THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF RESILIENT BLACK AFRICAN MEN WHO GREW UP IN ABSENT- FATHER HOMES

by

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submitted in accordance with the partial requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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December 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I declare that the above dissertation 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.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Below are definitions of some keywords. The definitions clarify the sense in which the words and terms are understood and used in the present study:

Family: That is "the smallest, organised, durable network of kin and non-kin who interact daily, providing domestic needs of children and assuring their survival" (Stack, 1996, p. 31).

Father: "A man who exercises paternal care over other persons" (http://www.dictionary.com).

Absent-Father: A father who cannot or will not spend time with his children and who is physically absent from the child's home (http://www.uslegal.com).

Success: "The attainment of one's goals" (http://www.dictionary.com).

Resilience: Is defined by Marano (2003) as an art that has been subjected to the scrutiny of science. He further points out that at the heart of resilience is a belief in oneself as well as a belief in something larger than oneself. He describes resilient people as individuals that have the ability to overcome adversity and who can move towards goals beyond themselves.

ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of black African men who grew up in absent-father homes. A phenomenological approach and qualitative exploratory design were used. The research participants were recruited in the Pretoria, South Africa through purposive sampling. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to analyse the information. The findings of this study indicate the following: the participants experienced various challenges in growing up in absent father homes. These included financial challenges, feelings of rejection, lack of guidance and protection. They had to rely on their single mothers for provision as well as the extended family and the community for support. These men were self-reliant, persevered and worked hard to achieve their goals in life. Resilience also played a role in making them thrive. They in turn wanted to be good fathers and husbands to their wives and children. Further research on resilient men who grew up in absent-father homes is recommended.

KEY TERMS: *Absent-father; Adaptive factors; African man; Family system; Fatherhood; Impact of absent father; Negative adjustment; Resilience; Role of a father; Success.*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

A number of previous studies have reflected on the negative impact of absent-fathers on children, specifically young male children. The negative impact arises from factors such as economic, educational, social, and other conditions that children with absent-fathers are exposed to. Such societal problems as criminality, delinquency, drug abuse and mental ill-health have been understood to emanate from lack of parental, especially fatherly support for children, especially boys (Flood, 2013). Failure in life among men that is manifested in poor educational achievements and poverty has been linked in literature to the absence of fathers and fatherly support in the lives of boys. A definition of absent fathers is given by Krohn and Bogan (2001) as men who have sired children but who do not play their fatherly role in these children's lives. In this case, they have no contribution to make in these children's lives. Absent fatherhood, arguably, is a major cause of the high school drop-out rate as noted by the Massachusetts Family Institute (2014). The results of school drop-out are lack of attainment of employment due to lack of education. The unemployment means that these children will depend on welfare and live a poverty-stricken life as adults. Fathers, notably, can impact on every aspect of a boy's life and strong evidence has shown that boys with absent-fathers experience profound negative consequences in their lives (Floyd & Morman, 2003; Jones, et al, 2003). Further, Rossi (1998, p.1) states that: "A growing body of research reveals the tremendous influence the father-son relationship exerts on academic achievement and overall psychological adjustment." For that reason, this study departs from the observation and assumption that the absence of fathers in the lives of boy children, specifically, may lead to limitations and failure in their lives.

The rising number of absent-fatherhood means that young people will not be prepared to reach adulthood and be self-reliant due to the lack of means to support themselves (Massachusetts Family Institute, 2014). Lack of self-reliance results in one having an inactive role as a citizen. Furthermore, The Massachusetts Family Institute (2014) insists that being brought up in a single parent home puts a child at a greater risk of academic under-achievement

and failure. Such anti-social tendencies as idleness, teen parenthood as well as adult criminality are traceable to lack of parental, and especially fatherly care and support for children. The report states that there is no single Massachusetts community that is immune from the problem of absent fatherhood and encourages that the people must all face it together. This current study too, examines the challenge of absent-parents, especially absent-fathers, as a deep-seated and wide-spread societal challenge in South Africa and beyond.

Studies have paid attention to the absence of fathers as a causality to social limitations and challenges that children face in life. For instance, Barajas (2011) notes that despite calls for a need on looking at the advantages, the majority of studies on households with single parents has focused on the disadvantages faced by children raised in absent father-homes. It is further argued by Barajas (2011) that it is important to also focus on how these children who grew up in absent-father homes displayed resilience levels rather than on focusing on the negative impact of absent-fatherhood only. It is confirmed that most of the children who grew in households with fathers graduate more, but research shows that some of those children who grow up in absent-father homes also graduate and manage to attend college. Barajas (2011) sees the need for more research on these children who graduate despite growing up in absent-father homes. Some of the men who grew up in absent father families view the above as success brought about by their resilience and other factors that contribute to their success.

For instance, Wilson (2014) describes resilience in the following three parts: " (a) resilient qualities; (b) resilient process; and (c) most recently, innate resilience" (p. 103). Through a phenomenological research perspective, it is noted by Wilson that the first part identifies the qualities that assists people in overcoming their adversities and challenges. She further points out that a strong supportive system, the ability to be self-sufficient and the possession of a positive self-esteem assists these individuals in overcoming their life adversities. In the second part she describes how the resilient qualities or traits are obtained and deployed in life. These qualities and traits are obtained through life experiences and the ability to manage one's difficulties. Wilson points out that the third part is the innate aspect where an individual strives toward self-actualisation and through a spiritual connection. In other words, one can have a passion and a desire for success and this passion and desire for success against many odds becomes a durable motivation that helps one to overcome obstacles in life. To rise above of and to overcome the adversity is according to Marano (2003) the very definition of resilience. In that

paradoxical way, adversity as an obstacle to progress and success may turn out to be a source of motivation to succeed in determined and purposed individuals who understand their disadvantaged positionalities in society.

Further, it is noted that some of the children who come from difficult environments are not incapacitated by their hardships, but they are rather strengthened by them. These children learn to protect themselves and, eventually manage to live satisfactory lives (Marano, 2003). Marano (2003) further postulates that resilient people have scars that portray their difficult lives, but they keep functioning despite the wounding. They struggle but they keep functioning anyway. Their resolve to succeed is strengthened rather than destroyed by challenges. Marano (2003) describes resilience as an art that has been subjected to the scrutiny of science over time. At the heart of resilience is a belief in oneself as well as a belief in something larger than oneself. Resilient people, notably, are people equipped with the ability to overcome adversity and move towards goals that are seemingly beyond their reach. These are people who are socially able to transcend pain and grief, and to understand and handle failures as temporary setbacks not definitive states of affairs.

Resilient people, it seems, are those persons that can make positive adjustment in difficult situations and challenging circumstances. The positive adjustment refers to the overall life adjustment that includes the psychological, emotional, occupational and family spheres of adjustment. Notably, Chrisp (1998) conducted a study on a group of single mothers raising sons in New Zealand. The aim of Chrisp's study was not to investigate the socio-economic situations of single mothers but what came out of the study was the negative impact the socio-economic situations had on the parenting abilities of these mothers. Similarly, Moja (1969) points out the existence of an individual in a traditional African life, as being made possible by others surrounding him or her. He further points out that the community's involvement and contribution in an individual's life cannot be left unnoticed. Therefore, owing to the role the extended community as well as the socio-economic factors play in the lives of men, this study intends to examine the role of the community as well as the socio-economic factors as contributing in the overall life adjustment of young men who grew up in absent-father homes.

Studies have been preoccupied with potential for the negative outcomes of father-absence and a few studies have focused on the outcomes of resilience of those who successfully emerged from the difficulties of growing in absent-father homes and who came to have better outcomes in

life and even becoming better role models of other men. One does not have to look very far to find numerous examples of men who have beaten the odds and have managed to rise above their adversities of living in absent-father homes. President Barack Obama and former President Bill Clinton of the United States of America are two of the more well-known examples, but there are numerous others who succeeded in turning around the potential catastrophe of the fatherless experience into lives generally accepted as productive (Innis, 2013). The experiences and lives of such resilient individuals are of interest to the present study. Resiliency was looked at as a common characteristic embedded in the lives of black African men who grew up in absent-father homes.

This researcher has become increasingly aware of the predominantly negative implications of absent-fatherhood as represented in available literature. My experience and engagement with some men from absent-father homes has revealed that there are many important lessons to be learned and that the concerned men frequently find ways to cope with and grow from being raised in absent-father homes to have successful families in their own right. In other words, they have not experienced growing in absent-father families as a hopeless situation. This study focuses on the strengths and the resilience mechanisms that are exhibited by men who grew up in absent-father homes.

1.2 THE AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore the factors that promote the resilience and positive adjustment of young men who grew up in absent-father homes. There is currently limited information in the literature on this as studies prevalently focus on, not resilience, but resignation and failure of children that grow up in absent-father homes. In this study, six South African men are given an opportunity to share their experiences in their own words. Their unique narratives contain information describing the complexities of growing up in absent-father homes, the challenges associated with this absence, as well as how they managed to rise above their adversities. A further aim of this study is to generate information that may be useful to professionals, such as psychologists or social workers, to better understand the consequences of growing up in absent-father homes and how some men manage to rise above the adversities that arise from the absence of their fathers.

1.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question, which emerges from the above stated aim of the study, is the following: What are the factors that promote the resilience and positive adjustment of young men who grew up in absent-father homes?

1.4 THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

A qualitative design with a phenomenological paradigm is the elected approach and design of this study. This type of design and paradigm is assumed to be able to produce a rich description of the unique and authentic lived experiences of six black African men who grew up in absent-father homes. An Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA) is used to analyse the gathered data. "The primary goal of IPA is for the researchers to investigate how individuals make sense of their experiences" (Pietkiewicz & Smith, p. 15). It is further pointed out that people have the ability to interpret their own events, the objects in their lives as well as other people in their lives. The analysis of the participants' experiences is integrated with Family Systems Theory where appropriate. An elaborate explication of the Family Systems Theory is made in Chapter Two of this study.

1.5 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS OF THE STUDY

The present chapter has introduced the study by presenting the background, aim of the study, research question and the qualitative design and approach that are deployed and utilised. The chapter that follows delves into the literature review of the study and the theoretical framework that is applicable to the topic. Chapter three discusses the research methodology and the design of the study in a more elaborate way than is fleshed out in this chapter. Chapter four presents the research findings of the study and chapter five presents the conclusion, which consists of the overall findings, the strengths of the study, the limitations, the role of the researcher as well as the recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

"When your father is absent, you have to believe in yourself" (Unknown)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the present study, as earlier stated, is to explore black African men's experience of the absence of their fathers and to flesh out their resilience and coping mechanisms. The present chapter delves into a discussion of Family Systems Theory that is deployed as a theoretical framework of this study. The relevant literature on the role of a father, the consequences of growing up in absent-father homes, including the psychological, the social, educational and economic factors and the resiliency factors of men who grew up in absent father homes is reviewed. This is followed by an overview of the differences between single and two-parent families. A discussion on single-parent homes caused by absent-fathers is covered. A view of the definition of success in relation to men who managed to rise above the challenges of absent-fathers is also treated. This chapter concludes with a discussion on the ability to adjust positively in an absent-father home. Resilience and the factors that bring it about as a mechanism of coping with and surviving social vulnerability and adversity is discussed before the chapter concludes.

2.2 A FAMILY SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK

From a Family Systems perspective, this researcher is interested in obtaining a better and a clear understanding of the experiences of men who grew up in absent-father homes. In terms of the principles of Family Systems Theory, a family member's experiences are relational and the context in which he operates in should not be excluded, therefore, these experiences cannot be viewed in isolation (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). In that way, the family climate is a formative environment that stamps its signature on the life of an individual. Systems theory is

concerned with wholes, and parts are better understood by the functions they serve in the whole. According to Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008), a family is viewed in terms of the first-order cybernetics or second-order cybernetics. These terms are elaborated on below.

2.2.1 First-order cybernetics

It is understood in first-order cybernetics that systems self-regulate, and in this way, they maintain their stability. The system is governed by the structure, the patterns of its organisation and they are controlled through feedback loops. The observed system is separated from the observer and in this way gives an objective study and manages the changes while outside of the system (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). In first-order cybernetics, family patterns of interaction are altered at the behavioural level only. A family is as much a collection of its members as members are parts of the family.

2.2.2 Second-order cybernetics

In second-order cybernetics, according to Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008), the therapist is part of the system, and has his or her own view of reality and his or her own way of describing the family. Therefore, in the second-order cybernetics, objectivity does not exist; but rather has its own social constructions of the family that explains more about the constructionist than about the family. The social interaction of the family members is what describes the family's reality by agreed rules and standards. In second-order cybernetics, underlying beliefs and patterns that govern the individual family members' behavior are altered.

2.2.3 The Family system

It is further argued by Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008) that a family is not just a cluster of individuals who live together and who have the same interests. He pointed out that there are various forms of families who are represented by their culture, heritage and that the families have rules and its members have assigned roles. The roles and rules in the family are part of the organisational structure of the family which has different forms of communication patterns that is overt or covert. Minuchin (1981) concurs that the relationship between members

is based on shared history, it is multilayered, and it has a sense of purpose and its own perceptions. As indicated earlier that the relationships in the family is based on shared history, the individuals in the system are bound by one another by multigenerational attachments that are powerful, that are based on loyalty between members and which persists over their lifetime (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008).

The Family Systems Theory is incorporated in this study to illuminate how the family, community and society in general play a role in raising a man from an absent-father home. This theoretical perspective informs the findings on whether the systemic view of raising a man who grew up fatherless has any impact on how they adjust later in life. In addition, the African perspective also looked at the traditional aspects and culture in terms of the African perspective. Moja (1969) says that "for African people the family has a much wider circle of members than the word suggests in Europe or North America. In traditional society, the family includes children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children and other immediate relatives" (p.106). These relationships within extended family is based on either blood relationship or it is based on the general understanding of one another. Such a family would include adopted and fostered families. The next section presents the key concepts of family systems theory in order to give a clear understanding of the nature of absent-father homes, its relational processes, and its patterns and rules.

2.2.3.1 Boundaries

Families have insiders and outsiders. There are boundaries that enclose and close out insiders and outsiders respectively. Boundaries are the limitations that are either open or closed, they either permit or not permit input from the environment. These boundaries are what define an entity or group. According to Systems theory, the purpose of boundaries is to maintain the integrity of the group (Connors & Caple, 2005). The integrity of the group is maintained by separating the group from others and ensuring its survival. According to Connors and Caple (2005), group systems theory maintains that permeable and flexible boundaries, that will allow new information, are necessary to allow change in the structure and dynamism of the system.

Furthermore, the member's access and their relationships to the environment is based on the type of boundaries the family has.

In the context of this research, the boundaries in the absent-father homes will be defined by the mother as the main decision maker in the family. The boundaries set will either allow the boys to seek information from outside the family in the absence of father figures or prevent them from seeking the information needed. This ideally includes limits that must be set within the absent-father families and they will include safety measures, household maintenance roles, the use of household resources and the general guidelines for the functioning of the family (Connors & Caple, 2005). In that way families have governance systems of a kind.

2.2.3.2 Rules, roles, and patterns

Families construct and maintain rules by which they proceed and operate. The rules in the family are what is perceived as acceptable or unacceptable in the family (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). The family members are allocated roles which stipulates what is expected of each family member in the family. According to Becvar and Becvar (2006) the family functioning is influenced by the rules and roles in the family and these include the family rituals and routines, the family secrets and myths as well the expected behaviours of the family subsystems. It is further postulated that the rules may be overt or covert. The overt rules are rules that are openly discussed and stated in the family while the covert rules are more unspoken of but are still known by the family. In that way families have conventions and traditions by which they operate.

A healthy functional family has clear and flexible roles and rules as stated by Becvar and Becvar (2006). With clear and flexible rules and roles, the family is able to adapt to the environment and respond adequately to change. On the contrary, a dysfunctional family has rigid rules and roles that are far from being flexible (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). The rigid and inflexible roles and rules in the dysfunctional family causes inadequacy in the way its members respond to the environment as mentioned by Becvar and Becvar (2006). In the case of absent-father homes, the mother and other members of the family, such as uncles, grandparents and aunts will have a set of rules that are either overt or covert. Young men who grow up in absent- father homes will have a healthy environment if the rules are clear, flexible and not confusing. Harmony and

cooperation in the family is enhanced by how long the members of a family have been living together as they develop their own patterns of communicating and understanding of one another (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2004). The way the family system operates and proceeds, may become a kind of binding culture that guides the daily workings of the family.

