

**EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN HEADING FAMILIES AT MAKHADO MUNICIPALITY IN
VHEMBE DISTRICT OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA**

BY

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*A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for degree of
Master of nursing*

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DECLARATION

I, Makhado Princess Anne Sheilah, declare that the dissertation entitled “***Experiences of children heading families at Makhado Municipality in Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, South Africa***” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged accordingly by means of complete references and that this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at this or any other institution.

Signature:



Date: 03 / 09 /2020

DEDICATION

I would love to dedicate this study to the following people: My immeasurable appreciation goes to my late grandparents, Pieter Maadie, grandmother Malepyena, my late parents Sebobocho and Tshepiso for all their words of encouragement and the believe in me. All my success that I have achieved in my years of academic career are the results of the rock-solid foundation that they have set. To my dearest late mother, I do not have enough words to thank her, this was what she wanted to see from my early childhood. How she desired and wished to see me climbing the academic ladder.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DoE	Department of Education
DoH	Department of Health.
DSD	Department of Social Development
IDP	Integrated Developmental Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SA	South Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

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ABSTRACT

The path of children heading families following the death of both parents takes many twists and turns, and a lot of support to face the challenging environment is needed. The path is not easy as compared to children with parents in terms of support and guidance. The purpose of the study was to determine the experiences of children heading families at Makhado municipality of Limpopo Province, South Africa. The objective of this study is to explore and describe the experiences of children heading families. Qualitative research approach with explorative, descriptive, contextual, interpretative phenomenological designs were used. Population of the study comprised of children heading families following the death of both parents, residing at Makhado municipality in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select the participants. The sample size of 20 participants was determined by data saturation. Data was transcribed verbatim and translated from Tshivenda to English language. Tesch's eight steps criteria was used to analyse data. The results of the study revealed that children heading families following the death of both parent's experience various challenges and ineffective support from different community structures. The researcher ensured trustworthiness and ethical consideration were considered throughout the study. Recommendations were developed based on the findings of the study.

Keywords: Child, Child headed families, Experience, Family, Parent

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and background of the study

Child-headed families are those families in which there is absence or permanent incapacity of the adult caregiver which has necessitated the taking over of responsibilities by children (Pillay, 2016). From birth to adulthood, each child needs a unique path of support and guidance. For some children, the path is truly straight forward, although never entirely predictable. To children heading families, the path takes many twists and turns, and effective support to stand the challenging environment is needed. The path of children heading families is not easy as compared to those with parents as they lack support and guidance when experiencing psycho-social, educational, financial and physical challenges.

In 2018 South Africa (SA) had about 58,000 children living in a total of 32,000 child-only households. This equates to 0.3% of all children in South Africa (SA). While children living in child-only households are rare relative to those residing in other household forms, the number of children living in this extreme situation is of concern. However, it is not ideal for any child to live without an adult resident. More than half (57%) of all children living in child-only households are from 15 years of age and above (Hall, 2018).

The study conducted by Miller (2017) in California on parental absence due to death, has shown an impact in the lives of children as the most stressful and significant event a child can experience. The psychological effects of a parent's death may affect the child for the rest of his/her life. Children heading families require enough time to grieve and adjust as is a crucial process that needs support from the family members, societies, health and education professionals. The emotional burdens of children heading families often arise when parents are still alive but terminally when required to assist in caring for their dying parents. Children may experience feelings of anger and shame and be stigmatised because of their parents' illness (Bonthuys, 2010).

Aquilino (2011) in the study conducted in the United States (US) supports that children heading families take over their parents' responsibilities when the last surviving parent is critically ill. The eldest child often must stop schooling and get a job, in order to gain income for the family. In Sub-

Saharan African countries, there is an increasing number of children heading families in the regions (Ciganda, Gagnon, and Tenkorang, 2012).

In Kenya, children heading families are often vulnerable to several challenges such as lack of parental guidance, physical abuse and poor living conditions Kurebwea, (2018). Kitheka (2016) further confirmed that children heading families are faced with stigmatization, discrimination and isolation resulting from reduced self-esteem and lack of confidence to participate in class activities.

Magwa and Magwa (2015) in the study conducted in Masvingo, Zimbabwe on challenges affecting schooling faced by child-headed families revealed that they are denied a sense of comfort and are burdened physically, emotionally, socially and psychologically. Additionally, a study by Haley (2015) in Zimbabwe on child headed families emphasises that children heading families are in-between as they are neither fully children nor adults. Evans (2010) found that in Tanzania and Uganda, they were not treated as fully-fleshed adults in their communities. They took over responsibilities without the commensurate rights of adult roles. Socially, children heading families are rejected in the communities they live in, regardless of the parenting role they play in the house.

In Swaziland, children heading families experience lack of daily family basic needs and they address their vulnerabilities according to their gender. Boys heading families are reluctant to take tasks of leadership, food provision and education based on Swazi tradition. Children act in accordance with their socio-cultural norms in fulfilling their roles. Girls heading families conforms to traditional Swazi norms, that produced sustainable social arrangements, and fostered resilience (Mkhatshwa, 2017).

According to Chidziva (2013), learners from child-headed families in Mpumalanga Province, suffer from depression caused by high levels of stress. Symptoms of depression observed from children heading families are frequent absence from school and poor performance leading to high rate of school dropout (Guo, Li and Sherr 2012). Mogotlane, Chauke, Van Rensberg, Human and Kganakga (2010) confirmed that children heading families experience psychological stress and anxiety.

Nxumalo (2015) in KwaZulu-Natal attests that challenges experienced by children heading families include lack of parental support in household routine and regular school attendance. It is difficult for children heading families to sustain educational activities such as homework's as household chores may take much of their time. The phenomenon of children heading families is increasing at a fast rate and is experienced nationally and internationally (Phillips, 2011).

Pillay (2015) established that some of the challenges experienced by children living in such families are increased responsibilities, care of the sick family members and difficulty in dealing with stigma of not having parents, sexual exploitation and withdrawal (Cluver and Gardner, 2012; Pillay, 2012; Skovdal and Daniel, 2012).

Mothapo (2016) in Mankweng, Limpopo Province, South Africa states that children heading families experience poor academic performance because of low-class attendance, lack of school materials, poor diet and poor living conditions. A study conducted by Maluleke (2014) in Limpopo Province, South Africa on involvement of parents in children's education, revealed the principles of family law, explains that parents are obliged to maintain, protect and care for children. They are further required to accept responsibility for the physical and emotional needs of their children and to raise their children in such a way that they can adapt to society and participate successfully in its activities. However, normally, children need support from parents, relatives, community members and health workers (Australian family trends, 2011). Unfortunately, parental support, guidance, supervision and care are notions that don't exist in the lives of children heading families.

1.2 Problem statement

The researcher was a nurse manager in one of the hospitals in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa. She observed that when both parents die some of the children remain heading families at a very tender age. In 2017, the researcher as a retiree volunteered to visit the secondary schools under Makhado Municipality in Vhembe district of Limpopo province, South Africa with the purpose of motivating learners to study hard. During the researcher's visits to various schools, she was informed by some of the educators that children who are heading families experience various challenges, resulting in poor performance and school dropout. The researcher has therefore decided to conduct a study on the experiences of children heading families at Makhado municipality in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa. Makhado municipality in Vhembe district has the highest statistics of children heading families as compared to the other municipalities. Table 1.1 shows the statistics of children heading families in Vhembe District.

Table 1.1: Children heading families in Vhembe District municipalities 2016-2019

Municipalities	2016	2017	2018	2019
Makhado	3,340	3,675	3,867	4,098
Musina	3,796	2,435	2,890	3,972
Thulamela	1,895	2,452	2,756	2,864
Collins Chabane	1,897	2,440	2,689	2,880
TOTAL	9,928	11,000	12,202	13,814

Source: Department of Social Development (Vhembe District, 2016-2019)

1.3 Significance of the study

The findings of the study may guide the Department of education (DoE), in developing and reviewing the existing policies regarding school children heading families. The findings of the study may be used by the Department of Social Development (DSD) in developing and reviewing the existing policies related to support of children heading families. Children heading families may benefit through receiving support from various stakeholders in their communities and institutions such as churches and business forums regarding the challenges that they face.

1.4 Study purpose and objectives

1.4.1 Purpose

The purpose of the study is to determine the experiences of children heading families at Makhado municipality in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa.

1.4.2 Research objectives

Objective of this study is to:

- explore the experiences of children heading families at Makhado municipality in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa.
- describe the experiences of children heading families at Makhado municipality in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa.

1.5 Definition of concepts

1.5.1 Child

A child is a person who is less than 18 years of age and fully dependent on another for their survival (Children's Act No. 38 of 2005). In this study, child refers to a human being between the ages of 13 to 18 years heading a family when there are no parents or adult caregiver to take responsibilities.

1.5.2 Child-headed families

Anderson (2013) expresses child-headed families as families whereby children take up responsibilities of providing leadership, decision making, daily running activities and maintenance of his or her younger siblings after the death of biological parents. In this study, child headed families refers to those families that are headed by children who are between the ages 13 -19 years.

1.5.3 Experience

Experience is the knowledge, understanding and skills gained through participation in an environment for a certain period (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2013). In this study, experience refers to the practical knowledge whether good or bad that children heading families have gained.

1.5.4 Family

A family is defined as persons who are related to a specific degree, through blood, adoption or socially approved sexual unions (Makiwane and Chimere-Dan, 2010). In this study, family means an intimate domestic group made up of people related to one another by blood, sexual making, or legal ties.

1.5.5 Parent

A parent is father or mother who is a biological parent, progenitor; adoptive, foster-parent, stepparent or guardian (Oxford English Dictionary, 2015). In this study, a parent refers to a biological mother or father who has the responsibilities of bringing up, looking after, taking care of and raising their children.

1.6. Research methodology

The researcher used qualitative approach with explorative, descriptive, contextual and interpretative phenomenological designs. The study was conducted at Makhado municipality in Vhembe district of Limpopo province South Africa. The population comprised of children heading families whose both parents died. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select children heading families between 13-19 years of age whose both parents died and residing at Makhado municipality.

Unstructured interviews were conducted to collect data from 20 children heading families. Data was analysed using Tesch's eight steps criterion. Trustworthiness was ensured throughout the study. Research ethics were considered to protect the rights of the participants. In chapter 3 the researcher has described research methodology in detail. Figure 1.1 shows the design and methods.

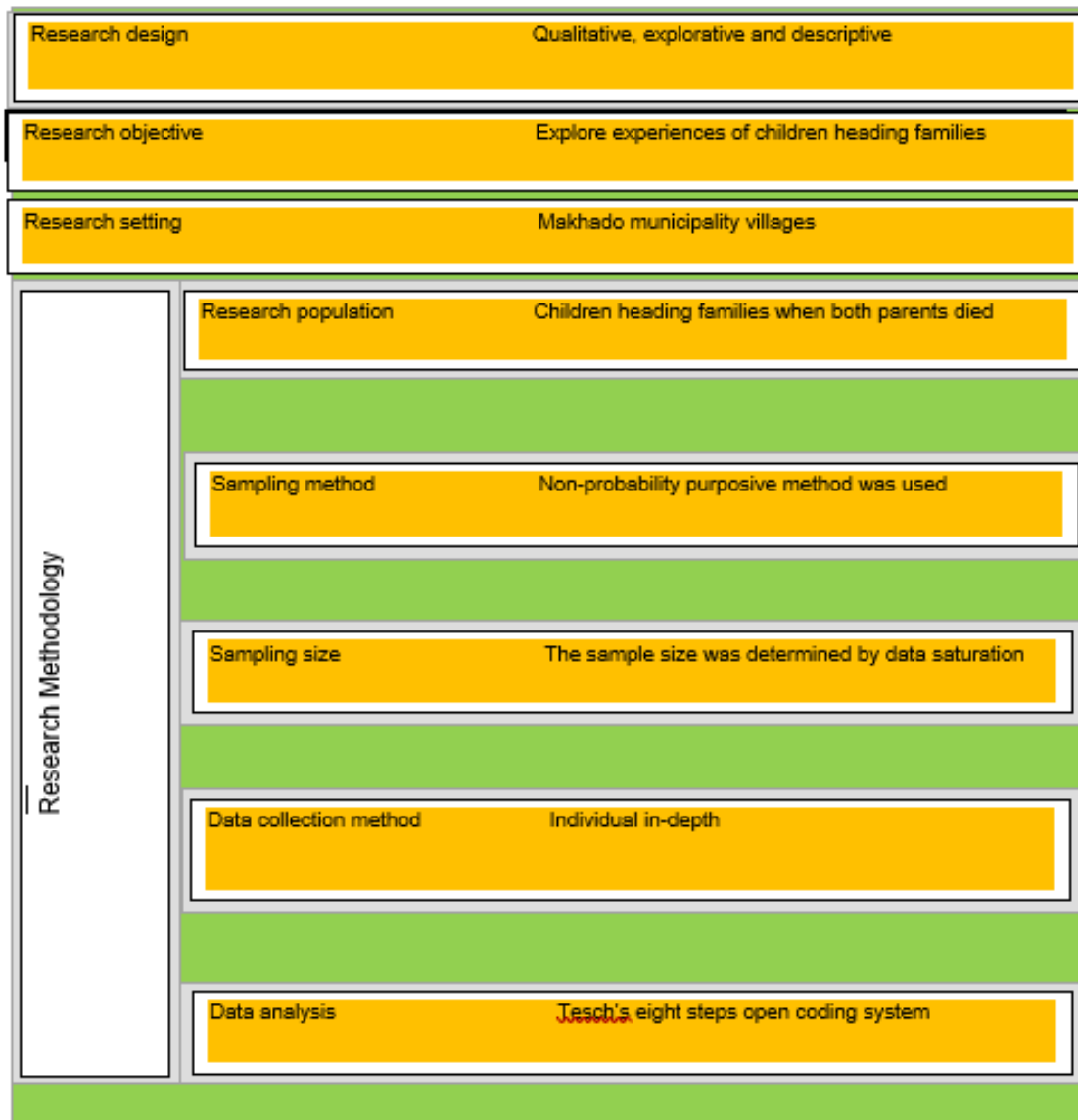


Figure 1.1: Study designs and methodology

1.7. Structure of the Dissertation

The study is presented in distinct chapters that reflect different steps of research:

Chapter 1: Orientation to the study

The chapter outlines the introduction and background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, objectives of the research, research approach and designs, data management and analysis.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Literature review is related to the title of the study, focussing on the challenges experiences that children heading families are faced with and supportive structures.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

The chapter entails the research methodology and describes research approach, research design, research population, sample and sampling technique, data collection and analysis, measures to ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion

Data presentation, analysis and interpretation and discussions are discussed.

Chapter 5: Summary, finding and recommendations

Conclusion of the findings and recommendations are deliberated.

1.8 Summary

Chapter one elaborates the background of the study, problem statement, significance of the study, purpose of the study and research objective. It provides the reader with the outline of the study on experiences of children heading families. Chapter two describes literature reviewed from various sources in relation to children heading families following the death of both parents.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Brink, van der Walt and van Rensburg (2017) define literature review as an organised written presentation of what has been published on a topic by scholars and other researchers. The purpose of literature review is to convey to the reader what is currently known regarding the topic of interest. Literature review is used to move the reader towards a specific understanding why the research study is important and needed (Chad, Lochmiller Jessica and Lester, 2017). Creswell (2014) indicates that preliminary literature review is essential because it helps to focus and give direction to the study. It is used first and foremost in the contextualisation of the researcher's study to argue a case and identify a role to be accomplished by research. (Henning, van Rensburg and Smit, 2017).

