusted to the loss to the best of their ability by going through some intrapersonal

experiences of grief and some external experiences of mourning rituals. This study also identified various needs, as well as assistance or lack thereof which was received by participants from family, peers, the community and educators.

### **5.2.1 Challenges resulting in negative emotional experiences**

Both the literature and empirical research offer a consensus of the consequences that an adolescent is subjected to after losing a parent. These include psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, stress and relationship issues; as well as (especially in rural deprived areas) financial difficulties, insecurity and poverty that exacerbate emotional distress (Cluver et al. 2008:1; Stokes et al. 2009:178). As such, the healing of a young person is delayed.

During the grieving process, the adolescent becomes aware of the important role that the deceased parent played in his or her life-world and therefore, they perceive their life-world and themselves in a different way. This new perceived sense of self has an influence on their well-being because adolescents experience a changed self. Self-esteem problems can arise which cause feelings of inauthenticity, self-doubt, low self-worth and self-pity. Susillo (2005:500-501) contends that the bereaved adolescent is so devastated that he or she feels that life will never be the same again because the normality that the adolescent used to enjoy when the parent was alive has dramatically changed. Empirical research revealed that some of the participants felt a change in their inner being and normal behaviour after the death of their father. Therefore, it was not surprising that some of the adolescents in this research had self-esteem problems that caused feelings of inadequacy.

People who have lost a loved one through death become distressed and experience a variety of negative emotions (Goodman et al. 2004:4; Mwamwenda 2004:79; Servaty-Seib 2004:126; Jakobsen & Christiansen 2011:176). In agreement with the literature review, the empirical study revealed that the participants in this study, who have lost a parent through death, experienced a variety of emotional responses. Emotional distress cited by these young people included sadness, stress, anxiety, disturbing dreams, changed self and self-esteem problems causing feelings of

inauthenticity and self-pity. Feelings of worthlessness, self-doubt and feeling unwanted resulted in relationship problems.

In the literature review, sadness and crying are stated as the major symptoms associated with grief (Corr 1999:147). According to the findings of the empirical study, young people felt sad, as they had lost a significant person in their lives. All the participants in this research lost their fathers and viewed a father as a significant person in their lives. The adolescents depended on their fathers as providers of love, care, safety and security as well as providers of financial and material resources. As a result, when a father dies, an adolescent does not only lose the attention, care and love that the parent gave, but also suffers from lack of access to basic resources (Li et al. 2008:152). A young person needs these things for the development of emotional and physical maturity.

Weymont and Rae (2006:1), as well as Jakobsen and Christiansen (2011:176) link the importance of parents to Bowlby's "Attachment Theory" which is based on the idea that babies bond with their primary caregivers through being fed, nurtured, held, protected and communicated with. With a strong primary attachment, children gain confidence, feel secured and loved. Weymont and Rae (2006:1) further state that the death of a parent breaks the primary attachment and the emotional pain associated with such a break is described as "life threatening". Both the empirical findings and literature concur that parents are important to adolescents and that, when a parent dies, adolescents are devastated. Goodman et al (2004:4) and Servaty-Seib (2004:126) concur with this view when the authors describe grief as the intense and uncontrollable emotional distress that a person experiences after the loss of a loved one.

The literature review highlighted that dramatic changes in an adolescent's life following the death of a parent may have a traumatic impact on the bereaved adolescent, affecting their well-being and causing psychosocial distress including depression, anxiety as well as self-esteem problems (Nyamukapa et al. 2008:134; Elegbeleye 2013:174). Empirical research revealed that, after the death of a parent, participants experienced stress, anxiety and self-esteem problems due to major adjustments in their lives without the parent. Changes mentioned by adolescents in this research and

in line with the literature review included adjustments in relationships, the place of residence and lack of financial and material resources. Going through these changes negatively affected adolescents consequently prolonging the grief.

The empirical investigation revealed that an adjustment in relationships was identified as a source of stress and anxiety to the participants in this research. Participants disclosed that the paternal family changed their attitude toward the participant's family after the death of a parent. Life became difficult and uncertain for most participants as they experienced animosity and hostility from the paternal family. In a number of cases, the paternal family betrayed the adolescent and family by using derogatory terms such as calling them witches and insinuating that they were responsible for the death of the adolescent's father. The paternal family also abandoned and rejected them, claiming that they were not biological children of the deceased. Furthermore, the paternal family would threaten to evict the bereaved family from their home. These actions by the paternal families made the adolescent to feel discriminated against, stigmatised, unappreciated, lonely and unloved. The stigmatisation embarrassed some of these adolescents and caused self-esteem problems. These young people are at a stage where they worry about how they are perceived by their peers and community members in general (Balk 2009:3).

The company of friends enhances self-esteem and feelings of self-worth (Jessop & McCarthy 2006:145). However, it emerged from the empirical research, that the peer group sometimes showed rejection towards the bereaved adolescent when they ridiculed and isolated them. Sometimes the bereaved participants in this study would suffer in the presence of the peer group when they wore old and torn clothes. Both the literature review and empirical research show that lack of validation by the peer group would make adolescents feel worthless, abandoned and unloved resulting in relationship problems as the adolescents developed low self-esteem (McCarthy 2010:30). McCarthy (2010:30) also warns that sometimes the bereaved adolescents may perceive relations to be destructive, only to find that, because of their emotional immaturity, friends do not know how to behave towards the bereaved friend. Thus, the author advocates that peer group support should be initiated at school to educate young people about bereavement issues.

From the literature review, Li et al. (2008:158) postulate that children who have lost parents are “double burdened” because not only do they lose the emotional support they enjoyed from the deceased parent, but often also lose access to basic resources including housing and land. Thus adolescents who have lost parents are often forced to change their place of residence and move to unfamiliar environments that, in most cases, lack emotional support and acceptance from neighbours (see Murray 2010:88). Empirical studies revealed adjustment on the place of residence as another prevailing factor which caused all the adolescents in this study to experience stress and anxiety. Adolescents had to battle with adjusting to an unfamiliar environment as a result of relocation after the death of the father, resulting in challenges pertaining to safety and security in the new residence which was sometimes devoid of adults to protect them. Some of the participants reported that they lived in households without an adult present, for instance with the mother working far away from home, some participants went to live with stepfathers, while others lived with extended families.

A painful experience reported by adolescents in this research was the radical change in financial and material resources. After the death of their respective fathers, most of these adolescents live in households characterised by poverty and hunger (see Richter & Desmond 2008:1026). The literature review on bereavement suggests that “economic poverty” has an adverse effect on the academic, social and emotional stimulation in children and such a situation negatively affects growth and development of children (Li et al. 2008:152). Adolescents in this research did not only worry about the loss of a loved one; they were also affected by the lack of financial and material resources. In all cases, the deceased father was the only provider of financial and material resources in the family. The loss of a father, therefore, brought about poverty and deprivation in the family to such an extent that some adolescents reported occasionally sleeping with hungry stomachs, going to school without a uniform and wearing torn shoes. Difficulties experienced by adolescents had a negative impact on their lives, and as a consequence, negatively affected their emotional and social well-being. Cluver and Gardner (2007:321) state that poverty and starvation are major factors of emotional and behavioural distress in young people. Thus, it was not surprising that some adolescents in this study reported experiencing anger, being withdrawn and anti-social behaviour as well as performing badly at school.