2.2.3.3 A Self-organising System

"General system theory holds that nature is self-organising, that systems naturally organise themselves to pursue goals in order to survive in their environment" (Connors & Caple, 2005, p. 93). Furthermore, it is pointed out that the "open systems organise in the active, natural progression towards ''higher order, heterogeneity, and organisation'' (Connors & Caple, 2005, p. 94). A family with an absent-father will self-organise in order to survive. The mother will set goals towards the progression of the system. This could include obtaining assistance from other extended family members, from the community or changing the way things are in the family. Families, in that organised way, are organisations and also institutions that are networked and cultured.

2.2.3.4 Positive and Negative Feedback.

Families are understood to be dynamic and responsive to change. The system is subjected to input from the environment that is both positive and negative in nature. The system balance or homeostasis is supported by negative feedback while the challenges and stresses of the system is caused by positive feedback. The positive feedback causes the system to adapt, disintegrate or to change into a higher order (Connors & Caple, 2005). As indicated in the previous paragraph, the self-organising system will receive positive feedback that will challenge the homeostasis and ensures that it adapts to the absent fatherhood. In the case of the system that is thriving in the midst of an absent-father, the family will receive the negative feedback that will maintain the homeostasis.

2.2.3.5 Morphostasis and morphogenesis

The stability or change in the system is described by the two concepts of morphostasis and morphogenesis (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Morphostasis and morphogenesis are concepts that are linked to the feedback processes that were described in the previous paragraph (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). In the context of change, the system strives for stability and this tendency to stabilize is described by the term morphostasis. This process is achieved through feedback processes (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Morphogenesis on the other hand, refers to changes that arise through positive feedback processes that take place within the system to enable growth and to allow change to take place in a system. This process maintains stability and functionality of the system and as mentioned earlier, it is attained through feedback loops (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). The maintenance of a balance between the two processes of morphostasis and morphogenesis are what characterises a healthy, absent-father home. In the case where the process is in the extreme of one side, this will result in a dysfunctional absent-father home (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). For example, a system will be able to allow and tolerate change when change is inevitable, but the system will resist change when the change threatens the system's functioning and survival (Maruyama, 1963).

2.2.3.6 Communication patterns

As mentioned earlier that families are organisations or entities, they have their own patterns of communication and cultures. These communication patterns are essential processes in the functioning of the system according to family systems theory (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Communication is thus of great importance to healthy absent-father home. As mentioned earlier that families have clear rules and roles that govern the family process, families also have clear and complete communication patterns between their members (Satir, 1972). A dysfunctional family will have unclear, vague, confusing and dishonest communication patterns (Satir, 1972). Unclear, confusing communication patterns causes dysfunctionality in the families and is riddled with conflict, double binds and paradoxes (Satir, 1972). Furthermore, the unclear communication patterns increase vulnerability and lack of resources during time of stress. Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967) point out the tentative axioms of communication as firstly, "one cannot not behave, secondly, one cannot not communicate and thirdly, that whether the message sent equals

the message received is important but rests on the evaluation of such a message (p. 31). It is pointed out that activity or inactivity, words or silence all have message value and influence others to respond to them (Watzlawick et al., 1967). A functional absent-father home will have clear rules that will be communicated in a clear, non-vague manner. In that way families know what is to be done and how that should be done or not done.

2.2.3.7 Triangles

Triangulation can be traced to Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory. According to Azevedo (2010), triangles take place in all families and as well as in social groups. He mentions that triangles are fluid rather than static. It is argued that introducing a third person in a relationship as a way of trying to stabilise the relationship is triangulation. Triangles are most likely to develop when a further individual is added to a relationship of two people. During times of stress, the triangulation can be rigid and more flexible when created during calm periods (Azevedo, 2010). In absent-father homes, the mother could triangulate another child, an uncle, an aunt or a grandparent in times of stress.

2.2.3.8 Structural coupling

Families organise themselves not only into systems but also into structures of operation that are understood and experienced. It is explained that a structure determined system is "a system such that all that takes place in it, or happens to it at any instant, is determined by its structure at that instant. The notion of structural determinism is not an explanatory principle, nor an ontological assumption; it is an abstraction that we make as observers of the operational coherences in which we exist as living systems" (Maturana, 2002, p. 20). There is a distinction between the organisation, and structure as outlined by Maturana (2002). He mentions that these two features constitute the structure determined systems. Furthermore, in our daily lives we make distinctions of our organisations and structure as we deal with our systems albeit inconsistently.

Maturana (2002) points out that the organisation and the structure of the system cannot be viewed independently of each other. The organisation of the absent-father homes is that there

is no father in the family and the mother has to take up several roles, but it is still a family structure. In these circumstances, when the structure of the system changes, the system maintains its class identity and stays the same. This occurs as long as its organisation is also conserved. The maintenance of the system's organisation is in such a way that if the organisation changes, the system will disintegrate and something different will take its place. Maturana mentions that this is not the case for the structure of a system and that the structure of a system permits change in the way that firstly, change can occur while the class identity is maintained, secondly, change can occur while the class identity of the system is lost. Maturana (2002) calls the former change the *changes of state* and the latter change *the disintegrative changes.*

In *changes of state,* the operations of the absent-father home change while it conserves its class identity and in *disintegrative changes* the original system operations disappear and new operations arises in its place. The following paragraph will look at the fatherhood role in society.

2.3 FATHERHOOD ROLES IN SOCIETY

As indicated in the previous paragraph that a system is determined by its structure, we will now look at the role of fatherhood in the family system. Contemporary research acknowledges the role of the father as one of the world's most important leadership roles (Innis, 2013). Fatherhood is crucial in the development of the child. Fathers play a protector role, a provider role as well as a teacher role to their sons. These are roles without which a child may grow deprived and vulnerable.

2.3.1 Fatherhood role in children's development

The ability of men as fathers to be influential over their families, especially children, is of interest to this section of the chapter. It has been revealed by the studies conducted on men's interaction with children, which included how they play with them, discipline them and talk to them that men are not only able to nurture children but that their ways are different from women (Weiss, 1987). It is further pointed out that the interaction of men and children have positive effects on their cognitive and social development, problem-solving skills and the ability to explore the environment. Furthermore, there is a difference in the way women and men approach

caregiving activities, such as feeding or bathing. For men, these tasks are carried out for accomplishment, while with women it is an opportunity to interact verbally and be closer to the child. Weiss (1987) asserts that the differences in such approaches have beneficial effects in that children are afforded different ways of interacting with their parents and experience different interactive methods. The different experiences grant the children a unique way of attaching differently to individual parents. Children who grow up without fathers miss on this opportunity whereas children who grow up with a present father experience the supportive and cooperative roles of both parents. In the absence of the involved father, children could also benefit from a non-nuclear family or a mother and an aunt and uncle who are taking on different yet cooperative roles. Weiss (1987) further points out that the cooperative roles of parents teaches children how to resolve conflict amicably and have differing opinions in a family. Families, in that manner become schools of life and existence in a challenging world.

Male, especially fatherly influence on children and their growth can be remarkable. Pruette (1997) agrees that the presence of a male figure in the children's life has positive effects on their overall development. A study was conducted that examined the two-month-old infants from middle income, two-parent families (Pruette, 1997). It was found in the study that the more fathers participated in the nurturing of the babies, the more socially responsive the babies were. Furthermore, it was also established a year later that these infants seemed more resilient in the face of stressful situations, asserts Pruette (1997).

Fathers can indeed be inspirational models in the lives of their children. Informatively, Patrick (2009) asserts that the father's interaction with their sons is more physical and exciting. He asserted that "fathers tend to interact with their sons in a way that is exciting and highly physical. A physical play fulfils a boy's need to be physical and active at a time when they have high testosterone levels and bursts of physical energy that need to be expressed. Physical development allows for the expression of this energy" (Patrick, 2009, p. 20). The expression of energy will need psychomotor skills which are enhanced by the physical play of fathers and their children. These psychomotor skills are associated with the strength and the utilisation of muscles during the physical play (Patrick, 2009). The presence of fathers and the way they interact with their sons assists in acquiring these motor skills (Patrick, 2009). Furthermore, schooling versus

no schooling, the quality of schooling and the level of parents' education have been mentioned as some of the influential factors on the development of children (Patrick, 2009).

2.3.2 Protective role of fathers

Fathers assume the role of protector and breadwinner according to Coakley, Washington and Kelley (2014). Inspite of the protector and breadwinner role that father are expected of, they are increasingly supporting their families in a nontraditional caregiving role. It has been noted by some researchers that the distinction of gender-specific roles is important, while others believe that the father's characteristics as a parent are more important (Lamb, 2010). It is indicated that the perspective of men changes once they become fathers. Their view on their role as a father is influenced by their personal experiences which will eventually affect how they relate to their own children and their children's mothers. Daniels (1998) points out that the father's economic security for their children and their preparation for their son's own manhood help them to break from their mothers and to gain masculine identities. It is further argued that without fathers to help sons deal with emotional issues, the boys become hypermasculine and filled with rage against women (Daniels, 1998). Fathers can corrupt or cultivate their sons into certain models of being responsible or irresponsible adults.

2.3.3 Provider role of fathers

The presence of a father in the family makes a remarkable contribution in the children's lives and in their ability to negotiate and navigate life in the world. Eddy, Thomson-de Boor and Mphaka (2013) further point out that research made on fatherhood in South Africa have revealed that father-presence in the homes of children is associated with his provision of basic needs of the child, protection and overall monetary contribution towards children's resources in the household as shown by (Eddy et al., 2013). On the other hand, with regards to the fatherhood roles in our society, fathers have been viewed in a different light when it came to nurturing and providing emotional support as these roles have been historically associated with mothers (Coakley et al., 2014). Fathers are rather seen as those parents whose job is to toughen the boys and help them face physical and social fights that life comes with.

Despite the need to provide and protect their families, there are some circumstances that prevented fathers from being present in their children's lives (Innis, 2013). An example is industrialisation which affected the role of fathers as primary parents. Industrialisation caused men to work away from home and they could not fully carry out their fatherly roles in the homes. This resulted with fathers disconnecting from their families due to employment obligations and therefore less time was spent parenting (Innis, 2013). Colonialism and apartheid exacerbated the separation of fathers from their families as men left to work in the mines and farms in different places. Ratele, Shefer, and Clowes (2012) asserts that fatherhood in the South African context has to be understood in how men were historically positioned as care-givers. Furthermore, asserts Ratele et al. (2012), racial oppression and domination resulted in many men not being able to achieve much economically and provide for their families. Apart from the negative associations linked to fatherhood, many researchers have focused on identifying the positive aspects of fatherhood. It is further pointed out that the local studies are beginning to challenge the one-sided and accusatory narratives about the role of fathers in society, especially black fathers in South Africa, the challenges seek to show many ways in which fathers and father-figures paly in caring and contributing to their children's lives (Ratele et al., 2012). However, this contribution is also dependent on employment, access to resources which enables these fathers to be providers and caregivers, as well as spouses, workers, and homeowners (Madhava & Roy n.d). Fathers that fail to provide for their families are seen as a failure in their own right and also that have failed their families, bread-winning is a central plank of fatherhood; it makes a difference it seems, between simple fathering and proper parenting.

2.3.4 Teacher role of fathers

A father can also be understood and experienced by children as a kind of teacher. For instance, Patrick (2009) stipulates that fathers "offer a unique and an irreplaceable contribution to parenting. The teaching role of fathers comprises of teaching attitudes; teaching children to feel and give expression to their feelings, to match their inner feelings with their outer behaviour; teaching boys to toughen up while having fun and how to get noisy and angry" (p.18). Furthermore, it is mentioned, this also assists in knowing how to handle their testosterone surge and the ability to restrain themselves and to have self-control. Patrick (2009)

further cites that this toughening up is crucial in peer interactions that becomes common during middle childhood. She furthermore asserts that this kind of play originates from the father's interaction with their sons and as indicated earlier that they engage in physical play which teaches the boys to developing fighting skills and strength; it also teaches boys to respect women; and to affirm a boy and give him the confidence and give them knowledge about manhood.

The presence of the father, therefore, makes a remarkable positive difference in the life of a child. Patrick (2009) further observes that the impact of a father's absence or presence is powerful on his son. It is further pointed out that sons model their father's behaviours regardless of their involvement. This modeling occurs in the process of learning about manhood. The more distance the father keeps from his home, the more the child-rearing will be left to the mother. This distance could also be the result of an emotionally detached father, an abusive father or an alcoholic father who deserts his own family. Statistics show that in these cases, as presented by Patrick (2009), that it is also quite likely that the son will follow his father's footsteps. Fathers, by their conduct in fatherhood write invisible scripts that their sons grow to act according to and rehearse as young men and growing as fathers in their own right.

2.4 THE CONSEQUENCES OF ABSENT-FATHERHOOD

If the presence of a father is as important as this study has so far noted, then the absence of a father in the lives of children is a grave matter. There are negative consequences that are said to be related to the absent fatherhood and they will be discussed below.

2.4.1 Social and psychological consequences

Certain social and psychological effects are experienced by children of absent-fathers, studies have shown. The studies have shown that the absence of fathers is a prevalent problem, especially in South Africa. For instance, Richter, Desmond, Hosegood, Madhaven, Makiwane, Makusha and Swartz (2012) points out that South Africa has one of the highest rates of father absence in the world. The results of the general household survey conducted in 2015 reveal that

only 61,8 % of South African preschool children live in the homes with present fathers (Statistics South Africa, 2016).

As pointed earlier about the negative impact of absent-father in the homes, Eddy et al. (2013) concurs that there are psychological, social and cognitive development that is impacted negatively by paternal neglect or abandonment as well as by the lack of emotional support. Reference is also made to studies that reveal that children with absent fathers in the USA are more prone to committing suicide. In reference to a South African study, Eddy et al. (2013) found that the negative effects of father absence were notable among children under 12 years of age. This was based on a study conducted by Dr Omar on a small sample of children growing up in Johannesburg who were referred by the courts for psychological intervention at the Teddy Bear Clinic.

Aggression can be a symptom of the absence of a father in the life of a boy. According to De Carlo (2012), research has shown that there is a significant level of aggression in nine and ten-year-old boys who are raised by mothers only than from boys who are raised by both a mother and a father. This aggression continues as the boys grow into young men and eventually men. It is noted that there is a need for responsible fathers to be part of creating healthy family systems for their children. It is indicated though that having fathers who actively participate in the rearing of their children does not guarantee that they will abstain from aggressive behaviour, but it can minimise the risk. The circumstances of single-parent household are extremely difficult to overcome, as stipulated by De Carlo (2012). He notes that this condition of single-parenthood is even more challenging for single African American women in the USA who are heads of households.

As the debates continue on the negative impact of absent-fatherhood, there is a general consensus from fathers' rights groups and other organisations that a wide range of social ills are associated with father absence. Such social ills are crime, delinquency, drug abuse and mental health problems. "Boys with absent fathers are statistically more likely to be violent, get hurt, do poorly in schools and be members of teenage gangs in adolescence" (Flood, 2003, p. 13). This is due to lack of proper guidance from the fathers and as a result, the growing boys succumbing to peer pressure without making any reasonable decisions. Waltz (2007) on the other hand states that the family functioning, the way they act as a family and not its composition will

determine the success or failure of the child. She further pointed out the importance of a single mother who is supportive, loving, motivating and encouraging as a parent to her sons and that this will help to develop her son's full potential with her flexibility in encouraging her son's growth, her son's independence and her son's sense of adventure.

Another possibility is that some children born to unmarried mothers, are exposed to different boyfriends of their mothers which bring instability in the family unit. This family instability results in negative outcomes for the child. Sawhill (2014) also looks at how in recent years, the focus of social science research has been less on the absence of a father and more on how family instability affects children. It is pointed out that a stable single-parent family in which a child does not experience the constant comings and goings of new boyfriends (or girlfriends) or the addition of new half-siblings looks better than an unstable environment, and shapes children into stable individuals. Although there are various negative consequences resulting from growing in absent-father homes, Richter and Morrel (2006) argue that father presence can also be negative in some cases, for instance, when abusive conduct by alcoholic or unloving fathers' impact on the development of a child (as cited in Eddy et al., 2013). It is pointed further how the presence of a responsible, caring and supportive father can have huge positive effects on their children, but that families and society have the high numbers of physically absent fathers which creates an obstacle to the achievement of broader father involvement (Eddy et al., 2013).