The researcher reviewed literature from the theoretical and empirical sources to generate a picture of what is known and not known about the experiences of children heading families (Grove, Gray and Burns, 2015). Literature reviewed includes challenges faced by children heading families, and various supportive structures. In South Africa, children heading families endure numerous challenges of caring for their siblings and themselves. The researcher reviewed literature from google scholar, Science direct and ABSCOHOST databases. Literature reviewed entails various challenges related to children heading families namely: educational challenges, financial challenges, psychological challenges, lack of parental supervision, abuse and exploitation, lack of food, poverty, cultural beliefs and gender,

2.2 Challenges faced by children heading families

Children heading families following the death of both parents' experience, educational, financial, abuse and exploitation, lack of food, psycho-social challenges due to absence of parenthood which impact into their lives negatively. They experience stigma and respond by isolating themselves and drop out from school.

2.2.1 Educational Challenges

According to United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2010), education plays an important role in shaping and grooming learners. Learners who are heading families go to school without parental guidance, love, warmth and a shoulder to cry on. They experience lack of finance and more responsibilities (Phillips, 2015; van der Mark, 2015; Mturi and

Akim, 2012). Children, consequently, expect the school to fill the gap (Marongwe, Sonn, Mashologu, 2016). Available studies acknowledge that the number of child-headed families is increasing yearly (Merengue et al. 2016; Phillips, 2015). The findings of the study conducted in Zimbabwe by Munodawafa, (2017) on quality of life of children living in child-headed families revealed that their educational enrolment and performance are affected by poor health, poverty, psychological distress, hunger and inadequate educational resources.

Motsa and Morojele (2016) in Swaziland states that children in child headed families experience “lack candles” to use for studies, they also have additional responsibilities in family contexts. Mohlokwane, (2013) also noted that responsibilities of heading families increase because of the absence of parents. Nsibande, (2015) stated that children simultaneously address family responsibilities and meet school requirements. Motsa and Morojele (2016) further, discovered that the relationship between teachers and children heading families could either be positive or negative in maintaining their commitment to education. Nevertheless, positive attitudes included caring, compassion for the children’s needs and parental emotional support is much needed. Some of the children heading families shoulder all the bulk of the housework and are susceptible to poverty and social isolation and these creates an environment which does not foster academic performance.

The findings of the study in child-headed families in Tanzania and Uganda revealed that children have substantial caregiving responsibilities for younger siblings, and they experience multiple stressors because of trying to sustain their families. Adolescent girls reported that they work up to 74 hours per week, on daily routine tasks, whereas, boys reported 69 working hours per week, leading to less time for educational activities and disadvantageous to health and psychosocial well-being. The workload pressure may force the child-headed children to abandon school when both parents die (Maqoko and Dreyer, 2007).

According to the study conducted by Pillay (2011), in Limpopo Province of South Africa, teachers are struggling with teaching children heading families who are surrounded by various challenges. Children go to school hungry, exhausted, emotionally and psychologically affected (Zhangazha, 2014). UNESCO (2009) reported that teachers are not adequately trained to deal with the problems of children heading families.

Nyaradzo (2013) affirms that learners who come from child-headed families are likely to be affected by high levels of absenteeism. This results from having no form of authority at home to influence the learners to attend school daily. Absenteeism results from household responsibilities. The more a learner is absent, the further he/she remains behind the school schedule. Pillay (2011) attests that some of the studies found that teachers are grappling with the task of teaching such children. Daily,

schools must contend with children who are hungry, exhausted and emotionally, psychologically affected (Zhangazha, 2014).

Campbell, Andersen, Mutsikiwa, Pulfall, Skovdal, Madanhire, Nyamukapa and Gregson (2014) alluded that there are many learners from the children headed families who dropouts from schools due to various factors. Magampa (2015) affirms that children heading families are poor and are not able to provide the intellectual stimulation that promotes good performance on intellectual capacities. A study conducted by Roberts (2013) on childhood education in SA revealed that warmth and affection from parents in the adolescents' environment is an important physiological need. If the need is unfulfilled, it may lead to problems in personality development. Regardless of culture, gender, age or race, such children become hostile and aggressive, dependent or defensively independent, impaired self-esteem and self-adequacy, emotionally unresponsive, emotionally unstable and a negative world view. Children who perceived themselves as rejected appeared to be liable to behavioural problems and conduct disorders, depressed and became involved in drug and alcohol abuse among other problems. Children heading families are experiencing extreme poverty, malnutrition, high levels of psychological and emotional stresses and anxiety.

2.2.2 Financial challenges

Phillips (2011) affirms that although children living in child-headed families are theoretically eligible for one or more of the grants available, application process is complicated, time consuming and frequently unsuccessful because the required documents. Failure to supply the required documents in the process of grants application result in disqualification. Daniel and Mathias (2012) identified lack of income as one of the stressors of children living in child-headed families.

A study conducted by Mohale (2013) in Limpopo Province SA highlighted that children heading families experience stigma when parents die. They experience shortage of material resources, starvation and malnutrition (Madhavan and Townsend, 2007). Girls are vulnerable to sexual abuse in exchange for money, food, clothes and shelter (Guo and Sherr, 2012; Skovdal and Dawe, 2012). Financial burden may lead to prostitution and early marriage resulting to early teenage pregnancy and septicaemia caused backstreet abortions.

The Constitution of SA 1996 Act 106, the state is obliged to provide social security to everyone, including social assistance to the individuals who are unable to support themselves and their dependants. In addition, the state has a responsibility to orphans. One of the unique problems experienced by children from child headed families is the inability to apply financial support grant from the Department of Social Development. Some of the children did not have some adult primary caregivers who should apply and receive a grant on behalf of the child.

2.2.3 Psychological challenges

Psychological challenges refer to variables that increase the likelihood of psychological difficulties for the children heading families. According to Miller (2017), in California parental absence due to death, has shown an impact on the lives of children as the most stressful and significant event a child can experience. The psychological effects of parent's death may affect all aspects of children's lives.

Daniel and Mathias, (2012) propose that numerous and conflicting roles encountered by children in child-headed families caused tension in their lives which required creative responses to resolve. The findings of the study conducted by Sumbulu, (2014) revealed that young adults emerging from child-headed families move with layers of hurt into adulthood.

A study conducted by Ganga, Chinyoka and Kudzai (2010) in Harare Zimbabwe, distinguished that children in child-headed families showed signs of depression which include low self-esteem, exhaustion for prolonged periods, discouragement, helplessness and loss of worthiness. Some of children displayed maniac depressive bipolar. The signs and symptoms include uncontrolled weeping and suicidal threats. Some of them showed that they have minor and partial amnesia characterised by forgetfulness which ultimately affects learning and grasping of concepts.

The study conducted by Chiadzwa (2013) on learners from child-headed families in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province, SA revealed that children heading families suffer from depression caused by high levels of stress. The common identified signs and symptoms associated with depression are frequent absence from school and poor performance resulting into school dropout.

Campbell, et al., (2014) concealed that learners go through distress due to irregularities in financial affairs. They are often found crying at school over all the worries about their home situations. Furthermore, it was revealed that children heading families have constant strain which may weaken their abilities to cope and adapt to the environment and may suffer a deteriorating social network. They are faced with a whole range of non-material support which hinder them to live a happy, well unified life and normal childhood. No one to give love, affection, help, advice, guidance, protection and support in times of calamity. They need someone to give them hope for future and to develop to their full potential.

A study conducted by Olopade (2015) in Zimbabwe on poverty distinguished that children heading families are faced with a lot of responsibilities. He found that children who experience high levels of stress are more likely to develop psychological challenges later in life.

2.2.4 Lack of parental supervision

In Zimbabwe, the findings of the study by Dziro, Mtetwa, Mukamusi, and Chikwaiwi (2013) on children in residential care institutions revealed that children heading families turn to exhibit a serious lack of proper grooming in African culture and values, which predisposed them to negative behavioural tendencies. When adolescents begin to discover their sexuality, without parents' involvement, they seek consolation from other sources. Nonetheless, some gets committed to the social platforms, computer games, clubbing, drugs and overwhelmed by peer influence (Lee, 2012).

Pillay (2011) found that children heading families experience strong feelings of sadness and anger because of their disadvantaged environmental conditions. Not having parental or adult guidance often leaves them feeling helpless and hopeless, especially when they do not receive any psychological support to help them cope with the death of parents.

A study by Le Roux-Kemp (2013) in Hong Kong noted that most of children take care of their households because they have no other option. They usually have a low level of education since their many household responsibilities prohibit them to continue with education.

2.2.4 Abuse and exploitation

Exploitation of a child refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, development, and education. Exploitation includes child labour and child prostitution. Both terms, however, indicate that an advantage is being taken of the child's lack of power and status. Children heading households are exposed to all forms of abuse mainly because the family environment that used to protect them as a safety net has been eroded.

A study conducted by Gono (2015) on experiences, challenges and coping resources of orphans heading families in Free State, SA revealed that girls are forced into prostitution in order to earn a living for their siblings. Boys may drop out of school to take up low paying odd jobs.

2.2.5 Lack of food

Nelson Mandela Children's fund report (2001) highlighted financial difficulties encountered by children living in child-headed families leading to hunger, poor housing, exploitation, child labour, early marriage, inadequate medical care, prostitution, criminal acts and drug abuse. Nonetheless, shortage food, clothing, school fees and non-food household items become a serious challenge for children heading families as their source of income might only come from social grants and not enough to cover all their daily needs.

The findings of the study on orphans and vulnerable child living in child-headed household in Zimbabwe revealed that there is a link between food security and school attendance (Munodawafa, 2017). Food insecurity increases the rate of absenteeism, as children absent themselves from school because of hunger as they cannot concentrate on empty stomach (Masset and Gelli, 2013; Jomaa, McDonnell and Probart 2011).

2.2.6 Poverty

A study conducted by Evans (2012) in Tanzania on supporting child-headed families found that material and emotional support from NGOs played a significant role in sustaining the child-headed children's needs. Non-governmental organisations provided children with a range of services and support, including food, regular cash support, school fees, uniforms, materials, health care, emotional support, peer support clubs, life skills and vocational training, self-defence clubs, capital for income-generation projects and community volunteer schemes. It is also argued that educators are frustrated by the whole scenario. It was established that because of disintegrated extended family safety net and inadequate material support from government, children from child headed families are vulnerable to poverty. Ebrahaim (2015) in SA, revealed that poverty has an influence on children heading families' learner's performances, especially if they do not have the required stationary. They fail to purchase school requirements and supplies leading to poor performance. Financial limitations hinder schooling and academic advancement of learners heading families. Children heading families are faced with persistent poverty that leads lack of educational motivation (Masondo, 2006; Leatham, 2005; Mokoena, 2007).

2.2.7 Cultural beliefs and gender

The study findings of the study conducted by Mkhathshwa (2017) in Swaziland revealed the ways in which children heading families experience daily family needs according to their gender. The study findings further revealed that boys heading families are reluctant to take tasks of leadership, food provision and education because of their traditional Swazi philosophy of muscularity. The findings further indicated that children act in accordance with their socio-cultural norms in fulfilling their roles. Girls heading families conforms to traditional Swazi norms, that produces sustainable social arrangements, and fostered resilience. It remains a challenge in such cultural beliefs whereby boys are perceived not to take household responsibilities yet there is no one to takeover following the death of the parents. Nevertheless, it is important that young boys should be taught from the young age about household activities.

2.2.8 Poor housing conditions

Children heading families find themselves living in unhygienic conditions and perhaps overcrowded in such a manner that there is lack of privacy. Household cleaning becomes a challenge due lack of cleaning materials as the money received from government social grant does not cover all their needs. Absence of parental control may also result to poor management of items purchased as the eldest child may not be able to supervise her siblings. Children heading families mostly live in overcrowded homes that are very unhygienic due to lack of proper sanitation and ablution facilities. They often share communal toilets, exposing them to predators.

2.2.9 Poor access to health care services

Children heading families might not have the knowledge concerning health related matters. The fact that there is no adult to supervise and monitor their general health, delay them in seeking medical services. In certainty, they are more likely to be malnourished or to fall ill, as poverty is the root cause of their vulnerability, but often neglected by adults in whose care they have been left. They might not have the knowledge of where health care services are available in the area or may be afraid to visit the health care centres. Failure of being aware of the signs and symptoms of some diseases may results in complications.

2.2.10 Stigmatisation and discrimination

UNESCO (2010) reported that stigmatisation and discrimination by teachers is the major educational barrier. Teachers are not adequately trained to work with children heading families. According to the study conducted by Bonthuys (2010), children heading families may experience feelings of anger and shame when stigmatised.

Magwa and Simiforosa (2016) in Zimbabwe affirm that some children heading families are dirty, beggars, prostitutes since they have no one to guide them along those lines. They experience pain of rejection by the society as society does not allow its children to play with them when they portrayed bad behaviours. It was established that even at school children heading families faces negative attitudes from both teachers and peers. They also highlighted that some teachers do not have empathy for them, and peers turn to mock them when they are chased out of school due to non-payment of school fees or not wearing uniforms.

A study conducted by Mohale (2013) in Limpopo Province, SA affirms that children heading families experience stigma when both parents die. They have very limited means of generating income to

sustain their families. Social stigma makes them feel isolated hence sexual exploitation of girls (Skovdal and Daniel, 2012).

2.3 Support of children heading families

2.3.1 Community support

The Namibian Government has made the care and support of child-headed families and susceptible children a major priority, by demonstrating the development of national Orphan Vulnerable children policy (Ministry of Women's Affairs and Child Welfare, 2003). In addition, a growing number of community-based responses have become evident in recent years at the local level, mostly from faith-based organisations. The Ministry of Basic Education, Sports, and Culture established "circles of support" to children heading families at both regional and national levels. The efforts should be nurtured and supported over the long-term to become sustainable, and thus provide children heading families with consistent support for their needs. Everyone in the community must be increasingly involved in providing the necessary back-up and support that children heading families need.

A study conducted in Port Elizabeth, SA by Pillay (2016) on problematizing child-headed families showed the so called "adult support" mostly does not contribute to children and young people's well-being. Children heading families are not often consulted about care arrangements and are not taken serious resulting in many having a sense of powerlessness over their situation. An emphasis on access to social grants increases the potential for abuse of these children. The study revealed the value of taking generational constructions into account in assessing current practice and developing more appropriate support arrangements.

Peers support resilience by offering positive relationships and encouraging coping and sharing of common experiences (Theron and Dunn, 2010) Cultural organisations such as non-governmental organisations (NGO's), community organisations, and other civic structures support resilience by providing feeding schemes and crèche facilities to child-headed families (Pillay, 2012). In addition, traditional values embedded within and fostered by cultural organisations encourage resilience (Theron and Dunn 2007).

The Teddy Bear Clinic in South Africa is one of the few foundations that provide holistic integrated services to children that have been abused, and they have been doing so since 1986. The Teddy Bear Clinic provides holistic child support and professional services that effectively promote their healing and stop further abuse. Children heading families benefit from the foundations as they are the most vulnerable who face abuse and exploitation in any form.

2.3.2 Department of Education and Health support

United Nations Convention on the rights of child offers grants to students as an assistant to further their education. The organisation aims to support children from disadvantaged groups, children heading families and young people. The students are carefully selected and thoroughly trained at degree levels. Students receive full stipend in terms of tuition and living costs while on training. Children heading families benefit from this organisation in furthering their education. Ensuring that children acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes, educators are the main key (Marongwe et al. 2016; Gubwe, Gubwe and Mago, 2015). Zhangazha (2014) argues that educators are grasping with the tasks of teaching children heading families as they struggle to teach them when they are hungry, exhausted, emotional and psychologically affected. The role of educators has a great impact towards the education of the children heading families as they need support, warmth and reassurance in their daily lives.