A surprising theme that emerged from the responses of adolescents in this research, which was not explicitly mentioned in the literature review, was the significance of dreams and the meaning which adolescents attached to dreaming. According to Mwamwenda (2004:226), dreams are about our imagination and feelings and we dream about things that are important to us, that we wish for or that have a bearing on our emotional lives. Some of the participants reported that they were able to communicate with the deceased parent through their dreams. Adolescents who experienced dreaming about their deceased parent found emotional comfort as they felt there was a connection with the deceased. This assisted adolescents with overcoming the loss. This finding is consistent with Howarth's (2011:28) assertion that a sustained communication link with the deceased parent can be achieved by means of dreams or performance of rituals and customs adopted from traditions applicable to the departed.

The emotional well-being of participants in this research seemed to be influenced by negative adjustments to relationships, relocation, financial insecurities and safety. Despite the intense emotional feelings arising from these challenges, participants seemed to have gone through the process of normal grief and were able to cope with and accept the loss. However, the possibility of long-term grief may not be ruled out since some participants were still emotional when they talked about the challenges they still experienced.

### **5.2.2 Dealing with bereavement**

Literature revealed that grief is a normal and healthy reaction to losing a loved one through death (McCarthy 2006:17). For people to cope with loss, it is necessary to resolve grief by going through the intrapersonal processes of grief and completing the tasks of mourning (Servaty-Seib 2004:129; Perkins 2007:27; Howarth 2011:23). Empirical findings highlighted that adolescents in this study adapted to the loss by going through the processes of dealing with grief whilst also experiencing mourning rituals adapted from traditions applicable to them.

When dealing with bereavement, adolescents experienced the stages of grief in the same way as adults experience the stages as postulated by Kübler-Ross (1969) in her

book '*On Death and Dying*' which she wrote when she studied terminally ill patients. However, according to the literature review, the progression through the processes of grief and the tasks of mourning differ from adults because much as adolescents have a cognitive understanding of death, they are emotionally immature to process the pain associated with loss. In line with Li et al. (2008:149), the process of grief of adolescents in this study was influenced by the "inaccurate information from adults ..., inability to sustain emotion ..., incomplete individuation [and] loss of primary attachment".

The stages according to Kübler-Ross (1969) include: going through denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. It has to be noted that participants in this research experienced four of these stages but there was no experience of bargaining that was reported.

Some adolescents reported having difficulty believing that their father was really dead and kept on wishing for his return. Thus, they were in a state of denial, shock and disbelief. Other participants had problems with accepting the reality of the parent's death because they were prevented from attending the funeral, and consequently, did not process their grief. In line with the literature review, some participants highlighted having experienced anger, some blaming the deceased for abandoning them while others directed their anger and hatred towards other people even if they did nothing to them (Kübler-Ross 1969:44).

Furthermore, according to the literature study, bereaved people experience depression symptoms (McClellan 2006:4-5; Hardy-Bougere 2008:67). In line with literature studies, adolescents in this study seemed to have gone through experiencing depressive symptoms. Some of these adolescents reported withdrawing from the company of people, isolating themselves and spending time sleeping. They cried a lot, did not have appetite, lacked sleep and also experienced physical pain. When at school, because of the emotional burden, they were unable to concentrate as they found themselves preoccupied and in deep thoughts about the deceased parent. Being in this condition negatively affected their academic progress and their self-esteem as a consequence. Some of these adolescents seemed to be still experiencing some of the symptoms of depression as they cried a lot during the interview sessions.



Although adolescents in this study have gone through intense emotional experiences after the loss of a parent, they eventually learned how to cope and accept the loss. Accepting the loss of a parent guides people towards healing as they process grief in a positive way (McCarthy 2006:40). Adolescents between the ages of eleven and fifteen years of age are capable of abstract reasoning and, as a result, they view death as final and irreversible (McCarthy 2006:43). Participants in this study were capable of understanding the finality of death. This assisted them to accept the reality of death. However, because they are still emotionally immature, participants were still overwhelmed by the difficulties associated with losing a significant person through death.

From the literature review, it is stated that although there is some commonality in the way people grieve, different cultural traditions are, however, applied when it comes to practices of mourning (Parkes 2001:35). These cultural traditions are referred to as rituals. Mpono (2007:82) and Hardy-Bougere (2008:67) define rituals as a set of traditional activities peculiar to a particular group performed for the restoration of a sense of normality within the individual or group. From the literature, it is noted that these rituals assist the bereaved to slowly adjust and accept the reality of death. Mourning rituals that were conducted during bereavement were prominent in the empirical findings of this research. Although some adolescents in the present study vividly remembered some rituals, they reported that they felt obliged to do some of these rituals without being informed about the processes involved and the benefits derived thereof. Whereas some of these activities assisted them in accepting the reality of the parents' death, others were viewed as meaningless activities to them. It is necessary that adolescents be exposed and educated about traditional practices pertaining to death and dying to improve their understanding of the therapeutic value thereof. Moreover, youths are adults of tomorrow who will have to impart this knowledge to others younger than them.

The most important rituals mentioned by adolescents in this research included viewing the body of the deceased when it was laid in state in a dedicated room, attending the funeral and visiting the grave. In the literature review, Worden (1996, 2002) in Leming and Dickinson (2007:138) advises that the bereaved person should undertake rituals

in order to overcome the natural denial and to accept the reality of death. According to some of the participants, although they were not informed about the proceedings and reasons why they had to partake in them, these activities gave them a chance to grieve and mourn the death of their parent. The rituals they participated in seemed to assist them to cope better and deal with the reality of the loss.

Some adolescents were given an opportunity to participate in the rituals whereas others were not given the opportunity due to a variety of circumstances. For instance, some of the adolescents in the research did not attend the funeral of their father. The lack of financial resources was mentioned most frequently as a problem. Most funerals were moved from the rural settlement where they lived to the places of origin of the deceased that were, in most cases, far away. As a result of distance, some adolescents were deprived of attendance in favour of adults due to lack of finances. Some of the adolescents, who were not given a chance to take part in these activities, seemed to take longer to internalise the loss. Such a situation where attendance is not possible may prolong grief.

Distributing the possessions of the deceased, holding a wake (umlindelo) as well as conducting grief ceremonies like slaughtering cattle, cutting hair and cleansing ceremonies were some of the activities that were executed. The literature review highlighted that children participate in the cultural activities to expose and teach them to respect their cultures (Yawa 2010:96). According to most of the participants in this research, they took part in the rituals because adults told them to do so without explaining why it was significant or how it could assist them. However, even when they were not told, some of the adolescents reported that partaking in the rituals assisted healing whilst others were indifferent to the practices. From the interviews, it is apparent that adolescents felt deprived and were unhappy about not being told about the significance of rituals.