Modern men experience pain, anger and confusion brought by the experiences of father absence in their lives and a need to have a father. It is pointed out that some fatherless men have been robbed of the ability to form father-son bonds, and this has contributed in the lack of introducing boys into manhood and showing them the ropes of adult world as men. The solution, as suggested, is to encourage men to be vulnerable and allow them to express their anger, rage and grieve the loss of fathers in their households. Men should be allowed to strengthen the rites and rituals that allow them to seek other men as mentors and advisors (Flood, 2003). On the other hand, Larcher (2007) points out that early attachment disruptions to the father through separation, loss and neglect or any form of abuse has been said to result in serious developmental challenges later in life. Larcher (2007) agrees and mentions that object-relations theorists write about the importance of a parent as an internal attachment object, which provides the individual with a sense of continuity and a basis for hope. It is further pointed out that the absence of this

reliable parent that brings the internal basis of security and protection results in serious psychological distortions about the self, lack of direction, and hopelessness.

Anger and anxiety may arise in people that lack a close and supportive loved one. For instance, Larcher (2007) quotes Bowlby (1988), where he explains the impact of an endangered attachment and its negative manifestation later in life. It has been confirmed that some of the mental problems involve aggressive tendencies and anger. And as responses to the risk of loss, anxiety and anger go hand in hand. He further referenced him in saying that the primary attachment relationships are expressed through strong emotions. The importance of early attachment cannot be underestimated and should be encouraged, or it will bring negative consequences in the course of an individual's life (Larcher, 2007). Fathers as strong and supportive figures fill in an important gap in the lives of children, especially boys.

2.4.2 Educational and economic consequences

Absent-fathers, by the foregoing, create a kind of wounding gap in the lives of children and this gap has multiple psychological and social effects. Chase, May, Scott, Woods, and Youngblood (2008) pointed out that statistics have shown the negative and debilitating consequences of absent fatherhood in children. These consequences include depriving them of wellbeing, happiness, completeness, and lifelong stability, and essentially setting them up for ultimate failure. This failure is the result of inability to go further in education and to ultimately improve their economic statuses. It is further outlined that generations ago an average American child could expect to grow up with his or her father but on the contrary today, living with both parents is still a dream for other children. This distance dream means that many young boys who grow up in absent-father homes may not receive the proper guidance about manhood as pointed out by Chase et al. (2008). Fortunately for some other children, the extended family is involved in the form of, for example, maternal uncles and grandfathers, as well as older brothers, who assist in assuming the role of fathers in their lives and give the support to their mothers (Richter et al. 2012). Where the actual father is missing, the gap in the children's lives compels the invention and production of social fathers and other father figures, and this proves the necessity of fathers in society.

Richter et al. (2012) further points to the effects of poverty on African American and Latino children, and how this poverty affects other aspects of the lives of these children. These segments include self-esteem to educational persistence. While some children demonstrate high levels of perseverance and resilience, they have the difficult, and decreasingly difficult task of raising above their adversities in spite of the system. Poverty has been linked to problems in school performance, in children's educational persistence, and in how they perceive themselves. Much of this results from the inability of their fathers to support them in single-parent and low-income homes (Gadsden, 1995). Education and competent performance require so much mental and emotional wellness that deprived children may not easily have unless they attain robust resilience and coping social technologies.

The strength and fortitude of children that overcome the gaps and adversities in their fatherless lives are of importance to this study. Barajas (2011) argues that the majority of research conducted on children growing up in single-parent homes, focuses more on the disadvantages faced by these children despite the calls to focus on discovering their strengths. It is further argued that understanding the disadvantages focuses only on one part of the issue and that the other part is to understand how some of these children managed to gain strengths and resiliency factors and thrive in absent-father homes. Barajas (2011) points to the ability to complete school and graduate of other children who grew up in absent-father home despite their challenges. Some of these children even manage to attend college. There is a great need for research focusing on the strengths of these academic achievers from absent-father homes, argues Barajas (2011). The odds of fatherlessness are often overcome by resilient boy children, this study notes. The focus on the disadvantages of growing up in absent father homes calls for more research on how other men rise above these adversities of absent fatherhood. By focussing on the positive side where some men succeed inspite of the absent-father in their lives this study fills in a wide gap in academic research. Prevalent studies dwell on negative developments where children of absent-fathers never recover from the gap and get lost in life while life is also lost to them.

2.4.3 Social-emotional effects

A father is just not needed in the lives of children but, also a male figure is important to boys in the main. It is acknowledged by Dickerson (2014) that even though both boys and girls are negatively affected by absent-fatherhood, boys are more affected socially and emotionally by the lack of a male role model in their lives. Furthermore, Dickerson (2014) asserts that the emotional expression differs between boys and girls. Girls are encouraged to express their emotions freely contrary to the boys being discouraged to express their emotions. These differences in emotional expression enhances the emotional development in girls while it hampers the development in boys.

Fathers shape the emotions and attitudes of their sons. Dickerson (2014) continues that this lack of emotional expression by boys can be traced back to the influence of their fathers. A reference is made to a research from Boston University, in the USA which shows that the boys who had present fathers in their lives were less aggressive, less competitive and they were able to express their emotions freely. These boys were said to be able to feel vulnerable and sad (Dickerson, 2014). In addition, the study showed that the involvement of fathers enabled the boys to be content and not act out aggressively to demand their father's attention and love. These less aggressive, emotionally matured and resilient boys are those who have fathers who care, who show them love in a consistent way, and those fathers who can comfort them when they need comfort. Unfortunately, as pointed out by Dickerson (2014) these type of fathers are in the minority.

For the better or the worse, fathers are highly informed and influential of the emotional and mental lives of their children, this study notes. Irrespective of whether in a good a bad way, fathers have an impact on the social and emotional lives of their children (Dobson, 2001). The emotional support from fathers and the time they make to spend with their children is associated with a healthy psychosocial outcome as well as a positive psychological well-being. As mentioned earlier, this healthy influence affects the cognitive and behavioural aspects of boys (Dickerson, 2014).

The negative aspects of growing without fathers as emotional attachment figures revealed that these men had difficulties in relating to their own sons later in life. This is asserted

by the notion that men are influenced by their developmental history and model the way they related to their own fathers (Dickerson, 2014). The sad part of this is that these men are often aggressive and critical of their sons despite their need to behave differently. These negative aspects were confirmed by a study conducted on forty middle school boys which showed that those coming from absent-father homes displayed a poor sense of masculinity and had poorer interpersonal relations as compared to those coming from present father-homes (Dickerson, 2014). The absent-father home showed to diminish a child's social support and coping mechanisms which leaves him feeling hopeless and helpless. Further, it is argued by Dickerson (2014) that adolescents with good relationships with their fathers showed lower rates of depressive symptoms as compared to those with poor relationships with their fathers who displayed high depressive symptoms.

From this literature review, numerous consequences of absent fatherhood have been discussed. Research into this area should also look at the negative consequences of present but poor fathers as well as abusive or neglecting fathers. Not only the absence of a father is problematic but also the presence of a harmful and negative father is noteworthy.

2.5 REASONS FOR FATHER ABSENCE

The presence or absence of fathers in the lives of their children may be a choiceless reality where the fathers do not have the power over circumstances and conditions that necessitate their presence or absence. There are various reasons for father absence, such as denial or unknown paternity. Studies in South Africa have reported on undisclosed paternity and absent fatherhood as one of the reasons for which fathers may be absent in their children's lives (Nduna & Jewkes, 2011). Some fathers may know the paternity of their children but deny it because they may not want to take the responsibilities of a family and children (Richter & Morrel, 2006). The undisclosed paternal identity denies children their right to know both their biological parents and also affects their legal status, by having the child registered with only one parent, furthermore, resolving paternal identity is important to avert the negative family relationships of a child not knowing who his or her father is (Nduna & Jewkes, 2011).

The father might also fear his own family and cause him to deny the child especially in cases when the young father might have to leave school in order to care for the child (Hunter, 2006). A father may also deny paternity if he cannot afford to pay the damages or *lobola* (bride wealth) after impregnating a woman (Morell et al, 2010).

Relations between fathers and mothers has shown to also have an influence on the presence or absence of fathers in the lives of their children. Some researchers have found that some fathers' lack of relationships with their children has been caused by the children's mother's refusal to grant them the opportunities to engage with their children. It is stated by Coakley et al. (2014) that fathers may also struggle with their own beliefs and expectations for relationships with their children as they would want their children to follow these beliefs. Furthermore, before men become fathers, it is noted, they form their ideas about fathering based on their own personal experiences. It is mentioned earlier that these fathers are influenced by their own personal history and as a result model their father's way of parenting. This is because it is the only way they know or admire, or they will reject their fathers' way of parenting if it had a negative impact on their childhood. Men thus can also form their own way of parenting that they identify best with. If fathers only have the negative examples of parenting, this can result in a generational cycle of neglect and absent-fathers (Coakley et al., 2014). Absent-fathers, in that way, create more absences in the lives of their children than just their own absence. Sons tend to reproduce and amplify the absence of their own fathers, creating a system and structure of absence that can be harmful.

As noted earlier about the negative impact industrialisation had on the relationships of fathers and their children, Madhava and Roy (n.d) agrees that in apartheid South Africa, Black men had to leave their families and go to far places and seek employment. It is stipulated that even with the end of apartheid in the early 90s, there is still families that are separated due to employment where a father has to work in another province or city to provide for his family. These reasons caused some men to grow up in absent-father homes and which had some negative consequences. Absent-fathers may not always be victimisers but are also victims of social and political circumstances that force their absence.

2.6 SINGLE-PARENT FAMILY AGAINST TWO-PARENT FAMILY

A comparison and contrast of two models, the single-parent family and the two-parent family is due in this section of the chapter. There have been comparisons between single-parent homes and two-parent homes and how they impact differently on the upbringing of children. We will look at the dynamics in these two-family structures. Sawhill (2014), for example, points out the negative impact the single-parent home has on children. She argues that children who live in families with both parents, do better because of the contribution of both parents while those in single-parent homes rely on the contribution of only one parent. She further points out that, single parents often have to spend a greater proportion of their income on child care because they do not have a co-parent to assist with taking care of the children in her absence. In addition to additional income, two-parent families are also able to spend more time with their children (Sawhill, 2014). The way the two parents complement each other in attending to the children may be a learning point for the children who then grow up enriched in their understanding of the family institution and social formation.

The other issue pointed out by Sawhill (2014) is the differences in parenting skills between single-parent home and a two-parent home. It is mentioned that the lack parenting skills found among single parents in the study conducted by Sawhill (2014) may not only be related to lack of support from a co-parent but to a lack of additional income and education. Education has been seen as one of the important factors in explaining lack of parenting skills. This lack of education also contributes to how much the single parent earns, which might not be enough to sustain her family. In this case, it is found that some single parents tend to be poorer and less educated. Waltz (2007) points out that in other cases, a son raised by a committed, hardworking single mother, can venture out with confidence through his mother's encouragement, as well as through additional male support he requires. The role of larger society comes to the fore again in this instance whereby it is mentioned that in the absence of a father at home, the son can find a role model from the society around him (Waltz, 2007).

Absence, frequent or long, of the present parent may also be a problem in the growth of children. Osmond (2010) pointed out those single mothers as the primary sources of income in the household are often forced to move to low income neighborhoods and work long hours to

provide for their families and therefore spend less time at home resulting in less interaction with the children. The less interaction between parent-child is prone to bring behaviour problems, peer pressure difficulties and strained relationships. As indicated earlier, some children have uncles, grandfathers who fill this gap in their lives. Waltz (2007) agrees that a satisfying meaningful paternal experience can be attained from grandfathers, godfathers, uncles, family friends, teachers, and coaches and these figures can all become important figures in a son's life and that mothers should foster this awareness.

Extended families may fill in the gap for absent parents. Makofane (2015) agrees that African mothers who raise their children without their fathers rely on their extended families and relatives for support. De Carlo (2012) asserts that the father-absence forces the mother to play the role of moral overseer, breadwinner, and nurturer. These circumstances of single-parent household can be extremely difficult to overcome. Despite the positive aspects of growing in a two-parent homes, there is evidence that highly educated, hardworking single mothers can also provide the emotional and economic needs of their children contrary to two parents who are both less educated and earn less financially (Flood, 2003). It is crucial to look at how some men who grew up in absent-father homes adjust positively in life.

2.7 ADJUSTING POSITIVELY IN AN ABSENT-FATHER HOME

This study, unlike many other studies, does not dwell on the negative outcome of absent-father in families but focuses on the positive adjustment and resilience of those men that succeed inspite of the absence of fathers. The study notes that despite the challenges experienced by men who grew up in fatherless homes, some have managed to avoid the negative outcomes of absent fatherhood in their lives and have become successful in different aspects of their lives. For instance, Canfield (2005) points out that if one wants to be successful, it means that the full responsibility has to be taken which includes the responsibility of achieving better in life, the responsibility to produce good results, ensuring quality of relationships, taking responsibility about one's health and overall living conditions. In other words, one should be able to face the negative and positive developments and conditions that life brings before one.

For purposes of this study it is important to look at what success entails in this regard and whether it is materialistic or not. Poraj-Weder (2014) refers to the positive and negative

aspects of materialism and calls the positive aspects as the "instrumental" materialism. He mentions that instrumental materialism sees possession of material things as a means of accomplishing aims and achieving non-material goals inclusive of values aimed at self-fulfilment. He further points out that the negative aspects of materialism, which he refers to as the "terminal" materialism as making possession a goal in itself. It is further pointed out that there are debates about the definition of materialism. Poraj-Weder (2014) has given the definition of materialism as appearing in three ways. He states the first area as the need to value one's success and those of others with how many possessions one has and with the quality of those possessions. The second area, he states is that the tendency to associate the possession of goods with happiness and satisfaction.

The third and last are area is the central place in life which one accords with the acquisition of goods. Notably, although there is a lot of discussion on material success, to other people material possessions are not as important as achieving a successful life, fame and power, one's importance and happiness, being content and having healthy and lasting relationships (Poraj-Weder, 2014). For the purpose of this study, success will be viewed as the ability to live a content life despite growing up in an absent-father home. This measure of success is based on the fact that what makes people content will be how they view themselves as successful.

2.7.1 Resilience and adjusting positively

This section of the chapter focuses on the resilience and positive adjustment of male children that defy the limits of the negative effects of absent-fathers in their families. Notably, there are strengths and resiliency qualities exhibited by children raised in absent-father homes. Despite the challenges they faced in absent-father homes, some men managed to rise above their adversities. Wilson (2014) describes resilience in three forms. The first form is resilient qualities which assists in identifying the qualities that people have and that assists them in overcoming the adversities in life. She mentions that among these qualities are self-efficacy and high self-esteem. The second form is the resilient process which is described as how do people obtain the traits or qualities of resilience. These qualities and traits are attained through life experiences. The last form is what she called the inner resilience which helps with overcoming difficult situations and adversities and the ability to thrive in the midst of adversities.

As understood by Marano (2003), resilience is the capacity to rise above adversity, and that sometimes the terrible adversities could range from any form of violence, molestation or war. Adversities in resilient people tends to harden than incapacitate them. Furthermore, it is mentioned that it is the means by which children of troubled families are not incapacitated by their hardship but rebound from it, they learn to protect themselves and emerge as strong adults, who are able to lead gratifying lives. Hargrove (2010) agrees that resilience is the ability to face threatful situations and being able to take risks, be able to adapt well in difficult environments, and being able to recover well from the challenges of life. He mentions that these abilities are accomplished through the application of protective factors. In addition, Marano (2003) further describes resilience as the belief in oneself as well as a belief in something larger than one's challenges or difficulties. He describes resilient people as having the ability to overcome adversity and who can move towards goals beyond themselves. They can transcend pain and grief, as mentioned and they perceive bad times as temporary states of affairs. Resilient people are also those people that are good at adapting to changing conditions and experiences of life (Marano, 2003).

Reich, Zautra and Hall (2010) concurs that resilience is an outcome of successful adaptation to adversity. It is noted that the overcoming stressful situations with the end results that are healthy, are the characteristics of a person who is resilient. Reich et al. (2010) argue that two questions have to be asked when enquiring about resilience. The first question, as asked, is about how people manage to recovery well and continue with their lives post difficult situations. It is confirmed that people who are resilient are able to regain their strength and power following stressful events. Recovery from setbacks and surviving adversities are aspects of resilience. The second question, it is noted, is sustainability or the capacity to forge forward in the face of adversity. Furthermore, to address this aspect of resilience, it is argued, one needs to ask how well people manage to gain back their health and well-being in the midst of challenging environments. This is, according to Fuller (2010) one of the powerful protective factors that resilient people possess. It is mentioned that these protective factors can enable people to avoid suicide, substance abuse, and other self-destructive behaviours (Fuller, 2010).