A study conducted by Ebrahim (2015) on perceptions of support to learners from child headed families at North West University, SA, highlighted many positive experiences that learners from children heading families experience at schools. These positive experiences promote their emotions and their psychological self and motivate them to keep going. Their school friends give them a feeling of acceptance instead of rejection hence increase of their confidence. Leatham (2005) similarly confirmed in her study that many learners from child-headed families had a positive attitude towards education.

Mayathule-Khoza (2001) in Gauteng Social Development stated that Isibindi, a community-based programme has deployed trained, community to outreach and provide care, protection and support to vulnerable children. Most beneficiaries of this programme are learners responsible for their siblings because of the death of both parents, and they carry over the responsibility far beyond their age. The department intervenes through provision of caretakers, to allow the family head peace of mind and the ability to concentrate on educational matters and other less stressful familial needs.

2.3.3 The Department of Social Development

The Department of Social Development is fully responsible for all official feeding schemes and other programmes that seek to provide social assistance to alleviate poverty. The mandate of this department is the management and provision of social security, encompassing social assistance and social insurance policies that aim to alleviate poverty due to death of both parents. This ensures that social exclusion because of social conditions beyond a learner's control is greatly minimised.

The DSD (2009) strives to ensure that all the needy children in Gauteng Province develop into productive members of society, giving them the right to a future free of fear, vulnerability or abuse. The department remains committed to ensure a better quality of life for the children of the Gauteng Province (Lekgoro, 2008).

Senoane and Phiri (2013) in municipal social development offices in Soweto that help orphaned children and other vulnerable children, provide information about community care centres and drop-off centres in the event of teenage pregnancy. They provide counselling and rehabilitation of drug addicted learners covering areas such as Doornkop, Phiri, Senoane, Alexandra township, Jeppestown and Orange Farm.

An organisation such as Al Imdaad Foundation, a Muslim organisation works in collaboration with the department of social development to provide school backpacks and stationery. The department also engages in job creation, some of their programmes involve the distribution of uniforms to needy learners. It is truly that poverty can create a hopelessness and darkness one cannot rise above without the right tools. The department of social development tries to provide these tools and bring hope, even if it is just a glim of hope at the end of a long tunnel. The DSD took the process further through close liaison with the national Departments of Justice and Constitutional Development, Education, Health, Labour, the South African Police Service, the provinces, national non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and service providers, as well as the office on the Rights of the Child in the Presidency. Consultative workshops were also held with the Portfolio Committee on Social Development and the bill was thereafter submitted to the State Law Advisors, and finally to Parliament.

The SA minister of Social Development in 2017 hosted a breakfast to acknowledge the academic performance of social grant beneficiaries of which some were children heading families' who wrote their matric examinations. The records further, confirmed that a total of 417 239 learners who were beneficiaries including children heading families who wrote their matric, 1,813 of these learners were under Isibindi programme. Many of those who receive grants passed some of the subjects with distinctions.

Poverty alleviation programme has been introduced in rural areas to combat poverty and unemployment in the most developing countries. The programme has been under the Public Works and it called the Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP) which was implemented in SA to primarily address poverty and unemployment in rural areas. The programme also covers child-headed children as they are faced with challenges of extreme poverty and hunger.

The government through the Social Welfare Department provides care and support to children from child headed households. To identify them, the Department collects the data from the school about

children who need foster care grant, counselling and child support grant. The documents to collect such information are class registers and grant collection application. According to Chiastilite, 2008 SA 2018) census showed that the total number of children aged 0-17 who reported that they had lost one or both parents. More than 3 million were living in child headed families.

The National Plan of Action (2017) for children aims to bring together existing international and national priorities for the survival, protection, development and participation of children in SA into one coherent framework. It provides, within the broader context of the South African Human Rights Framework, children's rights impetus to national planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national priorities. United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), (2007) is committed to supporting government to bolster the care of orphans and vulnerable children. However, it further supports the implementation of laws, policies, regulations and services that protect children from exploitation and abuse.

The community-based Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) operated entirely by volunteers who each contribute at least four hours a day to the project, ran a programme to identify, care for and support child-headed children. Each member of the NGO is responsible for identifying child-headed children in need in their neighbourhood, and act as a caretaker parent to 3–5 families of children living without adults. Once child-headed families are identified, and if no appropriate places with relatives or in institutions are found, the children are left in their homes under the supervision of the NGO. Each caretaker visits children on daily basis and ensure that they have adequate shelter, food, clothing and health care services, attending school and access to adult attention.

One of the programmes initiated is home-based care model introduced by the DSD for child-headed families to assist beneficiaries to access several services. This includes assistance to apply for identity documents, birth certificates, social grants, referrals to health services and social workers, when a need arises, Section 27 of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 Act 108 provides the right to access appropriate social assistance to those unable to support themselves of which child headed children are inclusive.

The DSD accredited child protection organisation for permission to place the child under foster care. It is the temporary placement of a child who needs care and protection. A child in need of such care is placed under a suitable person who is not the parent or guardian of the child. Children heading families without any visible means of support can be placed in an environment that should be favourable for the child's growth and development for a temporary period. This process is done in collaboration with the Social Development and court. However, to those children who may be just alone and no one else in the house and too young to stay alone the social development may consider the option of foster caring. Some communities, particularly in rural and poverty-stricken verbalise that

almost everyone is struggling to meet basic needs of subsistence, exhibit envy and jealousy towards children heading families who receive free aid especially when this comes from rich international and Western organisations (Lekule, 2014).

2.4 Summary

Chapter 2 outlines the literature review focusing on the challenges experienced by children heading families and supportive structures that are helpful to them. The purpose of the literature review was to inform the researchers and the readers about the various challenges experienced by children who are heading families and supportive structures that will assist them to cope in life. Chapter 3 outlines the research designs, study setting, research methods, measures to ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smith (2017), research methodology refers to the coherent group of methods and procedures that complement one another and that have the “goodness of fit” to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the research purpose. Good relationship was maintained between the researcher and participants throughout the study (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smith, 2017). This chapter describes qualitative approach, research design, study setting, target population, sample and sampling, sample size, pre-test, data collection and management, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations in detail.

3.2 Qualitative research approach

According to Burns and Grove (2015), qualitative research approach is primarily a systematic, subjective way to describe life experiences and situations, process of naturalistic inquiry that seeks in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting. It is used by researchers to gain more understanding and uncover trends of underlying reasons, opinions, motivations and dive deeper into the problem (Creswell, 2014). The researcher employed qualitative approach to interpret and understand the meaning of social interactions of children heading families as they interact with their siblings and the community. Data collected, analysed and interpreted in qualitative approach is not meaningfully calculated in numbers but summarised in words and therefore, the researcher’s expertise was much needed. The key point to remember is that qualitative questions are unstructured and considered the most effective method of investigating the emotional responses of the participants. Qualitative approach allows fewer participants to be interviewed in detail and data were narrated and addressed their experiences in their original context (Wild and Diggings, 2013). In this study the researcher was the main instrument and was subjectively involved in the research process. Data was collected in words about children heading families’ experiences and participants were considerate in the setting of everyday life in which the study was framed (Maree, 2016). It was in this approach where participants were selected based on their experience of heading families.

3.2.1 Study designs

The design is considered like an architectural blueprint that is followed in the construction of a building which specifies, what material is needed, how much of it will need to be purchased, what the lay-out

of the building is (Babbie and Mouton, 2012 cited by Wagner, Kawulich and Garner, 2012). It is also described as a plan or strategy moving from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specify the selection of participants, data gathering techniques to be used, and the data-analysis to be done (Maree, 2016). Exploratory, descriptive, contextual and interpretative phenomenological designs were used.

3.2.1.1 Exploratory design

According to Wagner (2012); Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2014), exploratory design is a qualitative research design in which the researcher explores a situation or setting, when the problem has not been clearly defined. Exploratory design makes preliminary investigation into relatively unknown areas of research (Polit and Beck, 2014). It is characterised by the researcher beginning with the phenomenon of interest and investigating its full breadth and depth including the way it manifested and other factors that may influence the phenomenon. The design raises the researcher's awareness about key issues in a new topic area (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006). The purpose of exploratory design is to gather information from the participants as much as possible about a specific topic. The study was conducted in areas where there were gaps in knowledge about the experiences of children heading families. The researcher visited the field not knowing exactly what was experienced by the participants. Information gathered formed the basis on which future research can be based (Dahlberg and McCaig, 2010). Exploratory design allowed for an in-depth exploration by means of probing more into the experiences of children heading families. In this design, the researcher desired to understand a situation or practice and problem better so that solutions can be identified (Burns, Gray and Burns, 2013). The aspect of the experiences of children heading families was explored, as the participants freely explained their experiences using their own words. The researcher increased her understanding of the experiences of the participants and could determine what children heading families were experiencing. The nature of qualitative exploratory design allowed the participants to share experiences in various ways.

3.2.1.2 Descriptive design

Descriptive design refers to a more intensive examination of the experiences of children heading families and their deeper meanings, leading to thicker description (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport, 2016). Descriptive design provides richly detailed and fresh information the researcher may not have foreseen or expected. Descriptive design is useful to study experiences about which little is known and provides the opportunity to define such phenomena through description. It is aimed to describe the phenomenon precisely either through narrative-type descriptions concerned with children's experiences (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2014). In this study, the researcher allowed children heading families to describe their experiences using their own words.

3.2.1.3 Contextual design

Contextual design refers to understanding events, actions, and processes in their context or setting in which the study takes place (Wagner, Kawulich and Garner, 2012). Human experience is best understood from the contexts of those who experience the phenomenon (Polit and Beck, 2012). Contextual design offers access to a valuable type of data namely, a deeper and richer understanding of children's lives and behaviour, including some knowledge of their subjective experience (Monette, Sullivan, De Jong and Hilton, 2014). The choice of the contextual aspect of qualitative research design was employed with the desire to present lived experiences in the natural environment in which the strict socio-cultural sanctioning occurred. The aim of contextual design was to describe and understand events within the concrete, natural context in which they occur (Babbie, 2012). The design allowed the researcher to explore the experiences of children heading families within this unique context for the reader to understand essential elements and meanings of their experiences. Contextual design is less focused on the interpretations of the researcher and more on the experiences of the participants. Human experience is best understood from the context of those who experience the phenomenon (Polit and Beck, 2014). In this study, participants were interviewed in the homes where children heading families reside (Polit and Beck, 2014).

3.2.1.4 Interpretative Phenomenological design

Phenomenological design is a specific type of in-depth interviews grounded in a philosophical tradition. Phenomenologists view the person as united with the environment and the world shapes the person, as much as the person shapes the world (Burns and Grove, 2014). Phenomenology is the study of lived experiences and the ways we understand those experiences to develop a worldview. The word phenomenology has been generally used to characterise any work in research, theory or practice that emphasises a first-person experience (Wertz, 2011). Phenomenology purely and simply describes experiences and does not attempt to explain the experience (Wagner, 2012). According to Polit and Beck, 2014); Wagner (2012), phenomenology is a method whose principal aim is to explore and describe the meaning of a concept or phenomenon that several individuals share, to understand children's' life and moves on to describe the meaning of a small group of individuals who share experiences. Interpretative phenomenological design identified some shared phenomenon of children heading families experienced. It is less focused on the interpretations of the researcher and more on the experiences of the participants (Wagner, 2012).

3.3 Study setting

According to Grove, Gray and Burns (2015), the study setting is a location for conducting research; can be natural, partially controlled, or highly controlled. The researcher conducted the study at

Makhado municipality rural villages in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa. The rural villages under Makhado Municipality where the research was conducted are Magau, Tshiozwi, Madombidzha, and Gogobole. Makhado municipality is in the northern parts of Limpopo Province approximately 100km from the Zimbabwean border along the N1 Route. The municipal area is 8310,586 km² in size and strategically located on a macro scale along a major passage between SA and the rest of the African continents. It is one of the four local municipalities in the Vhembe district which receives good rain during summer season and farmers harvest good plant products. Figure 3.1: shows Makhado municipality rural villages.

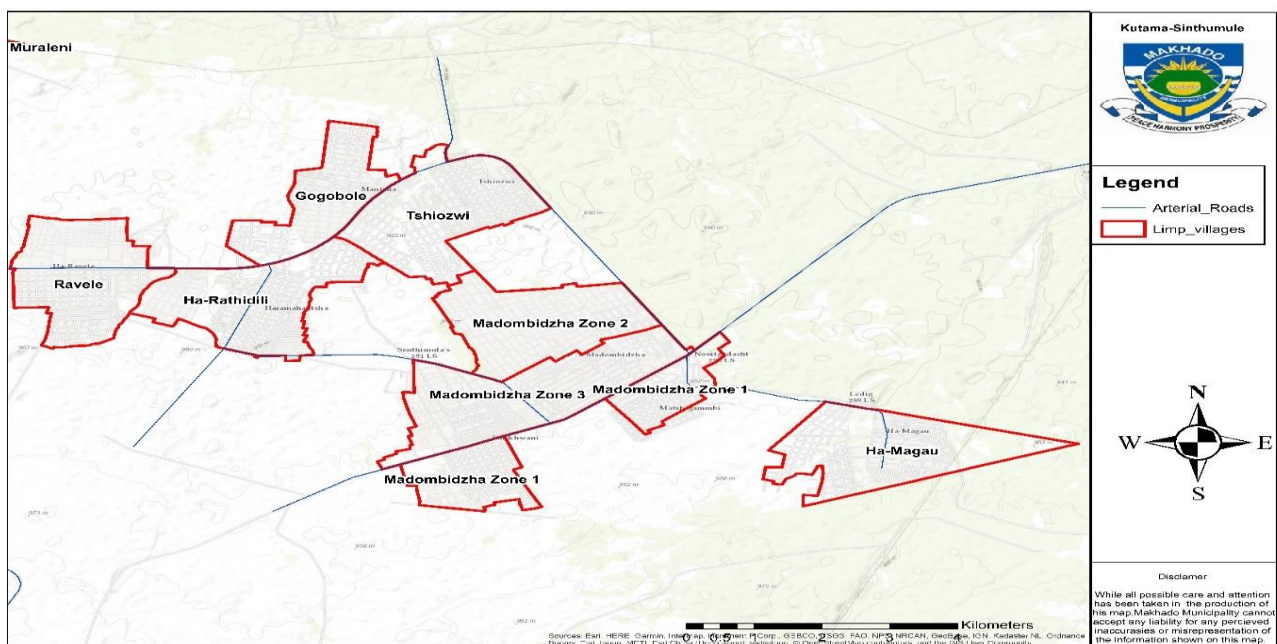


Figure 3.1: Makhado Municipality rural villages

3.4 Study population and sampling

3.4.1 Study population

Polit and Beck (2012) described study population as the entire set of individuals or objects having some common characteristics. Population of this study are all children heading families whose parents both died. The researcher selected the population based on the experiences of the participants.

- Target population

According to Brink, van der Walt and Van Rensburg (2017), target population is a complete set of persons or objects that possess some common characteristics that are of interest to the researcher. Burns, Grove and Gray (2014); Brink and van Walt (2017) define target population as the entire set of

individuals who meet the criteria that the researcher is interested in studying. The target for this study were children heading families between the ages of 13-19 years, whose parents both died.