Closely linked to rituals is the role of ancestral beliefs. According to African cultural belief, there is a connection between the living and the dead (amadlozi) and the ancestors play an important role as they protect the family against danger and assist family members towards prosperity (Jali 2000:42). According to African perspective, people do not really die but remain with the living in an ancestral form (Onukwugha

2002, in Russell 2005:14). From personal observation, it seems that ancestors visit the living relatives in different forms. In the case of the participants in this research, some participants reported being with their fathers in the form of dreams. One participant had a visitation of a snake. African beer and snuff was taken to the grave where some of it was poured over the grave by an elder and the remaining beer was shared by members present. This ceremony was performed to pay tribute and to appease the ancestors. The literature affirms that traditional rituals and beliefs help mourners to receive psychological relief, and are also performed to appease the ancestors (Yawa 2010:28-29).

A less prominently mentioned mechanism that made two of the adolescents feel better was the viewing of the photographs of the deceased parent. This may be due to lack of resources as taking photographs would be costly for most of these adolescents.

From the findings in this study, it appears that, despite not being informed about the significance of mourning rituals, some adolescents benefitted from the traditional practices. Therefore, it is necessary that people working with adolescents must be aware of cultural diversity and its impact on bereavement issues in order to be sensitive to the bereaved young people (Hardy-Bougere 2008:66).

### **5.2.3 Assistance needed and assistance received**

According to the Li et al (2008:152), the majority of parentally bereaved adolescents in a rural environment are vulnerable because they are faced with the deprivation of basic needs, care and security. This research was conducted in a rural environment that is characterised by poverty and deprivation. It is not surprising that the needs identified by the adolescents in this research mostly included basic material and financial needs. All participants that were interviewed mentioned the lack of basic necessities such as food and clothes and were also concerned about the lack of school uniform, shoes and necessities associated to schooling. These challenges facing the adolescent made the grief of the loss of a parent even more difficult.

Findings revealed that adolescents in this research mostly received negative or no support from various people including family members, peers, community members

and educators. Lack of constructive or positive support could delay recovery. For instance, some of the adolescents in this research reported that they were not told the truth about the death. Some family members deceived the participants about the meaning of death and also used euphemisms to shield young people from experiencing pain. This situation confused the adolescent and delayed healing. Thus, Goodman et al. (2004:23) suggest that “euphemistic explanations” should not be given as adolescents need to be told the truth about death in order to grieve and mourn appropriately. From the findings, it was apparent that adolescents needed to understand the meaning of death and its finality although they found grief too difficult to handle. Kosminsky and Lewin (2009:33) assert that, during adolescence, young people “understand intellectually realities that they cannot integrate emotionally” like the death of a parent.

McCarthy (2006:17) and Mahoney (2008:2) suggest that grief is a natural and predictable reaction to loss and, therefore, it cannot be prevented. However, grief can be minimised by giving adolescents the emotional support, material and financial security they needed to develop into mentally healthy adults. If there was inadequate support, people may struggle at a particular stage and suffer from complicated grief. Yeong (2005) in Hardy-Bougere (2008:67) defines complicated grief as “the persistent longing for a deceased person or the inability to adjust to the loss within a given period”. The empirical study revealed that adolescents in this research experienced hostility in the hands of their relatives and this negatively affected their emotional well-being. Some of the adolescents experienced emotional abuse from their stepfathers who also physically abused their mothers. Some of the participants still cried at the time of the interview because of the abuse being perpetrated. Perkins (2007:64) points out that the step-parent can be another factor that delays grief.

In some cases, negative support came from the mother. For instance, one participant reported that her mother refused to apply for the government grant that would assist them. Another one was often physically abused by her mother and, as a result, the adolescent was still grieving at the time of the interview. It should be noted that some of the surviving parents may still be experiencing the trauma of losing a loved one and, therefore, still going through grief themselves (Perkins 2007:58). The most traumatic abuse was received from the paternal family who showed a lot of hostility and

animosity towards the adolescent and the bereaved family. Some of the adolescents in this study were deeply hurt in the hands of their paternal relatives who rejected them. Adolescents felt abandoned, deserted, unloved and failed by the paternal relatives.

Another reality that adolescents in this study had to face was the hostility they sometimes suffered from their neighbours, for instance, when they requested paraffin to cook with or borrowed money to buy food. These adolescents appreciated that when they relocated their new neighbours assisted them, but later on that also changed. On some days, the adolescents slept with empty stomachs. The notion of "ubuntu" as practiced by Africans seems to be on the decline in communities probably because many homes, like the homes in the rural environment where this research was conducted, have little resources. There is an increase in parents who are breadwinners dying and leaving children with little or no resources, as is the case with the adolescents in this study. Smit (2007:169) is of the opinion that families are left facing an "economic predicament". This situation is brought by the absence of breadwinners through illness or death that is on the increase, resulting in poverty. According to Smit (2007:169) this situation puts a strain on economic stability in families. More families are left with little resources, therefore it becomes a challenge to African families to uphold the spirit of "ubuntu."

The literature review highlighted that grieving youths needed at least one trusted adult who can give them information about funeral arrangements, answer questions, provide them with love and give reassurance that they will be cared for (Elegbeleye 2013:177). This need was echoed by all adolescents in this research, but only a few had trusted adults who would listen to them when they wanted to talk. Being surrounded by people who cared would bring comfort and solace to the young person, assisting with recovery.

Access to emotional support from peers and other significant adults is important for bereaved youths because such relations could have a positive influence on the adolescents' experiences of bereavement (McCarthy 2010:30) In this study, family and peer group support emerged as key in assisting adolescents to cope emotionally. Some of the adolescents revealed that they talked about their feelings of grief to family

members, including siblings, mothers and grandmothers. One adolescent also talked about the love and care she received from her stepfather. Support also came from the maternal family when they visited the bereaved household, bought clothes for them and took them to parks for recreation. Some of the adolescents fondly related how happy they were when family members related stories to them. Stress would be reduced because these young people felt loved and cared for.

Peer group relations and acceptance are important during this stage of adolescence, as it gives a sense of belonging (McCarthy 2010:30). Playing and talking with friends at school and at home make adolescents happy. Getting attention from peers motivates and comforts the bereaved adolescents as they feel accepted by their peers.

The literature review indicated that bereavement can be a family affair or it can be shared by a group (Hardy-Bougere 2008:66). The empirical study revealed that the mourning process, in the case of the participants, was communal. During the week of the funeral, members of the community visited the family to offer condolences and prayers and to assist with the funeral preparations. Social groups to which some parents of the adolescents were affiliated to, brought some vegetables and groceries and also assisted with cooking on the day of the funeral. Most of the participating adolescents reported that support by the community was not directed to them but to adults in the family. For some time, neighbours continued to give assistance but after a while, as already mentioned above, it appeared as if the spirit of “ubuntu” was diminished when neighbours refused to assist any further.

A serious concern for the adolescents that emanated from the present study related to survival matters. They were more anxious about who would provide for their basic needs, for example food, clothing, shelter and security. Most of them had a surviving parent (the mother), but their fears could not be allayed because mothers were not working, thus disabling them from being provided with basic needs. Although adolescents received some form of financial and material assistance from family, peers, community members as well as educators, this was not enough. The material and financial security that they did receive had a positive impact on their emotional well-being.