He further argues that it is the most powerful remedy for loneliness, hopelessness, and loss of meaning in all our lives. Having defined and elaborated on resilience, it is crucial to look at the role of culture in resilience as outlined by Reich et al. (2010) who notes how culture is a factor is conditioning people's resilience and survivalism.

2.8 HOW IS RESILIENCE OBTAINED?

As discussed earlier, resilience is a common thread in men who managed to rise above the adversities of growing up in absent-father homes. At this juncture, this chapter turns to look at whether and how is resilience obtained. Marano (2003) stated that experts argue among themselves about the genetic make-up of resilience. It is stated that "people differ in their inborn ability to handle life's stresses and that resilience can also be cultivated. This is possible to strengthen one's inner self and one's belief in oneself, and to define oneself as a capable and competent individual" (Marano, 2003, p.20). He further points to the necessity to reflect on the past and interpret it to find the strengths one has probably had within all along. Some evidence shows that only during adulthood do people begin to overcome the difficulties of childhood and begin to rebuild their lives. This will be confirmed or disputed by findings from the research into black African men who grew up in absent-father homes. Hargrove (2010) points out to the observation made at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), where it was revealed that resilience is a process within which black men recognized, selected and accessed the protective factors that assisted them in challenging the threats that could have led to negative outcomes in their educational journey.

Further, Marano (2003) notes that one of the problems of our society is that frailty is often glorified. He believes that the society would turn a person into a victim by reminding him or her of the traumas in their lives. In reality, people have the capacity for strength, although they might not be wholly aware of it. He asserts that sometimes it is easier to be a victim; and talk and blame other people without taking any responsibilities about one's life. He further says that sometimes there are beliefs that if one's family has troubles, a person is not immune to those troubles and will also leave a lasting troubled life (Marano, 2003). This is contrary to the findings of some of the research which revealed that most men do not repeat their parents' drinking patterns. Some individuals survived from families with mental illnesses, with continuing family discords, and racial discrimination and poverty. This shows how they managed to create their own resilient paths.

The agency to survive and depart from a compelling parental background is a quality of inventiveness and also resilience. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008) states that "the ability to thrive and maintain relatively stable psychological and physical functioning after extremely aversive experiences, often showing only minor, transient disruption, reveals a great deal about a

family's or an individual's resilience" (p. 45). There is a ground-breaking research conducted at the University of California, in the USA, as shown in Marano (2003) that about a third of children never seem to be affected by the negative effects of poverty, alcoholism, and abuse in the homes they grew up in. It is indicated that even though some of these men were troubled as teens, when they grew up, they managed to make better choices, work hard and not follow their parents' paths. As much as troubled families impact badly on their children, resilient individuals are challenged by such troubles and manage to respond differently and in a positive manner.

Added to that, Marano (2003) argues that "the degree that it is learned, resilience seems to develop out of the challenge to maintain self-esteem. That troubled families make their children feel powerless and bad about themselves and that resilience is the capacity for a person to maintain self-esteem despite the powerful influence of the parents" (p. 42). Furthermore, "it is also possible to be hurt and to rebound at the same time, human beings are complex enough psychologically to accommodate the two" (Marano, 2003, p. 49).

Resilience can be attained by taking responsibility for one's failures and successes. This attainment is explained by Marano (2003) as the ability to maintain personal independence. He mentions that survivors draw boundaries between themselves and troubled parents; and that they keep their emotional distance while satisfying their needs. Furthermore, it is stated, resilient children often spend time with families where they receive encouragement, insight and support and that they also choose partners that will form stable and loving families with. "Survivors are able to cultivate insight, the mental habit of asking themselves questions and giving honest answers. They also take the initiative. They take charge of problems, stretching and testing themselves" (Marano, 2003, p. 52). People are not working in isolation in striving to achieve a better life. They have a supportive system in the forms of family members, the extended family, the organisations and the community at large. These could include churches, teachers and neighbours. This mean that they are not afraid to talk about the hard times they are having to someone who cared for their well-being. Independence, honesty with themselves and others seem to be a mark of the resilient people. Talking to people that they trust about their problem is part of not only sharing the problem but also owning it.

Notably, Fuller (2010) points out that central to all the research on resilience is the sense of belonging a person has, and he views this as the most powerful protective factor. He regards this as "the strongest antidote to suicide, violence, and substance abuse for young people. The

most powerful remedy for loneliness, hopelessness and loss of meaning in all our lives. Feeling that one belongs to himself and others makes one want more of success and life" (p. 18). Hargrove (2010), in his study of black male resilience, noted that resilient students are what he describes as those individuals who managed to defy the odds, who managed to challenge their difficulties and attain their goals. He points out that by that definition, then, the academically successful Black males appearing in the literature are those that are resilient while their peers failed to complete college and make it successfully in life (Hargrove, 2010).

Hargrove (2010) points out that "many of the ills that plague Black men are associated with a lower socioeconomic status inherited from the history of American slavery, which is a detriment that has unfortunately become ingrained in the nation's social fiber and institutions'' (p. 23). Understanding resilience and its concepts allows researchers, educators, policy makers, and parents to consider an additional theoretical basis on which to formulate effective studies, policy, and educational programs to further support Black male academic success (Hargrove, 2010). The research on men who grew up in absent-father families that this study does stands to give an indication on how much resilience played a part in assisting men who grew up in absent-father homes to rise above the adversities of growing in absent-father families.

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has fleshed out the Family Systems Theory that is the elected theoretical framework for this study. Relevant literature on the subject of absent-fathers and the resilience of children, especially boys, that successfully grow up to be remarkable men against the odds of absent-fathers has been reviewed. Growing up in an absent-father homes has been noted in this chapter to be a grave social challenge for children. Scholars have concentrated on the disadvantages and failures that children of absent-parents, especially absent-fathers, are confronted with. Differently, this study pays attention to the positive adjustment and resilience shown by those men that after a childhood marked by an absent-father who grew up to be resilient men that own up to their failures and successes. The intersection between culture and resilience, how culture can permit, or forbid resilience has also been reflected on in this chapter. The following chapter delves into the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter delves into the methodology of the study which is an important part that can determine the acceptability or unacceptability of the observations, arguments and conclusions of the study. The elected methodological approach of this study is the qualitative research approach and design that allows the researcher to observe the behaviour of human beings and use interpretation to make observations, arguments and conclusions as part of the study. This chapter details the methodology together with the research tools, analytical instruments and the process of applying interpretation to gathered data. The chapter begins with the important concept of interpretivism.

3.2 INTERPRETIVISM

When conducting research, it is important to consider your own underlying assumptions about reality and the nature of knowledge as this impacts every aspect of your research method. Personal prejudices and predispositions can cloud one's views of phenomena and interfere with open minded analysis. Epistemology refers to what forms a valid knowledge and how can this knowledge be obtained. On the other hand, ontology refers to what forms reality and how we can understand existence. The question of epistemology concerns the "relationship between the researcher and that which is being researched" (Larcher, 2007, p. 104) and is addressed by qualitative research. Edirisingha (2012) describes the ontological and epistemological ideologies which are positivism and interpretivism. She describes the positivist ontology as "believing that the world is external and that there is a single objective reality to any research phenomenon regardless of the researcher's perspective or belief" (p. 18). As a result, it is explained by Edirisingha (2012) that the researcher is in control of the research and takes up the structural approach in conducting a research. On the other hand, Edirisingha (2012) explains that the stance

of interpretivism in relation to ontology and epistemology is that interpretivists believe that reality is not one but that it is multiple and relative and that these multiple realities also depend on different meanings given by it by people. It is further explained that the knowledge acquired in this discipline is socially constructed rather than objectively determined and perceived.

Interpretivism believes that the researcher is capable for constructing social reality. Research conducted under this philosophy puts emphasis on the nature of people's character and participation in both social and cultural life. Interpretivists believe that there is no single correct method or way to create knowledge but rather different methods. In addition, the interpretive tradition believes that there are no correct or incorrect theories and that human actors, through social construction create people's knowledge of reality (Sahay, 2017). "It is the belief that this method of research carries, once a researcher adopts this position, he/she definitely and distinctively rules out the methods of physical science which believes reality to be objective and existing out there" (Sahay, 2017, p. 14). The goal of this interpretivist research is to understand and interpret the meanings in the lived experiences of men raised in absent-father homes and to gain an understanding, make meanings of the subjective experiences they had.

3.3 THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL PARADIGM

Phenomenology is the philosophical name for the method of investigating or enquiring into the meanings of our experiences as we live them. This research is phenomenological in that the study looks at the lived experiences of men who grew up in absent-father homes and what factors promote positive adjustment in men who grew up in absent-father homes. According to Bliss (2016), the goal of qualitative phenomenological research is "to describe a lived experience of a phenomenon. The aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, avoids any pre-given framework, but remaining true to the facts" (p. 5). Christensen, Johnson, and Turner (2010) concurs that the primary objective of a phenomenological study is to explicate the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experiences of a person, or a group of people, around a specific phenomenon. The phenomenologists are concerned with understanding people's social and psychological phenomena from their own perspectives. A phenomenologist's worldview is in line with the

belief that all perceptions and constructions are ultimately grounded in a particular perspective in time and space (Christensen et.al, 2010). This researcher in applying phenomenology in this study is concerned with the lived experiences of men who grew up in absent-father homes, the people involved in their lives, or who were involved and the factors that promote positive adjustment in their lives (Groenewald, 2004). The researcher aims to understand human behavior through the eyes of the participants in this study. It is on this basis that I chose the phenomenological paradigm.

3.4 RATIONALE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

The method of study used is the qualitative. de Gialdino (2009) explains that a qualitative research "entails the variety of views on what is known, what may be known, how it is known and that there is not one legitimate way to conduct qualitative research. Qualitative research is interested, in particular, in the way in which the world is understood, experienced, or produced by people's lives, behavior, and interactions" (p. 11). Furthermore, de Gialdino (2009) postulates that qualitative research is interested in the process, the changes taking place and the perspectives that people give about their lives.

Qualitative research is "an activity that locates the observer in the world and it consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world to be seen. These practices transform the world and they turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self'' (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2012, p. 15). It is further indicated that at this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world which means that the qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempt to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Guest et al., 2012). Furthermore, the researcher's choice of a qualitative approach was motivated by its interpretive nature of the world, seeking to understand the phenomena (Guest et al., 2012).

3.5 DATA SOURCES AND SAMPLE SIZE

Various methods are available for the purposes of gathering qualitative data, they include naturalistic observations, field notes, interviews, focus groups and others. Given the research question of this study, the semi-structured interviews were chosen as the preferred method of data collection because the order in which the various topics are dealt with and the wording of the questions are left to the interviewer's discretion. Kajornboon (2005) explains that "within each topic, the interviewer is free to conduct the conversation in a suitable manner and to ask appropriate questions that will give explanations and the clarity that is needed. To ask for clarification in case the answer is not clear and to prompt when necessary" (p. 12). It is up to the researcher to establish his or her own style of carrying out the conversation and discussions. Additional questions can be asked, and these questions do not necessarily have to be in the planned structure of questions. The additional questions will assist with clarity and further understanding. This means the interview is semi-structured, and will allow freedom in probing, seeking clarity and understanding.

According to Kajornboon (2005), semi-structured interviews "give topics and questions to the interviewee but are carefully designed to elicit the interviewee's ideas and opinions on the topic of interest, as opposed to leading the interviewee toward preconceived choices" (p. 10). In this case, the interviewer follows up with probes to get in-depth information on topics of interest. It is important to strive to avoid leading the interview or imposing meanings, and to strive to create relaxed, comfortable conversation. The semi-structured interview allows the researcher to elicit responses and accounts of events from men who grew up in absent-father homes. These men became the subjects and not just objects of the research in that they had the agency to freely express themselves while questions ensured that they remained relevant to the topic of the study.

A sample of six men was selected in Pretoria, South Africa and a homogenous sample came from a group of black African men between ages 21-55 who came from absent-father homes. A purposive sampling technique was used to choose the sample. A purposive sampling refers to "a method of selecting participants because they have particular features or characteristics that will enable detailed exploration of the phenomena being studied" (Frost, 2011, p. 49). The inclusion criteria of the participants were choosing only men who are either

working, have businesses or who have the successful means of sustaining their lives. Furthermore, it is mentioned that the purposive sampling technique "is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. It is a nonrandom technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants" (Etikan, 2016, p. 13). This technique gave the researcher more flexibility in choosing men who grew up in absent-father homes. In this case, the researcher decides what information is needed and embarks on finding people who can provide such information and who are willing to provide the information based on their knowledge or experience. Appointments were made with the individuals and interviews were conducted on the agreed date and time. The interviews were conducted in English and the time for the interviews varied from one hour to two hours. Most of the participants were met at their places of work while others preferred meeting at a coffee shop.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

An interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) was used to analyse the data. The IPA is rooted in the interpretive sciences, that is, phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Jorvornicky, 2018). For the purpose of this research, the science of phenomenology was the focus. As discussed earlier, phenomenology is the study of experiences from the perspectives of those who live through it (Jorvornicky, 2018). The science of phenomenology began with Hussler's philosophy with his interest in uncovering the features of an experience as outlined by Jorvornicky (2018). He believed that the features and processes of an experience should be uncovered in an undistorted manner. This science was further explored by Heidegger, who was Hussler's student. Heidegger's concern was the question of existence itself (Heidegger, 1962). He believed that humans are always situated in already existing systems of meanings that establish relationships between elements of the external world (Heidegger, 1962). He used the term "Dasein' to describe human beings. This, he translated to meaning 'being in the world', and 'being there' and he saw individuals as persons in context and making sense of their world. Heidegger's contribution to IPA is that individuals are meaning-making beings and that our being in the world is based on our own perspective, is temporal and relational Heidegger (1962).

The process of IPA as explained by Jorvonicky (2018) is firstly, phenomenological, which means that the Researcher strives to get as close as possible to the participants'

experiences, and secondly, interpretive, which means that the Researcher seeks to critically interrogate the participants accounts in relation to a phenomenon under investigation. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), who drew from the work of Heidegger (1962), explains that the primary goal of the IPA researchers is to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences. It is assumed that people have the ability to interpret their own events and circumstances and can be active participants in interpreting those events. The Researcher in the current study wanted to understand the participants' accounts of living in absent-father homes. Smith and Osborn (2015) explain the IPA steps used in research as follows:

3.6.1 Looking for themes

The transcripts were read a number of times. This is an important stage to familiarise oneself with the narratives of the participants by reading and re-reading. Each reading has the potential to give new insights and this is close to be a free textual analysis. "There are no rules about what is commented upon, and there is no requirement, for example, to divide the text into meaning units and assign a comment for each unit in the first phase of interpretation" (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 5). This reader followed this technique in the research that delivered the data that was used in this study.

3.6.2 Connecting the Themes

The next step was to list the emergent themes on a sheet of paper, while the researcher looked for connections between them. This initial list was provided in a chronological manner based on the order with which they came up in the transcripts of the participants. The next stage involved a more analytical or theoretical ordering, as the researcher tried to make sense of the connections between themes which are emerging (Smith & Osborn, 2015). This ordering was done in a form of a list of themes.

3.6.3 Clustering of themes

Some of the themes were clustered together. As the clustering of themes emerged, they were checked in the transcript to make sure that they were a true reflection of the participants' narratives. This stage meant that the researcher had to have a close interaction with the text. As

a researcher, "one is drawing on one's interpretative resources to make sense of what the person is saying, but at the same time one is constantly checking one's own sense-making against what the person actually said. As an adjunct to the process of clustering, it may help to compile directories of the participant's phrases that support related themes" (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 11). This is what this researcher did in the analysis of the recorded submissions of the participants.

3.6.4 Listing of themes

The next stage was to produce a list of the themes, that is coherently ordered. Thus, this process identified some clusters of themes which represent what the participants relayed in their narratives. The clusters were themselves given a name and represent the superordinate themes. This process names the themes which go with each superordinate theme and were identified to assist in the organization of the analysis and facilitate finding the original source subsequently (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

3.6.5 Writing Up

This final section was concerned with progressing from the identifying of the themes, to organizing and listing the themes and to finally write about the meanings of the participants experiences. As indicated, this involves writing the account of the participants experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2015). This stage was concerned with translating the themes into a narrative account of each participant.