- Accessible population

Grove, Burns and Gray, (2013); Brink, van der Walt Van Rensburg (2017)) claim that accessible population is a group or objects that are available and reasonable accessible to the researcher for a study. In this study, the researcher has requested the traditional leaders from the four rural villages at the Makhado municipality to assist her in identifying children who are heading families whose both parents died.

3.4.2 Sample and Sampling

- Sampling

According to Kumar (2014), sampling is a process of selecting a few elements of respondents (a sample) from a bigger group (the sampling population) to become the basis for estimating the prevalence of information of interest to the researcher. Groves, Burns, Grove and Gray (2013) refers sampling as a process of selecting a group of people, events, behaviours, or other elements that are a representative of the population being studied.

The researcher used non-probability, purposive sampling technique to select children heading families. Polit and Beck (2014) confirm that using non-probability purposive sampling requires the researcher to judge and select participants with the experiences of heading families. according to Kumar (2014), purposive sampling is the researcher's judgement as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study.

- Sample size

Burns, Grove and Gray (2015), refers to sample size as few numbers of participants, events, behaviours, or situations examined in a study. The size of the sample is determined by the information needs of the study (Polit and Beck, 2012). Qualitative researchers need to make judgements to ensure that the number of participants is adequate to support an innovativeness, warning that the sample should not be too large, to disrupt the deep case oriented analysis of the phenomenon, nor should it be too small so that the researcher fails to delineate the "core" essence of the phenomenon (Parahoo, 2006). LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (2010) also highlighted that the researchers should avoid using too few participants arguing that such very small samples tend to be unstable, especially for nomothetic analysis. In this study, the researcher interviewed children who are heading families and a sample

size of 20 participants was determined by data saturation and the researcher continued to collect data up to the point in which there was no new information forthcoming (Wagner, 2012).

3.4.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criterion is the sampling requirements identified by the researcher that must be present for the element or subject to be included in the sample (Burns, Grove and Gray, 2015). Exclusion criteria as those criteria that would lead a researcher to exclude certain elements individuals or objects from the population (LoBiondo-Wood and Haber, 2010).

3.4.3.1 Inclusion criteria

The researcher included children:

- between ages of 13-19 years (boys and girls) hoping that they will be able to narrate their experiences.
- heading families resulting from the death of both parents

3.4.3.2 Exclusion criteria

The researcher has excluded children who are:

- not mentally stable
- not heading the family

3.5 Unstructured In-depth interviews

According to Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012), interview is a two-way conversation and a purposive interaction in which the researcher asks questions from the participants to collect detailed data about the phenomenon. It involves verbal communication between the researcher and the participant, where information is provided to the researcher (Grove, Burns and Gray, 2013). The interviews provide more detailed information and the researcher explored the experiences of children heading families through probing. According to Streubert and Carpenter (2011), the researcher as an instrument is an important aspect of qualitative research since the researcher is initially involved in research process of data collection through observation, interviewing and interpreting the results. Qualitative studies rely extensively on in-depth interviews and are more like conversations than formal events (Mashall and Rossman, 2006). Interviews are the most effective ways of data collection in the social sciences and are reflected as a valuable source of information, when used correctly. Interviews aim to obtain rich descriptive data that will assist the researcher to see the world through the eyes of

the participant. This establishes good rapport between participants and the researcher and participants are put at ease. In this study, participants did most of the talking and the researcher listened more (Babbie, 2012). One central question was asked followed by probing questions based on the participant's responses. The interview lasted for approximately 30-45 minutes. During the interview the researcher and participants established good relationship, this in turn, enabled the researcher to contact participants at a later stage when further questions arose during the interpretations and analysis of data.

3.6 Pre-testing

According to Kumar (2014), pre-testing is a practice whereby the researcher tests the question that has been developed before it's actual use to ascertain the likely challenges with it. Two participants were interviewed during pre-testing to determine the clarity of the interview central question and whether the time allocated was adequate and these two individuals did not form part of the research study. The researcher pre-tested her communication skills, interview skills and time allocated for each participant and tape recorder was tested. After, the pre-test, the researcher modified the questions that presented problems and eliminated those that provided irrelevant information. For any ambiguity during the interview the researcher rephrased the questions to improve ambiguity.

3.7 Data collection

Burns, Grove, and Gray (2017) define data collection as the process of selecting participants and gathering data from the participants. It includes selection of the sample, the techniques of data collection and the transcriptions through taking notes and tape recordings. In qualitative studies, the researcher is expected to give detailed data collection process for others to "see" how the research progressed to enrich the trustworthiness of the study findings. Traditional leaders of the selective rural villages were visited to gain permission to conduct the study and identification of children heading families. Arrangements were made prior to data collection to meet the participants and relatives in order to explain the purpose of the study. After thorough explanation of the study purpose, participants voluntarily signed the assent forms and relatives signed consent form. The use of voice recorder was important as it allowed the researcher to keep a full record of the interviews. The researcher has ensured that the voice recorder was in order and that she knew exactly how to use it (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2014). The researcher gained participants consent first prior recording as they have the right to agree and not.

Interviews were conducted in a quite suitable environment that did not have any interruptions that was identified by the participants. The participant's privacy was maintained throughout by not allowing anyone into the area where interviews were conducted. Unstructured interviews were used to allow

the in-depth interaction. Interviews were conducted in Tshivenda and translated to English, verbatim quotes were written as they are since they were helpful in conveying the ‘flavour’ of a culture (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2014). Each participant was allowed enough time to describe their experiences in full without the researcher leading and interrupting them unnecessarily and researcher listened more and talked less. Whenever a need arose, probing and clarifying questions were asked during the interview to explore features of the lived experiences deeper. The researcher allowed participants to describe their experiences freely until they felt that they have exhausted their experiences. When the researcher ends the interview, she tried to “wind down” rather than end shortly and summarised the major points (De Vos, 2012). Each participant was interviewed for approximately 30-45 minutes. The researcher used field notes and a voice recorder per participant’s agreement as a confirmation of what has been said. Though tape recorder may have its disadvantages, as participants may not feel happy being taped and may withdraw, therefore, it was placed unremarkably so as not troubled the participants. Verbal and non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures and the tone of voice were observed during the interview. Probing questions were asked based on participant’s responses and from the central question developed by the researcher. In this study, it was important that the researcher asked whether participants might have any questions to get clarity as they were informed to contact the researcher if they might need at a later stage. The researcher interviewed participants until data saturation was reached. The researcher thanked participants for their availability and participation.

3.8 Data management and analysis

The researcher transcribed data verbatim then translated it from Tshivenda to English. Data was kept safe under lock and key to maintain privacy. No names of the participants were linked to data, but codes were used. Data was analysed guided by Tesch’s eight steps coding criteria as follows:

Step 1: Get a sense of the whole

The researcher got a sense of the whole by reading and re-reading all the transcripts and jotted down ideas as they came to her mind after a thorough reading of data material.

Step 2: Picking one document at a time

The researcher picked one shortest interesting interviewed transcript from the pile and read thoroughly, analysing the underlying meaning. The substance of the information was underlined with thoughts noted in the margins.

Step 3: Making a list of all topics

After reading several interview documents, the researcher made a list of all topics derived from interview report. Similar topics were clustered together, formed in columns arranged as major topics, unique topics and left-overs.

Step 4: Taking the list of topics and going back to the data

The researcher took a list of topics, and went back to the data, and abbreviate topics as codes and codes were written alongside the appropriate segments of the interview report.

Step 5: Turning topics into categories

Topics derived from the interview reports that were related to each other were grouped together. The researcher then classified the qualitative information by looking for categories, themes or dimensions of information. Major themes, themes and sub-themes were identified. Drawing of columns between categories were shown how they are interrelated.

Step 6: Making a final decision

The researcher made a final decision on themes and sub-themes were made by assembling data material belonging to each category.

Step 7: Assembling the data

The researcher assembled the data material belonging to each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis.

Step 8: Recording data, if necessary

Re-coding of the existing data was done as the researcher found it necessary during the analysing process. The researcher then generated major themes, themes, sub-themes and categories from the data collected.

3.9 Measures to ensure trustworthiness

Polit and Beck (2012) stated that trustworthiness is the degree of confidence qualitative researchers have in their data. Trustworthiness reflect how the researcher can persuade her audiences that the

findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to or worth taking account of (Babbie and Mouton, 2012). Trustworthiness was employed using the following criteria found in the highly influential work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) namely: credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability. The researcher has ensured honesty, integrity so that the quality of data collected should be true.

3.9.1 Credibility

According to Silverman, (2014); Wagner; (2012), credibility is the extent to which any research claim to be based on undistorted evidence, sincere, free from error and evasion that the readers find its inferences to be believable. It is the most important criterion which shows that the study is of quality and the findings obtained are agreeable (Silverman, 2014). Credibility refers to how well data and process of analysis address the intended focus of the study. This means that no irrelevant data has been included in the study only relevant data recorded systematically. It further reflected that the truth of the findings as judged by participants and others within the same situation. Burns, Grove and Gray, (2015) further, suggested that credibility refers to the sureness of the reader about the extent to which the researchers have produced results that reflected the views of the participants. Credibility was attained through using a series of techniques including prolonged engagement, member checks and persistent observation.

- Prolonged engagement

Polit and Beck (2017) refers to prolonged engagement as the investment of sufficient time collecting data to have an in-depth understanding of the experiences of children heading families so as to test for misinformation and distortion and to ensure saturation of important categories. It is during this stage that the researcher gained an in-depth understanding of the experiences of children heading families. In this study, the researcher has ensured prolonged engagement by staying in the field with participants for a month (Babbie and Mouton, 2012). Prolonged engagement further established a sense of trust and rapport between the researcher and the participants as it is important in gathering rich data (Brink and van der Walt and Van Rensburg, 2017).

- Member check

Gary (2017) confirmed that member check is when researcher together with the participants check whether they have understood each other correctly on what has been said during the interview process. Member checking in other words, it is a way of validating the researcher's understanding with participants that she observed as it was very reassuring for qualitative research to hear that the researcher understood, interpreted and captured the opinions and views of participants appropriately. The researcher together with the participants verified the content throughout the interview process by

continuous probing and paraphrasing ensuring that the researcher has properly interpreted participants' meanings. Verification involved restating, summarising, what participants explained (Gary, 2017).

- Persistent observation

All non-verbal cues and verbal communication made by the participants were observed throughout the interview process very carefully (Babbie, 2012). In this study, the researcher persistently observed the participants throughout data collection to identify their emotional behaviours. It is during this process where the researcher looked for multiple influences and determines what counts and what does not count (Brink and van der Walt and Van Rensburg, 2017).

3.9.2 Confirmability

Polit and Beck (2012) refers to confirmability as the potential for congruency between two or more independent people about the data's accuracy, relevance and meaning. The researcher as neutral as possible and not being biased and documented the procedure by means of checking or rechecking the data throughout the data. Throughout, the researcher has been supervised and monitored by the supervisor and co-supervisor in order to confirm the findings.

3.9.3 Transferability

According to Polit and Beck (2014), transferability refers to the extent to which qualitative findings can be transferred and applicable to another context, settings or groups. Polit and Beck (2017) view transferability as the extent to which findings of study may be 'generalised' to other settings or groups. The findings would be applied to various similar contexts. The researcher has shared the findings with other researchers to gain positive inputs, including other organizations that were working directly with children.

3.9.4 Dependability

Anol, (2012) views dependability in qualitative research, as when two researchers assessing the same phenomenon using the same set of evidence independently will arrive at the same conclusions or the same researcher observing or a similar phenomenon at different times arrives at similar conclusion. Holloway and Wheeler (2011) suggested that the context of the study must be well described to achieve dependability. In this study, the researcher assured dependability of the study findings by ensuring that all the processes within the entire research process were consistent with the philosophical and methodological precepts of phenomenology. To enhance objectivity, the researcher

shared the transcripts with another experienced researcher who independently did the analysis and notes were compared.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Dahlberg and McCaig (2010) outlined that ethics in research as the systematic moral principles, rules or code of practice that guide activity from the beginning to completion of the study (including the publication of results). Polit and Beck (2012) defines ethics as a system of moral values concerned with the degree to which a researcher adheres to professional, legal and social obligations during the research process. The researcher adhered to all research ethics in all stages of the study, namely: permission to conduct study, informed consent, deception, anonymity, privacy and confidentiality, freedom of autonomy and rights of participants. However, the details of how ethical considerations were adhered to regarding participants, institutions involved in the study as well as the scientific integrity of the study.

3.10.1 Permission to conduct a study

The researcher has presented the proposal to the Advanced Nursing Science Department and the School of Health Sciences Research panel members for quality purposes. The proposal was submitted to the University of Venda's Higher Degree Committee and ethical clearance certificate was obtained. Ethical clearance was used as an evidence to apply permission to conduct research from the respective institutions such as Makhado municipality villages, community leaders, relatives as well as participants.

3.10.2 Informed consent

According to Dahlberg and McCaig (2010), informed consent is, essentially, a term made up of two parts. For the first part, research should always be conducted openly, honestly and participants should be made aware of what the research entails. Second, participation must be voluntary, and participants must give consent to be involved in the study. When these two parts, are combined, are, essentially, what is meant by the term 'informed consent' Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, (2014). Polit and Beck (2014) explained that informed consent means participants have been provided with ample information and have the power and freedom to voluntarily accept or refuse participation and signifies researcher's efforts to establish and maintain participant's autonomy. Participants who have agreed to participate were informed that the information collected will not be linked to their names (Brink *et al.*, 2012). Before the researcher begins her fieldwork, she has obtained the informed consent of her study research from the participants. It is important that participants made adequately aware of the type of information the researcher wants from them. Participants were given information on the

purpose of the study, procedure, potential benefits, assurance of confidentiality, description of risks. Participants were explained that they have the right to withdrawal before and during the interview process without any punishment. Participants have the right to contact the researcher even after the interview as the researcher will contact the participants. Participants were also informed that there are no incentives to be given to them for their participation.

3.10.3 Deception

According to Wagner (2012), deception is when the researcher provides the participants intentionally with misleading, cheating or withholding information from participants about the aim and methods of study. In this study, the researcher remained honest to the participants as there were no undisclosed risks and detailed explanation was given. Prior to data collection the researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study.

3.10.4 Anonymity

Polit and Beck (2017), outline that anonymity is when the researcher cannot link any data to a participant. It is usually a requirement of research ethics that the identity of individuals who have participated in research code numbers and pseudonym names were used. Anonymity is closely related to confidentiality and is the most secure means of protecting confidentiality. Therefore, to maintain strict anonymity the researcher will not link participants with data. The names of the participants and the municipality and villages of the form where the data was collected will not be revealed when the report is published.

3.10.5 Privacy and Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to the process of keeping the information obtained from the participants during a study undisclosed and private (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). According to Burns and Grove (2016), privacy is the freedom participants should determine the time, extent, and general circumstances under which their private and sensitive information be protected and will not be made accessible to any persons other than the research team by using password protection. In this study, interviews were conducted in a quite environment identified by the participants to maintain and secure participant's rights. Furthermore, the researcher would not divulge any information gathered from the participants with anybody.

To maintain confidentiality, participants were assured that no identifying information would be made available to anyone not directly involved to the study. As breach of confidentiality occurs when the researcher, by accident or direct action, allow an unauthorized person to gain access to the raw data

of a study. Breach of confidentiality is of special concern in qualitative studies that have few study participants and involve the reporting of long quotes made by those participants (Burns and Grove, 2014). Under such circumstances, participants were guaranteed confidentiality, in which the researcher would not identify a person's responses but promised not to divulge that persons identify in any report, paper or public forum.