The findings revealed that some adolescents in this study had expectations from educators at school to be assisted in coping with their grief. They expected educators to be patient with them instead of scolding them. They expressed the wish that they could be given the necessary guidance so that they could be free to confide in educators.

On a sad note, some adolescents in this study expressed that after the loss of a parent they experienced some hardship at school. They often found it difficult to concentrate as they were overburdened by problems and by deep thoughts, thinking about their deceased fathers. Some of the adolescents failed but others passed. In Ackerman (2011:7), Dowdney (2000) concurs that some children work hard at school as a tribute to their deceased parents, whereas others find it difficult to concentrate as memories of their fathers keep on coming back. Perkins (2007:64) reiterates that emotional grief can interfere with effective learning hindering academic progress. It is therefore not surprising to find some parentally bereaved adolescents performing badly academically whilst others do well.

### **5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Various limitations associated with this study were identified. Limitations that came to the fore were related to the research design and the sampling of participants.

The focus of this study was on participants giving their perspective of bereavement in their own words and in their familiar environment, thus a qualitative research approach was chosen in order to give leeway to adolescents to express themselves. Giving adolescents the freedom to tell their experiences would allow the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of said experiences. Due to the sensitive nature of the information these adolescents had to impart, some information may have been deliberately left out or forgotten by the participants because interviewing was conducted two to three years after bereavement. For example, participants might have left out some information on rituals because they thought it was of little significance to the study.

Adolescents that took part in this research were defined by a variable; they had to be parentally bereaved adolescents because the researcher was looking for information-rich participants who had personal experiences of what the study focussed on. They had to be parentally bereaved adolescents who lived in a rural environment. Conducting research on this type of topic compels the researcher to interview the adolescents who, in response, have to relive the situation which had caused pain. This resulted in participants having to endure the pain previously experienced. As the researcher was doing a psychology internship in the same area where the research was conducted, she was in a position to give group and individual therapy to the affected adolescents.

When it came to analysing and interpreting data, the researcher may could have an element of bias or prejudice arising out of her own experiences. In order to overcome this limitation and ensure trustworthiness and credibility, the researcher digitally recorded and transcribed the interviews. To validate her personal involvement, the researcher involved her supervisor whose input brought immense and knowledgeable perspective.

The sample in this research included seven girls and one boy. All the participants who were interviewed had lost a father, thus only deaths of fathers were studied. The small sample size and homogeneity of the sample group pose another limitation of generalisability of research findings to other populations. However, through semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to get rich accounts of bereavement experiences of the participants.

#### **5.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

This study revealed that African adolescents' emotional needs are often not recognised or neglected by both the adolescent and other significant people. Adolescents in this study reported that they experienced intense emotional feelings following the death of a parent. Adolescents needed to be assisted to process and deal with their emotional feelings. Therefore, there is a need for intervention programmes to be in place at community level to assist young people dealing with bereavement in a rural context. More studies could be conducted on how these



adolescents could be afforded psychological and emotional support opportunities, whether in groups or individually, especially in a rural environment characterised by poverty and the absence of professional people like educational psychologists or social workers to assist.

Young people spend most of their day at school. In this rural environment, the school seemed to be the main institution that could provide stability. More studies could be undertaken that concentrate on the training of educators and develop a package with skills in order to equip them to deal with bereavement issues. MacLeod (2010:162) is of the opinion that schools have a strong desire to intervene and assist young people who are bereaved but educators feel their skills are inadequate.

From the findings, it is evident that adolescents in bereavement need emotional support in order to deal with their sadness, stress, frustrations, fears and concerns about their future. Being surrounded by caring and loving people would enable the young people to positively deal with their grief and bereavement challenges and grow to become well-functioning adults. Findings also revealed that the most important need of the adolescents themselves is to be given financial and material support while their emotional needs are neglected. This is not surprising because inadequate financial and material security poses a big problem for them. Mwamwenda (2006:241) and Li et al. (2008:152) postulate that it is essential for the young people to satisfy their basic survival needs, such as food for basic nutrition, clothing, shelter and health in order to meet the adolescent's psychosocial needs. The Government's involvement in the form of grants, as some of the adolescents reported, and material assistance the adolescents received from family members and some educators became useful. However, some adolescents reported that they did not get grant funds from the Government. More studies could be conducted to obtain more information that would provide adequate background to the adolescents' experiences of parental bereavement and look into interventions that can be put in place in a rural environment to further satisfy bereaved adolescents.

Most adolescents in this study indicated that they practiced certain rituals and activities but were not informed about the merits of the rituals. Although adolescents reported that some of the rituals gave them a chance to grieve and mourn the death of the

father and in the process accept reality, it seemed that they would do better if they were made aware of the significance of the rituals. Attention by other researchers could concentrate on different traditions and customs associated with death and dying in the South African context and on how adolescents could be made aware of such rituals.

## 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

This research was conducted in a rural environment in the east of Pretoria. The rationale for this choice is that there are no Educational Psychologists that are based in the school or the neighbourhood who can offer psychological interventions to bereaved adolescents. Furthermore, there are few Social Workers in the wide area who offer little or no support as they are overwhelmed by the large number of people with social problems. Although grieving is a normal process that a person who has lost a loved one goes through, emotional support is needed in order for the grieving person to cope well and become a fully functioning adult. If adolescents lack support they are susceptible to endure complicated grief. Adolescents in this study are emotionally affected by the death of a parent. They need support in order to heal and become fully functioning adults.

The researcher is of the opinion that educators be assisted to take a major role in dealing with children in bereavement. Educators should also be assisted to play a role in the bereavement awareness of the community so that family and community members would be in a position to give positive and constructive support to bereaved adolescents. Based on the findings of the study the researcher would like to make the following recommendations:

1. Death and bereavement should form part of the school curriculum for the emotional readiness of adolescents. Stevenson (2009:287) states that children of all ages need to be exposed to the realities of death and bereavement. The following points, when drawing a curriculum should be taken into consideration:

- In a rural environment characterised by poverty the school remains the only stable institution with adults who can offer a safe place and listen to these young

people. Another consideration is that the bereaved adolescents spend most of their time during the day at school in close contact with educators. Therefore, the school is the correct environment where general information and intervention could be given about bereavement issues (see Jessop & McCarthy 2006:149). Educators may be willing to assist the bereaved adolescents. However, they are not trained in bereavement support, thus may not be equipped to deal with the subject of assisting bereaved children going through the loss of loved ones (see MacLeod 2010:162). Thus, it becomes necessary that educators should be trained to become aware of the emotional effects of bereavement on learners and understand what these learners are going through in order to give school-based interventions in an appropriate way.