3.7 ISSUES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

The experts on research who writes on research methods have illustrated that there are measures that qualitative researchers can be adopted to address the issues of credibility and dependability. These are issues that are central to any study because if they are not addressed, the study fails the important test of scientificity and is therefore dismissible.

3.7.1 Researcher subjectivity and competency

Brink (1993) points out that the researcher subjectivity and competency questions must be checked, otherwise they may influence the trustworthiness of data considerably. He further emphasises that "researchers' competence is crucial in enabling him or her to obtain any accurate dependable or credible data. That interviewees may want to make things seem better or worse than they are and may also attempt to please the researcher by responding in the way that they believe he or she expects. Furthermore, it is pointed out, they may also fear that by giving negative responses, they will be placed in a devalued position by the researcher. Interviewees may also be unwilling to share certain information with the researcher and deliberately withhold or distort it" (p. 21). To prevent this, the Researcher firstly made sure that the participants understood the nature of the research such as why the participant was asked to participate in the study, the nature of the researcher's studies and the data collection method. Secondly, the researcher built a rapport and created a safe space for the participants and lastly, by keeping accurate and detailed notes and records of the responses of the participants. The participants were aware of the recording.

3.7.2 Credibility and authenticity

Credibility and authenticity of a study are as important as dependability and acceptability. Shenton (2004) emphasises that in the need to establish trustworthiness, credibility has to be ensured. It is further pointed out that the researcher has to neutralise her position regarding the phenomenon being studied, and therefore may not influence, manipulate or distort data to serve her own interests. The researcher in this study adopted focused on the research inquiry and developed empathy, while she gave respect to the participants. In this case, the proper procedures of interviewing, data-gathering sessions and analysis were employed. In terms of authenticity, each participant who was approached was given the opportunity to decline participation in the study so as to ensure that the data collected is from willing participants who will give true and free accounts of their stories instead of participants who will feel coerced to participate and give false information.

The participants were encouraged to be open and comfortable from the onset. This was done by building rapport before starting with the questions (Shenton, 2004).

3.7.3 Transferability

Transferability is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Shenton, 2004). In this type of study, the concern often lies in demonstrating that the results of the work at hand can be applied to a wider population (Shenton, 2004). It is further pointed out that to understand transferability, sufficient thick description of the phenomenon under investigation is provided to allow the reader to have a proper understanding of it, thereby enabling them to compare the instances of the phenomenon described in the research report with those that they have seen emerge in their situations (Shenton, 2004). In this current study, the phenomenon is clearly described to assist in application in a wider population. The research findings apply to other situations such as social services, educational settings and work settings.

3.7.4 Reflexivity

Horrigan-Kelly, Millar and Dowling (2016) points out the importance of highlighting that the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon being studied is based on them having particular pre-conceptions. This is what reflexivity means and therefore playing a central role in the researcher's attempts to keep a check on their preconceptions (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). The researcher in the current study remained focused on the phenomenon being studied while both reining in and reflexively interrogating her own understandings. This involved the researcher bringing forward their understanding of their position in terms of personal values, beliefs, motivations, culture, ethnicity, and so on.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical considerations were taken into account as outlined by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (2008), as well as the general ethical considerations relevant to the study. Issues of moral right and wrong come to bear on any study that involves participants and subjects that concern lives and communities.

3.8.1 Informed consent

The researcher provided detailed information to participants about the nature of the research and the need to gain written consent. The interview was one on one, and the sample selected was on voluntary basis and they were interviewed once informed consent was obtained. It is an ethical requirement for the researcher to obtain written consent from the participants before the commencement of the interviews. The informed consent included the aims and purpose of the study; what the research entails; the methods used in the study; what is expected from the participants during the study; the assurance that participation is completely voluntary, anonymous, and without remuneration. The participants were informed that they can say when they feel uncomfortable about certain questions. (See Appendix 'A').

3.8.2 Confidentiality and privacy

The researcher used pseudonyms or initials and, where possible, the researcher changed other identifying details in reports. The researcher also established whether the participants wished to remain anonymous or not. The exclusion clause of confidentiality was also explained to the participants. This includes when it was appropriate to breach confidentiality; as in the request by the court of law, where unreported illegal sexual behaviours, and/or illegal activities, or intention to harm others or self were noted (Sheffield, Aberdeen, & Thompson, n.d.).

3.8.3 No harm

Research, if unchecked can harm participants, for instance, Sheffield et al. (n.d.) points out that "many interviews concern issues that are sensitive and this can make interviews emotionally intense and might potentially harm the interviewee" (p. 3). The researcher ensured that the research would not bring any harm to the participants in a physical or emotional manner. Sometimes the advice offered to avoid potential harm to participants is of a generic nature; for example, if a participant becomes distressed, the research used her own intuition to determine whether or not to interrupt or stop an interview. The researcher informed the participants that there are debriefing services available for free at the UNISA Psychotherapy clinic should there

be a need post interview. There was no deception by the researcher to the respondents by deliberately misrepresenting facts or withholding information from them.

3.8.4 Appreciation of participants

This researcher wrote to thank the participants for their time and the information that they supplied. Sheffield et al. (n.d.) offers suggestions for giving something back to participants as it feels that it is a privilege to be allowed insight into a person's life and this should be openly acknowledged in a letter of thanks and appreciation to all participants.

3.8.5 Dual role and over-involvement

The researcher as a therapist in training did not find herself drawn into that role and away from that of researcher during an in-depth interview. The researcher also avoided being over-involved with the participant as outlined by Sheffield et al. (n.d.). I was careful and critical not to openly show excitement about certain responses from the interviewees so as to avoid unintentionally showing them the answers I was directly interested or not interested in.

3.8.6 Competency and supervision

The researcher was competent to conduct the study under supervision as an Intern Clinical Psychologist.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In summation, the present chapter has delineated the qualitative methodology that is deployed in the present study. A rationale of the qualitative study and the explanations of its relevance to such a study as this is given. The merits of the phenomenological research paradigm that allows the qualitative researcher to understand and interpret the lived experience of participants is also fleshed out. The data sources, sample choice and sample size are explained followed by and elaboration on the approach to data analysis that was used. The ethical

considerations of the study that came to bear on the research are explained with a view to demonstrate the compliance of the present study to institutional and disciplinary demands in terms of ethics. The importance of this methodology chapter is that it demonstrates the dependability, acceptability, authenticity and trustworthiness of this study as a credible scientific and academically acceptable study that contributes to the discipline of clinical psychology. The following chapter delves into the discussion of the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the discussion of the data that was gathered through semi-structured interviews. Six men who grew up in absent-father homes were interviewed and their lived experiences examined and interpreted accordingly. Literature has suggested that the absence of the father in any family, may compromises the emotional and psychological welfare of children (Flood, 2003). This study focused on those children that manage to positively adjust to their situation and deploy resilience to not only survive but prosper and become successful man. Fathers' absence from families is said to contribute to a wide range of social problems, from crime and delinquency to poor school performance. The research evidence shows, as stipulated by Flood (2003) that, in general, children raised in two-parent families do better on measures of educational performance and psychological adjustment than children raised in single-parent families. But the research also shows that the absence of a father by itself does not determine children's well-being. The quality of parenting and the nature of parents' relationships with each other and their children are the critical factors in shaping the impact of father absence upon children (Flood, 2003). The mere absence of the father may not be an ultimate determinant of the failure of children, more other factors come bear, and therefore, resilient and positively charged children can overcome the adversities of absent-fathers.

The researcher notes the families and the circumstances these men grew up in. The men are also acknowledged and respected as owners of their lives and the first experts on their lived experiences of growing up in absent-father homes. This chapter presents the information obtained from the six participants who grew up in absent-father homes. As described in Chapter three, this study uses a qualitative research method with an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis used to organise the data. This process has been attained through reading and re-reading the data, and then organising it into major themes and sub-themes. This chapter begins with the brief background information about the research participants to provide the reader with each participant's context. This is followed by the major themes and subthemes drawn from the

narratives of the participants. The excerpts are cited verbatim from the participants' original transcripts regarding their experiences to provide evidence of and to verify the themes and subthemes obtained from the participants' narratives. The researcher used her own interpretation based on her understanding of the narratives of these men. The lived experiences of the men that were interviewed is noted but may not fundamentally be definitive of the positive adjustment and resilience of successful men from absent-father homes.

4.1.1 Backgrounds of the Participants

All of the participants who took part in the study were men who grew up in absent-father homes. These men either do not know their fathers or their fathers left them at a very young age. Furthermore, these men were raised by their single mothers or grandmothers with other family members and extended family playing a big role in their lives. For reasons of confidentiality, the participants' background information and their contexts had to be discussed with great care to maintain their anonymity. The participants will be identified as Misters JM, MT, JN, EM, SB and SM.

4.1.1.1 A brief biography of Mr JM

Mr JM is in his late thirties and he is married with two children. Mr JM has been married for five years and lives in Pretoria with his family. He has a Bachelor of Technology in Electrical Engineering and works as an engineering technician. His mother lives in Lesotho, a neighbouring country, where he originates from. Mr JM is a staunch Christian. He is also an elder in his local church and he does charity work over the weekends. Mr JM has a younger brother who also stays in Pretoria and he helped him financially through university. Mr JM grew up in an absent-father home where he had to rely on his mother and extended family for upkeep. He recalled his exposure to his father's absence that began at the age of four years when his father was working away from home and eventually died when Mr JM was six years old.

4.1.1.2 A brief biography of Mr TM

Mr TM is in his early forties and he is married with one child. He has been married for 15 years. Mr TM lives in Pretoria with his family. His highest educational qualification is a Master's degree and he is currently working as a Director in the government sector. Prior to this he worked for a Christian Non-governmental organisation for many years and he travelled the world as a result. Mr TM grew up in an absent-father home and he was raised by his grandmother and supported by his sisters.

4.1.1.3 A brief biography of Mr JN

Mr JN is in his mid-thirties and he is single with two children. He has a business degree and owns a small business in the hospitality field. He stays in Pretoria and his children, whom he sees often, stay with their mother in Limpopo. He has aspirations of expanding his business and getting married to the mother of his children. Mr JN grew up in an absent-father home and he was raised up by his mother. Mr JN recalls being aware that he did not have a father at the age of 15 or 16 years.

4.1.1.4 A brief biography of Mr EM

Mr EM is in his early forties and he is an Attorney. He is married with three children. He has an LLB degree and works as a Financial Analyst at the Financial Services Board. Mr EM lives in Pretoria with his family. Mr EM grew up in an absent-father home and he was raised by his mother. Mr EM recalled being in middle school when he realised that he did not have a father at home.

4.1.1.5 A brief biography of Mr SB

Mr SB is in his late twenties and he works as a Biokinetist in the government sector. He also holds a rank of a cadet officer in the same unit. He has a BSC degree in Biokinetics. He is single and has no children. Mr SB grew up in an absent father home and he was raised by his

mother. Mr SB recalls that his father left him when he was seven years old. His father died and his body was brought to his family after he had been absent for many years. At the time Mr SB was in grade 12.

4.1.1.6 A brief biography of Mr SM

Mr SM is in his early fifties and works as a Brigadier General in the government sector. He has a Degree in Nursing and worked as a Nurse before he was appointed as a Brigadier General. Mr SM is divorced with two children. He stays alone in Pretoria and his children whom he sees every day, stay with their mother in Pretoria. Mr SM grew up in an absent-father home and he was raised by his mother. Mr SM realised during his early schooling years that he did not have a father at home. He stayed at his uncle's house and he felt that he did not belong there as he was constantly reminded of his absent father.

4.2 THE THEMES

The negative impact and emotional injury that arise from an absent father and that were experienced by men who grew up in absent-father homes is evident when one interviews the men. However, the negative impact did not stop these men from being ambitious and achieving their goals. Men who endured significant portions of their youth without the continuous presence of the biological father are left with numerous unanswered questions about their own worth, it left them with anger and frustration, but they did not allow this to hamper their efforts to thrive in life. The support system these men got also played a significant role in their lives. This support system varied from grandparents, uncles, teachers, their friends' fathers and the community. This may simply mean than fathers are not necessarily biological but can be social. The first step that I took towards analysing the data was to transcribe the interviews of the participants. The transcripts were then read a number of times to look for themes in the narrative. The meaning units of the themes were listed, and connections made between them. A list of four themes emerged and was clustered. The clusters represent the superordinate themes with some having subthemes.

The four themes that emerged are discussed below:

1. All participants communicated the belief that the most important role of a father is that of teacher and advisor, a provider, a protector and a role model.

2. All participants expressed the perception that the impact of growing up in absent-father families was at the core of their life challenges as they were growing up.

3. All participants shared their adaptive responses to growing in absent-father homes.

4. An overwhelming majority of participants described the experience of having a strong support system as the one that gave them the strength to pursue their ambitions in life.

The following sections provide an in-depth discussion of each of the fore-mentioned findings. Excerpts from interview transcripts introduce the voice of the participants and offer insight into their emotions, opinions, fears, and deep-rooted perceptions about their exposure to absent-fathers.

4.2.1 Theme 1: The role of a father

The participants expressed their view on what role they believe a father should have played in their lives. This role ranged from being a role model to them as men, to be an advisor and teacher, a protector and a provider. This father is not only seen as a source of knowledge and wisdom but also a breadwinner.

4.2.1.1 Sub-theme: Father as a teacher and advisor

Some of the participants believed that their father would have taught them about life, how to become men, fathers, and husbands to their wives and children. Some believed their fathers would have taught them about love. Mr JM expressed how he would have wanted guidance as a man from his father, but he did not have that opportunity:

"…but you know if you had your father you might have gone through certain things, you know like that man phase in life. So, I can say that I wanted more of his counsels, on how to approach things…guidance."

In terms of advisory role, Mr JN concurs and expresses the belief that he could have made better decisions in life had he had a father who advised him. He had this to say:

"Well it's, um, it's very hard its challenging you know because coming to that, if I had my dad I would have done right. Or, I could have been given this advice in life or you know…"

On the teacher role, Mr EM believed that his father would have encouraged him and taught how to play soccer:

"Um, I don't know I mean like, um, I think some of the things that you, ah, that you get you know when you as a father. Ah, maybe, that's the reason why I can't play soccer today…"

Mr SB believed that his father would have taught him a lot about life:

"Um, I think, he would have played a good role in teaching us. What it really means to be. How a man is supposed to be, to be like. Maybe, we would have learnt something about love and that and that… So, all of those things we had to learn them on the street. Someone has to teach that, someone has to teach us that…We have to learn those kinds of things in TV, we have to learn those things, because it was never there at home. You know, you don't how it feels to have a father and a mother in the same house…"

It is evident from the excerpts of these men that they expected to be taught and advised about life by their fathers.

4.2.1.2 Sub-theme: Father as a provider

Most participants believed that their father's role was to provide for the family. They believed that a father has to ensure that his family has enough for sustenance. The father is

associated with provision and not lack. Mr JM had to say this about a father playing a provider role:

> "I think that comfort of having a father, I think that it is very much
> important. And, you know like, it also affected our family, financially he
> was working, so he is no more it is only then, and you know like mother
> who is providing. So, yeah"

Mr JN agreed with the provider role of a father when he said:

> "…where normally things will be fine, he (father) was working and he
> used to visit us every month you know, bring some nice stuff and things
> like that you know. Life was good…"

One of the main roles of a father, as seen in the responses of these participants is that a father is a provider for his children and family, a breadwinner.

4.2.1.3 Sub-theme: Father as a role model

The participants believed that their fathers should have been their role models and no other people. The role of a father as expressed by the participants summarises their need to have wanted their fathers to have been a role model to them. This included to model how to be a man, how to handle challenges in their lives, how to be great fathers to their children and great husbands to their wives.

Mr TM expressed that a father who is a role model was a father who plays an important role in his family. He expressed how he would have preferred the presence of a father who was playing his role of a father than having a presence of a father who is a drunkard or an abuser and not playing his role of a father. He had this to say about a father's role:

> "ah, should I have grown up in a family that had a father, who was a
> drunkard, who was an abuser, was I going to turn the way that I have
> turned?"

The participants of the study had expectations that their fathers and no other people should have been their role models.