Participants were informed that they should feel free to withdraw at any stage from the study and they should not give notice about their withdrawal or provide any explanation (Kaiser, 2009). To provide secure storage and control, data collected was stored under lock and key where the researcher and the supervisor can easily access. Research reports were examined closely for evidence that the participants' confidentiality was maintained during data collection, analysis, and reporting (Burns and Grove, 2015).

3.10.6 Ethical research principles.

Ethical research principles according to Flick (2011), relates to addressing the question of which ethically relevant issues caused by the intervention of researchers can be expected to impact on the people with or about whom they research. It is concerned in addition with the steps taken to protect those who participate in the research, if this is necessary. The reasons for adhering to the ethical principles is to prevent the physical and emotional harm to the participants (Wagner, 2012). The researcher protected the rights of the participants, namely: respect for persons, beneficence, justice and human dignity.

- Respect for persons

The researcher employed ethical responsibility to recognise and protect the dignity of the participants. In this study, such ethical codes were observed by ensuring that participants signed informed consent assent (Polit and Beck, 2014). Participants have the right to decide whether to participate in the study, without the risk of penalty or prejudicial treatment (Brink, van der Walt and Van Rensburg, 2012). Voluntary participation is a principle that required people should not be forced to participate in the study and that, if they have agreed to participate, they were free to withdraw at any time they wished (William and Mohamed, 2010). Those who refused to give information were not be forced, threatened, intimidated or give penalty measures. Participants with mental disorder or intellectually challenged did not form part of the study.

- Beneficence

The researcher would not cause any harm to the physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, economic, social or legal aspects of the participants and would look for the indirect dangers and guard against them (Babbie and Mounton, 2012). The researcher continuously not exposed the participants to experience any temporary or permanent harm, if participant's experiences any emotional challenges the researcher has referred those affected to the appropriate services. The right to protect participants from exploitation was maintained always as the researcher explained to participants that they may withdraw from the interview at any moment should they wish to do so, without any penalty or explanation.

- Justice

According to Brink, van Walt and Van Rensburg (2017), the 'principle of justice' refers participants' right to fair selection and treatment. Participants were selected and treated fairly, equity, justice and with no discrimination. Maintaining fairness to participants, the researcher guided the interview process and kept the focus of the interview keeping clear that the interview was not a therapeutic session. Participants were selected for the reasons directly related to the problem, and not because they were readily available or can be easily manipulated. Therefore, no specific benefits were given to certain participants, all participants were treated fairly and respected according to the agreement made with them.

➤ Human dignity

The researcher reassured participants that any information provided would not be used against them in any way. Children heading families participated in the study voluntarily, as the researcher fully disclosed every important information about the proposed study. Participants were protected of their identity as the researcher would not identify a given response with the participant (Babbie, 2012). The researcher made certain that the cultural values of the participants were respected. The degree of risk of the participants would not exceed the potential humanitarian benefits of the knowledge to be gained from the study. Punctuality was always maintained.

3.11 Summary

This chapter describes the research design and methodology which include the study setting, study population, target population, sampling and study sample, data collection and analysis. Measures to ensure trustworthiness for each phase of the study and ethical considerations were also discussed.

Trustworthiness of the study was described under credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability. Chapter 4 outlines data analysis, interpretation and discussion.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the research design and methods. This chapter gives attention to data analysis, interpretation and discussion of the experiences of children heading families at Makhado municipality in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa. Data analysis started with data collection. Data was collected from children heading the families residing at the rural villages of Makhado municipality in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa. The rural villages where data was collected are Magau, Madombidzha, Tshiozwi and Gogobole.

Prior commencement of the interviews, the researcher informed the participants that whatever is discussed during the interview will be kept confidential. The content of the consent and assent forms was explained to the children in their home language. The researcher asked permission from participants of recording the interviews with the audiotape. The language used to collect data was Tshivenda and some participants preferred to mix English and Tshivenda. The researcher observed the behaviour of the participants during interviews and this was recorded as field notes.

The purpose of conducting in-depth interviews was to explore and describe the challenges experienced by children heading families and to determine the range of support structures available. The average time spent on each individual interview was about 30-45 minutes. Interviews were conducted after school hours and during the weekends at the homes of children heading families. The number of participants interviewed varied daily. Throughout data collection the researcher continuously asked probing questions till saturation was reached. Data was collected from 20 participants. Data analysis was guided by the Tesch's eight steps of open-coding qualitative data (Creswell, 2014).

4.2 Demographic profile of the participants

Data was collected from eleven girls and nine boys between 15 and 19 years of age. Education level of the participants ranged between grade 8 and 12. Table 4.1 shows the demographic profile of the participants. P stands for participants.

Table 4.1: Demographic profile of the participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Grades
P1	Male	17 years	Grade 11
P2	Male	15 years	Grade 9
P3	Female	17 years	Grade 10
P4	Female	16 years	Grade 10
P5	Female	18 years	Grade 12
P6	Female	14 years	Grade 8
P7	Female	18 years	Grade 12
P8	Female	17 years	Grade 12
P9	Male	15 years	Grade 9
P10	Male	16 years	Grade 10
P11	Male	14 years	Grade 7
P12	Female	18 years	Grade 12
P13	Male	15 years	Grade 8
P14	Male	18 years	Grade 12
P15	Female	16 years	Grade 9
P16	Male	17 years	Grade 9
P17	Female	15 years	Grade 8
P18	Female	18 years	Grade 12
P19	Female	15 years	Grade 8
P20	Male	19 years	Grade 12

4.3 Challenges experienced by children heading families

Findings of the study revealed that children heading families whose parents died are experiencing various challenges and ineffective support. According to Le Roux-Kemp (2015), child-headed families have become a common and integral part of South African society. Findings of the study are discussed according to the major themes, themes and sub-themes that emerged from analysis of data collected from children heading families. Challenges experienced by children heading families emerged as a major theme. The impact of absence of parents during childhood, safety and security and ineffective support emerged as themes Table 4.2 shows the major theme, themes and sub-themes.

Table 4.2: Major themes, themes and sub-themes

Major themes	Themes	Sub-themes
Challenges experienced by children heading families	Absence of parents	-Impact of absence of father and mother figures -Parental love and guidance -Role adaptation
	Financial constraints	-Lack of household essentials
	Safety and security	-Poor housing conditions -Poor health conditions
	Ineffective support	- Social support - Psychological support - Instrumental support

4.3.1 Absence of parents

Findings of the study revealed that children heading families' experience numerous challenges that affect their daily lives negatively. Absence of parents as a result of death has a negative impact on the children's lives. Children heading families experience lack of love, guidance and advices. They still perceived that absence of parents' subject them to another complexity of coping with role adaptation and increased household workload. The impact of parents during childhood resulted in children lacking parental love and guidance, role adaptation and health related issues was stated by majority of children heading families.

4.3.3.1 The impact of absence of the father and mother figures

According to Collins Dictionary (2006), defines fatherless to someone without a father, either because he has died or because he does not live with his children. The study findings indicate that some of children heading families never saw their parents nor had the relationship with them. They were left with the questions of where do they exactly belong? Their mothers never showed them their fathers

or told them who their fathers were hence, identity crisis. Most of participants had mixed feelings towards their biological fathers that of hatred and longing to see them.

Children who grow without a parent stagger in adopting the role of a parents as they do not have a role model. They identify with any father whom they attribute all the personal characteristics that they cannot trace. Consequently, such characteristics are less strongly felt as part of one's own personality. The study findings further revealed that those children who do not know their fathers struggle with identity crisis asking themselves what the real surname of their father is.

Participant 5 said:

“I do not know who my father is and how he looked like. Whether do I look like him or not. This makes me ask myself so many questions such as; what is my actual surname? I would love to use my father’s surname for proper identification.”

Participant 10 expounded that:

“I never saw my father in my entire life. I even don’t wish to see him personally since my mother told me that he never supported me in any form. However, he never bought me even the necessities like napkins.”

Participant 9 explained that:

“We do not know our biological father, however, our elder sister informed us about our father after he has passed on.”

Participant 4 had to say:

“I am in grade 8 and staying alone in this house. I have three sisters who are staying with their father. One was born in 2012 and the twins were born in 2015. I was born in 2004 from a different father whom I don’t know.”

Participant 12 had to say:

“We don’t know our father as we never saw him in our lives. In total we are six five boys and one girl.”

A fatherless situation has a negative impact on the child's life. A study conducted in SA by Spencer (2013) discovered that children who grow up without a father suffer emotionally, intellectually, socially in terms of behaviour. The issue of fatherlessness is a sensitive one. Girls suffer from low self-esteem, and higher level of risky sexual behaviour and abuse, and more difficulties forming and maintaining stable sexual relationships. Girls become prone to falling pregnant early and end up as single parents. Boys who grow up without a father, on the other hand, are more likely to engage in over-compensatory masculine behaviour later in life.

A study conducted in Free State Province, South Africa, by Gono (2015), on the experiences and challenges faced by children heading families revealed that children who lost their mothers suffer massive grief over the loss of love and nurturing. Children who lost their fathers too suffer particularly from a decline in their standard of living, as the death of a father typically entails the loss of income for the household, especially if the father was the only breadwinner

4.3.3.2 Parental love and guidance

Children affirmed that they stay in homes where they no longer experience parental love and guidance which their parents used to provide. They perceive that they don't deserve to be loved. They usually struggle to take decisions as there is no parent to guide them. Sometimes they long for their parental love especially when they are emotionally disturbed, as parents are not there to comfort them.

Sumbulu (2014) supports the findings of this study when stating that children heading families travel a long and difficult road in their fast-tracked life into parenthood. They cross the unknown grounds without the road signs as they are not guided, loved, directed and disciplined by the parents. It is a "learn-as-you-go" type of experiential learning curve.

Participant 1 stated that:

"It is frustrating to live without a parent because as a child I need somebody to advise and give me love, support and guidance. I sometimes miss my mother."

Pillay (2011) stated that lack of parental guidance, support, warmth and love remain a long-lasting mark on the psychological well-being of children heading families. Du Toit and Forlin (2009) affirm that absence of parents raises questions on the carrying out on values, beliefs and practices. Children heading families struggle with issues such as self-confidence, self-esteem, emotional stability, poverty group sociability and morality.

The life of children heading families is not easy as compared to those with parents. Children living in child-headed families endure various burdens of caring for each other. They are left on their own to care for their brothers and sisters and themselves (Mturi, Xaba and Sekokota, 2005). Parents normally provide children with coping strategies to fulfil or meet their basic needs. The relationship parents have with their children is determined by unconditional love, acceptance and belonging.

4.3.3.3 Role adaptation

Following the death of the parent the eldest child takes the role of a parent that of looking after the siblings. Boys and girls take the responsibilities of managing all the household chores. The eldest child in the family takes responsibilities of heading a family when the parent is critically ill. He or she is obliged to take care of the siblings whilst managing the schoolwork. The siblings rely on the eldest child for emotional support and social guidance, which creates an unbearable strain. Pillay (2015) corroborates in his study indicated that learners from poor homes especially child-headed homes are likely to perform poorly at school because of the added responsibilities such as caring for the siblings or contributing to the family income.

Participant 4 stated:

“Following the death of a parent life became very difficult to adapt to the role of a parent especially when one is still young and need to be guided by parents. Nonetheless, I find myself forced to take the parental role as I was the eldest child in the family.” I share the routine with my siblings. Some of my siblings become reluctant to adopt their roles.”

Participant 6 explicated:

“The death of both parents left me with the responsibility of looking after my five siblings of the ages 17 years’ male, 15 years’ male 13 years’ male, 11 years’ female and 9 years’ male. I struggle to do my schoolwork because of the increased responsibilities.”

Participant 8 said:

“The responsibilities and the role of parenting commenced when my mother was still alive and critically ill. As the eldest child I was obliged to take over the family responsibilities during the period the mother was critically ill. It is stressful and hard to take care of my critically ill mother.

My siblings address me as their mother calling mom although I am a boy.”

Children heading families are recognised as being independent and responsible for providing leadership and making major decisions in running and maintaining the household activities, caring for younger siblings and adopting parental roles (van der Mark, 2015). The responsibilities faced by children-heading families affect their education. They are eager to overcome challenges as they believe that schooling is the way to get a better life for themselves and for their siblings.

Studies have shown that children in child-headed households share responsibilities, as tasks are divided amongst the siblings reducing the burden on household heads (Korevaar, 2009; Evans, 2012). According to Francis-Chizororo (2010), home chores are distributed amongst household members, with every member contributing towards income generation and food production. However, major responsibilities remain with the children heading the family, such as final decision making and management of finances.

The study conducted by Nxumalo (2015), in KwaZulu-Natal highlighted a challenge of coping with the household routine and regular school attendance. It is difficult for children heading families to sustain educational activities such as homework as household chores may take much of their time.

Participant 7 explained:

“I stay alone, sometimes the neighbour comes to check me. I sometimes feel tired especially when coming from school and needed to cook and draw water using a wheelbarrow. It is sometimes very difficult.”

Daniel and Mathias (2012) mentioned that there are cases in Tanzania where children are employed as domestic workers. The employers exploit them through making false promises about the working conditions, opportunities for education and the child’s life condition. The employers justify themselves by believing that they are helping these children and their families.

4.3.2 Financial constraints

The social grant money is insufficient to meet necessities such as furniture, grocery, electricity, clothes, bedding. Children in child headed families are unable to attain basic needs such as food, clothing, toiletries, blankets and furniture (Kuhanen, Shemeika, Notlokolo and Nghixulifwa, 2008; Ruiz-Casarens, 2009). They experience financial constraints which lead to child labour.

Children heading families are exploited by the community members, given them hard jobs to perform in exchange for less money. In many societies, almost all children undertake work, for example within the home or outside. Many consider work activities within certain limits that contribute to children's development and education, especially if the work is combined with school activities.

Certain types of work activities are unquestionably exploitative bonded labour that is harmful to the child's health or wellbeing. In determining whether children's work in a context or considered exploitative, it is important to examine their age, sex and the state of health. It is being important to consider factors such as the age of the child, the hours spent working each day, the level of physical or psychosocial stress the activity creates, the conditions of work, the payment, the level of responsibility, whether the child attends school, the level of self-esteem, whether work contributes to or harms the child's psychosocial and physical development.

Children heading families are deprived of their childhood, potential and dignity which may be harmful to physical and mental development. They are employed on part-time basis to do home chores for the community members to earn very little payments in different forms such as old clothes, money or food. They are given strenuous home chores and cannot celebrate their birthdays due to lack of funds.

4.3.2.1 Lack of household essentials

They battle to attain simple essentials for their day-to-day essentials, such as food, toiletries, clothing, which can hold back their learning (Campbell *et al.*, 2014). Due to lack of finance, children cannot afford to purchase the household essentials such as furniture, groceries, clothes, electricity, bed and bedding.

Participant 17 explained:

"I am obliged to do part-time job after school, Saturday's so that I should get some money to buy other necessary items. I push a wheelbarrow supplying 25 litter water containers from the street water pipes or boreholes to different households, gardening and laundry of which I am paid R1.00 per 25 litres if I'm able to deliver 10 containers I will receive R10.00 in total. I feel very tired that becomes difficult for me to study in the evening. Started to cry."

➤ Furniture

The furniture looked old and not user friendly. In some of the houses there are no tables and chairs. They are unable to purchase basic household items such as refrigerators, macro waves and stoves.

Participant 14 said:

“I study in bed because I do not have a table and chair where I can sit write comfortably.”