- Death and loss should already be taught at primary school in order to educate young people about aspects of loss in general to improve their general understanding of bereavement, challenges associated with losing a parent and coping skills. At school information would be presented to the youth in a natural academic environment and in a language appropriate to their level of understanding. Educating the youth about death and loss would normalise grief as children would be exposed to the exploration of feelings before the experience of bereavement (see Rowling 2010:154).
- Schools should have a policy that manages bereavement issues. Stokes et al. (2009:186) sees the school as a safe place where the bereaved adolescent can deal with the loss away from other grieving family members. The youth at school is in the presence of peers and other trusted adults (educators) who can be confidants. The school policy therefore should give guidelines as to how other learners, educators and other school personnel should deal with bereavement in support of a bereaved learner.
- It is apparent that adolescents in a rural environment have numerous challenges that negatively affect their emotions. Although they are emotionally affected by the death of a loved one, they seem to lack relevant awareness of their emotional feelings as they concentrate on their financial needs. Adolescents also lack relevant vocabulary and thus they have limitations to express, externalise and manage their emotional feelings (Jessop & McCarthy 2006:147-148; Perkins 2007:67). Therefore, it is recommended that educators should be given skills to equip them to

educate children to be aware of how they are feeling to be able to identify and express their emotions. For instance, educators could teach children “feeling words” and they can also match “feeling words” to “feeling faces” or to “feeling colours” (Sorensen 2008:29, 32, 41) so that they can have a better understanding of their feelings and, consequently, be able to express such feelings. Being able to identify and express emotional feelings would assist children to resolve said feelings during the normal stages of the grief process (Sorensen 2008:17).

2. Educators working with adolescents should be trained to be sensitive to cultural diversity so as not to offend these young people and to be able to assist them accordingly. De Witt and Lessing (2010:474) state that people working with the youth should take note of cultural beliefs and practices of the communities they are involved with. When educators deal with cultural diversity issues with learners during lessons, death and mourning rituals should also be included in the discussions to expose all learners to the different traditional beliefs pertaining to death matters. Awareness of diverse traditional practices would make children sensitive to other bereaved learners. For example, if children were aware of different mourning rituals they would refrain from making fun of other children when they shave their hair after losing a parent.

3. Positive support should be given to adolescents to assist them towards healing.

- It is recommended that bereavement intervention workshops for educators should be organised to train educators on bereavement in adolescents in order to gain more insight into the challenges facing bereaved adolescents. This would assist educators to understand the behaviour of adolescents in a rural context and to be equipped to support those affected by death in a positive manner. This would assist adolescents to cope better with bereavement. Attention should not only be given to drug abuse campaigns or HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns, but also to bereavement awareness before learners show emotional, behavioural or learning problems due to bereavement. Stevenson (2009:289) is of the opinion that staff development workshops on death education should be made available to all educators since bereaved children can be found in every class.

- The findings revealed that most surviving parents and other adults may not be fully aware of the plight of bereaved adolescents and are ill-equipped to give positive and constructive support to these adolescents. Bereaved adolescents are unintentionally left to suffer alone in silence because the adolescents have difficulty talking about their feelings. McCarthy (2006:147-148) attributes that to the fear of troubling other grieving family members. Parents are regarded as the first death educators of children (Stevenson 2009:282). Therefore, the researcher recommends that, during parents' meetings, educators should include awareness campaigns on bereavement to make parents aware about the emotional experiences of parentally bereaved adolescents and how this impacts on their behavioural and emotional well-being. Through these awareness campaigns surviving parents, other adults in the family and in the community might become educated about adolescent grief. They may become aware that, just like adults, grieving adolescents are going through emotional trauma after the loss of a loved one and are equally in need of support during bereavement. Hopefully, awareness of the plight of adolescents would make adults to be more focused and co-operative in addressing the needs of the bereaved adolescents.

- Adolescence is a stage where young people value the input of peers more than that of adults. Stokes et al. (2009:185) attributes this to the developmental task of seeking independence from adults and seeking acceptance by peers. This situation makes adolescents hesitant to seek support from adults and to become more comfortable with peers. In line with Perkin's (2007:64) advice, it is recommended that peer-support groups should be established within the school and be trained on loss and grief. This is where the bereaved adolescent could feel safe to share her feelings and anxieties and get solace in the comfort of peers. Lopez (2011:11) affirms the above assertion when the author points out that adolescents have accepted ways of relating, behaving and seeking support from peers. As a result they need intervention strategies that are appropriate to the stage from the peer group.

4. Guidelines for educators to recognise abnormal grief in adolescents should be outlined to assist educators to have the ability to recognise adolescents who are

experiencing abnormal grief in order to refer such adolescents to other professionals for effective intervention services.

## 5.6 CONCLUSION

In listening to the voices of parentally bereaved adolescents who live in a rural environment, it is evident that parental loss is a cause of emotional pain to adolescents. Adolescents who are already faced with challenges as they go through physical, emotional, cognitive, moral and psychological developmental changes, have to also deal with challenges and changes brought by losing a loved one. Challenges and changes brought about a lot of uncertainty and a feeling of vulnerability to adolescents, especially to rural adolescents who live in extremely vulnerable conditions.

Although adolescents had difficulty talking about their feelings, findings revealed that adolescents in this study experienced challenges that brought negative emotions. However, they resolved grief by going through intrapersonal experiences of grief and mourning rituals. It is regrettable that adolescents reported that they were not informed by adults why these rituals were performed because if they were informed, they probably would have benefitted more. People working with adolescents should be sensitive to cultural diversity so as not to offend these young people and to be able assist them accordingly.

From the voices of the young people in this study, it is apparent that the bereaved adolescents need to be emotionally supported by family, peers, community members and educators in order to make their lives more meaningful and sustainable. It seems that there were limited resources that were provided for psychological support to these adolescents. The little support given by family, peers, community members and educators was in the form of financial and material resources. Although the little financial and material security that was given to the adolescents had a positive impact on adolescents' emotional well-being, for adolescents to become optimally developed, they needed full emotional support.

The community needs to be made aware of the plight of bereaved adolescents and should be introduced into giving positive and constructive assistance to these young people. Educators can play a major role by getting involved in bereavement awareness campaigns, for example, during parents' meetings, to make community members aware of the plight of bereaved adolescents.

Since these young people are of a school going age they spend most of their time during the day at school with their peers and educators. This would come as an advantage in a rural environment, because school seems to be the only stable institution where adolescents can get support from educators and peer group. Therefore, focus should be on equipping educators to deal effectively with bereavement needs of learners, to establish and train peer support groups on bereavement matters and to refer those learners who seem to be having problems to other relevant professionals such as social workers and educational psychologists.

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## **APPENDECES**

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance

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Appendix A: Ethical Clearance

## Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

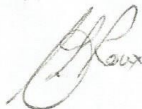
This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

**Mobatja ZT [0653-475-9]**

for M Ed study entitled

**A psycho-educational perspective of parental bereavement in  
African adolescents**

has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa  
College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two  
years from the date of issue.