4.2.1.4 Sub-theme: Father as protector

Some participants believed that one of the roles of a father is that of a protector.

Mr JM agreed with the protector role of a father against danger and in his case, protection against bullies.

> "Well, it depends on what was happening. For example, if maybe this
> family is sitting together, something happens, other parents will protect
> their children" …That father figure to protect me. And you know
> sometimes in an African culture, people they bully"

In Mr JN's case, he expected his father to protect him emotionally:

> "…Yes, yes. You when you grow up you get emotional as well. When
> things happen, and I should go to my dad, you know…"

Mr EM agreed with the role of a father as a protector and in his case, it was protection of his interests as a child. He mentioned how he was told to look after cattle and not encouraged to play with other children. He believed that his father would have protected his rights as a child and understood that he had to play like other children:

> "Yeah, he should have, any other person would have understood that this
> is a kid he must just play like any other kids…"

There is evidence that a father is expected to protect his children and his family as depicted by the participants. The forms of protection they expected were physical protection, emotional protection as well as protection of the social interests of children.

4.2.2 Theme 2: The impact of growing up in absent-father homes

The participants reported challenges of growing up in absent-father homes. Each participant commented on difficulties they experienced in growing in absent-father homes. One of the primary findings of this study was the perception by participants that growing in absent-

father homes was a significant contributor to some of the life challenges they encountered. The elements they considered valuable, but found lacking in their lives, are the "simple things" like having someone to talk to, support at sporting events, and lessons on social interaction with peers. While participants indicated that growing up in absent-father homes was far-reaching and continually impacted multiple aspects of their lives, there were three significant types of challenges that surfaced. The first challenge, as expressed by most participants, was that they had nothing to show from their father when other children did.

4.2.2.1 The impact of the missing provider

The participants expressed the difficulties of not having a father as a provide in the home. One participant, Mr JM described that when others talk about what their fathers bought them, he could not relate as he had nothing to show from a father. He therefore felt excluded from the discussions about fathers. Mr JM described his experiences as follows:

> "Yeah well, you know like when people always talk about their fathers
> and you don't have someone to talk about, and they say like my father
> bought me this and I was just there. So, we guys were different because
> everything has to come from my mother."

Mr JM's comment illustrates how the absence of a father contributed his struggles of not having a happy childhood. He mentioned that his mother had to be the sole provider for the family.

Mr TM shared a similar experience of not having anything to show from a father as he described his experience:
> "Look, um, the disadvantage is the idea that the society put in your head,
> ah the ideal where you see other kids and their fathers coming back from
> the field, ah and the kids would eat the leftovers of their lunch boxes."

Mr TM expressed that although he envied other kids having their fathers' leftovers, this is what society had put in people's head. He expressed that this is the only disadvantage he experienced of growing up without a father.

The experience that Mr EM shared is of not having a father to run to and to receive treats like other children did. He, therefore, felt left out. He shared his experience as follows:

> "Well, for me it was not nice you know. You know you see the kids
> running to their fathers you know after school, or Fridays, when at the
> firms…You get some nice sweets, they run to their fathers, but it's not
> your father."

Mr EM expresses how he had to depend on his friends' fathers for treats. He expressed sadness as a result. Mr EM further expressed his financial difficulties as well as feeling neglected and abandoned in one stage of his life of growing up in an absent-father home:

> "It's winter and they refuse to buy you shoes because you lost them at
> soccer or somewhere…And you stay the whole winter without shoes.
> And they are serious these people you know…when I was at varsity, I
> remember I had to drop out. I had some opportunities of getting a job,
> but I need a driver's license, and no one had money to give me. My uncle
> was another person at that stage. So, now everything ended, my great
> grandfather has passed away and, um, you see now that support structure
> is gone".

Mr SB shared a similar experience on the impact of growing without a father and having no financial assistance from him:

> "Um, they (referring to his friends) would tell you, my father this, my
> father that. My father would buy me that, my father would buy me
> that…or my father bought a TV. You just have to keep quiet you know."

This is the similar experience as Mr JM where Mr SB felt excluded in the discussions or had to remove himself from the conversations about fathers as he had nothing to contribute. This could also be attributed to an element of not feeling worthy enough to contribute to the discussions because he does not have a father or being envious for not having a father.

Mr SM's shared a similar experience of feeling neglected and lacking nurturance by not having a father to give him money for lunch. He described it as follows:

> "So, like in that time you know you needed 20 cents for a week just to eat bread. Lunch time and things like that, but…it was difficult"

As in the case with Misters JM, TM and EMs, Mr SM had nothing to show from his father. The participants shared these difficulties of not having enough resources or lacking some of the necessities due to having no fathers at home. They felt neglected, abandoned and not receiving enough pragmatic care as a result of not having a father.

Mr SM shared similar experiences of feeling neglected and not belonging to a sound family. He mentioned how his condition was impacted as he did not have the comfort and caring at his uncle's house. He did not get the love or acknowledgement at home. He felt unwanted. Mr SM knew his father although he did not stay with him. He knew him as a caring and loving father. He remembers not having money for lunch and school shoes to go to school and how he felt unwanted.

> "I was schooling at, um, a little bit far, it was about 6,7 kilometers from the house, now I never had the money to carry for lunch, that is when you can feel the absence of your father. Hmmm, we would leave home at 6 o'clock in the morning and come around 5 in the afternoon. And the most painful thing is that where I was staying, it was my uncle's house. It was not like a poor family, but it was like, but I felt like …I don't belong there. I am not their child…Um, you know at one stage I wanted to leave school…Because one year I remember I didn't have school shoes. So, when you come to school you are wearing differently, you feel very much out. Although that time people were understanding that you were from different families, but you yourself you will feel down, and you just feel out of place".

Mr SB shared the same as follows:

> "Eish its tough, because sometime when you, um, it's tough because sometimes you really need a father, it's tough you want to ask for money for school fees, money for the trip, money for that and that and you ask her and you find she's not working, it becomes tough, it's tough, life becomes really tough, it becomes very challenging…growing up back then going back to the initiation school was a big thing, but I couldn't go there, because no one was going to pay for those kinds of things. But I wouldn't say, as an African, it had an impact".

Mr SB further recalled how his mother took care of the family alone. Mr SB states that it was difficult as he needed more, and his mother could not provide financially for everything. The participants expected their fathers to contribute to their well-being, their nurturance and their overall care. In their case, they did not have this need fulfilled as they grew-up in absent-father homes.

4.2.2.2 The impact of the missing mentor

Most participants expressed the reality of an absent-father as including the lack of a mentor at home. They indicated that not having a father meant a lack of direction which in turn translated into the lack of someone to model how to deal with the difficult periods in their lives. Mr JM described his own challenges as follows:

> "Ja, basically I was talking more about my childhood…on how to approach things". Mr JM expressed lack of mentorship in not knowing how to approach certain challenges in life. He believed that had his father been around, he would have helped him out.

Mr JN expressed a similar view as follows:

> "Well it's um, it's very hard its challenging you know because coming to that, if I had my dad I would have done right. Or, I could have been given

this advice in life or you know…when you grow up you get emotional as

well. When things happen, and I should go to my dad you know".

Mr JN feels that he could have approached his dad and sought advice about certain aspects of life, had he been available. He expressed feeling emotional about the situation. Mr TM expressed how his father might have advised him about relationships:

"Because somebody might talk about issues that the father is the one who

probably introduced me to topics like sex. My father should have been the

one who would have introduced me on the issues of relationships".

It is a similar situation for Mr EM who expressed that being raised by other men, his uncle and grandfather, was difficult as they did not understand his needs. He expressed these feelings as follows:

"So, the guy (his father) you know if he was there, you know I would have

been you know an easy guy. He would have tempted me, encouraged me

to do other things, you know I would have known certain things like, things

that I found out for myself as we were like growing up".

This shows how he learned certain things by himself, things he expected a father to teach him. According to Mr SB, his father would have played a significant role in teaching him about life. He outlines how he had to resort to learning about life from the streets or from television.

Mentorship is seen as one of the most important aspects in a man's life. Mentorship in general involves showing one the ropes, guiding them and directing them. In the absence of fathers in their homes, these men did not receive the mentorship they expected. They were left with confusion and had to work hard to make the best decisions they could make.

4.2.2.3 The impact of the missing protector

Some participants believed that their fathers would have protected them or taught them how to protect themselves. Mr JM relayed the immediate significance of his father's absence and how it brought him a period of withdrawal and introversion as there was no one to protect him. He mentioned that he needed a father figure to protect him from people who bullied him

sometimes. He envied how other families would protect their children and he had no father to do that.

Mr JN agreed as mentioned earlier that he would have wanted to go to his father for protection, but he could not.

Protection in a child's life is important as they rely on adults to protect them. In this case, the men grew up feeling unprotected and neglected. Even though they had to rely on other members of their system, the importance of their father as a first male attachment figure was missed by these men. It created a void in their lives.

4.2.2.4 The systemic impact of being in an absent-father home.

Some of the participants shared their experiences of how absent fathers impacted on their family system. Mr TM pointed out his experiences of sadness for not having a father around:

> "When my father left us, the entire extended family of my father isolated us. And, from my mother's side we only had my grandfather, um, my grandmother, uhm you know my grandfather died in the mine, in a mine accident so that was like the small clan that we had."

Mr TM mentioned how his grandmother who was 80 years old had to step in and help raise him. This shows how his system was perturbed and failed to re-organise itself when his father left. The failure of a family system to re-organise itself causes challenges for the members of the system. The system has to strive to survive.

Mr JN expressed how he felt that not having a father at home was different as there were certain expectations from a father, but he was not present. He shared this experience:

> "It is easier in the beginning… but as you grow things start changing and it becomes a different environment……"

Mr EM's condition was impacted by having a mother who had to work far away to provide for her family and as a result she was most time absent from home:

"And, my mother was working, she was never there also. She was like working as a domestic worker somewhere all the time…nobody was doing homework with me".

Mr SB's condition was impacted negatively as he could not perform the cultural rituals that were expected. He mentioned how he could not go to an initiation school because his mother could not send him. The impact of an absent-father on Mr SM's situation was instability. He had to rely on his uncle as a father figure, but the uncle was not supportive. He then had to move to Mamelodi township in Pretoria, to stay with his aunt to further his studies and have a better life. The impact of absent- father homes in the situation of these men is evident. Their condition was not the same without a father and they had to strive to reorganise themselves to survive. Even though they had other members of the system, it was not the same. They felt treated differently, they felt unwanted and being outcasts in their own families and relations.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Adaptive responses to growing in absent-father homes

There are different adaptive responses that helped the participants to survive in absent-father homes. These adaptive responses are education, self-motivation, and hunger to have a better life. Ambition becomes a counterforce to adversity.

4.2.3.1 Perseverance, sacrifice, and tenacity

Perseverance, sacrifice, and tenacity have been key features in helping these men adapt in absent-father homes. They persevered against the odds in changing their hardships and attaining a better life in the future. Their tenacity and sacrifice contributed in them beating these odds. They believed arming themselves with an education was one of the weapons to beat the odds. As the late President Nelson Mandela once said: 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Mandela, 2006, para. 21).

Mr SB believed in persevering to obtain his education under his adverse circumstances. He did not allow any challenges to prevent him in gaining his education. He aired his story as follows:

"So, I was staying there and apparently the house got blown away by the wind. It was in December and it was raining, so all my books were wet, so yes, it was on, it was on Friday and on Monday I am writing. But I managed to get a diploma…So, everybody at home was still insisting, my uncle, my mom was like ok go, they said we must come to Gauteng there are some nice colleges in Gauteng you can study, you got a diploma you can go study. I said to them, no, I'm not going there, I'm going to go back to school, and I'm going to do better"

Mr SB had to be on his own but he persevered to obtain his education.

For Mr SM, sacrificing to achieve his dream of getting his education was also a crucial adaptive feature. He worked hard to achieve his nursing qualification:

"After matric, um, I came to Mamelodi to stay with my aunt. Because, I know I can't go any further although I had a good matric… And I was just applying for, you know nursing was free. I knew I can do nursing, police work…I can go to school and also earn something… and once I got into nursing, I knew that now I am independent."

Mr EM mentioned how he persevered and sacrificed to go to university without anyone's support because he needed education:

"… my aunt stayed that side, so I stayed there. I would walk to university you know about 7 or 10 km, had late classes, but you know when I look back, you know you don't want that kind of life, for your children…"

In spite of a challenging transition to manhood, Mr JM also had a vision that he wanted to do things differently and to have a better life. He worked hard to motivate himself to finish school and go to University.

It is evident that these men had to persevere, sacrifice and work hard to escape their hardships of growing in absent-father homes. One of their goals was to persevere and arm themselves with education, to change their circumstances. It is clear with the careers they are in

and the better conditions they are today that this perseverance and sacrifice enabled them to get an education they needed and assisted in adapting in spite of absent-father homes.

4.2.3.2 Self-reliance and taking responsibility for self and others

The participants had to rely on themselves to work harder and take the responsibility to achieve their goals of having a better life. They also had to be disciplined in their self-reliance and responsibilities. Mr JM relayed this in taking the responsibility for himself and others in the family:

> "…I have my younger brother and, uh…when I started working, I have to take care of him and do everything for him. It also like help me to be more disciplined because I know that like there is someone looking up to me. So, like I have to set a good example for him… because you know like you just tell yourself that I'm going to be a man. And you know like you set your own goals and you try to motivate yourself to achieve"
> …Well, I think growing up helps you understand things in a better way, and, uh, you realise that you need to learn how to do things in a human being, in a different way. Yes, and, uh, you try also to motivate yourself, sometimes you like this is what I want to do and if I don't work very hard, I am not going to achieve this".

Mr JN had similar views on being self-reliant which he expressed as follows:

> "Ja, I can say, because as I am saying, I end up learning lot of things you know. I learn to stand up for myself you know. I learned to be positive you know. And work through my ambitions in life you know. So, Ja".

Mr EM agreed with taking responsibility that he had to focus on his goal:

> "Um, you must look forward. Um, what do you want, and, um, exactly what you want, you just need to do that by yourself. You know I can tell you and say, you know as a child it is so difficult in life. You don't have

resources, you don't have anything else, you just need to do everything
yourself, because nobody is going to, so how I, I always had my focus on
everything I want to achieve because after that…"

There is evidence of striving for the betterment of their lives in these men as revealed by how much effort they put in being self-reliant, taking responsibility, and motivating themselves. They worked against the odds to believe that they could achieve something better by telling themselves that it could be done. This self- motivation can be linked to the resilience levels these men had. They did not allow their circumstances to lower them further but motivated themselves to get out of the poverty they were in.

4.2.3.3 Hunger for a better life

The participants' need for a different and better life from the one they grew up in was an adaptive factor for them. There were not satisfied with how they grew up and wanted to change their circumstances and those of their future families. Most of the participants believed that being good fathers to their children, being good husbands to their wives and supporting their siblings will bring the satisfaction of becoming the father they yearned for and to be committed to their roles as fathers as opposed to being absent like their own fathers. Mr SM said this about being a good father to his children:

"…Um, I don't know is it from that, but, um, I love my kids very much.
Even though we divorced with their mother, I cannot go a day without
talking to them… I wouldn't wish anybody to go through what I went
through. Um… I get angry when I see someone neglecting his own child,
you know…Hmm. But I told myself when I was in standard 9, yes, grade
11 that once, if I can leave the school now, then I am condemning myself
to this life forever. So, the best thing I will do, my matric, come what
may…"

Mr EM relayed how this encouraged him to work harder to be a good father to his children:

"I have a son, a firstborn. He was not born out of this marriage. Ah, and
he stays at home. What it did to me was its like I will say, a lot of my

kids, I don't want any of my kids to grow up like I did. I take care of my kids…but what I know is, the love for my kid…It's something that come naturally. And he is staying with us now, he left the mom and he decided to come with my mom. He is attending school now, I take care of him. But the thing is, not that I'm scared to be like to be like him (his father). It's something that I know…"

Mr TM added to this about being good husbands to their wives:

"So, in terms of how I treat women, how I treat my family, how I treat my son, this I am using the values that I learnt. And, I learnt those values from women. I have a great relationship with my son, and, um, I have a great relationship with my wife".