The researcher observed that children lacked food, clothes and that their housing structures were wanting. This was noticed during the individual interview visitations to their homes. This confirms that the financial income level within these families is so low that the bare minimum consumption requirements cannot be met.

➤ Groceries

Children heading families cannot afford to purchase the basic groceries needed. Some of them can only afford to buy only a 12.5kg bag of mealie-meal (See figure 4.1). Most of the days they cook mealie meal and serve it with aचार. Van Breda (2010) stated that children heading families have a good understanding of the range of good groups nutrients required for their bodies; however, they could not afford the different types of nutrients due to financial constraints. Furthermore, a study in Zimbabwe by Francis-Chizororo (2010) concluded that many of the children heading families did not have regular balanced meals. While only some of the houses within the rural area of study grew their own food, many children were having trouble in coping with their responsibilities and thus did not have extra energy to maintain a food garden. In other study in Tanzania, securing food was a mayor stress for the child headed families (Daniel and Mathias, 2012). Figure 4.1 shows that children can afford to buy only 12.5 kg bag of mealie meal.



Figure 4.1: Grocery is only a bag of 12,5kg mealie-meal

Participant 10 indicated that:

“We do not have food for breakfast hence we go to school hungry.”

Participant 16 confirmed that:

“Food is a big challenge as I only receive social grant which cannot cover purchasing of uniforms since they are torn.”

➤ Clothes

Children heading families explained that they do not have enough clothes, such as school uniform, shoes, underwear's and jerseys. Children are sometimes compelled to use big or small sizes of clothes and uniforms from the relatives and friends.

Far too big and there was not any option we just wear it so that we can report to school.

Participant 13 said that:

“I do not have adequate number of school uniforms, even school shoes are badly torn but there is nothing that we can do. We attend school as we are. No clothes, underwear's and jerseys. We rely on handouts from people and we appreciate whatever we are given by the good Samaritans.”

➤ Electricity

Children in child headed families are unable to purchase enough electricity units for cooking, lights and ironing.

They usually buy electricity only when they receive child grant and use firewood for cooking. They sometimes use paraffin and candles for lights. It is also difficult to collect firewood. They also struggle to collect firewood due of time factor, distance and lack of accompaniment.

Participant 2 stated that:

“We can’t afford not have electricity, I use firewood and paraffin stove for cooking. It is scary during the night as sometimes it is very dark.”

➤ Bed and bedding

The money for grant is not enough to purchase beds and bedlinen. They do not have enough bed linen and their mattresses are torn and surging. They complain of extreme coldness during winter seasons. They are compelled to sleep wearing old jerseys and jackets to add to the smaller number of blankets. Cold seasons has negative impact towards their school performance as they experience cold that they study whist in their sleep place and covers themselves with those torn blankets.

Participant 3 indicated:

“We share one bed and our younger sister who is 14 years sleeps on this old rugged coach using this torn blanket even if it can be how cold we use what you see. This made our June school results look bad as it was difficult to sit on the bed and study as you can see that there is not even a chair nor a table where one could sit and study.”

➤ Stationary

Although school learners are supplied with stationary, calculators, dictionaries are not included. It is difficult to purchase stationary that is not supplied at school as they do not have enough money. They borrow dictionaries and calculators from friends.

“I need a calculator for mathematical calculations even in English I struggle since I do not have English dictionary.”

➤ Sanitary pads

Girls revealed that they do not have money to buy sanitary pads. They turn to use old rags of materials that can absorb menstrual blood. This resulted in high school absenteeism fearing that menstrual blood may stain their uniform and make them feel embarrassed.

Participant 2 explicated:

“During menstruation I do not have sanitary towels, and as such I use an old rag of materials that can absorb blood. We do not have money to buy pads.”

4.3.3 Safety and Security

It has been identified during the interviews that children heading families stay in poor safety and insecurity conditions. Dilapidated houses with broken windows and doors that do not lock expose them to crime. In the absence of parents, no one provides children with information on how to attain a sense of safety and security by introducing them to limitation, stability and by always reminding them from early child on about precautions that they need to take in order to ensure their safety (Leatham, 2005).

The study by Mkhize (2006) identified that most of children in child headed families stay in the houses with broken windows, doors and roofs which threaten their safety from inclement weather and criminals. It is normal for them to sleep on the floor with a single blanket since furniture and beds is luxury in their impoverished context. Mostly they live in overcrowded homes that are very unhygienic with lack of proper sanitation and ablution facilities. This is a common problem experienced in child-headed families. According to the South African Constitution Act No. 108 of 1996, section 28.1, every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services. Section 26 (1) and 26 (2), of the South African Constitution Act No.108 of 1996 states that, everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing, and that the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realization of this right.

4.3.3.1 Poor housing conditions

The findings of the study indicate that most of the children heading families' homes do not have safety and security systems. Some of the yards do not have fences nor gates hence lack of security. Therefore, they become vulnerable to any form of crime which might occur when they are at home or when they are asleep.

Participant 13 alluded that:

“I have got only one room. The yard does not have a fence nor gate. I do not lock when going to school or during the night when I sleep.”

Participant 18 mentioned that:

“The house windows are broken. All doors do not have locks.”

Participant 17 elucidated:

“There is no fence nor gate around the yard, day and night there is no where I could lock except the door in little house where I say”.

Participant 19 indicated:

“The external and internal door of this house do not have a lock but big holes, we are just protected by the God. When going to school we live the house not locked.”

Poor safety and security are evidenced by the doors that do not close tightly (See figure 4.4)



Figure 4.2: Poor state of the door

With the increase in crime everyone secures their homes by installing alarm systems or by burglar proofing their houses, Pillay (2014) confessed that children are staying in houses with broken doors and windows, while others stated that they were very afraid because their roof was in a bad state particularly during rainy seasons. Participants live in dilapidated houses. Most of the participants are staying in yards where there is no fence and they are afraid of criminals. Figure 4.5 shows the shack which is not surrounded by fence and no gate.



Figure 4.3: No fence nor gate around the shack

The researcher noted that three children, 19- and 14-years sleep in one room on an old mattress. Two children share the bed and the younger one sleeps on an old dirty couch using dirty and ragged bedlinen. They indicated that the situation of shortage of bedlinen becomes worse during winter where they add with some boxes

According to the study conducted by Motsa (2016), children in child headed families in Swaziland lack necessities such as candles to use for their studies, and additional responsibilities in family contexts. They have definite and important responsibilities in their lives that affect their study time (Mohlokwane, 2013). Nsibande, (2015) states that children simultaneously address family responsibilities, and this makes it difficult to meet school requirements.

Participant 1 indicated that:

“We feel we are not safe especially during the night as our streets do not have lights so it will be difficult for us to identify anyone who enters the yard and house.”

The study conducted by Mogotlane Chauke, Van Rensberg, Human and Kganakga, (2010) reported that children felt unsafe in their own homes. Phillips (2011) elaborates that children live in constant fear, knowing that they are at risk of violence, sexual assault and other abuses that they are frequently

exposed to. They lose their shelter due to dilapidation caused by heavy rains. Hlengwa (2010) states that parental death can at times lead to children ending up in the streets. Figure 4 shows a door that does not close without a locking system.



Figure 4:4: A shack door without a lock

4.3.3.2 Poor health conditions

The study findings revealed that some of the children heading families are taking their parental role of looking after their siblings and they stated that it is difficult for them to look after their sick sisters or brother. When is sick the eldest child has the responsibilities to seek medical help and sometime bound to absent themselves from school to take the responsibility of providing care to the one who is sick. Findings of the study revealed that children heading families stay in an environment which is not favourable for their health. The researcher observed that the house environmental area appeared very dirty because of lack of cleaning materials and parental supervision. Floors, walls and windows appeared very dirty. The food is kept in containers that are untidy.

Participant 4 explicated:

“When one of my siblings is sick, I am forced not to attend school and take care of him as there is no one to take care of. This becomes very difficult for me as my schoolwork remains behind.”

Participant 7 explained:

“When one of us becomes ill we go to the nearest clinic to seek medical help some but the challenge is when my younger brother is sick and cannot attend school. I am forced to stay at home to look after him. This affects my performance at school as some of the learners will be busy with schoolwork.”

The findings of the study revealed that children heading families live in unbearable untidy conditions, unhygienic conditions as they lack cleaning materials and adult supervise. Many of the child headed families are living in overcrowded shacks or dilapidated houses.

According to Phillips (2011), children in child-headed families’ express disillusionment of their living circumstances, for example, poor sanitation and unhygienic living conditions. Many of the learners in child-headed families use very old furniture such as tables and chairs to do their schoolwork. Poor environmental hygiene result in poor health status. Figure 4.6 shows poor arrangement the contents in a one roomed shack.



Figure 4.5: Untidy interior shack’s environment

Participant 2 stated that:

“We do not have cleaning materials to keep the house and the surrounding clean because the money we receive from the child grant

cannot cover all their basic needs.” Cleaning material, it’s a big challenge.”

Overcrowding and lack of privacy are major concerns to some of the children heading families as many stay in Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses and shacks where boys and girls find themselves sharing bedrooms and some only have one room which serves as a kitchen, bedroom, dining room of which they just use curtains to divided the room for privacy.

Participant 4 explained that:

“I am staying in this one room which I used as a kitchen and a bedroom.”

Participant 11 stated that:

“I am 19 years old staying with four brothers aged 17 years, 15 years, 13 years, 11 years and 9 years in the RDP house.”

Overcrowding result into lack of privacy and poor environmental and personal hygiene. Nonetheless, challenges experienced by children heading families early reflect their social disempowerment and devastating experiences of poverty, which are further exacerbated by the lack of adequate social support from their families and communities (Van Dijk and Van Driel, 2009).

Participant 11 explained that:

“I am obliged to look for work that I can do after school or Saturday’s so that I should be able to get some money to buy other necessary items. However, the work that I find is to draw water with a wheelbarrow of which 25 litters. I am paid R1.00 if I’m able to deliver 10 containers of 25 litters they pay me R10.00, this makes me feel very tired that becomes difficult for me to study in the evening.

Participant 16 expounded that:

“I stay alone, sometimes the neighbour comes to check me. I sometimes feel tired especially coming from school and needed to cook and draw water using a wheelbarrow to supply other communities’ members that have hired me. The communities’ members pay me R1.00 per 25 litres when I fetch water. It is sometimes difficult for me to manage school activities, home chores and peace part-time jobs.”

4.4 Ineffective support

Children heading families do not receive effective socially, psychologically and instrumentally support. They stated that social support is provided by churches and community members. They also receive social support from those who voluntarily wish to do so, but this is very rare.

4.4.1 Social support

The findings of the study revealed that most children heading families turn to the community for social support which helps them cope with the challenges in the absence of their parents. The challenges experienced by children heading families clearly reflect their social disempowerment and devastating experiences of poverty, which are further exacerbated by the lack of adequate social support from their relatives and communities (Van Dijk and Van Driel, 2009).

➤ Church and school support

In this study it was revealed that participants receive support from churches and schools they attend. The pastors and church members support children heading families by making follow-ups on the challenges related to the absence of parents. Churches and schools gives hope and comfort to children heading families.

Participant 16 explained that:

“No one to turn to in terms, of financial assistance and emotional support, but we are able to talk to the educators about other problems. As we are Christians, we believe that regardless of the challenges and hardships around us it will come to an end one day buy we have strong hope for our future.” I sometimes struggle to identify a person who is willing to mentor me on how to lead my sibling as they grow moreover knowing that I also do not have experience of parenting.”

Participant 5 confirmed that:

“We receive support from the church and educators. whenever there is a need for us to pay for activities and at, they do not make it difficult for us since they know that we do not have money, however, their attitude towards us gives us hope and reassurance.”

Participant 16 pointed out that:

“We entertain ourselves because God has blessed us with beautiful voices. Even at the church they know that we three good singers. We are thinking of starting the Idols in our village because we do not have recreational facilities.” They all three stood up and started singing.”

A South-African research study done in schools in low-income areas (Pillay, 2012) indicates that children considered the school environment to be a place where they feel safe and protected. They also place a high value on the presence of the teachers as well as their relationships with their teachers.

Children-heading families are motivated by their religion and faith at the centre of their lives and align all other needs. Faith is the guiding force that directs their thoughts, activities, and relationships. Due to the circumstance’s in their lives most children heading families would experience extrinsic motivation, with religion providing safety, hope, comfort, friendliness, eminences and self-justification. Pargament and Cummings (2010). Linda and Theron (2017) define resilience as the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to psychological, social, cultural and physical resources that can sustain their well-being. Awino (2010) affirms that children heading families have an ability to achieve positive development despite the breakdown of their immediate nurturing environment. Consequently, religion is part of that nurturing environment as confirmed by Pargament and Cummings (2010) who found that engaging in religion positively and proactively in dealing with challenges promote psychological resilience. Richard (2013) states, that resilient children are proficient in using positive emotions to resist adversity, accept uncertainty and recover from trauma. Pillay (2016) confirms that resilient children heading family feel safe at school regardless of all the barriers they may experience.

Participant 17 voiced that:

“We receive support from church and schools through the help of the educators, at times where there is money that needed to be paid by learners our educators do not bother us as they know that we don’t have. Furthermore, our educators give us advise and encourages to be committed in attending school.”

Participant 14 indicated that:

“In church I feel welcomed. I play a keyboard and sing in church, and this makes me feel I am accepted.”

Onuoha and Munakata (2010) share the same views that the family institution, in which parents play essential leadership roles, caters for the emotional, spiritual and material needs of children. Loss of parents makes a child vulnerable to psychological distress. It is important that educational psychologists share this knowledge with educators, as well as supporting them in championing resilience purposefully in children placed at risk by the systems in which they are growing up. Sharing knowledge is a process which is facilitated via professional developmental programmes, workshops, literature written for teachers, informal contact and mentorship (Deb and Walsh, 2012; Woods et al., 2011).

Some of the educators possess the potential and willingness to support vulnerable learners. They should be equipped with the knowledge and skills to support children heading families (Hoadley, 2008) Machenjedze, 2014; Mampane and Boucher, 2006; Theron, 2009). Participatory action learning and action research process would be suitable to improve the capacity of participating teachers to support learners so that they feel less overwhelmed and anxious (Palar and Zuber-Skerritt, 2012).

The findings of the study revealed that most of the rural villages are mushrooming with taverns whereby most of the youth spend time consuming alcohol of which for the children heading family it's a challenge as they should be resilient otherwise, they are more vulnerable and start to indulge in alcohol at a very tender age. Absence of parental supervision and guidance makes it very difficult for them to resist.

Though, most of the participants revealed that educators in schools and the churches give them support as these brings them a sense of hope. The community is not fully interested as most of the community members seem to be experiencing financial difficulties also.

Children heading families are deprived of opportunities for play, leisure and recreational activities as well as friendships. In one study in South Africa, child heads reported having limited time to play with friends owing to the increased workload, and yearned for support from adults (Masondo, 2006).

Another participant noted that:

"We are twins and we turned 18, the year that we passed to grade 8, the councillor in our village promised to buy us school uniform, but when the schools re-opened in January that particular year we went to him with the hope that we will receive the school uniform as promised. It became a surprise that morning when the councillor told us at the last hour that he could not buy as he did not have enough money. We went from house to house in that morning asking for old school uniform

from those who have passed grade 12. Some were supportive enough and gave us their old uniform even though some were too big for us.”