Prof CS le Roux  
CEDU REC (Chairperson)  
[lrouxcs@unisa.ac.za](mailto:lrouxcs@unisa.ac.za)

27 November 2013

Reference number: 2013 November/0653-475-9/CSLR



## GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

For administrative use:  
Reference no: D2014 / 365

### GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	18 February 2014
Validity of Research Approval:	18 February to 3 October 2014
Name of Researcher:	Mabotja Z.T.
Address of Researcher:	P.O. Box 13628
	Tramshed
	0126
Telephone Number:	012 320 8909 / 076 290 0455
Email address:	zeemabotja@gmail.com
Research Topic:	A psycho-educational perspective of parental bereavement in African adolescents
Number and type of schools:	ONE Primary School
District/s/HO	Gauteng North

**Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this

1

*Makhado*  
2014/02/19

Making education a societal priority

**Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research**

9<sup>th</sup> Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001  
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506  
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za  
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

Mr L Mkhari  
District Director  
Gauteng Department of Education  
District Gauteng North (D1)  
Private Bag X75  
Pretoria 0001

Date:

Dear Mr Mkhari

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT -----**

I am currently studying towards a Masters in Educational Psychology at the University of South Africa. One of the requirements for the fulfilment of the degree is that I complete a dissertation, of limited scope, involving research. My research topic is: A Psycho-Educational perspective of parental bereavement in African adolescents. The purpose of the study is to research the emotional experiences of African adolescents, in a rural setting, who are dealing with parental bereavement, with the intention of giving guidelines to educators on how to support adolescents.

I request your permission to conduct the research at ----- Primary School. If permission is granted the principal's, parent's or guardian's consent, including learner's assent will be obtained before the research is conducted.

Learners who have suffered the loss of a parent will be identified by the teachers. One individual interview session, of one hour long will be conducted with the learners. The learners will be handled with utmost care and their identities will be kept confidential. I will be guided in the process by the ethical rules of conduct for practitioners registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa and the dictates of the Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 of 1974), as well as the Unisa Research Ethics Policy.

The research project will be conducted under the supervision of Prof Elza Venter.

**Please note:**

- The interviews will be published in my dissertation.
- Each interview session will be tape recorded.
- The learners' identities will be protected by providing an alias.
- The learners' participation is voluntary. A learner has the right to withdraw, at any point, from the study, for any reason and without any prejudice.
- As this topic may induce psychological stress, care will be taken to debrief learners and counselling sessions will be organised should the need arise.

I have attached hereto a letter of approval from the Gauteng Department of Education and UNISA Research Ethics Clearance Certificate.

You are welcome to contact me if you need any additional information.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zolelwa Mabotja  
Intern Educational Psychologist

Kindly complete the following:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ grant

permission to Zolelwa Mabotja to conduct the research.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
District Director

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Research Student

## Appendix D: School Governing Body research approval letter

The School Governing Body  
----- Primary School  
P O Box -----  
Rethabile  
0122

Date:

Dear Sir / Madam

### **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT KUTUMELA MOLEFI PRIMARY SCHOOL**

I am currently studying towards a Masters in Educational Psychology at the University of South Africa. One of the requirements for the fulfilment of the degree is that I complete a dissertation, of limited scope, involving research. My research topic is: A Psycho-Educational perspective of parental bereavement in African adolescents. The purpose of the study is to research the emotional experiences of African adolescents, in a rural setting, who are dealing with parental bereavement, with the intention of giving guidelines to educators on how to support adolescents.

I request your permission to conduct the research with your school learners. If permission is granted, the principal's, parent's or guardian's consent, including learner's assent will be obtained before the research is conducted.

The research project will be conducted under the supervision of Prof Elza Venter.

Learners who have suffered the loss of a parent will be identified by the School Based Support Team. One individual interview session, of one hour long will be conducted with the learners. The learners will be handled with utmost care and their identities will be kept confidential. I will be guided in the process by the ethical rules of conduct for practitioners registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa and the dictates of the Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 of 1974), as well as the Unisa Research Ethics Policy.

#### **Please note:**

- The interviews will be published in my dissertation.
- Each interview session will be tape recorded.
- The learners' identities will be protected by providing an alias.
- The learners' participation is voluntary. He/she has the right to withdraw, at any point, from the study, for any reason and without any prejudice.
- As this topic may induce psychological stress, care will be taken to debrief learners and counselling sessions will be organised with other professionals, should the need arise.

You are welcome to contact me if you need any additional information.

Yours sincerely

---

Zolelwa Mabotja  
Intern Educational Psychologist



Kindly complete the following:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ grant permission to

Zolelwa Mabotja to conduct the research.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Research Student

## Appendix E: School Principal research approval letter

Mr -----  
The Principal  
----- Primary School  
P O Box -----  
Rethabile  
0122

Date:

Dear Mr -----

### **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT -----**

I am currently studying towards a Masters in Educational Psychology at the University of South Africa. One of the requirements for the fulfilment of the degree is that I complete a dissertation, of limited scope, involving research. My research topic is: A Psycho-Educational perspective of parental bereavement in African adolescents. The purpose of the study is to research the emotional experiences of African adolescents, in a rural setting, who are dealing with parental bereavement, with the intention of giving guidelines to educators on how to support adolescents.

I request your permission to conduct the research with your learners. If permission is granted, the parent's or guardian's consent, including learner's assent, will be obtained before the research is conducted.

The research project will be conducted under the supervision of Prof Elza Venter.

Learners who have suffered the loss of a parent will be identified by the School Based Support Team. One individual interview session, of one hour long will be conducted with the learners. The learners will be handled with utmost care and their identities will be kept confidential. I will be guided in the process by the ethical rules of conduct for practitioners registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa and the dictates of the Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 of 1974), as well as the Unisa Research Ethics Policy.

#### **Please note:**

- The interviews will be published in my dissertation.
- Each interview session will be tape recorded.
- The learners' identities will be protected by providing an alias.
- The learners' participation is voluntary.
- A learner has the right to withdraw, at any point, from the study, for any reason and without any prejudice.
  
- As this topic may induce psychological stress, care will be taken to debrief learners and counselling sessions will be organised with other professionals, should the need arise.

You are welcome to contact me if you need any additional information.

Yours sincerely

---

Zolelwa Mabotja  
Intern Educational Psychologist

Kindly complete the following:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ grant permission to

Zolelwa Mabotja to conduct the research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Research Student Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F1: Parent / guardian letter of consent (English)

Date:

### Dear Parent/Guardian

I am currently studying towards a Masters in Educational Psychology at the University of South Africa. One of the requirements for the fulfilment of the degree is that I complete a dissertation, of limited scope, involving research. My research topic is: A Psycho-educational perspective of parental bereavement in African adolescents. The purpose of the study is to research the emotional experiences of African adolescents, in a rural setting, who are dealing with parental bereavement, with the intention of giving guidelines to educators on how to support adolescents. Your child has been identified to participate in this programme. He or she needs to participate and talk about his or her experiences of bereavement.

I therefore would like to request your permission for your child to participate in this study. The research project will be conducted under the supervision of Prof Elza Venter.

One individual interview session of one hour long will be conducted with your child. I will also ask your child if he or she would be willing to take part in the research.

### Please note:

- **The interview will be published in my dissertation.**
- **Each session of the interview will be recorded on tape.**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent's  
or guardian's name and surname) hereby give permission that my child

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name  
and surname of child)

may participate in the study programme and that he or she may talk about his or her experiences of bereavement after the loss of a parent. I also give permission for the sessions to be tape recorded and the interview on the experiences may be used and be published in the dissertation.