Some believed that they will be achieved by doing things differently, being responsible, loving their children, protecting them, providing for them and being there for them. Almost all participants shared the perception that the absent-father experience may be perpetuated along generational lines and, as a result, were somewhat committed to trying their utmost to avoid passing on this trend in their family. They expressed pride in being a father, and a husband. As such, the drive to enable their children to "tell a different story,"

Mr JN agreed on how he wanted to do things differently:

"…But you know as you grow you experience things and you try to do things differently. And, you know, um, you learn how to be a good dad or a responsible dad to your kids you know you learn a lot of things…Ja, and how to treat your kids in a different way, and you learn discipline…and you learn to be responsible."

The hunger for a better life and not giving up on their dreams played a major role in what these men are today. They did not accept their circumstances but looked beyond them. Their non-complacency with their situation and the belief that there is something better they can achieve, brought them to where they are today, it seems.

4.2.4 Theme 4: Supportive systems that mitigate the negative effects of growing in an absent-father home.

An overwhelming majority of participants described the experience of having a strong support system as what gave them the strength to pursue their ambitions in life. The support system was their mothers, other family members such as sisters, grandparents, aunts and the community. These support systems played an important role in the lives of these men who grew up in absent-father homes.

4.2.4.1 Mother's support

Most of the participants expressed that their mother, a single parent, was their substitute father. According to participants, mothers in their homes additionally fulfilled some of the roles of their absent fathers. Most of the participants expressed how their mother's support assisted in having a better life. They expressed their mothers' hard work, determination as having played a large role in who they are today. They expressed how their mothers motivated them and provided for them. Mr TM had to say the following about his mother's hard-working ethic:

> "My mother, I remember when she used to work at the farm leave the house at 4 am, comes back at 5 pm and then even then prepare to go at a place near a mine, to sell to sell, um alcohol, um, just to supplement the income".

Mr JM believed that her mother played a large role in sustaining their family's needs and it must have been difficult for her. His mother constantly worked hard to meet their basic needs and he stated that he is grateful for that. The challenges with most participants was that their mothers had to be often absent from home to go and work far away so that they can provide for the family. This was alluded to by Mr EM:

> "…and my mother was working, she was never there also. She was like working as a domestic worker somewhere all the time…"

Mr SB agrees on the burden his mother had to carry to provide for him under difficult circumstances. Mr SM suffered a double blow as his mother, the main support system he had,

passed away when he was doing matric and he had to rely more on his aunts. The mothers had to provide both emotional and financial support for their children and they had to prioritise the financial support for survival. It could not have been easy for these mothers as well being away from their children due to work during the Apartheid regime. This shows how even with only one parent; these men were still able to rise above their adversities and make their dreams come true.

4.2.4.2 Other family members' support

Besides having their mothers for support and care, most participants had other family members who played notable roles in their lives. The support was in the form of nurturing, giving advice, protection, and financial support.

Mr JM said the following about having uncles who supported him:

"The family, yes, we had an uncle, yes, and other relatives who were there...Well I'm trying my level best to live to my expectations, yes and ah, well I think the people that surrounded me played a big role like for example, you have family members who are there to support you, you have the church as well, yes, which sometimes gives you counsels on how to approach life".

For Mr JM the counsel he yearned for, from his father, was provided by other family members. They contributed in advising him about how to approach life and other difficulties in life. Both Mr EM and Mr SB also had uncles who helped support them. Mr EM regarded his uncle as a father and he was also supported by his grandfather. In Mr SB's case, his uncle and his grandmother played a big role in his life. They helped his mother to raise him, supported him financially and they also motivated his to go further in life. It can be seen in some of these men that not only did the other family members help their mothers with contributing financially in their lives, they also provided emotional support and protection. Mr TM had a close-knit family that ensured that he got what he needed in the absence of a father:

"Here is the thing, one of the key element with my family is that they always made sure that I had everything that I needed…um, I grew up in a very tight hood family, and um the tight hood in a sense that um we felt

that what we had was each other…and therefore, the support system was very strong…and um, growing up in that space, has shaped me to become who I am today…and um the sense of loyalty, sense of respect, selflessness was cultivated within that".

The closeness of Mr TM's family ensured that he received all the support in all the aspects of his life in such a way that he did not feel the impact of an absent-father. He had a grandmother to help raise him and sisters to provide for his needs.

In Mr JN's case, his sister played a big role in his life:

"Um, not exactly, because most of my time I was spending with my sister, you know. She was playing a part of being a parent. She will always give us advice on what's wrong and what's right, and all sort of things. I learnt that from her, she is the person who showed me how life is and how to behave and everything you know".

From the excerpts of these men, it is evident that their mothers needed the assistance of the large family to help with raising them up. As mothers had to work long hours and some of them away from home, they had to rely on other family members for advice, support and nurturing. The larger family contributed in making these men achieve their goals and better their lives.

4.2.4.3 The community's support

Besides the family members helping them and supporting them, the participants have the community to thank for their support while growing in absent-father homes. The support of the community cannot be underestimated in the support they provided for these men. The community ranged from their friends' parents, the neighbours, the church and the school. The first to mention is the role the school played in these men's lives. As mentioned by Mr JM and Mr SB, the teachers in their schools played a large role in their lives. They received motivation, advice and care from their teachers. This happened for Mr TM as well as he expressed his teacher's support as follows:

"Um, well the first person to have impact on my life as a woman, um, it was my grade one teacher…Yeah, um one of the (giggles) one of my… not role models, but one of the people I respect ah wrote a book, and she was not famous among the Americans. Hillary Clinton, she wrote a book "It takes a village to raise a child." And, um, which is a very, I think that for your PHD you should look at that. Um the African support structure … And, um, that support structure on its own, remember growing up, anybody that can be your father's age, you will call them ntate (father)".

Mr EM concurred with Mr TM about the concept of 'it takes a village to raise a child':

"I don't know…maybe, would I have a father from the time that I grew up, your (friend's) father for instance was not your only father, he was our father…he would discipline all of you like the same way… there was no way when I'm with my friends, I would feel like I was not part of the family…we were like brothers, and his father use to make sure that he buys two chocolates''.

The proverb that "it takes a village to raise a child" basically means that children belong to the community and not to one family. It means that it is the responsibility of the community to take care of the child and provide for his needs. This is in line with the principle of ''Ubuntu'' which means the spirit of humanity that South Africans live by. One of the institutions that was mentioned by the participants is the faith community, the church. Some participants indicated they became spiritually inclined and their affiliation with a church as a mechanism to fill the gap left by paternal absence helped them. They expressed how the church helped them with staying strong, with counselling and motivating them. The counselling and motivation some of the men gained from their community contributed to enabling them to rise above their adversities of growing up in absent-father homes. Religious faith also provided the men with confidence and belief in a brighter future that motivated the men that grew up in absent-father homes.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In summation, the research results show how the men who grew up in difficult situations in absent-father homes still managed to thrive in life amid their circumstances. The findings show how effectively the participants used adaptive factors such as education, self-motivation, and hunger for a better life as well as the role their system helped them to thrive in life such as the supportive role of a mother, the other members of their family system as well as the community at large. This chapter began with a brief background information about the participants and their family circumstances. The objective of this chapter was to give a presentation of the participants' accounts verbatim. A phenomenological analysis was used and the information was organised into major themes and sub-themes. In the next chapter, a discussion of the themes is made, and this is also integrated with the relevant supporting literature and theory. Lastly, recommendations for future research are made.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to provide a summation of the entire study. As stated in the introduction, the study aimed to observe the lived experiences of resilient black African men that positively adjusted to their situations and overcame the adversities that come with absent-fathers in families. This study first notes that indeed, the absence of a father in a family unit compromises the social and psychological wellness and potential of the family members. Inspite of the disabling effect of the absence of fathers, this study has noted, positive adjustment and resilience as human technologies of coping and adjusting to social adversity can help the children, such as the participants here studied, to not only survive but also prosper in life. In this chapter, the themes and sub-themes that emerged during the participants accounts are discussed in reference to the relevant literature and family systems theory. Subsequently, the strengths and limitations of the study are highlighted, and this chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

5.2 TRADITIONAL VIEWS OF IDEAL FAMILY SYSTEMS

As discussed in the previous chapter the narratives of the six participants revealed the important role a father plays in the lives of men and the negative impact of the absence of a father on the family system. It also revealed the protective factors that enabled these men to thrive in the midst of their challenges as well as the importance of a support system in absent-father homes. Individuals exist in connection with a larger group and cannot be viewed in isolation. The individual also acquires his identity from this group as noted by Becvar and Becvar (2009). This larger group is called a family system and its hierarchical structure comprises of a parental subsystem and a children's sub-system. There are different family makeups by choice, that comprises of only one parent or two people of the same gender as

parents but for the interest of this research, the parental sub-system is made up of two heterosexual parents and that is, a mother and a father. There is also a supra-system which is superior to the family system and this system comprises of the extended family which includes aunts, uncles and grandparents. The family system is part of a larger community which includes the neighbours, the religious groups, schools, and other organisations.

As noted by Minuchin (1981) in Chapter Two, a functional description of the family would detail the services that the family provides to society as well as the tasks and roles required within the family structure to provide for the physical welfare and emotional and psychological needs of the family. The findings of this research are in line with the systems theory when they discuss that the parts of a system and its functions are interrelated. As noted by Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008), the relationship between members of the family structure is deep and multilayered and has to be looked as a whole and not as isolated parts. A family system has a set of roles assigned to its members and these men who grew up in absent-father homes had expectations in terms of what roles should fathers play in a family system. These expectations are being a provider for their families, a teacher, a role model to their sons and a protector for their families. This role definition was supported by Maguire and Cartwright (2008), when they pointed out that it is important for young boys to have male figures and mentors in their lives.

These expectations were not met for the participants in the current study due to the absence of fathers in their families. The roles in the family are guided by a set of rules that determines the power structure and develops complex forms of communication that is overt and covert. This communication gives guidelines in running the family and on how to solve problems effectively. In the case of these men, they were expecting a father to be at the top of this structure with his assigned role as the leader of the house. This assigned role would have included teaching them on how to become a man, how to be a father, how to address some of the challenges of life as well as about cultural issues as African men. As one participant indicated that one of his family's customs is for a boy who is coming of age to go to an initiation school as part of their culture and to be declared a man. In an African perspective, it is a requirement and a custom in other ethnic groups that they should undergo an initiation ritual. This participant could not go because his mother could not afford to send him to an initiation school. This had a negative impact on him as he believes that he did not go through the process of being prepared for manhood.

Considering the absence of fathers in these homes, some of the tasks and roles were not fulfilled. There is a strong relationship between household expenditure and father involvement and no contribution, due to a father's role not being fulfilled, meant that the burden was on only one parent in the household. The mothers of these men had to take the sole responsibility for their households and carry multiple roles in the absence of the father. Among the multiple roles that the mother had to carry was to protect her family, set up rules and boundaries, and advice and guide her family. De Carlo (2012) asserts that the absence of the father forces the mother to play the role of a disciplinarian, the provider and the nurturer. These circumstances of single-parent household can be extremely difficult to overcome. With the pressure that the mother was in, in the families of these men, it was difficult to maintain the initial rules of the family and they had to be changed. The rules in the system give direction, and they ensure that the assigned roles are performed in the system. The rules may be overt or covert but there are often unspoken rules that the members are openly discussing. The rules of a system are what differentiate that system from other systems and portray its uniqueness. The positive feedback allowed the mother to renegotiate the rules of the family. In the case of the participants, some of the house rules were linked to their expectations of what a father's role is, such as to make sure doors are closed at night to protect the family and to discipline the children when they are out of line. As discussed in chapter Two, the system receives information from the outside environment that is both positive and negative. The survival of this system was on whether the system was receiving positive or negative feedback. The negative feedback would have meant that the mother is working with the old rules of having a father in the house and not allowing change. The mother had to change this rule and make sure she checks the doors at night or assign this task to someone else. The old rules would have created entropy resulting in sadness and anger in some of the participants.

The system of one the participants received negative feedback which resulted in the process of morphostasis. This means that the family system of this participant remained stable in a context of change. It was evident in the findings, when this participant explained that he did not feel that there is no father at home as his sisters and grandmother made sure that he had everything, they kept the system stable and hence no disintegration. He mentioned how his close-knit family made sure that he got everything he needed. With the systems of other participants, morphogenesis took place as change was inevitable. As noted in Chapter Two in the case of a

system successfully changing, the system conserves its class identity. In disintegrative changes the original system disappears and something else arises in its place. These families with absent-fathers had to strive for stability in the context of absent-fatherhood and allow growth to thrive. The stability was enabled by the mother when she realized the need to change the rules and to allow help from outside. From the narratives of these men, the mother with the support of the extended family, kept the stability in the family.

As indicated earlier, the family system also has boundaries to protect the family. The boundaries need to be clear yet permeable and protect the identity and integrity of the subsystem. As mentioned in Chapter Two, that the system either permeates or it refuses to allow what enters or leaves the system in terms of feedback loops, the permeable boundaries would in turn allow the mother to accept outside assistance from other family members and the community. This also allowed these men to have contact with other members of their larger system and others outside their system. Without permeable but rigid boundaries, this assistance would be difficult to receive. From a systems perspective, the participants can be regarded as having had open systems by allowing information about how they could improve their lives into their system and receiving advice from other people. The open system also allowed the mother of these men to form alliances with other members of the family and gaining assistance in running her family.

As indicated that the mother had to take up multiple roles of being the head of the house and the provider, the formed alliances with other family members relieved the mother of some of the roles of the family. These men therefore had to rely on grandparents and other members of the supra system to step in, to keep the family going and assist the mother. Makofane (2015) agrees that African mothers who raise their children without their fathers rely on their families for support. Moja (1969) agrees as mentioned in chapter 2 that in traditional society, the family includes children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children and other immediate relatives" (Moja, 1969, p. 106). As evidenced in the narratives of these men who grew up in absent-father homes, the extended family played a noteworthy role in their lives. There is an African proverb that says: 'It takes a village to raise a child'. This notion was revealed by these men who grew up in absent father homes. Moja (1969) further pointed out that in traditional African life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone but owes his existence to other people. These men revealed how they did not only rely on their single mothers and the extended families, but that the community at large played a role in raising them.

The community takes responsibility in the feeding, protection and overall well-being of a child. It is further stated that the community must therefore make, create or produce the individual. As some participants in the current study revealed that their friends' fathers were like fathers to them, and others received assistance from churches and the schools, it was evident in the experiences shared by these participants that the community contributed to their overall lives of growing up in absent-father homes. Even though the other family members assisted the mother, it was revealed by other participants that some of these roles were not completely fulfilled by these members who took up parental roles in the absence of their fathers. As relayed by some of these men, they still felt left out, they were treated differently from their cousins and felt unwanted and not cared for by their uncles. It is evident that the absence of a father in the homes of these men not only left a void, but it also put pressure on their mothers to fulfill multiple roles. The participants therefore experienced a disconnection between themselves and their support structures. The emotional attachment and loyalties were not achieved due to absent-fatherhood in these men's lives. The impact ranged from experiences of sadness, neglect, and rejection.

As relayed by one participant, he had to step in himself when he started working to assist his mother with providing for his siblings. He, therefore, took up the role of a parent to his sibling which resulted in role reversal from a sibling to a parental figure. This role reversal changed his relationship into a parallel relationship with his mother in the family. As Becvar and Becvar (2009), postulated, a parallel relationship is characterised by both the complementary and symmetrical styles. It means that the members in this relationship are both able to exchange the positions of being in a one-down or one-up. In the case of this participant, taking up a parental role affected his position as per the demands of the family. This repositioning would have moved the mother from her initial complementary relationship she had with the family which made her dominate the system while others were submissive to her. This parentification became an adaptive change and prevented the disintegration of the system as the son was able to assist his mother in running the family while the mother is sought help from the external family.

One of the important aspects of a healthy system is the importance of communication. An individual may not be communicating verbally, but this is no indication that communication is not taking place. Communication is still present even in the non-verbal form. This non-verbal communication gives meaning to the silence, or to verbal communication when present

(Watzlawick et al., 1967). As indicated by Mr EM, he tried to ask about his father, but he could not get the answers from his family. Even though he did not get the answers there was still meaning to this lack of answers, that the family was not comfortable in disclosing the whereabout of his father. As mentioned in Chapter Two, functional families have open, clear, honest and complete communication patterns between their members, as well as clear rules and roles that govern their family processes (Satir, 1971).