4.4.2 Psychological support

It was also noted that children heading families experience lack of confidence and sense of helplessness. They encounter no emotional support and are subjected to poor-child interaction. This situation leads to child headed children presenting real signs of trauma and stress because of their situation. At school, learners from child headed families can be affected by the psychosocial barriers. Psychosocial barriers can lead to learning difficulties and social behavioural problems, which in turn will negatively impact the learner’s academic achievement (Saungwene, 2013).

Participant 12 indicated:

“Since my parent died, I have never talk about this, when I cry the relatives told me that it will never bring them back. Hii..... the death of a parent brings an unbearable pain sometimes I think of committing suicide. I even admire other children walking in streets with their parents.”

Participant 16 indicated:

“I long to say mama to someone. I fell pregnant when doing Grade 2 as I thought the boyfriend will take care of me. Having a child is more problematic as my boyfriend is not working. We all depend on social grant. I never received information about the use of condom and contraceptives.”

Byline, Tagurum, Chirdan, Bello, Afolaranmi, Hassan, Iyaji and Idoko, (2015) indicate that experience of bereavement can be severely emotional for young children and can affect the psychological and physical development of a child. Current research further suggests that these three psychosocial challenges are interrelated within the socioeconomic reality of under-resourced communities in SA, negatively affecting personal and community wellness (Donald and Clacherty 2005; Ward and Associate, 2000). Studies have claimed that most of children heading families have not received trauma counselling resulting in unresolved grief and trauma that leads to long-term psychological problems and they develop poor self-worth (Phillips, 2011; van der Mark, 2015).

According to the study by Chidziva (2013), on learners in Mpumalanga Province presented that children heading families suffer from depression caused by high levels of stress, he furthermore

suggested that there are symptoms of depression that can be observed within children who are heading families. These include frequent absence from schools or poor performance in school leading to school dropout.

Study conducted by Magampa, (2014) in Limpopo on learners from child headed families revealed that children may experience a wide range of emotions commonly known as bereavement and grief (Rando, 1984). However, grief theorists describe bereavement as the state of having suffered a loss, and grief is the normal reaction one experiences in that state and mourning as both an intrapsychic processes and cultural responses to grief (Rando, 1984). Grief on the other hand is understood as an incorporation of diverse psychological (affective, cognitive, social and behavioural) and physical (physiological, and somatic) manifestation. Nonetheless, bereavement is a distressing but natural and probably universal experience. Affective manifestation includes depression, despair, anxiety, guilt, anger, hostility and loneliness (Stroebe, Stroebe, Hansson and Schut, 2009). Cognitive manifestations include preoccupation with the deceased, low self-esteem, self-reproach with the deceased, reproach, helplessness, hopelessness, a sense of unreality and problems with memory and concentration. Yet, children are generally disadvantaged in this process because of developmental vulnerabilities. The difficulties and risks may prevent children from going through the natural grieving process that is necessary to recover from loss (Rando, 1984; Worden and Silverman, 1996). Intellectual immaturity that entails that children have immature concept related to death can foster and fantasy, is considered first among the risk and protective factors (Rando, 1984).

The first, factor include inability to sustain emotion that is, children are limited in the capacity to tolerate pain intensely overtime, their sadness often occur in bursts or while playing which is easily misunderstood. Secondly, dependency on caregiver i.e. children have little control over their lives and as such are dependent on the adult who care for them. The Third, factor is when children can't separate personal identity and fate from those closest to them. The fourth, factor is the loss of the primary attachment. When child's parents die, the child loses his/her primary attachment (Thompson, Kaslow, Kingree, King, Bryant and Rey, 1998). The loss of a parent is often accompanied by additional stressors that may inhibit children's abilities to mourn, and directly affect children's mental health. The stressors may include income, the stigma associated with the cause of death, and social changes in home, community, education and separation from siblings (Thompson, Kaslow, Kingree, King, Bryant and Rey, 1998). All these changes following the death of a parent and children's resources for adapting change can affect the psychological wellbeing of the bereaved child over time (Felner, Terre and Rowlinson, 1988).

However, the study found that children heading families' learners had not received counselling even though they were in situations that demanded such services. A point in case from the study was where a learner had a continuous headache for more than three weeks and had lost concentration, but no

teacher took notice of that. Many cases were revealed in the study of children heading families' learners who needed counselling.

A study by Chilangwa (2004) found that children in child-headed households also suffer stress in the process of adapting to adult roles and responsibilities of carrying on with minimal resources of the needs of survival parenting and security. Children in child-headed households are at risk of neglect, violence, sexual abuse and other abuses, which lead to psychological trauma.

During the interview the researcher noticed that those children whom their parents died have never got an opportunity of talking about their experiences to anyone. Most of the participants cried saying that their relatives never allow them to cry as they were told that crying will never bring back their parents, they are gone so don't keep on crying as this is not going to change the situation. When the researcher asked them as to whether they have been counselled after the incident. All participants reported that they have never attended any counselling session. This clearly showed that the psychological aspect of children heading learners has never been attended. Therefore, a need for psychological intervention is necessary throughout the grieving, mourning and bereavement process. Findings of the study revealed that children heading families experience confusion after their parent's death considering who should take over the parental role.

Participant 3 stated that:

“When parents have died there is a state of confusion asking yourself who should take the role of parenthood.” My siblings started calling me mummy and I agreed to be called mummy as I am the eldest boy.”

Participant 7 explained:

“The space of the parent and the role will never be filled by anyone because we long and wish to see your parents celebrating occasions like birth days especially when other children tell you of how their parents celebrate their birth days.”

Nyaradzo (2013) asserts that parents play an important role in their child's education. This leads to better performance at school. Ogina (2010) reiterates by stating that a parent's supportive role is essential in the learning experiences of a child. However, learners from child headed families are poorly motivated.

4.4.3 Instrumental support

It was revealed in this study that children heading families struggle in doing household chores and schooling. There is no one who is willing to assist them in carrying household duties such as cleaning,

cooking as they do all these household after school provided, they are not tired. Both boys and girls are faced with same challenges. From the observation made by the researcher it was noticed that they stay in unhygienic conditions that looked dirty. The researcher observed that floors and walls appeared very dirty, with unpacked dirty washing. The place where food was prepared and kept also viewing very untidy with unwashed utensils.

One participant indicated:

“It is difficult to do all the household duties when coming from school. During weekends, I attend Saturday classes from morning till late afternoon. On Sundays, I attend church services, therefore, I only do my wash my clothes Saturday night. It is very difficult to do proper house cleaning.”

Participant explained that:

“Our neighbour requested to plant vegetables in our yard specifically for him to generate money, he waters the garden supplied from his yard. He sometimes gives us some vegetables.”

Participant said:

“We spend some days without cooking as we come from school being very tired. There is no one to help us with all the household chores. It is difficult to study when you are hungry and tired.”

4.5 Summary

Chapter 4 focused on the presentation and discussions of the research findings. The chapter presented the findings supported by related literature and the participants expressed their experiences. Children heading families experienced various challenges namely; The impact of absence of parents, financial constraints, uncertainty of safety and security. The findings also revealed unmeasurable lack of psycho-social, and instrumental support to children heading families.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter incorporates the summary, limitations, conclusion and recommendations, based on the findings of the study. The findings of the study revealed that participants are faced with abundant challenges following the death of both parents. Nevertheless, the researcher was so astonished on noticing how children heading families survive and cope with the challenges they face on daily basis. The study was conducted from children heading families at Makhado Municipality in Vhembe district rural villages of Limpopo Province, SA. The findings revealed that children heading families receive ineffective support from the community.

5.2 Objectives of the study

An objective of the study was to explore and describe the experiences of children heading families at Makhado municipality in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa. The researcher explored the experiences of children heading families. Children heading families described their experiences of uncountable challenges related to the absence of parents and ineffective provision of support. The researcher observed that the objectives of the study were met.

5.3 Summary of the findings

This study was conducted at Makhado municipality in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, SA. The study noticeably identified challenges experienced by children heading families and ineffective support. The method of data collection was by means of unstructured in-depth individual interviews. The primary data sources were children heading families from 13-19 years of age whose both parents died. Participants were selected from the population using a non-probability purposive sampling technique. The researcher introduced and explained the significance of the study in relation to the objectives in detail. Data saturation for this study was reached after 16 participants were interviewed, nonetheless, the researcher continued with 4 additional interviews to confirm saturation.

The study employed a qualitative research approach, research design and reflected on explorative, descriptive, contextual and interpretative phenomenological designs. The choice of the study was consistent with the stated objectives. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University of Venda ethics committee and traditional leaders from the four rural villages at Makhado municipality

in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa. Informed consent was obtained from the participant's relatives giving the researcher permission to interview children heading families. Participants voluntarily signed the assent forms before they were interviewed.

Data collection occurred concurrently with data analysis (Creswell, 2014). Tesch' eight steps of systematic open-coding were accomplished to support in the formalization of proven, meaningful patterns (Creswell, 2014). Data was transcribed verbatim and transcripts were coded by the researcher. Trustworthiness was safe guided by means of ensuring credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability of the study.

The study findings were categorised into one major theme, four themes and nine sub-themes on the challenges experienced by children heading families and support resulting in the impact of absence of parents during childhood. Children heading families experience financial constraints and subsequent lack of food, furniture, clothes, stationary, bed and bedding. They are vulnerable to criminals as they stay dilapidated in houses and shacks without proper locking systems hence uncertainty of safety and security.

All participants interviewed were residing at Makhado municipality from the four rural villages: Magau, Tshiozwi, Madombidzha and Gogobole. During the initial stage participants were gathered at the traditional leaders as the traditional leader arranged that the researcher will find it easy to locate them. The researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study. A list of participants including their cell phones contact numbers specific villages where they live were updated by the researcher's. The list was meant to assist the researcher in locating the participants during data collection.

The findings of the study were supported by literature from the previous studies on the topic related to experiences of children heading families whose both parents died. However, there is a clear need for appropriate interventions to address the challenges of children heading families in communities and to develop sustainable solutions. Mavise (2011), recommended that there is a need to undertake preventative work, to create an environment where the community no longer find it acceptable to have children left unsupported and strategies are developed to prevent this happening.

In addition, children heading families should be targeted for training to build their life skills in aspects such as health, agriculture, sanitation, and stay more vigilant to any form of abuse. Therefore, it is important to introduce counselling sessions as well as building up coping strategies that enables children heading families overcome bereavement, trauma and anxiety (Powell, Chinake, Madzinge and Maambira, 2004).

5.4 Demographic data

Participants were boys and girls between the age of 13-19 years who were heading families. All participants interviewed were from the four rural villages in Makhado municipality, Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, SA. Participants were attending schools from the local secondary schools only one participant had already passed grade 12, due to financial challenges could not continue with education.

5.5 Discussion of the findings

5.5.1 Challenges experienced by children heading families

5.5.1.1 Absence of parents

The findings of the study revealed that children heading families experience countless challenges. Challenges include lack of love, role adaptation, absence of father and mother figures and ineffective support. Support and understanding amongst the siblings in the family was a major source of strength for children heading families. In the absence of parents, siblings turn to support each other emotionally, socially and psychologically through working together in ensuring the running and functioning of their family. Children heading families share household chores' and responsibilities which increase their unity. The absence of a parental subsystem in child-headed families implies that leadership roles are performed by the children who are unprepared and hurried by circumstances into the performance of the adult roles. They live in poor environmental conditions due to time factor and lack funds.

5.5.1.2 Parental love, support and guidance

Findings of the study revealed that children heading families miss their parental love, support and guidance. Most participants cried during the interview process recalling bad experiences which occurred before and after their parent's death. They admired other children in the company of their parents. They wish to hear and see their parents which was in vain.

5.5.1.3 Role adaptation

The study findings revealed that leadership role is automatically taken by the eldest child in the family soon after the death of the parents. It is quite difficult to lead the families when one is still young as siblings sometimes do not want to take responsibilities. Managing household chores and schoolwork becomes difficult. The role of leading the family changes when parents die, to that of a mother or father. The functions and responsibilities of the child also change to be those of the parents. It takes long for a child to adapt to the new roles, functions and responsibilities.

children heading families struggles to identify their relatives hence identity crisis sometimes brings a huge challenge when growing and later in life.

5.5.1.4 Health related issues

Environment hygiene in the house in and outside was very poor. When the siblings become ill it is the responsibility of the eldest child to accompany them to the health facilities, and this resulted in school absenteeism. Provision of care and treatment of ill siblings has a negative impact to the school progress.

5.6 Financial constraints

Most children-heading families experience financial constraint. They lack finance to buy furniture, groceries, electricity, clothes and bed-and bedding. They are exposed to child labour to make ends meet which influence the community members to exploit them through allocation of hard labour activities and pay them very little money. They don't have enough food hence they go to school hungry. Girls experience difficulties during menstruation as they don't have money to buy sanitary pads. They use old rags that absorbs the menstrual flow to avoid absenting themselves from school and embarrassment.

There is no furniture such as chairs, desks, and computers to assist in their education learning process. They don't have bed-bedding instead they use old ragged torn blankets. It is very difficult to for them to study in the night during wintertime, as a results they feel very cold and the room is so cold and have no warm clothes and blankets to cover themselves.

5.7 Safety and Security

Safety and security in child-headed families is one of the challenges experienced as their housing conditions and their yard environment expose them to all kinds of criminality. Most of their windows and doors were broken to an extend that some of the doors do not have locking systems. Their yards are without fence and gate and their safety is questionable and they believed in God for protection.

Van Breda (2010) states that children heading families experience feelings of helplessness and uncertainty about personal safety. In some cases, boys and girls share the same bedroom. Their housing structure comprised of only one room which they divide by old materials just to separate sleeping place and cooking area. Children heading families become easy targets to various forms of abuse and it is reported that they often have no voice in expressing their plight for safety and security as they are ignorant of their rights (Naidoo, 2008); Human and Van Rensburg, 2011; Campbell et, al.,2014).

5.8 Ineffective Support

The findings revealed that children heading families have ineffective support in various aspects of their lives such as social support, psychosocial, emotional and physical support.

5.8.1 Social support

Children heading families live in isolation where they do not receive any support from their communities and extended families. They receive ineffective support from their relatives. Churches give them spiritual guidance and schools through educators providing to them with guidance and the supply of stationary. The Department of Social Development provides them with child support grant.

5.8.2 Psychological support

Children heading families do not have facilities where they can be counselled during their mourning, grieving and bereavement period. They experience an increased level of stress and anxiety. Absence of their parents sometimes raise their emotions. Most of them revealed that when both parents die, they remain in a state of confusion especially when they do not know who should take over the leadership role. Children heading families are not counselled by professionals following the death of their parents as they are not referred for counselling. They are on their own through bereavement.

According to Nziyane (2010), the on-going psychological stress that children heading families experience often lead to behavioural problems in schools. This includes behaviours such as disrupting the class, fighting with peers, ignoring school work, risky sexual activity, dishonesty and stubbornness'. The destructive ways of dealing with anger and frustration are caused by the learner's lack of love and exposure to rejection.

5.8.3 Instrumental support

Children heading families receive insufficient support from the neighbourhood. The eldest child suffers physical exhaustion due to overload of work which affects their studies and result in poor school performance and sometimes school dropouts. They have no one who helped them in doing household chores like cooking, laundry, and the day to day family activities. No one support them in cleaning of the house and surroundings. The eldest child heading the family supervise his/her siblings. It is difficult for children to cope with responsibilities of managing the family activities and schooling hence no extra energy to maintain a vegetable garden (Van Breda, 2010).