### I agree to the following conditions:

- My child's participation is totally voluntary.
- My child's identity will be kept confidential. (He or she will be given a number so that people cannot identify with my child).
- I have the right to withdraw my child from this study should I no longer wish my child to be part of this programme.
- The completed interview and other data obtained will be treated as highly confidential material. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the raw data.
- There may be some psychological discomfort and stress associated with this research as a result of your child's sad memories as he or she talks about the loss of his or her parent.

I will take care, to the best of my professional capacity that this discomfort and stress will be dealt with, and your child will be assisted.

- A summary of findings will be presented to the parents and guardians in a meeting after the completion of my degree.

Name and surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



You are encouraged to ask questions at any time regarding the nature of the study or the method used. You are welcome to contact me on the number listed above should you have any further queries or concerns.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Zolelwa Mabotja

Intern Educational Psychologist

## Appendix F2: Parent / guardian letter of consent (isiZulu)

Date:

### **Mzali/Mbheki Othandekayo**

Njengamanje ngenza iziqu zami zeMastazi Ezifundweni Eziphathelene Nezengqondo kwezemfundo eNyuvesi YaseNingizimu Afrika. Okunye kwezinto ezidingekayo ukuze ngiqede lezi ziqu zami kufanele ukuthi ngibhale idezetheshini ngokuthile okufaka ucwaningo. Isihloko sami socwaningo sithi: Umbono Ngokwesifundo Sengqondo Kwezemfundo ngokushonelwa abazali kwezingane esezingena esigabeni sobudala (*izithonjana*) ezingama-Afrika. Inhloso yalesi sifundo socwaningo ukucwaninga ngolwazi izingane esezingena esigabeni sobudala (*izithonjana*) ezingama-Afrika ezihlala ezindaweni zasemakhaya ngosizi ezinalo ngokushonelwa abazali ngenhloso yokunika abafundisi imihlahlandlela yokuthi bangazixhasa kanjani. Ingane yakho ikhethiwe ukuthi ihlanganyele nezinye ezikhethwe ekilasini lakhe kulolu cwaningo. Kudingeka ukuthi ikhulume ngolwazi enalo ngokushonelwa umzali.

Ngakho ngicela imvume yakho ukuze ingane yakho ihlanganyele kulesi sifundo socwaningo. Le phrojekti yocwaningo izohanjiswa ngaphansi ko Prof Elza Venter okwezemfundo eNyuvesi yaseNingizimu Afrika.

Kuzoba nenkulumongxoxo, yomuntu ngamunye ezothatha ihora elilodwa ubude izokwenziwa nengane yakho. Ngizobuza ingane yakho ukuthi iyafisa ukuba yingxenywe yalolucwaningo.

### **Sicela uqaphele:**

- **Inkulumongxoxo izoshicilelwa kwidezetheshini yami.**
- **Kuzoqoshwa wonke umsebenzi ozokwenziwa nengane yakho ufakwe kwitheyiphu.**

Mina, \_\_\_\_\_

(Igama nesibongo somzali okanye umbheki)

ngiyavuma ukuthi ingane yami ingahlanganyela ohlelweni lwesifundo socwaningo nokuthi ingakhuluma ngolwazi enalo ngokushonelwa ngemuva kokulahlekelwa umzali. Ngiyavuma futhi ukuthi bangaqopha netheyiphu ngemihlangano abazoba nayo nengane yami kanti futhi inkulumongxoxo nolwazi okukhulunywe ngalo lingashicilelwa kwidezethishini.

### **Ngiyavumelana nalemibandela elandelayo:**

- Ukuhlanganyela kwengane yami ocwaningweni ngokokuzinikela nje.
- Ulwazi ngengane yami luzogcinwa luyimfihlo (Izonikezwa igama engeke abantu bakwazi ukuyazi ngalo).
- Nginelungelo lokukhipha ingane yami kulesi sifundo socwaningo nolunye ulwazi uma nje ngingasathandi ukuthi ingane yami ibe yingxenywe yalolu hlelo.

- Inkulumongxoxo ephelele kanye neminye imininingwane etholakele izoba yimfihlo kakhulu. Umcwaningi nomphethe kuphela abazokwazi ukufinyelela kulemininingwane engasetshenziwe.
- Kungaba nokungaphatheki kahle ngokwengqondo kanye nengcindezi engahambisana nalolu cwaningo njengoba ingane yakho izobe icabanga iphinde ikhulume ngokulahlekelwa umzali. Ngizokwenza isiqiniseko sokuthi lokho kungaphatheki kahle kanye nengcindezi ngiyabhekana nakho kanti futhi ngizosiza ingane yakho ithole usizo, iphinde ihlonyswe ngamasu okubhekana nemizwa yayo ngayo yonke indlela ngokwamandla omsebenzi wami.

Imiphumela locwaningo izothulwa emhlanganweni kubazali uma sengiqede izifundo zami.

Igama nesibongo somzali noma umbheki: \_\_\_\_\_

Isayiniwe: \_\_\_\_\_

Usuku: \_\_\_\_\_



Uyagqugquzelwa ukuthi ubuze imibuzo noma ngabe isiphi isikhathi ngohlobo lwesifundo socwaningo noma ngendlela esetshenzisiwe. Wamukelekile ukuthi ungifonele enambeni ebhalwe ngenhla uma ngabe uneminye imibuzo.

Ozithobayo

\_\_\_\_\_ Usuku: \_\_\_\_\_

Zolelwa Mabotja

(Umsebenzi Wezengqondo Osafundela Umsebenzi)

## Appendix G1: Learner letter of assent (English)

Date:

Dear Learner

I am currently studying towards a Masters in Educational Psychology at the University of South Africa. As part of my studies I am conducting research on adolescents' emotional experiences of bereavement after the loss of a parent. The objective of the study is to find new information that could assist to support adolescents during the period of bereavement.

Learners that will participate in this research will be chosen from your class; however, we cannot choose everybody. Your name is among those selected to participate in the study and if you agree to participate, you are expected to talk and share with me your experience of bereavement after the loss of your parent.

### **Please note:**

- **I will be tape recording each session of our interview.**
- **Some of your experiences, that you are going to talk about, will be published in my dissertation.**

I \_\_\_\_\_

(Name & surname of learner)

Hereby give permission that:

- My interview will be used and be published in the dissertation.
- I also agree that my conversations will be tape recorded and some of the information may be included in the dissertation.

I agree to the following conditions:

- My participation is totally voluntary.
- I agree to hold a one hour session with you, and if the need arises we will negotiate for more sessions.
- My identity will be kept confidential (I shall be given a participant number so that people will not be able to identify with me).
- I reserve the right to withdraw from this study, at any point, should I no longer wish to be part of this programme without penalty.
- The completed interview and any other data obtained will be treated as highly confidential material. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the raw data.
- There may be some psychological discomfort and stress associated with this research as it may bring back sad memories of the loss of your parent. I will take care, to the best of my professional capacity that this discomfort and stress will be dealt with, and you will be assisted and equipped with strategies to cope with your feelings.
- This research project was explained to you and you understand what the procedures entail.