5.3 "BUT WHERE IS MY FATHER"- THE REALISATION THAT THE SYSTEM IS NOT IDEAL

According to the narratives of these men, they did not have enough resources or lacked some of the necessities at home and they became aware that this lack is due to no contribution being made by a father in their homes. This lack affected their daily well-being as they could not show anything provided by their fathers and be proud of what they received from them. Eddy et al. (2013) agrees that the father contributes positively in the household by enabling access to resources, providing protection, and giving guidance. Most participants believed that not having a father increased the lack of resources at home and made things difficult for them. This resulted in these men feeling neglected, abandoned, confused, and full of resentment.

These men became aware that their circumstances are not the same as those of most of their larger system, their relatives, their community at large such as their friends and neighbours. These differences and the awareness of the absence of their father caused them to start asking questions about their fathers. As Mr JN reported that earlier in his life when he was younger, he did not notice that there is a lack in his family, and as he grew older and his awareness of his needs increasing, he realised that the missing father in the home could be contributing to his needs. In the case of Mr SB, when he became aware of the needs of his family not being fulfilled, he asked about the whereabouts of his father and why he left them. He reported how this left him with anger as the reasons were not satisfactory. In the case of Mr EM, he was told that he should not ask about his father at all. This could be perceived as an unspoken rule that this family should not ask questions about certain issues about the past, in this case, Mr EM's father who abandoned his family. This was a boundary formed by this family system. This shows confusing and unclear communication patterns that these participants were faced with. As mentioned earlier, no verbal communication is still communication as pointed out by

Watzlawick et al., (1967) that "One cannot not communicate". This showed some form of rigidity of this system and being too closed in this regard.

Even though rigidity was on this part of the system, it was not the whole system as the system still allowed positive feedback into the system in the form of advices, assistance and guidance from the external family and the community. The rigidity of the whole system would have brought a state of entropy and in this state the system would have been dysfunctional, in disorder and may even collapse. On the contrary, a system that maintains an appropriate and healthy balance between being open or closed, is in a state of negentropy. Daniels (1998) points out that absent fathers are not able to provide their children with economic security and prepare them for mature manhood to gain masculine identities and protect themselves. Some of these men reported that beside the need for provision, they needed guidance on some of the issues that affect their lives and they realized that they did not have a father to consult. The role of a mentor was lacking in the lives of these participants. As Mr SB further pointed out the role of a father as a mentor was missing in his life. As he grew up, he became aware that he needed to learn how to become a man, how to love, and not resort to the streets in learning about life. This left him with anger and resentment. A mentioned in Chapter Two by De Carlo (2012) aggression can be a symptom of the absence of a father in the life of a boy. He mentioned that research has shown that there is a significant level of aggression in nine and ten-year-old boys who are raised by mothers only than from boys who are raised by both a mother and a father. This aggression continues as the boys grow into young men and eventually men. This was evident in the narratives of some of these men for an example when one participant expressed that he became withdrawn in his system and others expressed how they struggled with anger and another one with controlling his temper. This showed that they could not effectively deal with their emotions and instead resorted to withdrawal or anger.

5.4 DISCOVERING HIDDEN BLESSINGS- REALISATION OF OWN POWER, AGENCY AND THE NEED FOR SELF-EMPOWERMENT

These men were flexible to allow in new information, in the form of advices from their mothers and other family members. This new information led to changes in their structures and dynamics. They were able to accept this advice and support from their wider system, and they

were able to see that they need to be willing to change their circumstances and contribute to the change. As one participant indicated in his narrative that his sister became an adviser to him. He relayed how his sister played a role of a parent and was teaching him what is wrong and right. He did not refuse to be advised by a woman who is not his mother. As indicated earlier, these men saw the need to contribute in this change. As one participant indicated, his other friends who were in the same position as him, did not try to change their circumstances, but he saw the need to differentiate himself from them, by thinking out of the box to persevere and strive to change his circumstances by going to school to get an education and a job. It is argued that 70% of children raised in absent-father homes attain education and this could be associated to their perseverance, sacrifice and tenacity as shared by most participants (Barajas, 2011). It is also evident that the family patterns and their underlying beliefs of these men were altered by bringing a complete change to their circumstances.

The participants also wanted to challenge the homeostasis of their system. As Mr SM indicated, he told his aunt that he wants to leave his hometown in Limpopo and go to Mamelodi in Gauteng so that he can obtain the education he needs. This move was a challenge to the homeostasis of his system. Things were not going to remain the same in his system in this regard.   These men wanted to maintain independence and at the same time allow open systems, flexible boundaries and bring stability into their systems. They believed in the notion that "your current circumstances cannot determine your future" (unknown). Seeing that their behaviours and events form a part of a large recursive dance as outlined by Hoffman (1981), they did not look at their circumstances in a linear manner but realised that they have to contribute in effecting the changes they need in their lives. The participants in this regard were seen as evolving within a context of mutual influence and interaction with other individuals in their system. They accepted advice and encouragement from their teachers, churches and their friends' fathers which perturbed their systems and impacted on them.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the participants exhibited perseverance and tenacity in dealing with the hardships of growing up in fatherless homes and they had to strive to reach their goals in life. They also had to be self-reliant and take responsibility for their lives and had a hunger for a better life. This hunger for a better life is supported by Maguire and Cartwright (2008) who defines resiliency as the internal drive and desire to persist towards goals when

circumstances become difficult and when faced with challenges. The hunger for a better life unlocked the resilience levels of these men within the current study and played a crucial role in helping them to rise above their adversities. The participants displayed their resilience by overcoming adversity and being able to set goals as well as accomplish them. These men saw from their friends and other families that they were in a difficult and different position from them and they wanted to change that. The encouragement and support from their mothers and realising how hard their mothers work, gave them the willpower and belief that they could also work hard and change their circumstances. These men reframed their problems by believing that they can be proactive and mobilise support for themselves. These men shifted from becoming aware and appreciative of other people who could take up the father role in their lives. They were also actively involved in seeking these connections and assistance from outside.

Furthermore, the desire for a better life was encouraged by looking at their life circumstances through a systemic lens. The systemic lens meant that for things to change, the participants cannot assume a passive role but that they should be active and feed into the changes they need. They took decisions to work hard, go to school, to accept advice and support from their system. A passive role would have meant that they waited for the change to come without contributing to effecting the change. As mentioned in Chapter Two by Marano (2003), resilience seems to develop out of the challenge to maintain self-esteem. It appears that these men realised that they will have to play a role and be willing to change their circumstances contrary to waiting for someone to change their situations. This awareness about their role helped them to achieve their goals such as education, being good fathers to their children, as Lamb (2010) mentioned that once men become fathers, their perspective on being fathers and fatherhood is influenced by their personal experiences, which include their relationships with their children and the children's mothers. These men wanted to assume their roles as per the desired structure of the family system and be good husbands to their wives.

5.5 CONCLUSION

In summation, this chapter gave a detailed discussion of the findings of the study and incorporating this with the literature used. The discussion first noted that indeed, the absence of a father in a family unit compromises the social and psychological wellness and potential of the

family members. In this chapter, the traditional views of the ideal family system were discussed. This revealed the importance of a supportive family and the extended family in the lives of the participants. The discussion included the detailed outline of the systems theory. The chapter also discussed the realisation by the participants that things are no longer the same in their systems. This included the lack of resources which resulted in confusion and anger. Lastly, the chapter looked at how the participants became self-reliant and became empowered to rise above their adversities. This included perseverance, tenacity, and utilising the support around them. The next chapter will give a conclusion and summation of the entire study.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings of the study show that the absence of fathers had a negative impact on the system. However, the findings have shown that the protective factors that helped these men to adjust in absent-father homes are related to various interpersonal factors. It showed that once these men became aware of the negative aspects of absent fatherhood, they managed to unlock their resilience levels and change their circumstances by looking at their challenges through a systemic lens. The systemic lens shows how having an open system to allow positive feedback to infiltrate their system. This positive feedback was in the form of advices, encouragement and guidance from their larger system and their communities. The positive feedback also assisted in forming alliances with the extended family members in taking some of the multiple roles their mothers were having.

These men were able to mobilise support in this regard. Their systems were open and had flexible rules which allowed for proper and not too rigid boundaries. The systemic process showed the mutual influence of members in the systems which assisted these men to take an active role in changing their circumstances. These findings are also in line with the African perspective that a family is not only nuclear but that it can be an open system that allows the extended family and the community to help in raising a child. Having looked at the research problem, it can be concluded that the factors that helped these men to adjust in absent father homes relate to resilience which in turn is facilitated by the mobilisation of interpersonal support networks. This required a family system that was sufficiently open and responsive to new information.

6.2 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

This study gave the men who grew up in absent-father homes the opportunity to share their lived experiences and to tell their own stories. As experts in their own stories, the participants were able to give genuine account about their lives. They had grown in absent-father

homes and were therefore able to provide rich authentic information with regards to their experiences. Some of the men indicated how this study helped them to finally share their hardships and their life experiences which was a means of catharsis to them. With the limited amount of literature available on resilient men who grew up in absent father homes, the research findings of this study contribute valuable insight and information to the body of knowledge on men who grew up in absent-father homes. These findings may therefore guide professionals such as psychologists, researchers, and social workers, in their effort to understand and assist boys and/or men who grow up in fatherless homes, by addressing the systemic aspects pointed out in this study. It was evident in the study that these men did not survive in isolation, but they were part of a wider system. The system's patterns, support, and stability played a crucial role in their lives. The protective factors shared by these men could be incorporated in the psychoeducation programmes and therapeutic strategies to empower other men who grew up in absent father homes to deal with their loss, rejection, and inadequacy. In addition, the findings of this study may stimulate further research in the areas of resilient black African men who grew up in absent father-homes.

6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the findings of this study contribute valuable insight and information pertaining to the experiences of black African men who grew up in absent father homes, this study does have certain limitations. With the aim to get in-depth and rich information, it was necessary to limit the sample size. Keeping in mind, it is important that these findings cannot be generalized but it serves on exploring the underlying process of positive adjustment in absent-father homes. Although this study was seen from a perspective of black African men, the systems approach looks at underlying interpersonal processes that informed the adjustment of these men rather than looking at the cultural content.

The researcher had to take into account cultural expectations and was mindful of cultural ways of viewing family systems as well as their cultural values. However, there are numerous researches done on westernised men, and it was important to look at black African men and the interpretation looked at the traditional African ways of adjusting in absent-father homes. The researcher was also aware that not all black African men are the same and that a black African

man in a rural setting may have a different experience from a black African man in an urban setting. This difference could be in terms of religious views of the family, the make-up of the family, the socio-economic status, employment status and level of education of parents, and numerous other factors could affect the experiences of these men. These limitations could be addressed by future research on the topic.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several opportunities for future studies to add to the body of knowledge regarding resilient black African men who grew up in absent-father homes. The future research could include a larger sample and the African perspective approach could be used. Past researchers have looked more into the negative aspects of growing in absent-father homes and disregarded the positive and adjustment factors in absent father homes. There is a need to look more into the resilient black African men who managed to adjust positively in growing up in absent father homes.

6.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study explored the lived experiences of resilient black African men who grew up in absent-father homes. In chapter one, the topic of the research was outlined, and the reader was introduced to the research problem. Chapter two focused on relevant literature of past studies regarding single parent homes and the impacts of father absence on the household. Chapter three outlined the researcher's methodology in terms of data-gathering, analysis, and interpretation of the findings. In chapter four the findings were presented in the form of several themes and subthemes, and a theoretically informed discussion of the findings followed in chapter five. This last chapter highlighted the traditional view of the system.

The chapter highlighted the traditional view of the system with the definition of the role of a father in the family hierarchy. It understood the impact of the absence of the father in terms of various systemic concepts, including rules, boundaries, roles, and feedback processes among others. Secondly, this chapter looked at the importance of the support system which was facilitated by the loosening of the family's boundaries. This support system was in the form of

the extended family, the community and other organisations such the school and the churches. Thirdly, this chapter highlighted how the process of adjustment to absent father homes is driven by various systemic reconfigurations that underlie the participants' resilience and tenacity to deal with hardships. Lastly, the findings of this study highlight several systemic factors that serve to protect the individual from the negative consequences related to absent-father homes. It highlights the will and power of individuals to rise above difficult circumstances, and how their resilience is intimately linked to connections with a wider system of support. The shift from victimhood to conqueror of circumstances are evident in the stories of these men who described themselves initially as passive and powerless in their isolation and difference, and later as responsible and mindful beneficiaries of interpersonal resources embedded in a wider communal system.

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CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Researcher's Name(s):   Ms Sina Mosholi
Intern Clinical Psychologist
University of South Africa (UNISA)

Project Title: Mini Dissertation for MA Clinical Psychology

INTRODUCTION

This consent may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask the researcher to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

You are being asked to participate in a research study.
This research is being conducted to explore the lived experiences of resilient black African men who grew up in absent-father homes.
When you are invited to participate in research, you have the right to be informed about the study procedures so that you can decide whether you want to consent to participation.

You have the right to know what you will be asked to do so that you can decide whether or not to be in the study. Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to be in the study if you do not want to. If you do not want to continue to be in the study, you may stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

The purpose of this research is to explore the factors that promote the resilience and positive adjustment of young men who grew up in absent father homes. The positive adjustment refers to the overall life adjustment that includes the psychological, emotional, occupational and family spheres of adjustment.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE IN THE STUDY?

About _6_ people will take part in this study in Pretoria.

WHAT AM I BEING ASKED TO DO?

You will be asked to answer the questions posed to you by the researcher.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THE STUDY?

The interview will take approximately 1 hour to complete. You can stop participating at any time without penalty.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING IN THE STUDY?

Your participation will benefit psychotherapists and other professionals who work with children and young adults who grew up in absent-father homes.

APPENDIX "A"

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF BEING IN THE STUDY?

There are no risks identified for being in the study. In case there is a need for debriefing the participant, the UNISA Psychotherapy Clinic will be used for the debriefing services.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF BEING IN THE STUDY?

There is no cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information produced by this study will be stored in the investigator's file and identified by a code number only. The code key connecting your name to specific information about you will be kept in a separate, secure location. Information contained in your records may not be given to anyone unaffiliated with the study in a form that could identify you without your written consent, except as required by law.

In addition, audiotapes will be taken during the study that could identify you, please give special written permission for their use. In that case, you will be given the opportunity to view or listen, as applicable, to the audiotapes before you give your permission for their use if you so request.

WILL I BE COMPENSATED FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY?

You will receive no payment for taking part in this study.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to participate in this study.

You will also be informed of any new information discovered during the course of this study that might influence your health, welfare, or willingness to be in this study.

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Please contact Dr Nico van Zyl at 012-4298239 if you have questions about the research. Additionally, you may ask questions, voice concerns or complaints to the researcher. Her contact details are 0715694141. A copy of this Informed Consent form will be given to you before you participate in the research.

SIGNATURES

I have read this consent form and my questions have been answered. My signature below means that I do want to be in the study. I know that I can remove myself from the study at any time without any problems.

_____   _____
Participant   Date

Study Consent Form

Interview Schedule

Title: The lived experiences of resilient black African men who grew up in absent- father homes.

Introduction and explanation of the interview process and rapport building

Discussion of consent and acquiring a signature on the consent form

1. Background information

2. Early childhood experiences of growing without a father:

3.1. At what age did you become aware that you do not have a father at home?

3.2. Describe in general what was like to grow up in an absent-father home?

3.3. What were the disadvantages of not having a father around? What effect did this have on your

     life?

3.4. Describe any feelings or emotions you had when you realized that your father was not around.

3.5. Describe what role do you think a father would have played in your life, had he been present?

     What would you have benefitted?

3.6. Did any of your friends have fathers? How did this impact on you?

3. The impact of growing without a father:

4.1 How does growing up without a father impact on you as a man, as an African man?

4.2 How does growing up without a father impact on your current relationships? On you as a

     friend, a brother? On you as a father (if you are), on you as a husband (if married)?

4.3 How does growing up without a father affect your general view in life?

4.4 How did growing up without a father affect any other aspect of your life that we did not

     mention?

4.5 Were there any other father figure men you interacted with in your life? How did this impact on you?

4. Coping strategies/resilience levels:

4.1 How did you cope with your father's absence?

4.2 Describe what steps/ strategies did you take to deal with the challenges you faced because of growing in an absent father home?

4.3 To what extent would you describe yourself as a resilient person and why?

4.4 In what ways did your experience of growing up without a father affect your resilience as an adult?

5. Conclusion:

5.1 Is there anything else about your experience that you would like to include that we might have omitted?

Thank the participant and assure confidentiality