5.9 Recommendations of the study

5.9.1 Recommendations related to further research

- The absence of parents in the lives of children heading families as they grow could be further researched to establish the nature and intensity of the impact that it could have within the same context of childhood.
- The same study could be conducted in some other rural-villages in other districts of Limpopo Province to explore the trend that it might take with regards to the intensity and kind of needs that it would have within other groups of children heading families elsewhere.
- The study could be conducted to urban provinces in South Africa.

5.9.2 Recommendations related to community

- The researcher recommends that respective stakeholders such as communities, churches, business structures, traditional leaders and various departments, such as department of justice, social development, education, NGO's and politicians identify intervention projects that will assist children heading families as this problem needs collaborative support.
- Children heading families should also be involved when interventions are deliberated.
- Communities' should be encouraged to practice 'Ubuntu' towards children heading families.
- Platforms should be created by the key figures in the villages to support children heading families to address the challenges.

5.9.3 Recommendations related to the psychological aspects

- Psychological intervention is necessary throughout the grieving, mourning and bereavement process.
- Health professionals should work together in support of children heading families.

5.9.4 Recommendations related to the impact of parental role

- Communities should be educated about the importance of fatherhood in the lives of children.
- Establishment of youth programs in various communities through the assistance of NGO's.

5.9.5 Recommendations related to education

- Establishment of libraries in the rural villages for children to access information.
- Establishment of voluntary support group to assist the children heading families with homework.

5.9.6 Recommendations related to financial constraints

- Social grant should be increased especially to those children that are heading the families to enable them to purchase the essentials such as groceries, stationary, food, bed-bedding and furniture.
- The researcher recommends that the government should prioritise children heading families in building the houses.

5.10 Delimitation and limitations of the study

Creswell (2014) described delimitation as those characteristics or boundaries set by the researcher to restrict the population to a homogeneous group of subjects to narrow the scope of a study. The researcher only included children whose parents died and heading families, residing in the four rural villages of Makhado municipality. According to Burns and Grove (2013), limitations referred to the restrictions or problems in a study that may decrease the generalizability of the findings. The study, findings were not generalised since the study was conducted in Makhado Municipality of Vhembe District in Limpopo Province, SA and not in other districts and provinces. During the interview, some of the participants became emotional when sharing their experiences of parental loss and the hardships. The researcher reassured and were referred to the psychologist and social workers for assistance.

5.11 Plan for dissemination and implementation of results

Burns and Grove (2013) denoted dissemination as the diffusion or communication of research findings by presentations and publications to a variety of audiences such as policy developers and professionals that deal with children. Dissertation copies will be submitted to the University of Venda Library and various Government departments such as DoH, DoE and DSD in the district's offices and the Makhado municipality so that policy developers may make references when reviewing the existing policies concerning challenges experienced by children heading families. The dissertation will be published in the accredited journals. Communities will be made aware of the findings experienced by children heading families. The findings of the study will be presented to the traditional leaders' gatherings and communities in the villages where data was collected to inform them about the challenges experienced by children heading families. Furthermore, the findings of the study will be presented nationally, and internationally during conferences. Articles will be published in accredited journals.

5.12 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to determine the experiences of children heading families at Makhado Municipality in Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, South Africa. The objectives of the study were to explore and describe the experiences of children heading families following the death of both parents. The study findings revealed several challenges experienced by children-heading families. However, children heading families live in difficult situations, with no basic needs hence they lack adult supervision and guidance. In addition, the psychological and economic stress being experienced by participant's reactions places them under severe strain and worsens their feelings of insecurity and hopeless. Inefficient social, psychological and instrumental support was inadequately provided to children heading families.

The eldest children heading the family are faced with increased responsibilities of caring for themselves, siblings and schooling. Financial constraints give rise to many challenges that brings hesitation to children heading families about their future. Uncertainty of safety and security exposes them to victims of all sorts of criminality. A gap which other researchers have not identified was inadequate support and follow up interventions of children heading families in their academic progress as majority of them have great potentials but lacked parental support and guidance.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Ethical clearance letter

**RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR**

**NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:
Ms PAS Makhado**

**Student No:
17023766**

**PROJECT TITLE: Experiences of children
heading families at Makhado
municipality in Vhembe district of
Limpopo Province.**

PROJECT NO: SHS/19/PDC/47/0612

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Dr ND Ndou	University of Venda	Supervisor
Dr T Malwela	University of Venda	Co - Supervisor
Ms PAS Makhado	University of Venda	Investigator - Student

**ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Date Considered: December 2019

Decision by Ethical Clearance Committee: Granted

Signature of Chairperson of the Committee: 

Name of the Chairperson of the Committee: Senior Prof. C.E. Ekosse

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA DIRECTOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION 2019 -12- 10 Private Bag X5050 Thohoyandou 0950
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University of Venda
PRIVATE BAG X5050, THOHOYANDOU, 0950, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA
TELEPHONE (015) 962 8504/8313 FAX (015) 962 9060
"A quality driven financially sustainable, rural-based Comprehensive University"

Annexure B: Permission to conduct research from the traditional leader

ANNEXURE A: Letter to ask permission from the traditional leaders

P.O. BOX 1462

Louis Trichardt

0920

The Traditional Leader

SINTHUMULE R.K.G

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to conduct research.

I hereby wish to request permission to conduct a research study at your village. I am presently a Master's degree student at the University of Venda under the School of Health Sciences. It is the University requirement that a student should conduct a research study at Makhado Municipality in Vhembe District of Limpopo Province. The study will be conducted from children heading families.

The results may assist the communities in understanding the experiences faced by children heading families. Participation in the study is voluntarily as participants will not be forced to take part. All information regarding the study will be given to the participants. All aspects regarding ethical consideration will be adhered to. Participants who may decide to withdraw during the study will not be penalized or threatened. All information collected will be kept confidential. For more enquiry contact Ms Princess Anne-Sheilah Makhado, with the Student number 0763556296.

Thanking you in advanced

Yours Sincerely

Research Name..... *Princess Anne Sheilah Makhado* Date..... *11/12/19*..... Student
Signature..... *Princess Anne Sheilah Makhado* Date..... *11/12/19*.....

VHAVENDA VHO
R K G SINTHUMULE
Tshiozwi Village
Date..... *11-12-2019*.....
Signature..... *R.K.G. SINTHUMULE*.....

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Annexure C: Consent form

Letter of information relating to informed consent

TITLE: Experiences of children heading families at Makhado Municipality in Vhembe District of Limpopo Province.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Makhado Princess Anne Sheillah

Co-Investigator/s//supervisor/s Dr N.D Ndou and Dr T. Malwela

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: Children heading families is a phenomenon that has now reached to a point that cannot be overlooked as it affects children in different dimensions such as psycho-social, education and economical (Martin 2009 cited in Lepheana, 2010). The phenomenon is increasing at a fast rate and is experienced both nationally and internationally. The path of children heading families is not easy as compared to those with parents. The researcher is a health retiree who has seen many parents dying and leaving children without adult care and supervision. As the researcher volunteered to visit schools in motivating learners, she was informed by the educators that many learners are child headed families who happen to take care of their siblings, as a result they take parental roles at a very tender age. Due to the increased in responsibilities this leads to poor school performance.

Outline of the Procedures: The researcher will make appointments with individual participants in advance to set the date, time and venue for the interviews. Prior to the commencement of the interview, the researcher will explain the purpose, ethical issues regarding their participation in the research, then the participants choose to sign or not to sign the consent/assent form. The researcher will also ask the interviewees for permission to record the interview proceedings as tape record will be used. The researcher will collect data through unstructured in-depth face-to-face interviews. This will give children heading families an opportunity to narrate and explain their experiences of heading families. An interview guide with one central question will be used to all participants. Then probing questions will be asked, determined by the participant's responses. An interview session will last for 30-45 minutes.

Risks of Discomforts to the participant: No invasive procedures will be done to the participants but in case of adverse reaction, the participants will be referred to the appropriate institutions and will be withdrawn from the study.

Benefits: Children heading family lives will be improved through counselling especially after the death of their parents and strengthening of the support systems from the community, government and various stakeholders so that child heading families will be followed up and supported in various ways.

Reason/s why participants may be withdrawn from the study: Participants have the right to withdraw at any stage of the research if they wish to do so. There is no harm or threats expected in participating in the study or withdrawing.

Remuneration: No remunerations will be offered.

Costs of the Study: Participants will not be expected to pay anything towards the study.

Confidentiality: To ensure confidentiality, interviews will take place in a quiet, private place and anonymity will be safeguarded by using pseudo names throughout the study. No information will be linked to the participants' names in villages and municipalities where data has been collected.

Research-related injury: In case of research related injury, the researcher will withdraw the participant from the study and refer him/her to an appropriate institution. No compensation will be made available.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries

Please contact the researcher Makhado P.A.S at 076355626, my supervisor Dr. Ndou N.D at (tel no. 060 613 581), Co-Supervisor: Dr. Malwela T. (tel no. 060 613 581) or the University Research Ethics Committee Secretariat on 015 962 9058. Complaints can be reported to the Director. Research and Innovation.

General

Potential participants must be assured that participation is voluntary and the approximate number of participants to be included should be disclosed. A copy of the information letter should be issued to participants. The information letter and consent form must be translated and provided in the primary spoken language of the research population.

CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study.

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Makhado Princess- Anne-Sheilah about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of the study. Research Ethics Clearance Number:
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerized system by the research.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.

- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant Date..... Time..... Signature

I, Makhado Princess Anne Sheilah herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Research

..... Date: Signature.....

Full Name of Witness (if applicable)

..... Date..... Signature.....

Full Name of Legal Guardia (if applicable)

..... Date..... Signature.....

Annexure D: Information sheet

TITLE: Experiences of Children Heading Families at Makhado Municipality in Vhembe District, South Africa.

I am a master's student at the University of Venda in the School of Health Sciences. I am presently conducting a research study on the above-mentioned topic. Therefore, I am requesting you to participate in the study. However, the purpose of the study is to identify and describe the experiences of children heading families at Makhado Municipality in Vhembe District of Limpopo Provinces, South Africa.

There will no harm inflicted, or threats exerted to you while participating in the study. We will only meet during an interview session. The interview will last from 30-45 minutes. All the information that you will be giving will be treated confidentially.

In case you decide to participate, you choose voluntarily with full understanding that if you no longer wish to continue before or during the interview you may withdraw without any penalty. A voice recorder will be used for voice recording during an interview and all the answers that you provide will not be attached or be consistently linking with your name as codes will be used. The researcher will continually and tentatively analyse data to determine what is important or not. Records such as field notes, jotted notes and diaries will be used during the interview. All data collected will be kept safe under lock and key only the researcher and the supervisor will have access.

The above information concerning the research study was explained to the participants and the participant fully understands the benefits, risks, and obligations involved when participating in the study. In case that you have any enquiry about the study, you are free to call me on 076 355 6296.

Researcher's name..... Signature..... Date:

Annexure E: Assent form

Consent for participation in research

I..... voluntarily participate in the study on experiences of children heading families at Makhado municipality in Vhembe District of Limpopo Province.

I understand my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without coercion or penalty.

.....

Signature of the participant

.....

Date

.....

Researcher signature

.....

Date

Annexure F: Central question

Kindly share with me your experiences of heading a family as a child after your parents have died.

Probing questions

Researcher: How are you coping after you have lost your parent at young age?

Annexure G: Editing certificate



Proof of editing

Date 23 February 2020

This is to certify that I have edited the draft thesis for the following master's candidate

Name: Makhado Princes Anne Sheila

Student No: 17023766

Title: EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN HEADING FAMILIES AT MAKHADO MUNICIPALITY IN VHEMBE DISTRICT OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

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Annexure H: Interview transcript

Researcher: Good day and, how are you?

Participant: I am doing well and you?

Researcher: Kindly share with me your experiences of heading a family as a child after your parents have died.

Participant: Following the death of a parent life became very difficult to adapt to the role of a parent especially when one is still young and need to be guided by parents. I was forced to take the parental role as I was the eldest child in the family.

Participant: The responsibilities and the role of parenting commenced when my mother was still alive. As the eldest child, I was obliged to take over the family responsibilities during this period as my mother was critically ill. It was stressful and hard to take care of your critically ill mother.

Participant: Death of both parents resulted in responsibilities of looking after my five siblings of the ages 17 years' male, 15 years' male 13 years' male, 11 years' female and 9 years' male. I struggled to do my schoolwork because of the increased responsibilities.

Participant: The space of the parent and the role they play will never be filled by anyone because we long and wish to see we parents celebrating occasions like birth days especially when other children tell you of how their parents celebrate their birth days.

Participants: When parents have died there is a state of confusion asking yourself who should take the role of parenthood. My siblings started calling me mummy and I agreed to be called mummy as I am the eldest boy.

Researcher: Can you share with me of the challenges you experienced after the death of your parents?

Participant: Clothing and food is a big challenge as I only receive social grant which cannot cover other things, such as uniform since some of my uniforms are getting torn.

Participant: We can't afford to buy electricity; I use wood fire and paraffin stove for cooking. It is scary during the night as some days as it is very dark."

Participant: We do not have electricity. I use candles and paraffin stove for cooking. During the night is scary as it is very dark. I study in bed as I do not have a table and chair where I can sit especially when doing studies.

Researcher: How are you coping after you have lost your parent at a young age?

Participant: Since my parents died I have never talked about it, because when I start crying they say do to me do you think you crying will ever bring my parent back to life?

Researcher: Can you please share with me how do you get financial assistance to buy groceries, electricity, clothes, stationary and other necessary items.

Participant: During menstruation I do not have sanitary towels, and as such I use an old rage of material that can absorb blood. Because we do not have money to buy pads that we can use during menstruation.”

Participant: There is no enough money to buy the cleaning material the walls and floors look very dirty and untidily.

Researcher: You said you do not feel safe when you are at home, tell me why?

Participant: There is no fence nor gate around the yard, day and night there is no where I could lock except the door in little house where I stay.

Participant: We feel we are not safe especially during the night as our streets do not have lights so it will be difficult for us to identify anyone who enters the house.”

Participant: The house has broken windows. All doors do not have locks and some of the internal doors have big holes as you can see.

Participant: We feel we are not safe especially during the night as our streets do not have lights so it will be difficult for us to identify anyone who enters the house.

Participant: “The external and internal door of this house do not have locks but big holes, we are just protected by the God. When going to school we live the house not locked.

Researcher: Tell me do you receive any support from any source?

Participant: No one to turn to in terms, of financial assistance, emotional and social support but we are able to talk to the educators at school about other problems. As we are church goers we believe that regardless of the challenges and hardships around us will come to an end and we have strong hope for our future.

Participant: We receive support from the church and educators at school, educators support us whenever there is a need for us to pay certain things they do not make it difficult for us since they know that we do not have money, however, their attitude towards us gives us hope and reassurance.

Participant: We receive support from churches and schools through the help of the educators, at times where there is money that needed to be paid by learners our educators do not bother us as they know that we don't have. Furthermore, our educators give us advises and also encourages to be committed in attending school.

Participant: In church I feel welcomed. I play a keyboard and sing in church, and this makes me feel I am accepted and valued.

Researcher: Please tell me have you receive any counselling following your parent's death?

Participant: I have never received any counselling following the death of my parents and it gives me a lot of stress when I start thinking about it.

Researcher: I heard you saying most of the time you are tired and this affects your school work. Can you share with me more?

Participant: It is difficult to carry all the household duties when coming from school. During weekends I tired attend Saturday classes from morning till late afternoon. On Sunday I go to church; I only do my washing Saturday night. It is very difficult to do proper house cleaning.

Participant: We spend some days without cooking as we come from school being very tired. There is no one to help us with all the household chores. It is difficult to study when you are hungry and tired.