- You have talked to your parent or legal guardian about this project and you have decided that you would like to participate in the study.
- You understand that your parent or legal guardian will also be informed and permission requested for you to partake in this study.
- You understand that your parent or legal guardian will be given a copy of this form to keep.
- I have read the above, or the above was read to me, and I had the opportunity to ask questions, which were answered to my satisfaction.
- I agree voluntarily to participate in the study as described.

Name & Surname of learner: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name & Surname of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



You are encouraged to ask questions at any time regarding the nature of the study or the method used. You are welcome to contact me on the telephone number listed above should you have any further queries or concerns.

## Appendix G2: Learner letter of assent (isiZulu)

### Mfundi Othandekayo

Njengamanje ngenza iziqu zami zeMastazi Ezifundweni Eziphathelene Nezenqondo Kwezemfundo eNyuvesi YaseNingizimu Afrika. Ngenza ucwaningo ngolwazi izingane esezingena esigabeni sobudala (*izithonjana*) ezinalo ngemuva kokushonelwa umzali. Ngizobe ngenza isifundo socwaningo ngoba nginethemba lokuthi ulwazi olusha lungatholakala olungasiza ukuxhasa izingane esezingena esigabeni sobudala (*izithonjana*) ezishonelwe umzali noma abazali bobabili.

Abafundi abazohlanganyela kulolu cwaningo bazokhethwa eklasini lakho kodwa angeke sikhethe bonke abafundi. Igama lakho likhethiwe. Uma uvuma ukuhlanganyela nathi kulesi sifundo socwaningo ngolwazi lwakho onalo ngobunzima ngemuva kokushonelwa umzali uzokhuluma ngolwazi lwakho nami.

### Sicela uqaphele lokhu:

- **Kuzokwenziwa itheyiphu eqoshiwe yocwaningo ngesikhathi ngasinye sokuhlangana.**
- **Olunye ulwazi lwakho ozokhuluma ngalo lizoshicilelwa kwidezetheshini yami.**

Mina, \_\_\_\_\_

(igama nesibongo somfundi)

### Ngininika imvume yokuthi:

- Inkulumongxoxo yami izosetshenziswa iphinde ishicilelwe kwidezetheshini.
- Ngiyavuma futhi ukuthi ingxoxo yami iqoshwe kanti futhi enye yayo ingafakwa kwidezetheshini.

### Ngiyavumelana nalezi zimo ezilandelayo:

- Ukuhlanganyela kwami kulolucwaningo okokuzinikela nje.
- Ngiyavuma ukuhlala umhlangano ongaba yihora elilodwa ubude, uma ngabe kuba khona isidingo singaxoxisana ngesikhathi esithe xaxa.
- Ukwaziswa kwami kuzogcinwa kuyimfihlo (ngizonikezwa inombolo ukuze abantu bengeke bakwazi ukubona ukuthi yimi).
- Nginelungelo lokuphuma noma yinini kulesi sifundo socwaningo ngale kokuhlululwa kanti futhi nangolunye ulwazi uma ngingasafuni ukuba yingxenywe yalolu hlelo.
- Ucwaningo eliphelele kanye neminye imininingwane etholakele kuzogcinwa njengolwazi oluyimfihlo kakhulu. Umcwaningi nomphethe kuphela abazokwazi ukufinyelela kulowo imininingwane ongakasetshenzwa.

- Kungaba nokungaphatheki kahle ngokwengqondo kanye nengcindezi engahambisana nalolu cwaningo njengoba uzocabanga uphinde ukhulume ngokulahlekelwa umzali wakho. Ngizokwenza isiqiniseko sokuthi lokho kungaphatheki kahle kanye nengcindezi ngiyabhekana nakho kanti futhi uzothola usizo uphinde uhlonyiswe ngamasu okubhekana nemizwa yakho ngayo yonke indlela ngokwamandla omsebenzi wami.
- Le phrojekthi yocwaningo iyachazwa futhi uzokwazi ukuthi inqubo ihamba kanjani.
- Ukhulumile nomzali wakho noma umbheki osemthethweni ngale phrojekthi wase uthatha isinqumo sokuthi ufuna ukuba yingxenye yayo.
- Uyazi ukuthi umzali wakho noma umbheki osemthethweni uzokwaziswa futhi kucelwe imvume yokuthi wena ube yingxenye yalesi sifundo.
- Uyakuqonda ukuthi umzali wakho noma umbheki osemthethweni uzonikwa ikhophi yaleli fomu bayigcine.
- Ngikufindile noma bangifundelile lokhu okungenhla kanti futhi ngaphinde ngaba nethuba lokubuza imibuzo, eye yaphendulwa nganeliseka.
- Ngiyavuma ngokuzinikela ukuhlanganyela kulesi sifundo socwaningo njengoba kuchaziwe.

Igama nesibongo somfundi:

---

Isayiniwe:

---

Usuku:

---

Igama nesibongo somcwaningi:

---

Isayiniwe:

---

Usuku:

---



Uyagqogquzelwa ukuthi ubuze imibuzo noma ngabe yisiphi isikhathi maqondana nohlobo lwalesisifundo socwaningo noma indlela esetshenzisiwe. Uvumelekile ukuthi ungifowunele enambeni ebhalwe ngenhla uma kukhona ofisa ukukusho noma ukukubuza.

## Appendix H: Semi-structured interview schedule

### **Semi-structured Interview schedule**

The participants will be telling their stories. Therefore, a semi-structured interview will be used to obtain information. In a semi-structured interview the interviewer asks the participants to comment on issues and the participants are free to expand as they see fit. Although the participants are free to express themselves in any manner they choose, the researcher will use an interview schedule, which contains items pertaining to the study, as a guideline to ensure that all the relevant topics are covered.

#### **I. OPENING**

##### **A. Establishing Rapport**

My name is Zolelwa. In our last meeting I explained to you that we were going to meet so that you can talk to me about your experiences after your parent died. You should not feel forced to talk to me or say anything you are not comfortable with. Whenever you feel uncomfortable about anything please feel free to stop me. As I mentioned in the letter of assent, your name and what we discuss will remain confidential. Whenever you want me to clarify something, please say so. If at any stage you want to withdraw as a participant in this research, you are free to do so.

##### **B. Purpose**

I would like you to tell me your background, your family, some experiences you have had, your feelings about the loss of your parent in order to learn more about your experiences in order to understand your feelings about your loss. This information will be used in my research on bereavement.

##### **C. Motivation**

I hope to use this information to assist teachers to understand the experiences and needs of adolescents that had lost a parent.

##### **D. Time Line**

The interview should take about 60 minutes. Are you available to talk at this time?

##### **E. Transition**

I would like you to tell me about where you live and your family.

#### **2. BODY**

##### **Probes:**

1. Tell me about your bereavement after the death of your parent.
2. When people lose their loved ones they go through different emotions. Please tell me about the feelings you associate with losing a parent.
3. How did you deal with your life after the loss of your parent?

4. From whom did you get support?

5. What was helpful for you getting through the difficult times?

6. Let's talk about how you would assist a friend who has lost a parent and what advice you would give.

7. If you were asked to advise teachers on how to assist a child who has lost a parent, what would you say?

### **3. CLOSING**

I appreciate the time you took for this interview. If you need assistance or need to talk more about your experience please feel free to contact me.

Thank you again.